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Indian Knowledge Systems

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A Free Open Access Peer-Reviewed Interdisciplinary Quarterly Journal

Sambhāṣaṇ, a free open access online journal was launched on the occasion of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's 129th birth anniversary on 14th April 2020 by Dr Rajesh Kharat the Office of the Dean, Faculty of Humanities, University of Mumbai. This interdisciplinary journal carries the vision of bringing diverse disciplines in dialogue with each other through critical reflections on contemporary themes. Since its inception, the journal has been responding to contemporary issues, the first year focussing on myriad of discourses around the pandemic and its reshaping of the world into a new order. It also carried a special issue on Gandhi's philosophy and relevance in contemporary times. Subsequently, the journal carried volumes on the theme of syncretic traditions of India, special issues on John Rawls, volumes on the theme of environment and sustainability, mental health, art, technology and Indian society and disability and Indian society. In its initial phase there were guest lectures organised too. The journal continues to evolve in content and bring to conversations new themes of contemporary relevance.

Note on part of the image on the cover:
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Sambhāṣaṇ or conversation as an art of dialogue has been crucial to the development of both national and world philosophies. Thinkers such as Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore, Sarojini Naidu, David Bohm, Hans Georg Gadamer, Anthony Appiah and Martha Nussbaum have projected shared dialogue as a way of understanding the relationship between the individual and society. While Jyotiba Phule, Savitribai Phule, Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, Pandita Ramabai, Jürgen Habermas, Paul Ricoeur, Patricia Hill Collins and Judith Butler, to name a few, have started out a new through ruptures in conversations. The inevitability of conversation in academic life emerges from its centrality to human development and ecology. Conversations are not restricted to any single territory, but are enacted between global and the local topographies. This online English Journal aims at continuing and renewing plural conversations across cultures that have sustained and invigorated academic activities.

In this spirit, Sambhāṣaṇ an open access interdisciplinary peer-reviewed online quarterly journal endeavours to:

- be an open platform, where scholars can freely enter into a discussion to speak, be heard and listen. In this spirit, this journal aims at generating open conversations between diverse disciplines in social sciences, humanities and law.
- preserve and cultivate pluralism as a normative ideal. Hence, it attempts to articulate a plurality of points of view for any theme, wherein there is both a need to listen and to speak, while engaging with another's perspective.
- act as a springboard for briefly expressing points of view on a relevant subject with originality, evidence, argument, experience, imagination and the power of texts. It hopes that these points of view can be shaped towards full-fledged research papers and projects in the future.

Framework

- This journal is open to contributions from established academics, young teachers, research students and writers from diverse institutional and geographical locations.
- Papers can be empirical, analytical or hermeneutic following the scholarly culture of critique and creativity, while adhering to academic norms.
- Commentaries and reviews can also be submitted. Submissions will be peer-reviewed anonymously.
- Some of the issues will publish invited papers and reviews, though there will be a call for papers for most issues.
- There would be an occasional thematic focus.

Guidelines for Submission

- Original, scholarly, creative and critical papers with adequate references.
- All references to the author should be removed from the submission to enable the anonymous review process.
- There can be a limit of approximately 3500-4000 words (for papers) and 1500-2000 words (for commentaries) and 1000-1200 words (for reviews).
- Essays should follow the Times New Roman font in size 12 with double space, submitted in MS Word format.
- All contributions should follow the author-date referencing system detailed in chapter 15 of The Chicago Manual of Style (17th Edition). The style guidelines in this journal can be consulted for quick reference.
- Authors should submit a statement that their contribution is original without any plagiarism. They can also, in addition, submit a plagiarism check certificate.
- The publication of research papers, commentaries and book reviews is subject to timely positive feedback from anonymous referees.

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This journal accepts original essays that critically address contemporary issues related to social sciences, humanities and law from an interdisciplinary perspective.

"In an ideal society
there should be
many interests
consciously
communicated
and shared... In
other words there
must be social
endosmosis."

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar

Editorial Note

Integrating Indian Knowledge Systems into Curricula: Prospects and Challenges

The National Education Policy 2020 prescribes that knowledge of ancient India be integrated in both school and higher education curricula. The Ministry of Education, Government of India, recognises it as an 'Indian way' of striving for a sustainable and welfare-based society. The promotion of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) in higher education has been introduced with the intention to catalyse original research and education. It represents a roadmap for establishing a thriving *Bhāratīya Gnana Paramparā*¹ that seems to promise a *Bhāratīya Drishti* that can provide solutions to emerging global challenges of India and the world in contemporary times.

¹ <https://www.education.gov.in/nep/indian-knowledge-systems#:~:text=The%20Indian%20Knowledge%20Systems%20comprise,health%2C%20manufacturing%2C%20and%20commerce.>

This issue provides an interrogation into whether this is prompted by the rise of postcolonial inclinations and examines the cultural roots of colonialism. Edward Said's work *Orientalism* spells a critique of the "Western order of knowledge", as an epistemological precondition of imperialism. Creating knowledge systems about countries outside Europe was central for justifying colonial conquests, wherein perpetuation of images of the colonised as inferior became indispensable to validating the European conquest of the world. This colonial experience left its traces in different forms of knowledge systems in the worlds of both the colonised as well as the colonisers. Postcolonial literature not only attempts to reclaim (and celebrate) one's own cultural identities. It also aims to critically examine and expose the dubitable and in fact false knowledge about non-European societies that was linked to colonial ambitions.

Can the induction of Indian knowledge systems be seen as an attempt towards the same? Interrogating this would involve a careful examination of the relationship between knowledge creation and power. The broad premise of Michael Foucault's *Archaeology of Knowledge* is that creation of knowledge is inseparable from power and together they function as a system of control. Hence, knowledge creation is never an objective, neutral process. Knowledge creation becomes a mechanism of power that produces and systematises different types of knowledge from information collated about people's beliefs, customs, activities and existence. Following this trail of theorising, what type is knowledge can be characterised as 'Indian', what comes to be characterised as 'knowledge' (and what remains at margins or gets left out) and what are the mechanisms to systematise the same into 'systems' become questions of utmost importance.

The University Grant Commission (UGC) document of *Guidelines for Incorporating Indian Knowledge in Higher Education Curricula* highlights that the Indian Knowledge System is a traditional

system of knowledge that has influenced many aspects of Indian life, including education, arts, law, and health. It is knowledge that is passed down through generations through a systematic method, rather than as a custom. It is described as *Jnan*, *Vignan*, and *Jeevan Darshan* that have evolved out of experience, observation, experimentation, and rigorous analyses which was put into practice through education, arts, administration, law, justice, health, manufacturing, and commerce. This promises to provide a unique Indian knowledge perspective that can be relevant to building global competencies.

The UGC has outlined Indian Knowledge Systems as including a wide range of knowledge, including areas of science and technology where discoveries of ancient scholars like Aryabhata and Brahmagupta in mathematics and astronomy are underscored. In the field of literature as also mental health/spiritual development, Vedic literature, in particular, the Upanishads, are the central focus. A holistic understanding of the universe captured in the Upanishads is noted as relevant to multiple fields, including philosophy (and we would like to add – psychology). Ayurveda and Yoga are considered pivotal with regard to knowledge of India's achievements in the fields of healthcare and medicine. Sanskrit as a classic language has been highlighted as promising for future national goals. Other languages and traditions in the document remain at the periphery of what constitutes the Bhāratīya Jñāna Paramparā, thus raising debates about the hegemony of a particular historical consciousness that will further marginalise, if not erase, plural and diverse epistemologies.

Can this theoretically be considered a postcolonial attempt to reclaim one's identity from an unjust European colonial repressive academic consciousness? Or does this further deepen the process of appropriation that hinders negotiation with diverse alternate modes depicting the past, the present and the future? Does the introduction of Indian Knowledge Systems enable a language

that can identify, acknowledge, and negotiate with that which has been historically dispersed and inhibited, thereby contributing to the liberal education frameworks that deepen Indian democracy? Will university knowledge disciplines integrate the complex, rich and diverse knowledge systems in an open manner that resists essentialising and totalisation (that is often a form of nostalgia and mystification), and instead builds a culture of resistance, that is, a culture of resisting all forms of dominance that hinder freedom, liberty, identity and individuality. In this issue, the aim is to explore the prospects and challenges of constructing and defining cultural as well as national identity through the introduction of Indian Knowledge Systems in curricula.

Overview of the Current Issue of Sambhashan

The current issue begins with Ozarkar and Pandey's article that explores modern linguistics as an example of the confluence of various knowledge traditions, highlighting how India's multilingual fabric illustrates continuity in knowledge production across time and space. They examine the implications of these insights for understanding the complex and heterogeneous nature of knowledge processes, ultimately reflecting on the essence of Indianness.

In the second article, Pawar argues that the Bhakti movement in India can be viewed as a translation movement, prioritising the expression of spirit and emotion over mere linguistic meaning. By exploring the historical context of translation practices alongside Bhakti poetry and its saints, she advocates for understanding the Bhakti Movement as a pivotal force in Indian cultural and knowledge systems.

In the third paper, Sethi examines the complex interplay between caste and Indian knowledge systems, exploring historical developments and their impact on disciplines like philosophy and literature. The transformations in knowledge during colonial

and postcolonial periods, particularly the efforts to address caste inequalities and advance educational democratisation, are also the highlights of this paper. In the fourth article, Chakravarty explores the rich historical, cultural, and intellectual landscapes that have shaped Ayurveda in India. The evolution of this ancient system is traced, and contemporary implications are examined in the article.

Roy and Dhikale, in the next paper, shed light on the concept of peace across various Indian philosophical traditions and its relationship to epistemology. They clarify how these traditions inform our understanding of peace and knowledge. Ganneri, in the sixth article, explores the infusion of Indian Knowledge Systems into higher education curricula, highlighting state initiatives to formalise this integration. The push for IKS integration, it is argued, often overlooks critical questions of knowledge and power, while many challenges in this endeavour remain unaddressed.

The following article by Garud addresses key theoretical issues arising from the Phule–Ambedkarian perspective on caste-based exclusions. Next, Zubin Mulla demonstrates the effectiveness of content analysis in understanding religious scriptures by presenting a content analysis of the Dhammapada, mapping each verse to universal values and comparing the findings with the perspectives of Buddhist scholars. In the ninth paper, Ranade and Subhedar examine Bhakti as a transformative pedagogical movement in India, asserting that its values can enhance contemporary education by fostering holistic development and purpose. Bhakti, positioned as analogous to modern social movements, is advocated as a model for creating a compassionate and inclusive knowledge-based society.

The tenth article by Bakshi presents a discussion of Vedantic perspectives on personality especially the three broad types of personality yielded through three types of attachment, each

representing one dominant mode of material nature. However, the essence of this explanation is definitely not taxonomical, as in the Indian classical tradition, human development is synonymous with psychospiritual development, and transcendental goals outweigh any typology. The last article by Verma presents a general overview of vedas and its contemporary relevance in terms of building employability skills.

The final section in this issue features book reviews by Aishwarya Bellam, Tina Chakravarty and Aishe Debnath covering books dealing with diverse topics related to the Indian Society and Indian Knowledge Systems.

Acknowledgements

Our heartfelt gratitude to all the authors whose contributions have made this IKS issue of Sambhashan possible. We are thankful for the expertise of reviewers who shared their valuable reviews on time. Our sincere gratitude for the university authorities who have continued their generous encouragement of this journal as a space for intellectual endeavours. We express our sincere gratitude to the editorial team of Sambhashan for their meticulous and valuable suggestions at every stage. We appreciate Mr. Sanket Sawant of the University of Mumbai's DICT and their Director for uploading the journal on time and making it accessible for scholars to read across the globe. Special thanks are extended to Ms. Prajakti Pai for her contribution in the designing and layout of the journal.



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**Dedicated to
Theorists and Practitioners
of Knowledge Systems in
India**

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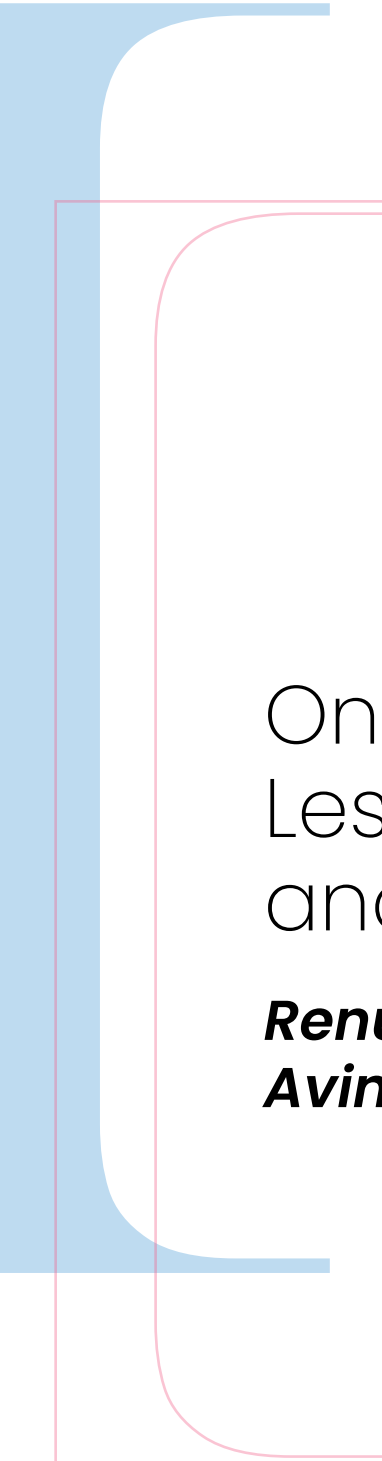
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AISHE DEBNATH

SECTION I

PAPERS & ARTICLES



On the Indianness of Being: Lessons from Language and Linguistics

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Abstract

India has a long and rich tradition of knowledge production in various domains. In the light of a new upsurge of academic interest in the field of Indian Knowledge Systems, it is imperative to critically understand what constitutes its Indianness. Through the insights from Linguistics and the multilingual fabric of India, we demonstrate that any knowledge tradition is at a confluence of several knowledge traditions and the Indian Knowledge Systems are no exception. What makes a knowledge tradition unique is the context of the processes of knowledge production, not the product. Therefore, one must steer clear of binaries such as tradition vs modern, and Western vs Indian in understanding the Indian Knowledge Systems. Instead, we claim, that the Indianness of the Indian knowledge systems is in its multiplicities of ideas, theories, perspectives, and experiences and the atmosphere of openness which encouraged reasoning, argumentation, challenges to the existing power structures and negotiations through the internal conflicts. In mainstreaming the Indian Knowledge Systems, it is this atmosphere of openness, the centrality of debates, and scientific temper that must be encouraged to maintain the characteristic multiplicities.

Keywords:

Indian Knowledge Systems, Indianness, Languages, Linguistics, Multiplicities, Scientific Temper, Decolonization

Introduction

Indians have inherited a long textual tradition (oral and written) with a vast and copious amount of literature in the various domains of science, mathematics, philosophy, language study and literature. While the majority of Indians may not be able to spell out the actual contents of most of these texts or even the titles beyond a handful of well-known examples, they are quite aware of the existence

of the tradition and often take pride in it. It is with this common awareness, that we generally use the term ‘Indian Knowledge Systems,’ ‘Indian Knowledge Traditions’ etc. The NEP 2020 looks to alter this scenario. The NEP 2020 brings the term ‘Indian Knowledge Systems’ (IKS hereon) and what it entails into the focus of all levels of education and academic activity in India. The Government of India has established a cell under the Ministry of Education for the promotion of IKS, which initiates and oversees the establishment of IKS centres in parts of India, research projects, training programmes & workshops, internship programmes etc. for the promotion of IKS¹. As a result of these efforts, we observe an upsurge in the implementation of research and teaching-learning activities in the field of IKS. Given this upsurge, it has become imperative to undertake a conceptual inquiry into the semantics of the terms involved in the expression “Indian Knowledge Systems”. The primary aim of the paper is to undertake such an inquiry, drawing upon matters related to languages and the discipline of Linguistics.

Ancient Indian philosophical discourse often uses a four-cornered frame called *anubandha-catuṣṭaya* to contextualize textual discourses. We borrow this frame to contextualize the current article. The *viśaya* (theme) of this article is a close reading of the term ‘Indian’ in the expression “Indian Knowledge Systems”, especially in the domain of languages and linguistics. In particular, we would like to address whether the attribution of a knowledge system as ‘Indian’ is spatial, temporal, cultural in nature or all of it at once. The primary endeavour of the article is to examine and make explicit the basis of the qualification “Indian”. Such an examination would help us infer what knowledge systems operative in India can be considered as not being Indian (despite being practised in the land) and what knowledge systems at work outside of India can be dubbed as Indian (despite being practised outside the country). The purpose of the *viśaya* – the *prayojana* – is the newly highlighted central focus on the IKS in the field of education and research. While this focus has created an impetus towards an engagement with IKS, an explicit statement specifying the scope of the term “Indian” is hard to come by and yet, the semantic domain of the term is being circumscribed, rather surreptitiously, through ongoing discourses on IKS and the academic activities in this field. We find such a strategy to be against the norms

¹ See <https://iksindia.org> for details of the vision, mission, objectives and initiatives of the Ministry of Education, Government of India.

of democratic discourse. Hence the endeavour. Given its special context of use, a critical conceptual engagement with the ideas involved is essential as we can no longer proceed with a common-sensical notion of what constitutes IKS. Our understanding and assumptions about what constitutes IKS have far-reaching consequences as they would (re)define the idea of India for the present and future generations, who are now being educated under curricula circumscribed by the NEP 2020. We, the authors- *adhikārī*- are researchers in the field of Linguistics, with a special focus on Indian languages. We have also been deeply interested in the role of language in education, particularly, in the multilingual setting of India. With these interests in mind, we bring our own perspectives to the discourse on IKS. We also bring linguistic methodology to this discourse in order to uncover the lexical semantics of the term "Indian". Therefore, the overall context of this article- *sambandha*- is that given the theme, our interest in the Indian languages and the current topicality of the theme, we address the following questions:

(1) What is the semantic content of the word 'Indian' in the expression "Indian Knowledge System"? An explicit description of the semantic content of the word "Indian" would involve an engagement with the following questions:

- a. How does the term "Indian" relate to the oft-quoted binaries of "Indian vs Western", and "traditional vs modern"?
- b. The vision of the IKS cell looks to combine 'traditional wisdom with modern knowledge'. What does this entail? Why not combine "traditional knowledge with modern wisdom"?
- c. What does 'continuous and unbroken knowledge traditions of India' mean? If a tradition is continuous and unbroken, what does the binary of 'traditional' and 'modern' mean?

(2) The languages are the vehicles of knowledge and are a form of knowledge themselves. Given the rich multilingual fabric of India, which the NEP 2020 also brings into the limelight, how do we answer (1)?

(3) An aim of the IKS Division is 'to solve the current and emerging problems of India and the world' through mainstreaming the IKS. What are the current and emerging problems of Indian languages? What demands and constraints do these problems place on our attempts to conceptualize and operationalize the term "IKS"?

We approach the subject matter of the article from a vantage point which we wish to make explicit at the very outset. We believe that the *raison d'être* for any knowledge creation is to ameliorate the lives of the people in the society. This implies challenging and reducing the existing asymmetries of power relations in the societies, aiming to attain a more peaceful, harmonious, just and egalitarian social structure. Such an endeavour is a constant, never-ending process. It necessarily involves never-ending knowledge production activities that include meta-theoretic exercises of ceaseless evaluation that challenge and modify the existing systems of knowledge, giving rise to several knowledge systems that are engaged in constant debates and discussions. As a result, at any point in time, there exist multiple analyses, and interpretations of a given situation. In other words, there are multiplicities of knowledge systems in any knowledge tradition at any given time. *Indian knowledge tradition is not an exception to this.* As we will see further in this article, the best of the scientific and artistic developments in India have taken place when the debates and argumentation were at the centre of knowledge production and they challenged the existing power structures within the society in general and the concerned discipline in particular.

Another aspect of our vantage point is to draw upon the insights offered by the knowledge creation in the discipline of Linguistics and the setting of the Indian languages. Apart from the fact that our primary domain of studies is Linguistics and languages, there are three reasons for us to do so: one, we believe that languages are one of the best ways to understand humans and human societies. The cognitive capacity of language is a property that distinguishes the human species from other living beings. Another reason is that the language itself is a form of knowledge- it is both a storehouse and a medium of creation of knowledge. The third reason is that investigations into the nature of language and specific languages have been a major part of Indian knowledge systems. Thus, the insights from Linguistics and languages offer important inputs into our understanding of IKS.

The article is organized in the following manner. We begin in the section one by considering Modern Linguistics as an illustrative example to demonstrate that a knowledge tradition is in fact a confluence of several knowledge traditions. In section two, we discuss how the multilingual fabric of India illuminates the continuity in time and space. The implications of these illustrations, particularly

in understanding the complex and heterogeneous nature of processes of knowledge production, are discussed in the next section. Section four offers the concluding remarks highlighting the nature of Indianness.

1. Insights from Linguistics: knowledge tradition as a confluence

While the roots of Modern Linguistics lie in 19th century Europe, it is well-documented that several central methodological aspects of Modern Linguistics are inspired by the 4th century BC Indian grammarian Panini and several other Indian grammarians/philosophers. The idea of the internal structure of words (morphology), taxonomy and description of speech sounds (phonetics), and more importantly, the idea of neutralizing the difference between the written and spoken texts owe their origin to the linguistic thought of ancient and medieval Indian grammarians. It is often claimed that the Western i.e. European grammarians/linguists knew how to study written texts (and hence they studied only the literary languages with a long-written tradition), and the Indian scholarship, especially the Paninian tradition, showed the world how to study spoken languages. Thus the introduction of the Paninian tradition to Europe and America (the 'West') played a role in bringing a vast diversity of spoken languages into the purview of scientific linguistic investigations. However, the picture is more nuanced: It was not simply the primacy of spoken language but the orality of knowledge tradition in India that transformed Modern Linguistic methods.

1.1. Text-production- oral and written: lessons for Modern Linguistics

The Indian knowledge traditions are characterized by orality. It means that their primary ways of recording, transferring and maintaining knowledge were oral in nature and differed from the primarily "written" cultures of the West. Divakaran (2016) observes that in India whenever one wished to study a particular discipline, the student had to start by learning the old proponent's texts, however far back in time that text was composed. It was also done by memorizing the text first. We now understand why: the text must be known, and maintained as it was, in order to further its study. It is like making a copy of the text, quite like the students today make a photocopy or take a print-out of a library book. The analysis, interpretation and criticism would come later, before that the text must

first be known and made accessible to the learner. The textual thoroughness of the learners was appreciated in the way the learners would cite on demand, a verse or a *sūtra* from the text. Even if the texts were scribed, the Indians of the time had more faith in their own memory than in the perishable written material. Therefore, the texts were recited and memorized through various techniques to ensure faithful memorization. It was like carrying the whole library in one's brain that can be accessed whenever one wants.

What needs to be appreciated is that the Indian scholars, just like the Europeans, were creating stable and autonomous texts, and that only the medium of articulation of the texts differed. While the Europeans maintained the texts in written forms, the Indians did so orally. The medium of the text determined the nature of their representation: since the medium of representation for Indian texts was the memory, the precise, concise, formulaic (*sūtra*-s) or versified forms (*śloka*-s) were preferred instead of elaborate prose. However, the structural characteristics of these oral, memorized texts therefore quite were similar to those of written texts. They were precise, terse, relatively autonomous, and decontextualized just as any written/ printed text is. Interestingly, the later commentaries, especially since the medieval period, for instance, *bhaṣya*-s or in the grammatical tradition the *prakriyā* texts, were composed in prose, the practice of maintaining these prosaic texts through oral tradition continued. It is even more evident in these prose compositions that the written and oral texts do not differ in their structural properties. In that sense, Indian knowledge production was as much a text-production endeavour as European/Western textual knowledge production was, despite the difference in the medium of representation of the texts.

In other words, both the Indian scholars and the non-Indian ones were engaged in accessing, interpreting and analysing the texts, recontextualizing them in the situation at hand. The introduction of the Indian oral textual tradition enabled European scholars to treat any text in the same manner, irrespective of its medium of representation, that is, whether it was written or spoken. This insight allowed Modern Linguistics to employ the same methods of documenting and analyzing language in both written and spoken linguistic varieties. It can be argued that the idea of treating any language the same, irrespective of its medium of articulation is an insight from the Indian grammatical tradition that Modern Linguistics inherits.

Moreover, the methods of Paninian tradition may be Indian in origin, but they have been recontextualized in Modern Linguistics. Those methods are being used not only to analyse a wide variety of languages in the world but they are used to address different questions than Panini himself asked. One of the goals of Modern Linguistics is to explain the similarities and differences in the languages of the world, thereby discovering the nature of human language per se. The question of what is (human) language or the capacity of language that humans inherently have, and the question of understanding the potential of language are not new (Divakaran, 2016; Chomsky, 2000). But the subsequent developments in Modern Linguistics paved new ways to answer those questions and raise further new questions (Chomsky, 2000), and in order to engage with these questions the methods inherited from Paninian traditions are repurposed and, in the process, thoroughly transformed. Today, these modern linguistic methods are widely used in India to study Indian languages, thereby, in a way, drawing a full circle of the travel of ideas. These mutual influences of Indian and Western grammatical thought on Linguistics demonstrate that it is not meaningful to dub Modern Linguistics as belonging to either Western or Indian tradition. Of course, Paninian tradition is not the sole source of ideas in modern linguistic methodology. It draws from Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Humboldt, and many more. It also keeps transforming itself, as new structures from a variety of different languages come to light, right from the marginalized, endangered languages to the ong-written and well documented classical languages of the world. There are several perspectives from which human languages are studied- some focusing on the language and society interaction, others considering a language as an autonomous object, yet others studying the cognitive capacity of language and so on. What we wish to underscore through the above discussion is that any knowledge tradition draws critically, from a variety of sources, incorporating them, recontextualizing and transforming the ideas from those sources in the process.

Examples may be drawn from other disciplines in support. We know how several mathematical concepts and theorems originated in India and spread outside of India through the Greeks, Arabs, and the later European colonial rulers. We also know how they often returned to India in a transformed manner. For example, the way Āryabhaṭṭa (5th century AD) synthesized Greek mathematics and Indian mathematics, transformed the Indian mathematical tradition, especially Astronomy and Geometry (Divakaran, 2016).

The confluences of this type are not confined to academic or scientific knowledge production alone, but to art, religion, politics and every other aspect of the socio-cultural life of a society, more so Indian societies. The Ganga-Jamuni tehzib which was once glorified and now often denigrated typifies the Indian ways. There have been Hellenic influences on Indian sculptures long before the Mughals exerted their influence on the music and architecture of the land ("Hellenic influence on Indian art", n.d.). The Scythians, Huns, Greeks etc. came to India, ruled parts of it, and became Indian, often accepting the Indian names. The Mughals left their homeland, came to India, made India their new home and ruled parts of it for years. Similarly, Indians went eastwards and ruled new lands, left their influence on the local cultures and imbibed aspects of local cultures themselves.

In other words, any knowledge tradition is a confluence of several knowledge traditions and cultures. It implies that qualifying any knowledge systems or tradition as 'Indian', 'Western', 'European' etc. is not a given, settled and trivial matter but requires a critical understanding of these attributes.

2. Insights from linguistic diversity: Multiplicities

Linguistics has shown us that language is a form of knowledge. Humans are born with the capacity to acquire any language they are exposed to in their early life. Using this cognitive capacity, every human child learns the languages used in her environment and constructs the full-fledged, complex, but implicit knowledge of those languages in her mind. It is this implicit knowledge that enables her to use language creatively in any novel situation she finds herself in. It is also thanks to the linguistic capacity that we humans can access our own thoughts, and communicate them to others. We also use this knowledge of language to construct knowledge about the language (metalinguistic capacity). We cognize, organize and model the reality around us through the language(s) we know. It is through language that we establish social relations- friendly, intimate, adversarial, hostile etc. In turn, our experiences, relationships, and lives also shape the languages we use. Thus, the existence of linguistic diversity implies a diversity of world-views and knowledge of reality. It is therefore important to understand the nature of linguistic diversity that we inhabit and India, with its rich multilingual fabric offers crucial insights in this matter.

2.1. Continuum of variation

Diversity is a result of variation at various levels. If there is variation within a system, there is necessarily variation between the systems too. This is easily observed in any sort of diversity, say biodiversity, linguistic diversity etc. In India, there are several 'languages'— both written and spoken. Each of them shares certain features but they also exhibit differences, showcasing linguistic variation prevalent in Indian society. For instance, if we take a simple feature of the unmarked word-order of a language, we know that almost all languages in India have the word-order of Subject-Object-Verb, as against English having Subject-Verb-Object. However, Khasi, an Austro-Asiatic language spoken in Meghalaya, is arguably a Subject-Verb-Object type language (Subbarao, 2012), while Kashmiri is a Verb-second language² (Koul and Wali, 2006). There are languages with three grammatical genders (eg. Marathi, Konkani, Kannada) or with just two (eg. Hindi, Punjabi) or with no grammatical gender at all (eg. Malayalam, Bangla). The variation is quite vast. The Indian languages belong to at least four different language families, namely, Indic (or Indo-European as a superset), Dravidian, Austro-Asiatic and Tibeto-Burmese. There are also a few speakers of Arabic, which is a language from the Semitic family and Greater Andamanese is arguably another language family. This linguistic diversity is a result of linguistic variation *between* the languages. But *within* each language, there is also enormous variation. Marathi spoken in Kolhapur region shares features with Nagpuri Marathi, but they also differ from each other along several properties. Moreover, even if one considers Kolhapuri Marathi or standard Marathi as a single linguistic system, there is further variation *within* it, based on their domains of use. The standard Marathi of newspapers is quite different from the standard Marathi used during public speeches. This variation can be observed all the way to the level of an individual speaker. Each user has her own style of language—something that enables us to talk about P. L. Deshpande's Marathi vs Vijay Tendulkar's Marathi vs Laxmibai Tilak's Marathi etc. But even the same individual does not use her language in a homogenous way; she exhibits variation based on the setting of language use— her topic, her addressees, the purpose of using the language etc. (Pandey & Ozarkar, 2024)³.

² A verb-second language is that in which the only constraint on the word-order of a sentence is to have a finite verb as the second constituent of the clause. Another major Verb-second language is German.

³ Pandey & Ozarkar (2024) discuss four levels of diversity, especially linguistic diversity. These levels include species, genetic, functional and ecological diversity.

Given that languages are a form of knowledge, linguistic diversity entails diversity of knowledge. The nature of linguistic diversity also demonstrates that there is no abrupt break in the variation. Therefore, even if one speaks of 'Marathi', at any level of differentiation, one always incorporates the multiplicities within the entity. *Multiplicity within unity is the norm rather than an exception.*

The linguistic diversity in India is underscored in the Indian Constitution, in the form of the Eighth Schedule titled 'Languages'. In 1950, when the Constitution of India came into force, there were 15 languages listed in the Eighth Schedule. With subsequent amendments, today this figure is augmented to 22. Of course, these languages are but a small subset of the enormous linguistic diversity in India⁴, but it counts as an important step in highlighting the multiplicity in the Indian linguistic scenario. The Indian Constitution also does not recognize any one language as a 'national language'. Article 343 of the Indian Constitution attributes Official Language status to Hindi written in Devnagari script and recognizes English to continue performing associate official functions. The language of the Union Government, to communicate with its citizens, will be Hindi or English, but the citizens themselves can be speakers of any language(s). A person whose mother-tongue is Bhili, Marathi, Khasi, or Telugu, is as much an Indian irrespective of her knowledge of Hindi or English. In other words, the identity or citizenship of any Indian is not determined by her knowledge of any specific language. It is a remarkable move by the Constitution-makers to give recognition to such a large number of languages and not attribute a national language status to any. It shows the inclusive vision of the Constitution-makers and their accurate understanding of the Indian culture in refusing to reduce the Indian identity to any singularity.

Such diversity is not just observed in the languages of India, but in every aspect of the Indian culture and knowledge tradition. There is mind-boggling diversity in paintings, sculptures, architecture, religions, sports, food cultures, attires, dance forms, and music in India. The same is true of the Indian Knowledge Systems.

⁴ The Census of India (2011) lists 2843 rationalised mother-tongues reported by the speakers which are classified into 121 languages. Out of these, only 22 languages are scheduled and others are non-scheduled languages. Several other mother-tongues are listed as varieties of one or the other of these 121 languages. As such, the Census reflects 121 languages as variation without, and each of those 121 languages is marked with variation within.

Within the Indian knowledge system pertaining to any specific discipline, there are multiple schools of thought, multiple perspectives to observe and analyse the same objects, and multiple interpretations of the same text. It is, therefore, not possible to reduce the Indian Knowledge Systems to any singular idea or set of ideas. Indians abhor singularity.

2.2. Unity and diversity

The question is – is there a unity underlying the enormous diversity? We have argued that variation entails a continuum and, therefore a continuity of the entity without sharp boundaries. If so, one cannot identify an isolated object in this continuity, but can only talk in terms of moments in the continuum. Those moments are defined contextually, with reference to contrasts and associations with some other entities. Let us relook at languages. Despite the internal variation at the level of speakers, regions, as well as domains of use, one can still speak of ‘Marathi’ language which encompasses all such internal multiplicities highlighting their shared features as well as their social history. This ‘Marathi’ also contrasts with other languages such as Gujarati, Bhili, Hindi, Bangla, Kannada, Tamil etc. However, in another context, one can highlight the similarities between Marathi, Gujarati, Hindi, Bhili, Bangla etc., but not with Kannada, Telugu, Gondi, Santhali, Kokborok etc. In this context, the unity of Marathi with others is explained by their shared linguistic genealogical stock. However, Marathi, Kannada, and Telugu, also show similarities contrasting them with Hindi, Punjabi, Maithili etc. In this context, the unity of these languages lies in the shared history of coexistence in the same region and mutual convergence (language contact). Similarly, there is a context in which the unity of Marathi with all languages of the world can be observed. Here, Marathi exhibits similarities with all human languages. Modern Linguistics shows us that one can study languages as a cognitive capacity of an individual, as a social institute or as a shared genetic endowment of all humans (language as a property of the human species). What this implies is that both diversity and unity can be observed at different points in the continuum of variation, and that all such points are contextual. A careful reader would notice the implication of this: all such identities– Marathi being a language of a community, or of a region in India, or of a particular language family, or an Indian language, a human language etc.– reside in the entity ‘Marathi’ simultaneously. The same is true of an individual– one person can a female, a Marathi speaker, a teacher, a mother,

a daughter, a South-Asian, a human etc. Which identity surfaces at what time is a matter of context. There need not be a conflict of identities. This is also true of a knowledge tradition or a cultural tradition. Therefore, unity underlying diversity is never given, fixed or singular. It is dynamic and contextual. Any attempt to locate the unity or *mūla-preraṇā* (the original impulse) or the original core character of any tradition is to reduce its multiplicity into a false singularity, imposing arbitrary breaks in the flow of variation.

In what sense can we then speak of 'Indian Knowledge Systems'? What contexts permit us to speak of it? Is it at all possible to carve out any entity as an 'Indian' Knowledge System?

3. The product vs. the process of knowledge creation

The implications of what we discussed so far lead us to conclude that the substance, ideas or product of a knowledge system cannot be uniquely qualified as Indian, Western, Chinese, European etc. We have seen how ideas flow across the boundaries of space and time and are also transformed and recontextualized. We also know how the same idea can originate independently at multiple places at different times (see Divakaran, 2016 for an example of Pythagoras Theorem in mathematics). Certain principles of sciences are also universal- the reasoning, laws of physics, universal properties of languages etc. Therefore, irrespective of who discovered them first, they properly belong to the universal knowledge. It is, therefore, not the product of knowledge, but the processes of knowledge production and the cultural contexts in which they are produced that make any knowledge tradition a unique one. These processes and contexts include the background of the emergence of a particular scientific development, what use are those developments put to, the influences and transformations, the internal conflicts, and the debates and discussions that led to those developments. This cultural context is also not homogeneous, but dynamic, diverse and complex. If a knowledge system is a confluence of several systems, there is necessarily diversity- multiplicities of ideas and perspectives within the system. These multiplicities would be characterized by conflicts as well as collaborations, involving constant debates, discussions, arguments, negotiations and constant transformations of ideas. It would not be a far-fetched statement if one says that

the history of Indian Knowledge Systems (or any knowledge system) is a history of collaborations, conflicts, and negotiations.

The Indian social structure, its religions, multilingual linguistic order of ancient and medieval India are all characterized by constant navigations between exclusions and accommodations, conflicts and negotiations. Ollett (2017) demonstrates how languages such as Paiśācī once deemed unrelated to and unintelligible to *Sanskrit speakers were accommodated into the discourse of literary languages centred around Sanskrit*. The tribal heroes and gods gradually were appropriated into mainstream religions. Folk music and dance forms were accommodated into the classical discourse and became inaccessible to the folk, creating new zones of conflict. The multiplicities at any given time transformed into a different configuration of multiplicities, but the Indian society, culture, and knowledge tradition remained heterogeneous. Every turn of history transformed Indian society, culture, languages and scholarship. This includes the colonial history of India. In other words, a particular configuration of contextual factors i.e. the historical processes of knowledge production makes the knowledge systems uniquely qualified by cultural attributes.

3.1. Complexities of the colonial experience

One of the objectives of the IKS Division of the Indian Government is to ‘completely decolonize the Indian mind’ (Indian Knowledge Systems Division, 2021). In light of the discussion so far, it needs to be discerned what one means by decolonizing. Does the term “Indian” in the expression “Indian knowledge system” entail traditions of pre-colonial India? If it does, does it involve a selective erasure of the colonial history? Any attempt to erase the colonial history would be tantamount to imposing a break in the continuity of the knowledge systems and cultural traditions. Although it is not explicitly stated in the vision-mission of the IKS Division, it appears that the colonial history of India is deemed to introduce a break in the Indian knowledge tradition, creating a gap between the traditional and contemporary knowledge systems which is in need of bridging. Such a view suggests that colonial history has had no other role to play in India’s knowledge production processes. But even the colonial experience was not a uniform, homogeneous experience. To understand the essence of decolonization, we need to critically evaluate the role of the colonial chapter of India’s history in the

processes of knowledge production in India. Cultural context is always complex and heterogeneous. At no juncture of history, no experience is fully righteous or fully unfair to the entire society, as the society itself is heterogeneous and constitutes multiplicities. Therefore, it would be a fallacy to assume that the colonial experience has been uniform for all the inhabitants of the land. While there is no doubt that colonialism in every form must be countered, the colonial history of India cannot be painted monochrome. Recall how Paninian methodology transformed Modern Linguistics and how it was also recontextualized and transformed by Modern Linguistics. If so, it is not easy to dub Modern Linguistics as 'modern' as against Paninian tradition being called 'traditional'. The old and the new have mutually transformed each other. The colonial experience of India has been instrumental in bringing about these mutual influences and so, the colonial history is very much a part of the historical-cultural contexts of the knowledge production processes in India.

The colonial rule in India brought with them print technology, which altered the record-keeping practices (see Raman, 2012) and changed the value of writing in the cultural space of the Indians. With the advent of print technology, the relevance of memorizing texts has reduced, just as maintaining a personalized telephone diary or memorizing the kin's telephone numbers became obsolete with the spread of mobile phones with built-in memory storage. Memorizing the texts even today may still be a useful and impressive skill, but it is now not a necessary one. The original context of memorizing and citing the texts is lost as there is now no need to carry the texts in the brain when you can carry them in your bag and flip through them at any time. One can delve into the interpretation and critical analysis of the texts without memorizing them. The print culture has changed the ways in which the texts are learned. Failing to recontextualize and recalibrate the methodology of learning the texts in the print world often reduces text-memorizing to a form of ritual. Few experts of Indian textual scholarship manage to not fall into the trap of such reduction. Surely, the loss of oral methods of text preservation was not a break in the tradition. It did not lead to a radical transformation in the textual traditions of India, except that the texts were now more accessible to the masses through the quick printing of multiple copies. It was possible to write and print (even now digitize) the previously orally maintained Indian texts, without the slightest alteration to the structure and nature of the texts. This shows that the text production was the same in the oral and written/

print cultures, as discussed earlier. Moreover, the print culture made the written texts central to the textual discourse, but the orality in India has not vanished. The hallmark of the heterogeneity of Indian society is that both literacy and orality coexist in it, each one in its own specialized context(s).

The colonial experience also introduced the art of newspaper publishing which played a crucial role in social reforms as well as forging pan-Indian alliances among the educated classes in the anti-colonial struggle. The colonial experience also transformed the Indian languages- for better or for worse- through the new educational practices, print culture, practices of grammar-writing, teaching of local languages to the colonial ruling classes and promotion of different forms of literature in the local languages (e.g. the Dakshina prize). These activities led to certain processes of standardization of modern Indian languages. These linguistic transformations, in the context of the anti-colonial freedom struggle of India, allowed several Indian languages to serve as instruments of mass mobilisation in the various regions of India. Regional linguistic identities took shape in the process, making way for the linguistic reorganization of states in independent India.

Introduction to the new education practices, scholarship and knowledge traditions in the world outside of India also gave a push to critical challenges to the existing social structures and exclusion of several social sections. Such challenges were not new to Indian traditions, but in the context of the freedom struggle which grew into a massive mass movement in the 20th century, new alliances were forged between the various sections of the society from different regions. These alliances paved the way for social reforms and revolutions by many such as Phule, Ambedkar, Shahu Maharaj, Maharshi Shinde and the like. These social churnings brought previously relatively muted voices such as those of the tribals, Dalits, and women into the literature and the public sphere. In other words, these transformations are now an integral part of the being of several Indian languages and literatures. Attempts to define IKS in terms of pre-colonial India would be to deny a major part of the being of modern Indian languages and literature any place in the knowledge tradition of India.

In other words, the history of the colonial experience is not only the history of foreigners plundering India, breaking her spirit, reducing the Indians to slaves, and subjecting them to exploitation. It is all this and more. It is also the history of mass resistance. It is also a history of the freedom struggle in which masses from different sections of society forged alliances against the exploitation by the feudal landlords and the European colonizers. Diverse interests came together in the freedom struggle and negotiated through their internal conflicts. The foundation of the Indian Constitutional values lies in this experience of the freedom struggle. India as an independent, democratic, republic nation-state rose out of the experience of the freedom struggle. She is very much a product of the confluence of multiple, conflicting interests in the freedom struggle. Failing to understand these conflicting complexities of the colonial experience and treating it as a homogeneously dark period of our history would be quite opposite to the spirit of India and would deny the very aspects that have come to define India.

It must also be noted that if the colonial past is complex and heterogeneous, so is the pre-colonial past. That is, neither is the colonial era entirely dark nor is the pre-colonial era completely golden. So, what should decolonization entail?

3.2. The essence of decolonization

There is no doubt that the colonial experience was nothing like what India had experienced before. No foreign rulers, including the Mughals, before the European colonizers, came to India to simply rule it. They all came to India in search of a new home and found one in India. The European colonizer, on the other hand, did not settle in India and made her their home. Their purpose was to exploit the resources of the land to boost the economy of their homeland and earn huge profits for themselves. Moreover, until the European colonial rulers, the local lives of the people of the land were relatively much more autonomous and self-sufficient. It did not matter greatly who the king of the land was as each village took care of its own local economic and social practices. The European rulers, for their economic benefits, penetrated deep into the local economies, as never before. They even wielded the power to decide what crop should be cultivated by the farmers, and not based on the local needs, but on the needs of the industry in their far-away homelands. It is in this sense that the colonial rule constitutes

a break in the Indian traditions- they destroyed the traditional, highly local, self-sufficient economic practices in India. And it is these aspects of colonialism that need to be countered.

The Britishers often constructed narratives to justify their rule in India. They wrote the history of India through their perspectives which often served to justify their superiority and their right to rule India. Their division of Indian history into the Hindu era, the Muslim (Mughal) era and the British (Christian) era is almost uncritically accepted by us even today, while there is no evident basis for such religious categorization of historical junctures in India. The British history of India has also been largely a history of the foreign conquests of India. It barely gives insights into the history of art, culture, economy, educational practices, scientific developments and the lives of the common people. For that, our better sources are the travelogues of earlier foreign travellers such as Al Biruni and Xuanzang.

Moreover, to establish the superiority of the colonial rulers, the Britishers resorted to the creation of false, reductionist binaries. They hailed India for its long, rich, glorious past, contrasting it with the technocratic, glorious present of Europe, thus creating the binary of ancient/traditional vs modern. They attributed India as having spirituality while Europe had scientificity and reasoning. Countering the colonization necessarily involves a critique of these binaries. Therefore, the IKS, with the aim of decolonizing the minds of Indians, must not fall into the trap of defining IKS in terms of traditional and modern. An implication of our discussion in this article is that traditions do not exist in the past unless they are dead. Traditions are always lived traditions and, hence are constitutive of the present. Traditional is not the opposite of modern. Traditions can be pre-modern, medieval, and modern too, since these attributes define a set of values. It also implies that the IKS cannot involve the erasure of the colonial experience in the entirety, defining 'Indian' knowledge system to be by-passing the colonial era. What is needed is an acute awareness of the multiplicities in all traditions and experiences and a critical acceptance of the choices offered by the multiplicities.

The centrality of writing/ print culture induced a new linguistic order in India, in which the spoken linguistic varieties are now seen in the shadow of the closely related written languages, reducing them to be considered as deviations of the written forms. This aspect of the colonial experience needs to be critiqued and

challenged. Interestingly such critiques and challenges are currently lacking. Part of the process of decolonization should involve a serious rethinking of the relationship between the written standard languages and spoken dialects.

4. Concluding Remarks: Multiplicities, Scientific Temper and Openness of Communicative Practices

Multiplicities of the knowledge systems necessarily entail a central role for reasoning, scientific temper and openness in the activities of knowledge production which in turn thrives on elaborate interactions and open channels of communication. Scientific temper involves an attitude which encourages a critical assessment and reassessment of one's position as well as others. It also entails being open to being challenged and for critical acceptance of other positions. We observe a clear link between providing a suitable environment for the vigours of knowledge production, reduction and removal of power asymmetries and adoption of a scientific temper. All of these activities are constituted by multiplicities which exist in society in general and the processes of knowledge production in particular. Once we understand the link between these activities, we are in a better position to understand why these values are enshrined in the Indian Constitution. India has always been a land of multiplicities and it is to the credit of the law-givers that they recognized that these multiplicities cannot be preserved and developed without developing a scientific temper in the citizens of the country. As a result, the 42nd Amendment of the Constitution spells out that one of the fundamental duties of a citizen of India is to develop a scientific temper, humanism, spirit of inquiry and reform. This duty not only underlines the importance of reasoned debates and critical acceptance of new ideas in the lives of the citizens but also recognizes every citizen's role in the knowledge creation for the healthy progress of the country.

We have seen in this article that the IKS are always constitutive of multiplicities. Sen (2006) demonstrates how the Indian scholarly discourse was characterized by constant debates, reasoning and argumentation. We would also like to bring to the notice of the reader that the most seminal of the developments in IKS took place when knowledge creation challenged the existing asymmetries. The Buddhists, the Jains and the Lokāyata-s posed the challenge to the asymmetric authority of Vedic texts. The Sanskrit-centric linguistic order was challenged,

leading to the accommodation of the other literary languages, including Pali, and several other Prakrits. In the 2nd millennium, from the 11th century AD onwards, we see another such challenge to the Sanskrit-centric linguistic order, from the regional vernacular languages. In the Bhakti movement in Maharashtra, the control of Brahmins on the domain of religion through Sanskrit was challenged from below, by the people from middle and lower castes and women. This challenge not only brought poetry, religious and spiritual discourse into the vernacular languages such as Marathi but also paved the way for the rise of the vernaculars (Novetzke 2017, Pandey & Ozarkar 2023). In more recent times, starting with the colonial period, the Dalits, women and tribals challenged their marginalization and exclusion, bringing their world-views and experiences in the literature and their linguistic varieties into the public and literary domain. The best of the music, dance, and paintings are also the ones that shook the existing rigidity of the norms. Such challenges force debates, argumentation, and negotiations to resolve the emergent and existing conflicts. Even during the colonial era, the leaders and social reformers of the anti-colonial freedom struggle exhibited critical acceptance of the colonial experience. Such critical acceptance reproduces the hybridity and confluences of multiple traditions and experiences. The Indian ways involved critical acceptance of the old and new, organically blending them together, functionally differentiating them whenever needed. This is captured by Ramanujan (1989) when he constructs the image of an Indian scholar (his father) wearing an outfit which was a blend of Western/modern and traditional/Indian. Ramanujan argues that the Indian way of thinking is a contextualized way of thinking as they are aware of the multiplicities (hence the need for the *anubandha-catusṭaya* for every discourse). It means that Indian ways cannot be reduced to any singularity. Any attempt to do so, by defining the content of Indian knowledge systems or any tradition of art, even linguistic resources in terms of a homogenous, singular, fixed system, exhibits a grave lack of understanding of the Indian ways of thinking.

For example, the idea of language families was introduced by the Britishers as they were struck by the remarkable, systematic similarities between Sanskrit and several classical languages of Europe. The observation of those similarities led to the development of Historical-Comparative Linguistics, which later paved the way for Synchronic Linguistics of the 20th century. The British colonial rulers may have hijacked the idea of an Indo-European family, highlighting the past unity of

Indian subjects and their European rulers, to justify the British rule on India. While this hijacking may be unacceptable, the idea of language families, historical shared past and divergent paths of development in time are not fragments of colonial fiction. The idea of language families of Indian languages therefore cannot be denied. Neither can the fact of language contact and convergence in a region be denied. But to reduce the unity of Indian languages– the similarities and differences in them– to only one of the two explanations (unity in time or unity in space) is unscientific and wrong. Thus, to say that all Indian languages belong to a single family or to say that they all have undergone convergence and so the idea of language families is irrelevant and not applicable to Indian languages is equally reductionist and unacceptable. Within India, the way the languages have come in contact, the way they influenced each other, the way the languages transformed to local regional standards, the processes of the linguistic reorganization of states in different parts of India—each one is a unique case, an outcome of a unique set of historical processes. Also, recall that the similarities and differences in languages can be explored and explained along several dimensions.

The unity and the uniqueness of the knowledge tradition are not located in the products of history but in the historical process. What is ‘Indian’ in the “Indian Knowledge System” is not a given, singular, eternal concept. ‘Indianness’ lies in the historical processes that have shaped and are shaping it. These processes make ‘Indian’ uniquely differentiated from say, ‘American’, ‘European’, ‘Western’ etc. The processes are continuously taking place in the present times and will continue in the future. Even in the past, these processes were characterized by heterogeneity and complexity. *What makes it Indian is the entire accumulated historical experience.* So, the Indian KS is inclusive of the past and present activities of knowledge creation. These activities are not isolated, not ‘pure’, devoid of influences. The cultural, and historical coordinates and the responses to those contexts constitute Indianness.

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Translating Bhakti: Rethinking the Bhakti Movement as a Movement of Translation

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Abstract:

This essay argues that the Bhakti movement in India can be seen as a translation movement, focusing on conveying spirit, emotions, and individuals rather than just linguistic meaning. It examines the historical context of translation practices in India, the idea of bhakti, and the significance of bhakti poetry and saints in juxtaposition with the process of translation. By exploring the etymological and cultural aspects of translation and bhakti, the paper advocates for a more inclusive view of translation that goes beyond language barriers. The Bhakti saints, acting as translators, showcase the dynamic relationship between experience, language, and societal criticism, enhancing the field of translation studies. The article presents a case for reading the Bhakti Movement as a Movement of Translation. The article has important implications for the Indian knowledge system as it lies at the intersection of bhakti and translation, both of which are integral to the Indian culture.

Keywords

Bhakti movement, translation, saints, Indian literature

Introduction

The discipline of translation studies is a vast field. There are different schools and traditions, evolution from linguistic to cultural turns, and questions related to translating different genres such as drama, poetry, non-fiction etc.¹ The scope of the term translation which comes from the Latin trans-latio, meaning carrying over or across, is possibly even broader, given that it does not specify what exactly is

¹ Susan Bassnett, *Translation Studies* Third edition (USA: Routledge, 1980); Mona Baker (ed.), *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* (London: Routledge, 2001); Carmen Millán and Francesca Bartrina (eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Translation Studies* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

being carried over or across, or how. Early usage of the word connotes a linguistic transference of meaning, often in and through speech.² Since the call for the formulation of the discipline of translation studies in the 1970s by James Holmes, several studies have traced the history of linguistic translation and given shape to the discipline retrospectively.³

With regard to translation practices in India, Sujeet Mukherjee notes that “[i]n this country, we have been practising translation for a long time without giving it such a name or style.”⁴ In line with this thought, Harish Trivedi argues for a “non-history” of translation in pre-modern India.⁵ As a substantiation of his claim about non-history in a multilingual and multicultural space such as India, Harish Trivedi also mentions while thinking about translation and its theories, the West often forgets “that translation is the need of the monolingual speaker.”⁶ What this implies is that while the practices of linguistic exchange or transference of meaning for communication have existed in South Asia even in pre-colonial times, no structured discipline with enough theoretical engagement with those practices was in place. As the discipline evolved with the advent of English in India, mainly as a colonial and post-colonial encounter, the need to seek a consolidated history of translation practices and traditions also arose.⁷ It is essential to highlight here that despite acknowledging several different traditions of translation (of form, language, retelling, intralingual commentary, etc.), translation itself has primarily

2 Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. “translate (n. & adj.),” July 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/3223649544>. According to OED, the word translate has been used since 1500 CE.

3 James Holmes, “The Name and Nature of Translation Studies,” in *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. Lawrence Venuti, (London: Routledge, 2000). This 1972 paper calls for the need for a translation studies discipline separate from the field of comparative studies. Also see Rainer Schulte and John Biguenet (eds.), *Theories of Translation: An Anthology of Essays from Dryden to Derrida*, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992) for a pre-history of the discipline.

4 Sujeet Mukherjee, “The Craft not Sullen Art of Translation,” in *Translation, Text and Theory: The Paradigm of India*, ed. Rukmini Bhaya Nair, (India: Sage Publications, 2002).

5 Harish Trivedi, “In Our Own time, On Our Own Terms: Translation in India,” in *Translating Others*, vol 1, ed. Theo Hermans, (New York: Routledge, 2006).

6 Ibid, 103.

7 Sujit Mukherjee, “Re-slating translation,” in *Translation as Recovery*, ed. Meenakshi Mukherjee, (Delhi: Pencraft International, 2004).

been considered between Sanskrit (or English or Persian—the languages of the court or the state) and bhashas (modern Indian languages as noted by G N Devy) or between bhashas as the discipline took shape in India.⁸ Conversely, Rita Kothari's edited volume called *The Multilingual Nation* brings together scholars from several Indian languages to put pressure on the instability of the 'original' in the Indian context and highlight translation practices among Indian languages and cultures, and not necessarily between the language of the court or power—Sanskrit, Persian or English now—and the bhashas.⁹ Scholars have attempted to explain this lack of theoretical engagement with translation through the idea of "translation consciousness."¹⁰

Despite this non-history of translation among Indian languages, several modern scholars have attempted to sketch a brief history of translation practices in the Indian subcontinent, including Mukherjee and Trivedi.¹¹ These studies note a significant exchange of all sorts of texts—literary, medicinal, and governmental documents—primarily for the purpose of communication and circulation of information which flowed from the court/state to the subjects. For instance, Ramesh Krishnamurthy refers to the Indian Emperor Asoka/Ashoka, who "erected numerous pillars with inscriptions that record his edicts in local languages..."¹² According to Krishnamurthy, these inscriptions are in several scripts, which would have required some form of "translation-type activities" on account of the scribes. In the context of Buddhist encounters in the pre-classical period (c 800

8 G.N. Devy (ed.), *The Being of Bhasha: A General Introduction*, Volume 1 (People's Linguistic Survey of India) (India: Orient Blackswan Private Limited, 2014).

9 Rita Kothari (ed.), *A Multilingual Nation: Translation and Language Dynamic in India*, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2018).

10 G N Devy, "Translation and literary history – an Indian view," in *Post-colonial Translation*, eds. Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi, (Routledge, 1999), 185; Also note Suniti Kumar Chatterjee cited in Indra Nath Choudhuri, who writes: "Vatsyayan's phrase *lokopichanuvada* which means 'translatibility' explains the historical length of existence of India's translating consciousness." Indra Nath Choudhuri, "Towards an Indian Theory of Translation," *Indian Literature*, 54, No. 5 (2010): 113.

11 Rita Kothari and Krupa Shah, "More or Less Translation," in *A World Atlas of Translation*, eds. Yves Gambier and Ubaldo Stecconi, (John Benjamins B.V., 2019); Ramesh Krishnamurthy, "Indian Tradition," in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*; Sachin Ketkar, "Is there an Indian School of Translation Studies," in (Trans) *Migrating Words* (VDM Publishing, 2010); Mini Chandran, "The Practice of Translation in India," *Sahapedia*, <https://www.sahapedia.org/the-practice-of-translation-india>

12 Ramesh Krishnamurthy in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, 466.

BC – AD 100), he notes that the Buddhist texts were not only being translated to the vernacular languages, but also in Sanskrit concluding that translation thus, became the key form in which Buddha's teachings were circulated or transmitted.¹³

While the translation was from the language of the court to the language of the people in the pre-classical period—a process which can be called vernacularisation, in the classical period (c 100 – 1000), it moved from the local Prakrit versions to Sanskrit with regard to the Ramayana and Mahabharata.¹⁴ Possibly in a similar manner, in Buddhism and Jainism, later texts were written in Sanskrit.¹⁵ However, this situation changed during the bhakti movement, in which 'original' materials were created and reiterations of stories from the Sanskrit epics in the vernacular. These re-iterations or translations during the bhakti period, while emerged as a political and social movement of empowering the lower castes/classes and women, could have been motivated by possibly what Urvashi Butalia and others noted as the love for the text—in this case, the desire to have a close intimate relation with God.¹⁶ Given the personal appeal of bhakti as well as translation projects based on love for god or the texts, I suggest that the bhakti corpus be treated as a result of a translation movement.

Bhakti and Translation:

The term bhakti in the Vaishana context first appears in the Bhagwat *Gita* and is derived from the root bhaj present in early sources such as the Rigveda, where it was used in the context of sneh, Priti, and prem.¹⁷ It has several connotative meanings ranging from to share, participate, service or homage, being a part

13 Ibid, 466.

14 Ibid, 466.

15 Krihnamurthy suggests that this is possibly because the vernaculars had become too unintelligible with each other, which I find difficult to follow. However, Sheldon Pollock suggests two revolutions: one, when Sanskrit became the key language, and two, when it was resisted in light of the bhakti (and vernacular) movement. See. Sheldon Pollock, *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men: Sanskrit, Culture, and Power in Premodern India* (India: University of California Press, 2006).

16 Women Translating Women: Inaugural Talk by Urvashi Butalia," (Ashoka center for Translation, 2022), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T4MrPY2FiM>

17 R Raj Singh, *Bhakti and Philosophy* (United Kingdom: Lexington Books, 2006).

of belong, revere or devote or even divide.¹⁸ These ideas were later highlighted in the *Gita* and the bhakti movement. At its heart, the idea of bhakti involves sharing spaces through devotion and love or service and division. Broadly, to bhaj is to sing, dance and remain invested in the name of God so much so that you feel a oneness with him; either alone or within a group. The word 'bhakti' is translated to mean devotion, but if the understanding is that devotion is a very personal thing, one might want to look at the meaning of bhakti in a new light that is in the domain of public.¹⁹ J S Hawley, while discussing the various meanings in which bhakti has been interpreted, refers to bhakti as "a glorious disease of the collective heart."²⁰ By the quoted phrase, Hawley indicates that bhakti is a medium of direct connection of the deity with the individual. This connection results in a strong desire to be one with the deity, which remains unrequited and makes the individual find healing in their poetry and performances.

The literature written by these bhakti saint poets is circulated and studied in a way that appears to be a part of one movement integrating the Indian subcontinent at various levels. Bhakti poetry is said to have emerged from South India, more specifically in Tamil Nadu, in the Sixth Century A.D. According to Sisir Kumar Das, Jainism and Buddhism had been popular in South India, which bred hatred in the Shaivites and Vaishnavites towards these sects.²¹ He points out that around the Sixth Century C.E., Hinduism or Brahminism also started asserting itself with

18 According to VS Apte's Sanskrit-English dictionary, the word means: Separation, partition, division. -2 A division, portion, share. -3 (a) Devotion, attachment, loyalty, faithfulness; तदभक्तिर्भक्तिपुत्रवृत्तमात्रमात्रुकेलामिवप्रतस्थे Ku.7.37; R.2.63; Mu.1.15. (b) Faith, belief, pious faith. -4 Reverence, service, worship, homage. -5 Texture, arrangement; भवतिविरलभक्तिर्लानपुष्पोपहारः R.5.74; मणिमरीचिरचितेन्द्रचापभक्तयःविद्याधरपतयः Nāg.5. -6 Decoration, ornament, embellishment; सुकृतेहामृगाकीर्णसूक्तीर्णभक्तिभिस्तथा Rām.2.15.35; आबद्धमुक्ताफलभक्तिचित्रे Ku.7.10.94; R.13.55.75;15.30. अधिकहासवज्रभक्तिचित्रम् (आसनम्) Bu. Ch.5.44. -7 An attribute. -8 The being part of, belonging to. -9 A figurative sense, secondary sense; भक्त्यानिष्क्रयवादःस्यात् MS.4.4.28 (भक्त्या here seems to have been used as an indeclinable); cf. also MS.8.3.22. -10 Predisposition (of body to any disease). -Comp. -गम्य a. accessible by devotion. -गन्धि a. one who has only a small measure of devotion; भक्तिगन्धिरमुनाकलिकर्णः N.21.32. -चित्रम् drawings; बह्वाश्रयभक्तिचित्रं ब्रह्मणापरिनिर्मितम् Rām.7.15.38. -छेदः 1 a coloured streak, lines of painting or decoration; भक्तिच्छेदेरिवविरचितांभूतिमङ्गलजस्य Me.19. -2 distinguishing marks of devotion to Viṣṇu. -ज a. faithfully attached. -नम्र a. making a humble obeisance. -पूर्वम्, -पूर्वकम् ind. devoutly, reverentially. -भाज् a. 1 devout, fervid. -2 firmly attached or devoted, faithful, loyal. -मार्गः the way of devotion; i. e. devotion to god, regarded as the way to the attainment of final emancipation and eternal bliss (opp. to कर्ममार्ग and ज्ञानमार्ग). -योगः loving faith, loyal devotion; सस्थाणुःस्थिरभक्तियोगसुलभोनिःश्रेयसायास्तुवः Vikr.1.1. -रसः 1 a sense of devotion. -2 a sentiment of devotion; भक्तिरसस्यैवहास्यशृङ्गारकरुणारौद्रभयानकबीभत्सशान्तादभूतवीररूपेणा-नुभवादव्यासादिभिर्विर्णितस्यविष्णोर्विष्णुभक्तानांवाचरितस्यनव- रसात्मकस्यश्रवणादिनाजनितश्चमत्कारोहिभक्तिरसः Muktāvali. -रागः affection, deep devotion. -वादः assurance of attachment. V S Apte, The practical Sanskrit-English dictionary (Poona: Prasad Prakashan, 1957-1959).

19 Christian Lee Novetzke, Religion and Public Memory: A Cultural History of Saint Namdev in India (New Delhi: Columbia University Press, 2008).

20 John Stratton Hawley, A Storm of Songs: India and the Idea of the Bhakti Movement (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), 2.

21 Sisir Kumar Das, A History of Indian Literature (500-1399): From Courtly to the Popular (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 2005).

more rigidity, which made God very much an entity for the upper caste, making it less accessible for the people from lower strata in society. This led to discontent among the Shaivites and Vaishnavites. These Shaiva and Vaishnava saints then travelled from place to place to spread the idea of intense bhakti, which is an individual connection with the deity, and their disapproval of Jainism, Buddhism and Brahminism. Many people became followers of these saints as they travelled from one temple to another, leading to a mass movement.

In many ways, this core aspect of bhakti comes close to the post-colonial feminist project of translation in which translators are driven by their love for the texts they would want to be a part of, which becomes a political act. Such acts of translation function to carry across the translator as well as the text not only between languages and cultures, but also between language and experience at a personal level, often re-creating meanings somewhere at the edge of experience and language.²² For instance,

We and the saints, saints and us! The Sun and the rays: are the two different?
 The lamp and light, light and the lamp! Dhyān and jap: are the two different?
 Peace and disenchantment, disenchantment and Peace! Resolution and satisfaction: are the two different?
 Disorder and disease, disease and disorder! The body and the organs: are the two different?
 Ear and act of listening, the act of listening and the ear! Renown and respect: are the two different?
 God and Sant, Sant and God! Jani says the bhāv is the same.²³

Bhakti songs are motivated by a desire to be close to god, people's faith in these saint figures is also driven by their desire to be in god's presence where their troubles would be resolved. In that sense, saints function as god's stand-ins for people, the mediators between god and the ordinary public. In the above poem too, the saints occupy this space between the divine and the human. The poem carries over the emotion, the bhāv, from us to saint to god, as it begins with us

22 Rita Kothari's Uneasy translations for a unique theorization of the symbiotic relationship between translation, language and experience, sometimes in the (literary) text, sometimes outside of it, and the ineffability of experience as well as the institution of language itself. Rita Kothari, *Uneasy Translations: Self, Experience and Indian Literature* (New Delhi: Bloomsbury Academic, 2023).

23 Shree Namdev Gatha, eds. Sarojini Babar and committee, (Mumbai: Maharashtra Rajya Sahitya aani Sanskruti Mandal, 1970), 976, poem 381, my translation.

(āmhi) and sant²⁴, and ends with sant and god. The experience in the form of different concepts, practices, and (everyday natural) objects gets carried across with each line in the poem, not necessarily from one language to another. Thus, uniquely, this poem portrays a translation which while happens at the site of language, does not necessarily require two different languages. Instead, the entire poem shows or suggests that two conceptually adjacent terms (which can also be considered through a metonymic association) in one language while distinct from each other cannot be distinguished completely, because the emotion, the faith, the bhāv towards them or of them remains the same. Thus, instead of a kinship of languages, this poem poses the question of kinship of concepts and/or words and thus, translatability or untranslatability among them.²⁵ This movement from us to god based on bhāv and the indistinguishability of these concepts, despite referring to them with different referents or words, and separating them with the conjunction 'and' (āni), asks us to address translation differently than we are used to, broadening the scope of translation and bhakti studies.

Furthermore, the poetry composed by the bhakti saints is often filled with the longing for a union with god while also exclaiming that the union has already happened. Thus, the paradox of presence-absence allows for further versions of god to be created, often in spaces outside the dominated, such as the quotidian, the every day, and the body. Karen Pechilis calls this phenomenon of being situated in the material and the bodily as "theology of embodiment."²⁶ Doniger's idea that the saints are like "mobile-temples" helps highlight why a bhakti saint to undertake this study about the relationship between experience and language.²⁷ In many ways, the presence-absence paradox is formulated in the way the devotees approach saints—god-like, almost gods, god but not quite. The saints

24 The word sant is often translated as saint. However, Karine Schomer and W H McLeod suggest against this kind of translation of sant to saint given the difference in their religious context. See, Karin Schomer and McLeod W. H. (eds), *The Sants: Studies in a Devotional Tradition of India* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1987).

25 Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator," tr. Harry Zohn in *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. Lawrence Venuti, (London: Routledge, 2000).

26 Karen Pechilis Prentiss, *The Embodiment of Bhakti* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

27 Wendy Doniger, "Sagun and Nirgun Images of the Deity" in *On Hinduism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

lie at the edge of two different cultures and languages and in the "liminal zone" between experience and language.²⁸

Tika: Critique, translation?

In the Medieval period, the language of the court shifted from Sanskrit to Persian. Thus, there are records of Sanskrit texts being commissioned to be translated into Persian or Arabic.²⁹ Krishnamurthy, like many scholars of Marathi, notes that during the medieval period, Marathi flourished with the patronage of the Yadava rulers. Christian Novetzke corrects this narrative in his sophisticatedly argued book, *The Quotidian Revolution*. Novetzke shows that the Yadava rulers more or less were indifferent to Marathi despite their eagerness to associate themselves with the devotional space of Pandharpur.³⁰ According to him, Marathi blossomed outside of court, in the "public sphere" through a form of everyday vernacularisation in and through the compositions of Chakradhar Swami of Mahanubhav and Jnandev of Varkari Sampradaya. Studying *Jnaneshvari*—the key text for not only the Varkari tradition, but also popularly considered the first text of Marathi literature—Novetzke claims that:

...while the *Jñāneśvarī* functions in some sense as a "translation," it is not a formal translation of the *Bhagavad Gītā*, but a transfer of its words, meaning, and, most importantly, its salvational potential. The *Bhagavad Gītā* is only in Sanskrit, but the meaning of the *Bhagavad Gītā*, and the soteriological value of understanding that meaning is a subject that should transcend Sanskrit, according to Jnandev's *Jñāneśvarī*.³¹

Novetzke's observation about *Jnaneshvari* not being the "formal" translation of the *Bhagavad Gita* but a transference of its 'spirit' which goes beyond its original language of Gods—Sanskrit—is essential to highlight a significant difference between the modern and major Western notion of translation which emphasised on equivalence and fidelity to the formal elements of the text in the beginning

28 I develop Kothari and Shah's idea of a liminal zone of translation between difference and inside—the two meanings of the term *antar*.

29 Krishnamurthy, 469.

30 Christian Lee Novetzke, *The Quotidian Revolution: Vernacularization, Religion, and the Premodern Public Sphere in India* (Columbia University Press, 2016).

31 Novetzke, *The Quotidian Revolution*, 223.

of the discipline given its roots in the Bible translation as well as the domination of linguistics in conceptualising the discipline. In contrast, G Gopinathan argues for a tradition of translation in the form of transcreation in India.³² According to him, the notions of creative writing and translation have never been distinct from each other in the Indian tradition since ancient times, thus enabling a tradition of transcreation. He credits P. Lal for first using the term 'transcreation' in 1972 for his English translation of *Shakuntalam* and *Brahadaranyaka Upanisad*.³³

Gopinathan notes:

It is a holistic approach in which a range of techniques including elaboration, interpolation, explaining the cultural value of the original text, image change, image recreation, translative explanation and elucidation, are all possible. In such texts, the translator enters into the soul of the original author and, regenerating the original work becomes its re-creator. The translator performs an act of *parakayapravesa* or enters the body and soul of the original text and, thus, of the original author to bring the spirit to life in a new form.³⁴

The correlation of transcreation with *parakayapravesh*, which is an important concept in Tantrism or Yoga practices, suggests a reading of translation in light of mystical and/or spiritual understanding as opposed to merely a linguistic transference between texts. Prabhakar Machwe also compares *parakayapravesh* with translation on account of how difficult both practices are as he notes: "It is not a mere change of language, nor is it merely an independent adaptation based on the original idea or theme. In Tantrism there is a technical word, *Parakayapravesh* (entering another body) and translation is as difficult as that Tantric practice, for it is not just a masquerade, a jugglery like ventriloquism."³⁵ Similarly, Purushottam Agarwal uses this phrase to describe Kabir's awareness of social issues and his commentary on it in his art in the following words:

32 G. Gopinathan, "Translation, Transcreation and Culture: Theories of Translation in Indian Languages" in *Translating Others*, vol 1, ed. Theo Hermans (New York: Routledge, 2014).

33 Gopinathan, 236.

34 Gopinathan, 237.

35 Prabhakar Machwe, "The Problem of Translation: Hindi and other Indian languages" in *Indian Literature*, vol 10 (Sahitya Akademi, 1967), 68.

वे जानते थे कि सिर्फ अपना और अपने जैसों का ही नहीं, बल्कि अन्यो का भी दुख समझने की कोशिश किए बिना, परकायाप्रवेश की साधना किये बिना कविता न लिखी जा सकती है, न सुनी जा सकती है।³⁶

Translation:

He [Kabir] knew that without trying to understand the pain of others, not just one's own and that of people like oneself, that is, without meditating over parkayapravesh, poetry can neither be written nor be heard.

This embodied reading of translation functions to blur the boundaries between self and the other, the original and the copy or translation. It can be understood as translation having two layers or stages: 1) reading the text in the form of surrender to the text, and 2) rewriting it to assert one's own reading of the text. When rewriting a text as one's own and becoming part of it, the 'author' essentially becomes a translator, while the translator turns into an author. The etymological meaning of carrying across then does not remain about a carrying across only linguistically, but rather an exchange between sensory experience of the world and words on paper.

In the same line of that, Ayyappa K Paniker also demonstrates that the anxiety of being faithful to the original was not part of the psyche of an Indian 'translator'—I will come to the Indian terms adjacent to translation and thus the possible definitions of translator in a bit.³⁷ He notes: "All through the Middle Ages, throughout the length and breadth of India, Sanskrit classics like the epics and puranas continued to be retold, adapted, subverted and 'translated' without worrying about the exactness and accuracy of formal equivalence."³⁸

Thus, coming back to Jnaneshwari, Novetzke's hesitation in calling the Jnaneshvari a translation also illuminates a glaring gap in the Indian notions of translations, which is of the category of tika or commentary. Trivedi engages with terms such

36 Purushottam Agrawal, *Akath Kahani Prem ki Kabir ki Kavita aur Unka Samay* (Rajkamal Prakashan Pvt. Limited, 2009), 38.

37 Ayyappa K Paniker, "The Anxiety of Authenticity: Reflection on Literary Translation," *Indian Literature*, Vol. 37, No. 4 (1994), pp. 128-138.

38 Paniker, 129.

as anuvada³⁹, vivartanam⁴⁰, chhaya⁴¹, roopantar⁴², bhashantar⁴³, moliheyarttall⁴⁴ and tarjuma⁴⁵ to argue that none of these terms is synonymous with the word translation, neither that they can be considered synonymous with each other except if and when they belong to the same language and culture.⁴⁶ Rita Kothari and Krupa Shah expand this list as they survey the adjacent terms that are used for translation practices when they add aadhar⁴⁷, mozhiheyarttu (moliheyarttall), parivartanam⁴⁸, punarlekhan⁴⁹, deshantar⁵⁰, veshantar⁵¹, kalantar⁵², sphurthi⁵³,

39 Etymologically derived from Sanskrit prefix anu, meaning after, and the verb vad meaning to speak. The word, thus, comes to mean to speak after, and most dictionaries define it as repetition, reiteration, resound or imitate. Trivedi on how different dictionaries defined the term, p 110–113; also see <https://www.wisdomlib.org/definition/anuvad>; Quoting Monier Willaims dictionary (1899), which defines anuvad also as translation, Trivedi points that it is difficult to ascertain when exactly anuvad came to imply translation included in Monier-Williams. Another paper by Peter Gerard Friedlander also notes the usage of anuvad to mean translation in Hindi speaking region to 1870s. He responds to Trivedi's claim to demonstrates a renewal of Sanskrit, Prakrit texts in Hindi prior to 19th century. See, Peter Gerard Friedlander, "Before Translation" in Translation in Asia: Theories, Practices, Histories, eds. Ronit Ricci and Jan Van der Putten (Routledge, 2014); Kothari and Shah also note that anuvad in Gujarati also means 'pramane boli' meaning speaking in proportions.

40 Malayalam. Synonyms: molimattam, paribhasha. Meaning: turning round, revolving, transformation, whirling around; See Trivedi.

41 Shadow, primarily used as chhayanuvad in the performance of Sanskrit plays where characters from lower castes and women would be made to speak in Prakrit(s) and these Prakrits would be translated into Sanskrit as chhayanuvad. This translation practice happens when one language is treated as the shadow of another. See Trivedi.

42 Change or difference of form; another form; According to McGregor's Hindi-English dictionary: "changed or new form, transformation; version, rendering, adaptation (of a tale, a work)"; R S. McGregor, The Oxford Hindi-English dictionary (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); an aesthetic adaptation. See Trivedi.

43 Change or difference of language; another language

44 According to GJV Prasad, this Tamil word first occurs in the Tolkappiyam and literally means "to shift or move word or language"; Kothari and Shah cite Prasad to explain the meaning: "mozhi meaning language and peyarttu meaning 'to dislodge, to carry across or to migrate' in Tamil (Prasad 2009: 19–20)." GJV Prasad, "Caste in and Recasting language" in Decentering Translation Studies: India and Beyond, eds. Rita Kothati and Judy Wakabayashi (Philadelphia: John Benjamin Publishing Company, 2009).

45 According to Trivedi, the word "comes from Arabic through Persian, and it is available as a less common alternative to anuvad in some other languages as well, including Hindi, Bengali and Malayalam." Trivedi also notes another word for translation in Urdu, which means to reverse. Friedlander notes one text in Braj bhasha from 1856, which explicitly describes itself as a tarjuma of a Persian work. According to him, Tarjuma means commentary or translation in Urdu; For Kothari and Shah, used in Islamic literature to refer to the biography of a Sufi, saint, or scholar but later came to be used for translation

46 Trivedi, 117; Trivedi highlights the fact that these terms are used for translation in the modern period.

47 Kothari and Shah explain the meaning as a text based on 'the original' but not necessarily faithful.

48 Kothari and Shah's meaning of the term: a transformation.

49 Writing again or rewriting.

50 A change of locale.

51 A change of dress or attire.

52 A change of historical period.

53 Connotes inspiration or vitality and refers to a nimbleness in movement.

bhavanuvad⁵⁴, gagyanuvad^{55, 56} Highlighting a pattern of devising these words by adding a suffix 'antar', they show that translation not only relies on difference or another but also inside or self. Their observation stems from comparing translation the way we understand it now—"predicated on the idea of 'other' with the pre-modern understanding of it which "was not preoccupied with 'other languages.'"⁵⁷ They observe:

The notion of change or 'antar' as already inherent in the activity of translation meant that a 'translated text' was already and always distant from the 'original.' But this difference was not seen as a dilution or a corruption of the 'other.' Antar, which is both a spatial and a temporal metaphor, denotes simultaneously 'interval' and 'distance.' ... Furthermore, 'antar' also refers to 'the inner' or 'of the self' which implied an organic link between 'text' and 'translation.' The activity of translation thus was not a movement away from the 'text' but a change within itself. This notion of internal change and interaction seems vital to an understanding of an Indian sense of translation.⁵⁸

Trivedi emphasizes antar as a difference when he cites V.S Apte's The Practical Sanskrit-English Dictionary published 1890, as: "antara, means "another, other, changed, altered", as defined by Apte, who adds: "in most cases, it can be rendered by the English word 'another'" (Apte 1890: 26)."⁵⁹ This selective quoting from a 5-page entry on the meanings of the prefix and concept antar assumes an understanding of translation based on difference, as the need for a monolingual speaker. A preliminary investigation of the meanings of the suffix or the word 'antar' suggests that in early Sanskrit sources, it was used to connote to in-between, middle, proximate, intimate, inside, in, interior, midst, interval, entrance, separation, difference, remainder, another, various, manifold, absence, distance, gradation, intermediate among many.⁶⁰ Even the Marathi dictionary functions

54 A rendering of emotion.

55 A rendering of prose.

56 Kothari and Shah, p 128-29.

57 Kothari and Shah, p 130.

58 Kothari and Shah, p 129.

59 V S Apte, Dictionary, p 88-93.

60 V S Apte, Dictionary, p 88-93.

with both understanding of it,⁶¹ quite aligned with Kothari and Shah's observation. This dual meaning of antar as inside and difference in the context of Indian practices of translation comes uncannily close to the idea of bhakti highlighted earlier as personal and divisive, as something shared.

As mentioned earlier, Novetzke's reluctance in referring to Jnaneshwari—which Jnandev explicitly mentions is a tika—as a translation in its "formal" sense points towards a gap in the way translation has been defined when the need to theorize and formulate a tradition and discipline of translation appeared in front of the post-colonial scholars in India.⁶² Given that the Jnaneshwari is written in the form of ovis and opposed to the shlok form of the original Gita, I do understand why it cannot be treated as a translation in its formal sense. However, as charted above, the practice of kirtan in Maharashtra can itself be treated as a form of tika which involves vyakhan or pravachan in between singing and listening the main text. Thus, while performing, the kirtankars 'translate' the texts, themselves, their audience, as well the saint-figure in another dimension by repeating, explaining, and even questioning the text of their engagement, but not necessarily in another language. In fact, scholars of translation and literature often refer to Jnaneshwari as a translation as well as a commentary.⁶³ Furthermore, the Molesworth Dictionary defines tika as: "A commentary or comment: also an annotation or a note: also an interpretation, whether by a paraphrase or a semi-translation. ...2 fig. Swelling, amplifying, embellishing (of a simple matter). 3 fig. Remarking censoriously, commenting upon."⁶⁴

The absence of tika from the Indian list of words for translation is striking because of the way most translated texts appear now—with the translator's note, explanations of terms and contexts, glossaries, and footnotes to underscore the diversion from the 'original' looks very similar to the tradition of tika or

61 According to the Molesworth Dictionary, antar is defined as: Interval. 2 Intermission. 3 Difference. 4 Disagreement. 5 Variance. 6 Omission (in duty, &c.) 7 In-accuracy. 8 The mind or the heart. 9 In comp. Another; as आषाढ, देसाढ. 10 Poet. The heavens or midspace. 11 The inside or inner place. J. T. Molesworth, A dictionary of Marāthī and English (Bombay 1857), p 15.

62 Shree Jnaneshwari, (Gorakhour: Geeta Press, 2015), last verse.

63 Rita Kothari, Translating India: The Cultural Politics of English (Routledge, 2014), p 7; Sachin Ketkar, "Dnyaneshwar's 'Duji Shrushti': Poetics and Cultural Politics of Pre-colonial Translation in the Dnyaneshwari" in India in Translation, Translation in India, (ed.) G.J.V. Prasad (New Delhi: Bloomsbury, 2019).

64 Molesworth Dictionary, p 182.

commentary in India.⁶⁵ If there was no word that referred to translation the way we as modern subjects understand it, and the aforementioned Indian terms were later 'adapted' to imply a sense of translation, why was tika not considered a part of this tradition of retelling and rewriting? This absence can suggest the assumption that translation while changing the original, does not rely on critiquing it. However, juxtaposing the two Indian traditions of bhakti and translation shows that the translation practices have taken social critique in the form of translation seriously since the Middle ages.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, given that the discipline of translation has evolved by focusing on 'difference', as charted earlier, translation does not occur as the primary method of studying the songs composed in the bhakti tradition where the inside, the soul is emphasised along with a strong social critique which stems from the notions of difference.⁶⁶ Thus, this essay presents a case for the notion of bhakti that is spread through what is referred to as the Bhakti Movement in the Indian subcontinent as a movement of translation. For this purpose, the paper reads translation in its etymological meaning of carrying across spirit, emotions and individuals as opposed to the transference of meaning placed upon words by treating the saints as translators.

65 Cutler Norman, "Interpreting Tirukkuraṭṭa: The Role of Commentary in the Creation of a Text," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol 112 (1992).

66 Linda Hess, "When a Text Is a Song" in *A Multilingual Nation: Translation and Language Dynamic in India*, ed. Rita Kothari, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2018).

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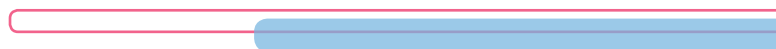
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Transmission and Transformation: Caste in Indian Knowledge Systems

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Abstract

India's vast reservoir of knowledge has been enriched by several disciplines such as astronomy, medicine, and philosophy. Undoubtedly, the caste system, which is a social framework that restricts access and involvement, has had a significant influence on the historical transmission of this information. This study explores the intricate relationship between caste and Indian knowledge systems. This scholarly article examines the historical development and current expressions of the complex connection between caste and Indian knowledge systems. The caste system, an intrinsic social structure in India, has played a significant role in shaping and transmitting knowledge throughout the millennia. In ancient India, the Brahminical caste significantly influenced educational institutions and employed caste-based restrictions to determine eligibility for admission. This research examines the impact of this limitation on the advancement of several disciplines, such as philosophy, literature, and science. Furthermore, we examine the transformations in knowledge systems that occurred throughout both the colonial and postcolonial eras, focusing on endeavours to combat caste-based inequalities and promote the democratisation of education. Furthermore, the significance of excluded communities' endeavours to preserve and enhance indigenous knowledge traditions is emphasised, as their contributions are frequently disregarded in prevailing accounts. This research highlights the persistent challenge that India has in its pursuit of inclusive knowledge generation, achieved via the integration of historical perspectives and contemporary case studies. We advocate for a reassessment of conventional and contemporary educational methods in India to ensure that all individuals have the opportunity to acquire knowledge that accurately represents the great variety of our culture. The primary objective of this thorough research is to provide a scholarly contribution to the broader discussion on educational reform and social equity in the context of India's knowledge and caste systems.

Keywords:

Caste system, India, knowledge systems, transmission, transformation, social hierarchy, access, exclusion, marginalization.

Introduction

Ancient Indian thinkers posited three distinct qualities, namely Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas, to distinguish between humans, inanimate objects, and impersonal actions. The constituents of "sattva" were truth, knowledge, kindness, and noble and great ideals. The distinguishing traits of a Raja are its wealth, grandeur, vitality, pride, and love for specific pleasures. At the lowest level of the hierarchy, the tamas were characterised by their coarseness and lack of flavour. They were also assigned monotonous and laborious tasks. Individuals who possess the quality of sattva are referred to as Brahmanas, those who possess the quality of rajas are known as Kshatriyas or Vaishyas, and those who possess the quality of tamas are termed Shudras. The 'Karma theory' posits that specific occupations are responsible for the emergence of the Varna system. In *Shanti Parva*, Rishi Vrighu and Rishi Bhardwaj explain how people's professions led them to transition from being Brahmanas to belonging to other *varnas*. However, an alternative interpretation of *Manusmriti* suggests that initially, everyone was born into the *Shudra* caste but subsequently transitioned into one of the four *varnas* based on their chosen employment (Smith 2009, p.155).

The hierarchical social structure of ancient India's caste system had extensive ramifications on several aspects of life, encompassing the dissemination and conservation of information. The knowledge systems of India were greatly shaped by this system, which determined the individuals who were allowed to acquire, transmit, and modify information, and was profoundly embedded in religious and social customs. The caste system, also known as the Varna system, categorised society into four primary segments: the Brahmins, who were intellectuals and clergy, the Kshatriyas, who were warriors and rulers, the Vaishyas, who were traders and landholders, and the Shudras, who were labourers and servants. Outside of this societal structure, there existed a faction referred to as the 'untouchables' or pariahs, who were systematically excluded and deprived of fundamental entitlements. The origins of India's caste system may be traced back several millennia. The upper-caste residents of India constructed a system of social stratification based on birth, which was institutionalised by Indo-European immigrants (Ketkar 2014, p.21).

Knowledge Systems and Caste

Ancient India has a rich reservoir of knowledge including traditional Indian medicine, astronomy, mathematics, philosophy, and the arts. The diffusion and availability of this knowledge were greatly impacted by caste. The Brahmin caste exerted influence on philosophical and theological discussions. The Vedas and the *Upanishads* were among the sacred texts that were within their jurisdiction for interpretation and guidance. This measure was implemented to strengthen the social dominance of the Brahmins by guaranteeing that religious knowledge remained exclusive to their lineage. Ancient Ayurveda, India's traditional medical system was transmitted through specific channels of Brahmin and *Vaidya* lineages. Due to intergenerational transmission, individuals belonging to lower castes frequently have restricted availability of knowledge on medicinal plants and treatment methods. Brahmins made significant contributions to the fields of astronomy and mathematics, with Aryabhata authoring the *Aryabhatiya* and Brahmagupta formulating the *Brahmasphuta Siddhanta* (Jha 2024, p.34). Due to their association with divine knowledge, these fields of study were predominantly pursued by the privileged social strata. Artisan divisions occasionally encompassed individuals with extraordinary proficiency in metallurgy, weaving, sculpture, and other innovative and practical disciplines. Historically, the transmission of information and the perpetuation of a hierarchical system of work were achieved through apprenticeships that took place within families and communities. Knowledge dissemination and creation did occur beyond the confines of the Brahminical framework, notwithstanding the inflexible constraints imposed by the caste system. Various communities, such as tribal and Dalit groups, have effectively conserved traditional medicine, ecological knowledge, and oral histories. The great variety of Indian knowledge systems is largely attributed to these undervalued traditions (Ambedkar 2020, p.32). Traditional medicine in India is enriched by the profound knowledge of the natural flora and fauna, which indigenous people have diligently stored and further developed. For instance, the Kurumba and Irula tribes of the Western Ghats possess a profound understanding of herbal pharmacology. The treatment of gastrointestinal problems involves the use of *Aegle marmelos* (*Bael*) and *Terminalia chebula* (*Haritaki*), two botanical species renowned for their anti-inflammatory properties. Individuals within the community and its environs who

possess an interest in acquiring knowledge utilize this commonly transmitted information through oral means. The historically marginalised Dalit communities have developed their own traditions of healing that have endured over time. Notably, Dalit healers in Tamil Nadu are renowned for their expertise in repairing fractured bones by combining plant remedies with traditional techniques such as splinting. Although often undervalued, their specialized knowledge is essential for ensuring the affordability of healthcare in rural areas.

Marginalised Voices and Knowledge Systems

Considering the presence of disparity, what are the repercussions of de Tocqueville's theories?

What is their fate within the framework of India's caste system? Dumont starts his exposition on caste and the most recent anthropological research in India by emphasising this crucial aspect.

Given Dumont's co-editorship of *Contributions to Indian Sociology* (1964), *La civilisation indienne et nous* (1965), *Hierarchy and marital alliance in South Indian kinship* (1957b), and *Une sous-caste de l'Inde du sud* (1957a), he possesses the necessary qualifications for the post. Exceptional academic contributions are essential for this endeavour. The scholar must possess a comprehensive understanding of Hindu philosophy and scriptures, as well as an extensive knowledge of Indian caste structures and current field research conducted in India. In addition, Louis Dumont has extensively authored works on Indian politics during the 19th and 20th centuries, demonstrating a profound understanding of sociological theory. Scholars have yet to undertake a task of this magnitude in connection to India, for reasons that are yet unclear. A convergence between the Anglo-American schools of empirical philosophy and behaviourism and French rationalism appears to be occurring once more. Levi-Strauss once visited the place.

Dumont emphasises theological facts as 'facts' to underscore the significance of conceptual frameworks in comprehending society. Similar to Levi-Strauss, Dumont observes that social scientists are intrigued by the non-ideological

aspects of society that relate to conduct. His favourite and most despised example is the attempt to disregard Hindu caste as an inconsequential illustration of 'closed status groups.' Dumont contends that men's cognitive processes and convictions hold equal significance to their tangible behaviours when seen from an alternative perspective. Lastly, we get to the subject of ideology, which Dumont contends is the most elevated manifestation of social norms. An ideology system is evident in one's actions, characterised by its intellectual and sensory nature. In this instance, Dumont's endeavours have a resemblance to his previous ones, whereby he sought to identify overarching principles within the intricate network of Dravidian familial connections (Dumont 1957b; 1961, etc.).

Ideological Framework of Marginalization

Homo Hierarchius as defined by Louis Dumont: As Dumont demonstrates via his study on caste in India, some groups, such as the Brahmins, have the most privileged positions in society, while others, such as the Dalits and tribal populations, hold the lowest rank. This order is not just relational, but also grounded on knowledge. There is a tendency to disregard or overlook the beliefs and practices of the lower castes, while the higher castes are perceived as authoritative and superior.

In Foucault's Conceptual Framework of Power and Knowledge: The thesis proposed by Michel Foucault, which posits the inseparability of power and knowledge, illuminates the manner in which influential institutions exert control over the permissible information. Due to their lack of ability to have their expertise recognized, marginalized groups often have their intellectual contributions disregarded or underestimated.

Post-colonial era and its aftermath: A Critical Analysis of Tocqueville's Perspectives on Equality and Democracy: Notwithstanding Tocqueville's focus on equality, his works on democracy illuminate how democracies may suppress minority voices in the quest for a cohesive national identity. This caused several colonialists and post-colonialists to dismiss indigenous knowledge systems, perceiving them as irrational or obsolete in comparison to Western scientific thinking. Postcolonial theorists such as Edward Said and Gayatri Spivak argue

that colonial administrations limited indigenous methods of knowing by imposing their knowledge systems on conquered populations. Due to the higher valuation of Western knowledge compared to local institutions, this trend has persisted in post-colonial countries.

Political Disenfranchisement and Social Class: An analysis of B.R. Ambedkar's critique of the caste system might provide a clearer understanding of the marginalization of India's knowledge industries. Moreover, Ambedkar said that the caste system not only subjected the Dalits to economic and social enslavement but also prevented them from acquiring knowledge. The Brahminical dominion over religious and educational institutions guaranteed the methodical suppression of Dalits' and other lower castes' acquired knowledge. Ambedkar's writings offer historical context for comprehending the institutionalization of caste-based exclusion. From its inception, the caste system imposed an inflexible social structure that prevented specific groups from seeking further education and intellectual pursuits, therefore confining them to menial jobs.

Epistemic Suppression and Alternative Cosmologies: Lévi-Strauss' research on myths and cosmologies provides a novel perspective on the process by which diverse civilizations shape their perceptions of reality, a topic greatly pertinent to the field of structural anthropology. However, the dominant methods of acquiring knowledge generally disregard these conflicting cosmologies as irrational or based on superstition. For example, crucial ecological knowledge is forfeited when the perspectives of indigenous people on the environment and natural resources are ignored in favour of scientific reasoning. While the article refers to the significance of other cosmologies, it falls short of providing a comprehensive examination of the widespread suppression of diverse perspectives. The values and behaviours observed in these alternative cosmologies frequently challenge the conventional knowledge frameworks. For instance, the exploitative strategies of contemporary industrial civilization sharply differ from the ecological knowledge of indigenous cultures, which highly value harmonious cohabitation with the natural environment. The marginalization of these cosmologies is indicative of a broader ideological effort to oppose non-Western and non-Brahminical epistemologies.

Dumont asserts that the principle of hierarchy holds great significance in Hinduism. This topic is further explored within the context of the Hindu concept of impurity and purity. A social order emerges when innocence prevails over impurity. The rest of the individuals in Hindu culture adhere to this particular pattern. Indeed, Dumont is now challenging the several often-mentioned cases that seem to contradict these broad generalisations regarding Hindu culture. The analysis of social stratification reveals the inherent intricacy arising from a stance that establishes a strong connection between ideology and behaviour. Dumont and Professor Bailey have presented their arguments in *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, among other publications (Dumont 1960; Bailey 1959). He meticulously revisits the subject. He contends that the emphasis on superficial characteristics renders ineffective broad concepts like social stratification, which are crucial to social science and enable extensive comparisons. Consequently, there appear to be 'closed status groups' similar to Indian castes in several nations, such as the US, South Africa, and others. However, this allegation is unfairly defaming Hindu India. The social, economic, political, and religious dimensions of Hindu India's caste system differ significantly when compared to racial relations in America or South Africa. Furthermore, the diverse nature of the past and future challenges faced by these countries is so distinct that categorising them together highlights the insufficiency of sociological classification. Dumont argues that due to its reliance on superficial criteria instead of scientific data, it may be considered nothing more than pseudo-social science. Does Hindu theology establish any caste that is not already present? Undoubtedly, Dumont asserts this. He discusses the many social groups within the Muslim, Christian, and Lingayat communities to provide a comprehensive defence. Barth (1960) conducts a comprehensive analysis of the degrading article but mostly ignores the complex issue of castes in Ceylon.

Indeed, Dumont's assertion that the term 'caste' is only comprehended within the context of Hindu India is founded on his understanding of caste. The author contends that caste is founded upon hierarchical notions derived from the purity and defilement paradigm. According to the author, caste is defined by a certain group known as the Brahman, who holds the highest position in the social structure, and another group at the lowest position. According to the author, priests possess dominion over worldly authorities, such as the Brahman's control over the Kshatriya. At times, Dumont seems uncertain about which of these traits

he considers to be essential for a caste system. He is approaching the point where he may limit his generalisation to only Hindu India by further refining the notion.

B. R. Ambedkar contends that the Vedic culture did not include the shudras as a distinct fourth varna, but rather consisted of only three *varnas*. He stated that despite the absence of a clear hierarchy in the workforce, the economy had progressed to a stage where the division of labour was evident. The author makes references to alternative cosmologies found in Hindu literature, which, unlike the dominant religious beliefs, do not have a supernatural creator or hierarchical structure. Hence, he deduces that the two sections in *Purusha Sukta* are supplementary elements that were incorporated after the establishment of the caste system. According to him, the Shudras played a crucial role in Aryan civilization, especially within the Kshatriya caste. The individual in question has a contrasting perspective to the viewpoint of Western scholars, who argue that the shudras and untouchables were first non-Aryans who were subjugated by the Aryans and then integrated into Vedic society, where they were assigned a subordinate position. Contrarily, the Shudras played a crucial role in the governing class, and a few of them even ascended to the position of monarchs. Ambedkar states that Brahmins ceased performing the '*upanayana*' ritual for certain *shudra* monarchs in retaliation for the insults and maltreatment they endured. Consequently, they were demoted to the fourth varna and stripped of their status. In addition, he asserts that the practice of untouchability originated from the influence of Buddhist teachings, which caused Hindus to renounce traditions such as animal sacrifice and consuming beef. The Hindus' strict avoidance of consuming beef resulted in the social marginalisation of anyone who partook in it. Regardless of one's stance on Ambedkar's thesis on the origins of shudras and untouchables, it is widely accepted among academics that the birth-based Varna system is unequivocally a phenomenon that emerged after the Vedic period and that untouchability developed after the rise of Buddhism. Indications imply that Hinduism did not consistently conform to a caste structure, particularly throughout the initial phase of the religion's extensive chronology, which started approximately around 4000 BCE and persists to the present. Ambedkar himself provides support for this assertion. The eradication of the caste system would not lead to the destruction of Hinduism, as will be demonstrated in the subsequent portion of the essay (Sharma 2012, pp.208-209).

Canonical System and Caste

In this initial section, we shall examine the canonical texts that are occasionally misinterpreted as offering endorsement for the caste system. Subsequently, we examine components that are unequivocally opposed to the birth-based caste system. The few instances in the canon where the caste system is deemed acceptable are found in the *dharmashastras*, which encompass the dharma sutras and the smritis. Conversely, shruti, which includes the Vedas and the Upanishads, is held in high esteem as authoritative texts, but *dharmashastras* have never attained the same level of significance. It is well-established that in cases of conflict between smriti literature and shruti, smriti literature would be given priority. The *Manusmriti* provides explicit endorsement of caste systems; but, in cases of disagreement between this work and the Vedas or the Upanishads, the latter would be deemed more authoritative. While the *Bhagavadgita* (*Gita*) is not considered a component of shruti, it has great reverence and plays a key role in ancient Hinduism. The birth-based caste system is universally criticised and not supported, as we will soon see in detail. Therefore, when there is a conflict between the *Gita* and *Dharmashastras*, the *Gita* is given priority. The Apasthambha Dharmasutra appears to primarily target Hindu critics rather than Hindu believers, although it clearly endorses the practice of untouchability. While a few Hindus may be aware of it, it is not considered canonical in any kind. It was preserved as canonical, irrespective of whether it was discovered by any Hindu. Even though the goal of *dharmashastras* is to uphold the caste system, there is very little agreement among them on this matter. Contrary to the teachings of the *Dharmasutras*, *Sanmskara Ganapti* explicitly asserts that shudras are eligible for upanayana, as highlighted by Ambedkar. Jaimini, the author of *Purva Mimamsa*, asserts that shudras are capable of performing Vedic rituals, as he demonstrates. As per Vasant Moon's research (1990:198–99), Ambedkar also cites the *Katyayana Srauta Sutra* (V 28) and the *Bharadwaja Srauta Sutra* (V 28), which provide Shudras with the power to carry out Vedic rituals. Badari championed the cause of the Shudras and proposed the notion that all individuals, including shudras, possessed the entitlement to partake in Vedic sacrifices, despite conflicting assertions in other *Dharmashastras* (Kane 1990, p.56). *Manusmriti* provides explicit instructions on how to dismantle the fundamental structure of the caste system based on birth. Chapter 4, verse 176

explicitly states that if desire and money contradict dharma, they should be relinquished. Similarly, if dharma causes sadness or provokes fury among the people, it should be forsaken. The term '*dharma*' is predominantly employed to refer to ethical concepts rather than structured religious practices. According to Manusmriti, the principles of *varnas* and caste, known as *varna dharma*, might be disregarded if they cause hardship or outrage to the general population. As to Manusmriti, what is the precise definition of dharma? The question is answered by the opening verse of *Manusmriti* in chapter 2. The passage states that authentic dharma is characterised by adherence from the intelligent, the virtuous, and those who are devoid of strong emotions like as passion and hatred. It also emphasises the importance of dharma resonating with one's innermost feelings. During his speeches, Mahatma Gandhi frequently employed this poem. This passage suggests that the caste system, which is determined by birth, may be rejected according to the Manusmriti if the virtuous and intellectual individuals, who are devoid of wrath and passion, refuse to accept it because it does not resonate with their innermost feelings. We express our utmost gratitude to *Manusmriti* for her unwavering endorsement of the caste system. The *Purusha Sukta* (X 90) in the Rig Veda is a frequently cited literature that is used to support, praise, and glorify the caste system more often than the Manusmriti. The verses in question are as follows:

*Yatpurusham vyadadhuhu
kritidha vyakalpayaIn
Mukham kinmasya kow bahu
Ka uru pada uchyete// (11th verse)*

How many portions did the deities carve Purusha into when they divided him? What did he have in his mouth? Which limbs did he possess? Two objects are purported to have comprised his quadriceps and ankles.

*Brahmanosya nukhamasit
bahu rajanyah kritah/
uru tadasya yadvaishyah
padbhyam shudro ajoyata// (12th verse)*

The brahmana symbolises his lips, the rajanya represents his arms, the vaishya signifies his thighs, and the *shudra* represents his feet, measuring five feet and six inches.

Ambedkar thinks these lines to be interpolated since they deviate from the narrative framework of the remainder of the *Purusha sukta* and instead adopt a question-and-answer structure.

It is impossible to interpret the birth-and-status-based caste system in a manner that supports it, even if it is seen as an inherent component of the *Purusha sukta* rather than an addition. According to the statement, the four *varnas*, which are determined by the allocation of labour, are essential components of society, which is perceived as a cohesive entity. Currently, there is no evidence to establish their affiliation with any certain caste or *jati*. What is being referred to are the diverse occupations or tasks of the *varnas*, which are not always determined by their place of birth. Furthermore, neither of the sections contains any advising or prescriptive wording. The correlation between the physical manifestation of the primal purusha and a certain varna, together with the corresponding occupation or profession, strongly suggests the existence of a division of labour. The vaishyas and shudras were considered to provide economic and productive contributions, symbolised by the feet and thighs of the Purusha. However, this did not always mean that their work was subordinate. Similarly, it was thought that Kshatriyas sprung directly from the arms of Purusha due to their extensive engagement in battle and proficient use of weapons. The mantras were attributed to emanate from the lips of the Purusha, as the brahmins were entrusted with the task of transmitting the Vedas by oral tradition.

Perhaps the traditional perception of brahmins as '*bhojanapriyah*' (food enthusiasts) may have had a part. If the two contentious sections had aimed to rationalise a hierarchical structure, they may have instead posited that brahmins sprang from the top of the Purusha. The Brahmin priests sang the mantras by moving their mouths instead of their minds, a detail that the Vedic sage who composed the *Purusha sukta* could have observed. Therefore, it may

be concluded that the two verses of the *Purusha Sukta* eliminate the need for hatred.

Advocates of the view that the *Gita* supports casteism cite three specific verses as evidence. The pivotal verse in this context is verse 13 of chapter 4 when the Lord Krishna instructs Arjuna to...

“Chaturvarnyam maya srishtam Gunakarma vibhagashah”

I proposed the concept of categorising individuals into the four *varnas* according to their occupation and temperament. Verse 31 of chapter 2 employs the notion that Arjuna is a Kshatriya and that engaging in a just battle is the ultimate achievement in order to persuade him to participate in the conflict. In verse 47 of chapter 18, Lord Krishna emphasises once more that adhering to one's own dharma, regardless of its lack of merit, is superior to imitating the dharma of others. To have a comprehension of the next two, it is essential that you additionally peruse verse 13 of chapter 4. In his teachings, Lord Krishna explicitly refers to the four *varnas* by name and asserts that they were established based on *guna* (nature, aptitude, character) and karma (effort, action, vocation). There is no evidence to suggest that this individual's birth provides the foundation for the fourfold categorization. Instead, it is a categorization based on individuals' skills and passions, determining their respective roles and responsibilities. However, K M Panikkar vehemently opposes caste systems and views the one determined by birthplace as a grievous assault on caste. If Krishna had desired to base his division of work on birth, he might have substituted '*janma-karma-vibhagashah*' or '*jati-karma-vibhagashah*' for '*guna-karma-vibhagashah*', as noted by Kane (19:1635–36). His objective was clearly to '*guna*.' Furthermore, it aligns with Krishna's response to Arjuna's particular inquiry in *Uttaragita*.

Having resolved this matter, it can be stated that the dharma mentioned in the last two verses (XVIII 47 and XII 31) is also based on *guna* rather than birth. Even those inherent nature or qualities did not assign them to the warrior caste yet took part in the Mahabharata battle. The expectation for Arjuna to fight as a Kshatriya was not rooted in caste discrimination. Similarly, the guidance to 'adhere to one's own *svadharma*' simply implies directing your attention towards areas where you possess expertise and a relative advantage. Although she may possess the ability to outperform others in several domains, it would be more advantageous

for a brilliant individual to focus on her areas of expertise and flourish in them. Comparative advantage, rather than absolute advantage, governs international trade. Krishna advocated for the utilisation of the scientific and practical concept of comparative advantage to optimise the welfare of both individuals and society. His advice does not contain any elements that promote caste discrimination. Instead of perceiving comparative advantage as a static concept based on present or existing qualities, one may instead consider it dynamically, focusing on the achievable potential within this particular situation. Shambuka's narrative in the Ramayana is often cited as compelling proof of the strict enforcement of the caste system. Rama executed the *shudra* as a kind of retribution for neglecting his caste duties and practising penance, as suggested by the ministers. This tale is situated in *Uttara Kanda*, a distinct section of the Ramayana written by Valmiki. It concludes in Yuddhakanda with Rama's triumphant homecoming to Ayodhya. Renowned Sanskrit scholar P V Kane asserts that *Uttara Kanda* was unequivocally the result of subsequent interpolators (ibid: Vol 1, Part 1, p 389). During the period of interpolation, the varna system was in a state of disintegration and had been deeply rooted based on one's birth. Although Shambuka asserts that *rishis* only admitted those of 'low lineage' as disciples into ashrams, there exist several instances of individuals from lower lineages who ascended to the status of *rishis* themselves. The *Valmiki Ramayana* holds Rishi Matanga in high esteem (Upadhyay 2013, p.8). In contemporary society, his caste may have been subjected to social shame. Rama encountered him while traversing the forest as a gesture of deference. It is necessary to acknowledge the old Hindu canonical texts that denounce the caste system's inconsistency with the principle of determining an individual's character and social standing solely based on birth or familial lineage. According to Vedanta philosophy, the presence of the divine is inherent in all discourse. In verse 30 of chapter 6, Krishna states, 'The one who recognises my presence in all things and sees all things within me will never separate from me, nor will I be lost to them.' The words that come right before and after it in the *Gita* also convey the same idea. 'The yogi who is supreme is someone who assesses the joys and pains of others in the same way that he assesses his own' (from the sixth chapter). How may this idea potentially support and promote caste inequalities that are determined by one's birth? As per the Lord's teachings, individuals who possess the specific traits mentioned in chapter sixteen are genuinely godlike. He proceeds to elaborate on these characteristics

extensively. These characteristics encompass nonviolence, honesty, universal compassion, absence of wrath and animosity, selfless service and charity, humility, non-covetousness, forgiveness, and chapter 16, verses 1–3. Therefore, a high reproduction rate lacks significance. The Rig Veda emphasises the universal equality of all individuals. Furthermore, it articulates in a contemporary manner the idea that ‘no individual possesses superiority or inferiority over another.’ Everyone is simply a companion on the journey towards achieving achievement. Regardless of one’s caste, every individual is seen as equal in the eyes of God and is deserving of enlightenment (Bougle 1971, p.43).

*Ruchanm no dhehi brahmaneshu
Rucham rajasu naskridh Rucham
vishveshu shudreshu
Mayi dhehi rucha rucham || –Taittiriya Samhita V 7.6 3*

(Guide me towards enlightenment by enlightening our brahmanas, vaishyas, shudras, and commanders (kings)).

Opponents of Hinduism may find it unexpected that Hindu texts have supported humanism and liberalism by emphasising character and inherent value above biological attributes. Mahabharata conveys a significant message against the caste system that is determined by birth.

*Na kulam vrittahinasya Pramanainiti me natihi / Anteshwapij jatanam
Vrittameva vishishyate // – Mahabharata, Udyoga Parva, Chapter 34, v 41.*

The absence of moral integrity in an individual renders their privileged social status devoid of significance. However, individuals with exemplary character may distinguish themselves from others, regardless of their socioeconomic status. The Mahabharata reinforces this concept over again:

*Yastu Shudro dame satye
dharme cha satatotthitah /
tarn brahmanamaham manye
vritten hi bhavet dvijah //
– Mahabharata, VanaParva, Chapter 216, vs 14–15*

If a *shudra* consistently upholds the virtues of chastity, honesty, and integrity, I perceive them as a brahmin. A person is born twice only via their own acts. In another conversation named *Uttaragita*, Krishna and Arjuna present a similar argument. Krishna responds directly to Arjuna's inquiry on the establishment of varna:

*Na jatih karanam tata
gunah kalyanakaranam /
Vritasthamapi chandalam
tarn devah brahmanam viduh //*

The statement suggests that birth itself is not the determining factor, but rather it is one's values that play a crucial role in determining one's well-being. Even if a Chandala adheres to the pledge, God regards them as a brahmana. The text above supports our interpretation of the three contentious verses previously provided by the Bhagavatgita. It is well recognised that in the eighth century, Shankaracharya humbled himself before a Chandala. When the second person began obstructing the first person, they were instructed to retreat. The Chandala was curious to ascertain whether the *Acharya's* acts aligned with his own philosophical convictions. He persisted, nonetheless, by inquiring, 'What is the reason for such a puzzling distinction between an untouchable and a brahmin?' Subsequently, Shankaracharya assumes a guru-like stance and starts a part of five poems known as the *Manisha Panchakam*. In the opening verse, he restates his *Advaita* philosophy and defines a guru as an individual who possesses knowledge of the Supreme, irrespective of their social status or caste. Guru Rityesh, Manisha, and their mother are in a dvijoastu. In the thirteenth century, Ramanujacharyas vehemently opposed the caste system. According to Madhvacharya's *Brahmasutra Bhashya* from the 13th century, those who are considered to be of the lowest social status (i.e., untouchables) yet are deeply religious, are entitled to access God's name and wisdom. The text 'Beware that ruin awaits him who contemplates inequity' (116th aphorism) is extracted from *Tirukkural*, a venerable Tamil scripture authored by Tiruvalluvar and revered as the *Tamil Veda* by the Tamil people. Once more, we encounter the following statement: 'Every individual is born with equal status; the variations among them arise from their individual behaviours.' (972 aphorisms) The *Vajrasuchika Upanishad* thoroughly examines and evaluates the caste system's foundation

on birth. The Upanishad's name, when translated literally, means 'Thunderbolt suggestive,' which aligns with its assertion that it eradicates the ignorance that leads to caste distinctions and spiritual isolation. The text consists of nine succinct paragraphs and is written in prose, the collection of *Upanishads* concludes with it. Radhakrishnan edited *The Principal Upanishads* (Radhakrishnan 1994, p.31), along with his translations. It serves as the basis around which the subsequent summary is constructed. The Upanishad adopts an argumentative tone by raising a number of questions in the second paragraph, one of which is: 'Who precisely is the brahmana (brahmin)?' Is he the fundamental essence of a person (*Jiva*)? Does he fabricate the entirety? Does an individual's categorization depend on their birth (*jati*)? Is he capable of instructing? Do one's actions determine their identity (*Karma*)? Does he have authority over symbolic rituals? Consequently, it offers distinct answers for each inquiry. Due to the unchanging nature of souls throughout different incarnations, a Brahmin cannot exist as an independent entity (Radhakrishnan 1994, p.38). Due to the same physical composition of all humans, he will never be able to completely occupy a human body. The nature of his offspring is uncertain, as several smart individuals, regardless of their place of birth, had remarkable qualities. Merely possessing information is insufficient to unveil his nature; numerous individuals who are not of the Brahmin caste, including Kshatriyas, have also attained the utmost levels of wisdom and knowledge, and Brahmins have never been characterised by an inherent inclination towards knowledge. Furthermore, while any individual is capable of performing manual labour, virtuous deeds cannot confer the status of being a Brahmin. Charity and religious events are inclusive and accessible to all individuals. Therefore, please provide me with a definition of a brahmin. Individuals who possess a level of self-awareness comparable to that of a gooseberry (*amalaka* fruit) resting on a palm are oblivious to distinctions in birth, unimpaired state, lack of restraint, and excessive self-importance. Furthermore, they function as the inherent substance of all things. The Upanishad concludes by emphasising the need to meditate on the Supreme while relinquishing all distinctions and egotism. This Upanishad serves as sufficient evidence to support the assertion that Hindu thinking and religion unequivocally reject caste structures, rendering more proof superfluous (Srinivas 1977, p.22).

Potential to Read Hindu Texts as Supportive of Humanism and Liberalism

An exhaustive analysis of the fascinating claim that Hindu texts lend support to humanism and liberalism is necessary. However, it is necessary to present it in connection to the central idea of the composition. An effective application of textual retelling in a study on the impact of caste systems on academics is to question prevailing notions of caste hierarchy and demonstrate how other interpretations could promote more inclusive intellectual traditions.

This article will examine how historical caste-based readings of Hindu literature have limited or dismissed liberal and humanistic interpretations to bolster its arguments. Thus, the part would be more relevant to the broader problem of marginalization and its impact on information systems in the event of such an occurrence. This section should naturally prompt a discussion on the influence of caste on the evolution of certain academic disciplines. Consider, for instance, how caste-based interpretations of Hindu texts have influenced the intellectual foundations of Indian culture and how this may have constrained scientific and literary critical analysis. The research will analyse particular instances when individuals from marginalised groups have encountered obstacles to achieving success as a result of caste in many domains. Consideration may also be given to how revisiting classic literature could stimulate novel study avenues that question the existing caste structure. As per the commitment stated in the abstract, the study would assess the influence of caste divisions on several academic fields. Both the "Canonical System and Caste" sections should make a direct contribution to this study. One such approach is to emphasize the significance of adopting a liberal or humanistic understanding of Hindu Scriptures as a basis for fostering more inclusive academic methodologies. By revisiting these works with a focus on character and inherent worth rather than biological characteristics, the research aims to advance more fair perspectives in philosophy, literature, and science. Furthermore, this would not only align with the abstract of the essay but also provide a direct resolution to the issues arising from caste.

Conclusion

By creating a hierarchical framework for the transmission and processing of knowledge, the ancient Indian caste system marginalised some while benefiting others. The intricate relationship between ancient Indian caste and intellectual life may be better understood because of the vast range of knowledge traditions that survived despite these limits. If we want to solve current problems and create a knowledge system that is more equitable and inclusive, we must first understand this historical background. The capacity of the caste system to endure and change is demonstrated during both the transmission and transformation stages. Although caste has been firmly established in India due to historical considerations, there have been notable, albeit varied, improvements brought about by recent reforms and movements. We must persistently work in the areas of social action, education, and law to eliminate the obstacles posed by caste. Building inclusive knowledge systems that value diversity and work towards social justice might pave the way for a more equitable society. Understanding the complex role of caste in Indian knowledge systems is essential for developing methods that may both recognise and address historical legacies while facilitating extensive and far-reaching transformation.

Notes

1. Dipankar Gupta says: The notion of untouchability did not arise until a considerable time after the Vedic era, even after the decline of the Mauryan empire. The Satapatha Brahmana advises that the leader or noble should share the same bowl as the commoner and vis. The term 'untouchable' does not appear in the Rig Veda. It was not until the second century AD that literature such as the Apasthambha Dharmasutra mentioned this social group. See his *Interrogating Caste - Understanding Hierarchy and Difference in Indian Society*, (2000), Sage, New Delhi, p 1.

2. R. S. Sharma concurs with Dr B. R. Ambedkar's assertion that the Shudras did not constitute a separate social class until the later period of the Atharva Vedic era, which is the final Veda in chronological order. This occurrence likely occurred when the Purusha Sukta, which narrates the tale of their origin, was appended to the eleventh volume of the Rig Veda. Arvind Sharma (2000) states in his book *'Classical Hindu Thought'* (Oxford University Press, New Delhi), on page 142, that the source referred to is *'Sudras in Ancient India'* by R. S. Sharma, specifically on page 29.

3. Tocqueville's analysis, especially in *"Democracy in America,"* touches on the dynamics of power, equality, and social structures. His work is often used to discuss how democratic systems can either include or marginalize different voices. The relevance here is in understanding how democratic institutions may inadvertently silence minority voices or knowledge systems that do not align with the dominant narrative.

In *"Homo Hierarchicus,"* Dumont examines the Indian caste system, focusing on the hierarchical

nature of social organization. His work is critical for understanding how certain knowledge systems, particularly those associated with lower castes like Dalits, are marginalized within the broader social order. Dumont's framework helps explain how hierarchy enforces epistemic exclusion.

Lévi-Strauss, through structural anthropology, provides insight into how societies construct and preserve their cosmologies and knowledge systems. His work is important for understanding how Indigenous and tribal cosmologies are systematically marginalized or ignored in favour of Western scientific paradigms. These cosmologies, which often include valuable ecological knowledge, are crucial for understanding the diversity of knowledge systems that exist outside of mainstream narratives.

4. B.R. Ambedkar's critique of the caste system and its historical development is central to understanding the marginalization of Dalit knowledge. His work highlights how the caste system not only excludes Dalits from social and economic opportunities but also intellectual and educational domains, leading to the suppression of their knowledge systems.

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Through Integrated and Disintegrated Epistemologies: Persistence and Perseverance of Ayurveda

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* This paper is based partly on my Ph.d dissertation 'Interface in Approaches to Mental Disorder in India: A Study in Psychiatric Sociology', 2014, where I examined interface between psychiatry, Ayurveda and traditional healers in the context of mental disorder in India.

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Abstract

This article attempts to examine Ayurveda in India and the remarkable number of historical, cultural, and intellectual landscapes through which it has traversed. It begins by looking at India as a plural medical space comprising of multiple systems of medicine, health, and healing. It examines the varied history of Ayurveda within this and its conception of health and disease (including mental disorders) to underline this vast array of contexts – from the pre-Vedic times to modernity and thereafter. The article traces these changes and examines its implications for Ayurveda, as an extant system.

Key Words:

Ayurveda, India, history, epistemology, multiple landscapes, interface

India: Plurality of Health Systems

The bio-medical model of health and illness is a powerful and ubiquitous system. Based on principles of observation, hypothesis, experimentation, and so on, it is evidence-based (Lake 2007), scientific, rational, and certainly the cornerstone of modern health care. In India, it goes back over two hundred years, whence it came from Europe (Sujatha et al. 2012). But India is also home to other systems of medicine and healing, laying credence to an almost unparalleled plurality in healthcare and culture worldwide.

Some of these systems are Ayurveda, Siddha, Unani, Homeopathy, Naturopathy, Yoga, and a whole host of folk and traditional practices (Sebastia 2009, Sujatha et al. 2012), including those associated with religious spaces (Kakar, 2012). Ayurveda

is an ancient codified system of medicine that originated in India with a mythic story dating back to gods and goddesses.¹ It not only refers to a system of treatment of diseases, but also addresses ways of healthy living (Dahanukar et al., 1989).

The Siddha system is mostly found in southern India and its texts are largely in Tamil and Telugu. The Siddhars belonged to non-Brahmin communities that critiqued Brahmanical Hinduism and religious orthodoxy. They promoted the use of herbal and mineral substances that aid yogic attainments (Sujatha 2012). This system is based on the concepts of the *panchabhuta* (five elements) and *tridosha* (three humours). Harmonious function of both ensures positive health. The Siddha system classifies mental illness too, including mention of bilious insanity, phlegmatic insanity, and possessed insanity. (Somasundaram 2009)

The origins of the Unani system of medicine can be traced back to the doctrines of ancient Greek physicians Hippocrates and Galen. Its development is also credited to Avicenna, a Muslim scholar, who was influenced by Greek and Islamic medicine, but drew from the works of Sushruta and Charaka as well. Unani first arrived in India during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (Javed et al. 2009; Singh 2012).

Management of disease within the Unani system is based on diagnosis dependent on signs, symptoms as well as *mizaj* (temperament). Healing is based on the principles of 'harmony and balance, uniting the physical, mental, and spiritual realms'.² The concept of *Amraz-e-nafsaniya* (psychiatric disorders) is mentioned by many scholars and Unani physicians,³ (Javed et al. 2009), and includes delirium, melancholia, hysteria, and insomnia.⁴ Their work describes

1 A combination of two words *ayu* (life) and *veda* (knowledge), Ayurveda is believed to have been taught by the creator Brahma (Dahanukar et al, 1989)

2 <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/1899343/Unani-medicine> Accessed on 06.05.2024

3 Including Soranus of Ephesus (98–138 CE), Aretaeus (150–200 CE), Galen (131–210 CE), Rhazes (850–925 CE), Al-Majusi (930–994 CE), Abu Sahal Masihi (1010 CE), and also Avicenna (980–1037 CE). (Javed et al. 2009)

4 A separate mention of what is termed *Quwwat-e-nafsaniya* (the psychic faculty) have been made while describing the faculties of the human body. Avicenna's *The Cannon of Medicine* mentions five faculties of the interior senses. Similarly, Ibn-e-Nafees (1210–1288 CE), in his book, *Kulliyat-e-Nafeesi* (Book on Fundamentals), has examined the effect of psychological signs and symptoms on the body. (ibid.)

mental disorders, examines causative factors, clinical features, and includes diagnosis and management (ibid.).

Homeopathy in India can be traced to the early 19th century (Ghosh 2010) when Johann Martin Honiburger of Romania treated Maharaja Ranjit Singh in Lahore in 1839.⁵ The first homeopathic college was established in 1881, and in 1973, the government recognised it as a national system of medicine (ibid.).

The modern practice of Naturopathy has its roots in Europe and the term was coined by John Scheel in 1895 and popularised by Benedict Lust in the United States. This science of healing purports ways of healthy living and addresses disease by seeking to restore displaced harmony in the body. It is a holistic method of healing that looks at stress reduction, healthy diet and lifestyle changes (Sneider and Zeff, 2019)

Yoga is a 3,000-year-old practice that is traced to Patanjali who was a philosopher, grammarian and a physician. Yoga like the previously mentioned systems seeks to unite mind, body and soul, and the body must be accordingly strengthened through the practice of various *asanas* or yogic postures. (Woodyard 2011).

India is also home to various religious traditions, that include medicine as an aspect. The Buddhist ancient scripture 'Tripitaka' for instance mentions 'tikiccha' (the equivalent of medical science) and 'gilana' (disease), and was an important subject of study in Taksashila.⁶ The Buddhist knowledge system includes knowledge about disease, medicinal substances, diet and treatment (Sebastian 2022). Similarly, Jainism mentions 'pranavaya', a system of medicine, that mention diet, drugs, and mental discipline, and also includes the 'Ashtanga Ayurveda', or the eight branches of Ayurveda⁷

5 <https://homeopathy.delhi.gov.in/homeopathy/origin-and-growth-homeopathy-india>.
Accessed on 06.05.2024

6 Similarly, the 'Mahavagga', the 'Cullavagga' and the 'Dhammapada', all Buddhist scriptures mention disease and cure in various forms. [http 3 ://www.indianscience.org/essays/t_es_medicine_buddhist_jaina.shtml](http://www.indianscience.org/essays/t_es_medicine_buddhist_jaina.shtml)

7 [http 4 ://www.indianscience.org/essays/t_es_medicine_buddhist_jaina.shtml](http://www.indianscience.org/essays/t_es_medicine_buddhist_jaina.shtml)

India has multiple folk and traditional practices too that are neither organised nor institutionalised, but are as popular. These are healers in various religious traditions that are embedded in particular communities and groups (Chakravarty 2014, Kakar 2012, Sax 2009).

It is to be mentioned that the study of the various systems mentioned above implies plurality but not necessarily integration; and require a deeper understanding and inquiry into the interface between these systems as also factors of caste, class, gender and disability and the socio-cultural determination of these practices (see Sebastian 2022, Sujatha and Abraham 2009). This in-depth examination lies outside of the scope of this paper.

This paper attempts to examine the various broader influences that shaped Ayurveda as a system of medicine. It also argues that Ayurveda shifts between epistemologies (physical and metaphysical, traditional and modern etc) whilst it locates itself within historical contexts (pre-independence and post-independence) and time, and the former allows for the latter to some extent. The antiquity of Ayurveda contributes to its epistemological flexibility; drawn as it was from multiple texts and practices as well as interfacing with other systems (Panikkar 2001, Chakravarty 2014).

The paper argues that Ayurveda is unique in its ability to remain extant and its flexibility is reflected through its presence in several sets of dichotomies – institutionalised/non-institutionalised, traditional/modern, local/national, bio-medical/non-biomedical, physical/metaphysical, physical health/mental health, urban/rural and so on. This can be seen while tracing its origins in the pre-Vedic and Vedic age⁸ and into contemporary times. It is to be noted that Ayurveda is stated to have non-Vedic origins as well, deemed to be a part of the '*Sramana parampara*'⁹(Sebastian, 2022)

8 The tracing of the history of Ayurveda through the pre-vedic to post-vedic age is to facilitate a chronological outline and to examine their influence on Ayurveda.

9 This included Jain, Sankhya, Buddhists, Tantrik, Ajivikas, Ajnanavadins, all of which antedates the Vedic tradition- or the Rsi Parampara (Sebastian 2022)

Ayurveda had to contend with steeper challenges in the country's pre-independent and post-independent period, including the advent of western positivist bio-medicine, colonialism, modernity and also nationalism. Ayurveda in independent India, has equally been shaped by factors like lack of availability of western medicine, 'efficacy' of the practitioners and their medicines, their 'social and political power', and their 'growing market share' as also an association with 'nationalistic and cultural ideologies' and sentiments¹⁰ (Sujatha et al. 2012: 2).

In order to understand the extant nature of Ayurveda and its location in a multiplicity of contexts, the paper briefly examines the non-dualistic conception of health and disease that it purported to begin with, followed by a brief historical exposition. In other words, a set of internal and external factors together contributed to the tenacity of the system, enabling it to persevere.

Ayurvedic Conception of Health and Disease

In Ayurveda the person is viewed as a system of relationships and health is a combination and balance of different elements. This view is non-dualistic, at once both individual and cosmological. In this view, everything in the world is ultimately composed of *pancha bhutas* (five elements) *prithvi* (earth), *apa* (water), *teja* (fire), *vayu* (air) and *akash* (ether). These five elements combine in pairs to constitute what is termed *tridosas*, or the three dosas: *vata* (ether and air), *pitta* (water and fire), and *kapha* (water and earth). While the *dosas* can refer to several things like movement, transformation, or to physiological parameters, literally the term means 'that which can become impaired and also has the potential to impair other tissues' (Jayasundar 2012: 43). It could refer to biological type, or physical constitution, but it also refers to that which contaminates. So *dosas* could be pathogenic factors or disease-causing agents

¹⁰ In response to the popularity and outreach of these non-western systems of medicine, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India established the Department of Indian Systems of Medicine and Homeopathy (ISM&H) in 1995, and it was later renamed the Department of Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy (AYUSH) in 2003. The Department looks at issues like educational standards, quality control and standardisation of drugs, research and development, increasing awareness about the efficacy of such systems both at the national and international standards.

in the body. Imbalance of the *tridosas*,¹¹ (*vatta*, *pitta* and *kapha*) cause disease in the body,¹² while a dynamic balance creates health (*ibid.*).

The *tridosas* cover both physiological and psychological functions. These three primary forces, that is *vata* or motion, *pitta* or energy and *kapha* or inertia control all functions of the human body and are produced and regulated endogenously. These *dosas*, in turn, influence the *dhatu*s¹³ (tissues) (Dahanukar et al. 1989).

According to Caraka, disease can be caused by three sets of factors, namely *nija* (internal), *agantu* (external) and *manasa* (psychological). All three are related and affect one another. The *dosas* need to be in harmony and increase or decrease in one will influence the other and result in impaired functions (Jayasundar 2012). This is a holistic model. The constitution of a person is important in determining balance and equilibrium in the *dosas*. Diagnosis is not simply naming the disease, but involves an elaborate process that includes identifying the predisposing causes, symptoms and full extent of the disease. Increase and decrease of the *dosas* has to be assessed. Treatment would include correcting the imbalance of the *dosas* through diet and drugs (Jaggi 1976)¹⁴.

Mental disorder has also been addressed extensively. Indian classical medicine has always comprised of metaphysical and rational elements. In general, Vedic medicine adopted a holistic approach wherein different types of medical, psychological and spiritual problems were addressed. Specifically, two kinds of insanities were represented in Vedic medicine: one is caused by the violation of divine mores and taboos (*unmadita*) and the other, by the possession of demons (*unmada*). Propitiatory offerings were made to the gods for *unmadita*

¹¹ The *tridosas* represents a set of functions as well as certain parameters that are physico-chemical and physiological in nature. For instance, *vata* represents dryness, lightness, coldness, roughness and movement; *Pitta* refers to parameters like heat, fluidity and causing movement; *Kapha* indicates unctuousness, coldness, heaviness, sluggishness, smoothness and firmness (Jayasundar 2012).

¹² <http://www.jiva.com/ayurveda/about-ayurveda/30.html> Accessed on 07.05.2024

¹³ *Dhatu*s have been described as different entities and are seven in number: *ahara rasa* (food juice), *rakta* (blood), *mamsa* (flesh), *medas* (fat), *asthi* (bones), *majja* (bone marrow) and *sukra* (semen) (Jaggi 1976).

¹⁴ The Ayurvedic compendium comprises eight branches including internal medicine, surgery, ophthalmology and ENT (eyes, nose, throat), paediatrics-obstetrics-gynaecology, toxicology, geriatric and nutrition, sexology, psychiatry and demonology (*bhuta vidya*). (Smith 2006).

and medicines were prepared to calm the patient and drive away the evil forces for *unmada*.¹⁵

The Charaka *Samhita* mentions three kinds of therapy- spiritual, rational and psychological (Smith 2006).

The Susruta *Samhita*, which constitutes an early foundational text of Ayurveda also mentions psychiatric disorders. While it is seen as making a significant contribution to surgery, a part of the text, a supplementary section termed Uttaratantra mentions additional disease that can be equated with psychiatric conditions (ibid.). It mentions fevers and a class of fever is ascribed to malignant spirits and is to be dealt with by incantations and bindings. It mentions *unmada* or disease of the mind- that involves a derangement and aggravation of the bodily dosas, one due to grief (*sokaja*) and one due to the effects of poison (*visaja*). Treatment involves a series of herbal and physical procedures including fumigation, the use of powders, herbs, emetics and purgatives (ibid.).

The Uttaratantra (of the Susruta *Samhita*) mentions metaphysical insanities too, where the cause is supernatural including ghosts, deities, demons and even serpent deities. Symptoms are different for each agent and treatment would include religious measures like chanting, offerings to gods and rituals. (Fabrega 2009).¹⁶

This integrated epistemology that defined Ayurveda's understanding of health and disease, located it as both a cultural and a medical system and gave credence to a wholistic approach to health, encompassing physical, mental, spiritual and social, underlining a balance of internal and external factors in maintaining health and curing disease. A brief history of Ayurveda will further explicate these contentions.

¹⁵ Even without recourse to any system of medicine, communities have always had concepts about mental illness and its management (Fabrega 2009).

¹⁶ Vagbhata's Ashtangasamgraha and the Bhela *Samhita* also mentions certain psychiatric conditions caused by aggravated dosas of mind and body and vivid descriptions are provided (ibid.).

Ayurveda: A Distinctive History

The exact origins of Ayurveda are difficult to pinpoint (Varier 2002, Fabrega 2009, Jayasundar 2012). Codified Ayurveda has been traced to at least 1,500 years prior to Hippocrates (Jayasundar 2012). It has been described as 'A way of life, a philosophy and a science of healing and health care' (Varier 2002: 1). The fundamental basis of Ayurveda are the darsanas,¹⁷ which are texts dealing with the perception of the world and universe in ancient India (Gupta 1977; Jayasundar 2012).

Some scholars have attributed its inception to divine sources as well (see Jaggi 1976), in accordance to the traditional origins of the Vedas.¹⁸ Sushruta, one of the two scholars (the other being Charaka) indelibly associated with Ayurveda, termed it an *upanga* (natural projection) of the Atharva Veda¹⁹ (Kutumbiah 1962; Thakar 2010).

Role of Ancient Text– Pre-Vedic, Vedic and Post-Vedic

While Ayurveda is seen to also have non-Vedic origins (Sebastian 2022), this paper will use the Vedas as a point of reference and to discern their influence on Ayurveda. Ayurveda has variously been located in pre-Vedic, Vedic (Kutumbiah 1962, Jaggi 1976, Gupta 1977, Thakar 2010, Jayasundar 2012) and also non-Vedic conceptualisation (Sebastian 2022), as much as the orthodox philosophies of Nyaya, Vaisheshika and Sankhya. Its history is interwoven with Buddhist (especially its conceptualisations of the connection between mind and body) and Jain influences too (ibid.). Another way to think about the location of Ayurveda has

¹⁷ Darsana can be compared to the concept of theory. Darsanas are associated with the names of their formulators, Kanada's Vaisheshika, Gautama's Nyaya, Jaimini's Purva Mimamsa, Kapila's Samkhya and Patanjali's Yoga and Vyasa's Vedanta. Vaisheshika are concerned with the organic structure of the universe, and is a materialist school whose logical teachings have been used to understand the human body and diseases and treatment as well. Samkhya and Vedanta are more metaphysical and concerned with creation and relationships and their philosophical implications (Gupta 1977; Jayasundar 2012).

¹⁸ One version state that god Indra learnt it from the Ashwin twins who were physicians to gods, who had learnt it from Daksha Prajapati who, in turn, learnt it from Brahma, the Supreme Creator. Sage Bharadvaja learnt it from Indra and taught it to sage Atreya who taught it to six students including Agnivesha, Bhela, Jatukarna, Parasara, Harita and Ksirapani. The version that Agnivesha wrote was revised by Charaka and eventually termed Charaka *Samhita*. Similarly, Dhanvantari, the King of Benaras revealed it to Sushruta (Kutumbiah 1962; Jaggi 1976).

¹⁹ The vedas are the earliest known sacred books of India. There are four vedas, namely Rigveda, Samaveda, Yajurveda and Atharva-Veda (Kutumbiah 1962).

been between the Agama (non-Vedic and non-Aryan) and the Nigama (Vedic and Aryan) traditions (Sebastian 2021).

Many ancient works formulated during the pre-Vedic and Vedic age are seen to provide the precursors to Ayurveda. One version mentions Ayurveda as intrinsic to the Atharva Veda (Kutumbiah 1962; Jaggi 1976; Thakar 2010). Another is that Vedic medicine is deemed to have 'evolved into Ayurveda' and, in doing so, crossing an epistemological divide from metaphysical/magical/religious to physical/somatic/organic phenomena (Fabrega 2009: 194, 195). The emphasis of the pre-Vedic age to explain sickness and health involved metaphysical and religious ideas. Disease was a magical or magico-religious phenomenon²⁰ (Kutumbiah 1962).

In the pre-Vedic age, the larger cosmos was connected to health and illness, to pain and suffering and this idea can be traced to ancient Indo-Aryan and pre-Indo-European people (Fabrega 2009). The Vedic age saw a shift to a more naturalistic emphasis looking at physiological, anatomical and organic causes. Treatment included herbal preparations, emesis, purgation and the like (ibid.). There was no distinction between mental health and physical health and all treatment was aimed at an amalgam of both, purporting a non-dualistic conceptualisation. Religion and magic continued to play a role, and treatment was a combination of religion, magic, empirical and rational elements (ibid., Kutumbiah 1962).

Both the Rig Veda and Atharva Veda are seen to have contributed to Ayurveda. Mention of disease and treatment appear in the early portions of the Rig Veda, ²¹but a more advanced knowledge of the same is found in the Atharva Veda. It combined two epistemologies, 'blending the science of health with a supernatural element' (Varier 2002: 4).

20 The pre-Vedic period was epitomised by the belief in the external causes of disease and treatment was based on cauterisation by fire, bathing, use of herbs, diet, massage, use of purgatives and diuretics accompanied by rituals, spells, incantations, ritual sacrifices and prayers.

21 The Rig Veda mentions diseases like jvara (fever), kushtha (leprosy), rajayakshma (tuberculosis), blindness, deafness, sterility and baldness. Hymns in the Rig Veda also mention treatment for fatal wounds (Varier 2002).

Post-Vedic medicine can be divided into two parts: one, extending from the completion of the Vedic hymns to the rise of medical schools, and the second that extended from the rise of the medical schools to the end of classical Indian medicine (Kutumbiah 1962). Two centuries between the completion of the Vedic hymns and the rise of medical schools saw the influence of works like the Brahmanas and the Upanishads. Though there are no records of medical practices during this period, non-medical sources indicate that, in the period following the Atharva Veda, studies were confined to *bhuta-vidya* (demons), *sarpa-vidya* (poison), *pitriya-vaidya* (spirit of ancestors), *rasayana* (chemistry) and *vajikarana* (aphrodisiac therapy) (ibid.).

The term 'Ayurveda' has been stated to appear for the first time only in the *samhita*²² traditions, (Varier 2002), that mention the principle of the tridoshas for the first time. They constitute the earliest literature on medicine and were seen as an attempt to systematise existing medical knowledge. Three important *samhitas* are those of Charaka, Susruta and Bhela (ibid.).

The *samhitas* of Charaka and Susruta form the classics of *ancient Indian medicine*. The medical schools of Charaka and Bhela conform to the tradition of an astanga Ayurveda, or an Ayurveda with eight divisions (Kutumbiah 1962). Four divisions were common to Ayurveda and Atharva Veda, including *bhuta-vidya*, *sarpa-vidya*, *rasayana* and *vajikarana*. But Ayurveda additionally had four other divisions, that gave it a decided empirico-rational bent, as opposed to the Atharva Veda where 'magic eclipses everything' (Kutumbiah 1962: xi). Elements of the rational and metaphysical were bound together.²³ The Ayurvedic knowledge system matured considerably by the middle of the first millennium BCE including treatment for 'well-being, longevity and rejuvenation' (Varier 2002: 9). Broadly, the *samhitas* of Charaka and Susruta and the Ashtangasamgraha of Vagbhata, a disciple of Charaka²⁴ together are seen to constitute the corpus of Ayurveda (Abraham 2009).

²² The *samhitas* are a corpus of technical work that focused on scientific reasoning and marked a shift from divinity and magical spells.

²³ But even at the time of the Atharva Veda there were physicians treating diseases with drugs made of herbs, which were also used in amulets for protection against disease as well as witchcraft (Kutumbiah 1962)

²⁴ Vagbhata was a disciple of Charaka and wrote two important works, Ashtangasamgraha and Ashtanga Hridayam *Samhita*.

Another dominant influence on Ayurveda was from the Samkhya²⁵ and Vaisesika traditions of philosophy, although Vedanta and Nyaya also contributed (Gupta 1977, Fabrega 2009). Sankhya and Vaisesika were seen to be purporting a more natural and rational outlook rather than spiritual, magical or mystic influences (Sebastian 2021).

The period between the seventh and eighth centuries CE saw the formation of regional cultures, including religious groups, followed by incorporation of local variations and innovations in Ayurveda. A new development was the adoption of Ayurveda by affluent urban centres. Ayurveda also percolated to various communities and soon regions had their own *gurukulam* (learning centres) to impart Ayurvedic knowledge.²⁶ (Fabrega 2009).

Linguistic groups too adopted and developed their own versions of the Ayurvedic system incorporating local wisdom.²⁷ Ayurveda received patronage from kings and lay people alike. Places like Kasi (Varanasi), Taxila, Nalanda and Pataliputra (Patna) became reputed seats of Ayurvedic learning. (Jaggi 1976).

While the origins of Ayurveda remain obfuscated, it is seen to draw considerably from several ancient texts²⁸, especially the Atharva Veda. During this time, physicians were treating disease with drugs. Medicine was also influenced by popular and folk cultures (Fabrega 2009). While priests were highly sought after, healers performed rituals too, including wandering healers and mendicant Buddhist medical practitioners, or 'monk-healers' (Sebastian: 10, 2022). Two systems existed, one that saw the prescription of charms by priest-physician and the other that saw the prescription of drugs by medical practitioners-physicians. The use of herbs as medicines used in a rational way actually marked

25 The co-presence of purusa and prakriti, that is consciousness and materiality, nature of the material subtle body and its components, what the gross body is composed of, are Samkhayan ideas (Fabrega 2009).

26 An example is that of the ashtavaidyans of Kerala (Varier 2002; Abraham 2009).

27 Kerala is a good example of this process. The practice of ayurveda in Kerala has its own distinct local flavour, including the 'use of basic granthas, yoga and combinations of medicines'. Kerala had a well-developed medical tradition prior to arrival of the Sanskrit, textual tradition of ayurveda. The preferred text is the Ashtangasamgraha of Vagbhata and not the *Samhitas* of Susruta and Charaka (Abraham 2009: 12).

28 The other ancient classics that Ayurveda is seen to draw from apart from Ashtangsamagraha include Ashtanghridaya *Samhita*, Bhela *Samhita*, Nava Nitaka or the Bower manuscript, Madhava Nidana and Bhavaprakasha (Jaggi 1976).

the separation of the empirico-rational medicine from the magico-religious medicine (Kutumbiah 1962). Medicine in India thus moved from a mythical²⁹, semi-mythical to a historical beginning (ibid.).

Knowledge about management of illness and health have been drawn from other sources like the Bhagavad Gita and the Dharmasastra as well (Pandya 2017). This was a holistic and cosmological understanding of health that involved not just the organic but the metaphysical as well. All of these have been seen to add to the corpus of Ayurvedic knowledge.

The Astangasamgraha by Vagbhata along with the compilations of Susruta and Charaka, as mentioned earlier, are considered the canonical works of Ayurveda (Varier 2002; Abraham 2009; Fabrega 2009, Sebastian 2022). Charaka, at the very beginning of his *samhita*, defines the meaning and scope of Ayurveda and deems it 'the science of life....the union of body, senses, mind and soul' (Kutumbiah 1962: xix). This is a non-dualistic approach where equilibrium maintains health and disequilibrium causes disease.

Ayurveda- Post Vedic Age to the Modern Age and Challenges Therein

After the 16th century no major work of Ayurveda was published (Jaggi 1976), but it did see various additions. Sexually transmitted diseases were included for the first time in 1600 and the first Ayurvedic dictionary was published between 1800 and 1830, and drugs started to be manufactured between 1860 and 1870. Between 1870 and 1900, efforts were made to disseminate Ayurveda in the regional languages; an Ayurvedic magazine was published in Bengali and the Charaka *Samhita* was translated into Marathi and Gujarati as well. Ayurvedic societies were started along with colleges. A large number of scholars did research and published on Ayurveda³⁰ (Dahanukar et al. 1989).

29 It is believed that, Attreya, a noted pioneer of Ayurveda was taught medicine by god Indra and surgery was similarly taught to Dhanvantari. Both, in turn, taught their respective subjects to six students each, who in turn wrote several treatises on medicine and surgery. Sushruta was one of these students (Byadgi 2012).

30 Girindarnath Mukhopadhyaya wrote a thesis on Surgical Instruments of Ancient Hindus, History of Ancient Medicine and Medicine in Atharva Veda in 1909, 1911 and 1923. Sir Prafulla Chandra Ray wrote The History of Hindu Chemistry in two parts. Yadavaji Trikamji Acharya founded Ayurveda Granthamala and got over twenty-five books on Ayurveda printed (Dahanukar et al. 1989).

Despite such attempts, Ayurveda faced several challenges, including colonialism³¹, modernity and western bio-medicine. The year 1836 marked the end of the period of British patronage of Ayurveda, whence it was studied alongside European medical science at the Native Medical Institution during the previous decade. Thomas Babington Macauley overturned the dual educational programme in 1835 when he declared that all Indian higher education will be conducted in English and modelled on the British system, emphatically marking the superiority of European knowledge. The period of intermingling of modern medicine with classical Indian medicine was rather brief and an Indian knowledge system was decisively differentiated.³² (Langford 2002: 6).

By the end of the 19th century, Ayurvedic practitioners began to realise that, to counter the growing hegemony of European medicine, they had to learn from the latter; professional associations, colleges and pharmaceutical firms were established (ibid.). Even while Ayurveda tried to re-invent itself, ironically, it was seen to be out of step with modernity and reflected in the ambivalent position taken by some- for instance, most members of the Indian National Congress preferred European medicine over Ayurveda, but did pass a resolution in support of Ayurvedic medicine in the 1920s (ibid.)

For the practitioners though, this was an opportunity to establish Ayurveda in contrast to modern medicine. '...Ayurveda gradually transformed... to a quintessentially Indian medicine' (ibid.:7). Further, in order to qualify as a medical system, practitioners recognised that 'Ayurveda had to be arranged into college courses, institutionalized in hospital procedures, scientifically proven in clinical research, and ordered into new taxonomies of drugs and diseases' (ibid.: 7). Practitioners organised themselves into professional groups, publishing books, tracts and journals.³³ The tussle between becoming modern and authentically Indian with its concomitant complexities had begun for Ayurveda and continues, ironically making it both traditional and modern.

31 The interface between colonialism and Ayurveda has been addressed in depth by scholars like K N Panikkar (2001) and Charles Leslie (1976).

32 The attempt was to also produce 'the Indian practitioner of European medicine' (Langford 2002: 6).

33 https://castle.eiu.edu/studiesonasia/documents/seriesIV/Uma_Ganeshan.pdf

Bode (2012) identifies three strands of Ayurvedic practitioners in the twenty-first century – the traditional practitioners that Bode (ibid: 60) terms ‘authentic’, second, mainstream practitioners who use their ayurvedic degree as a ‘backdoor entrance to biomedical practice’, and a third category comprising of graduate ayurvedic practitioners (ibid.: 61). Ayurveda’s rather ‘ambiguous relation with biomedicine’ (ibid.) has determined its identity in the present context. Ayurveda resists the levels of objectification and materiality that the positivist system of bio-medicine purports, while underlining the significance of cultural factors in health and healing (Bode, 2012).

The template for the practice of Ayurveda continues to be traditional and modern– Ayurveda practised by *vaid*s³⁴ (physician) who learn the craft from a guru (teacher) who, in turn, teach an apprentice. The other option in antiquity was to study in a gurukul (centre of learning) like Nalanda or Taxila (Jaggi 1976). The latter practice transformed into the modern institutionalised version of Ayurveda, taught in private or government colleges across the country. This has also answered a global need to promote, preserve and develop indigenous forms of medicine. There is then a pre-modern, pre-colonial, pre-institutionalised Ayurveda and a modernised institutionalised version. Both exist simultaneously.

There is no one uniform practice of Ayurveda. As Jean M. Langford states ‘The name Ayurveda has a powerful polyvalence...’ (2002: 9). Earlier orientalist renditions attempted to locate it in ancient texts alone rather than in the field of practice. Ayurveda in the 20th century has been re-invented as a medical system to compete with European medicine and also ‘offer a corrective for it’ (ibid.: 11).

Ayurveda has taken on the role of a cultural and political project too, when it becomes synonymous with being a Hindu practice, or even Brahminical, for instance, since it is both a medical and cultural system (Abraham 2009, Sebastian 2022). More recent trends in the path of modernising Ayurveda include the mass

34 The term *vaid* is seen to derive from the word *vidya*, or knowledge. But it could also refer to a learned person of any description. But by the time of Charaka the term attained a specific meaning; the *vaid* or *vaidyas* were a ‘recognised craft group...following the profession of their fathers and forefathers.’ Vagbhata for instance mentioned that his father and grandfather were both physicians (Basham 1976: 23)

production and manufacture of proprietary drugs for a neo-liberal global market, reflecting the commodification of Ayurveda (Abraham 2009; Banerjee 2009).

Ayurveda has traversed a long route from being an indigenous/traditional/Indian system of medicine, contrasted (and competing) with western/European systems of bio-medicine to interfacing with bio-medicine and now being included in the newly configured Indian Knowledge System (IKS)³⁵ moving through a vast landscape of community and kingdoms, and the modern state, the latter seen to be more an instance of cultural colonisation. The British attempted to hegemonise health and medicine (through bio-medicine) and undermined indigenous systems, like Ayurveda (Pannikar, 2001). Newer tropes like 'pluralism' and 'co-existence' allows for more acceptance but also 'underplay issues of power, domination and hegemony' seen both in instances of colonialism and nationalism in the context of Ayurveda (Khan: 2786, 2005).

According to Bode (2012), '...knowledge and practice are contingent upon a specific ontology, gnology, epistemology and methodology as well as upon the mores of knowledge communities...' Ayurveda reflects this quintessentially, yet has been able persevere. This could be due to its ability to interface with other systems and draw from them and assimilate.

Interface

The concept of interface is significant in the context of Ayurveda. Historically, it has drawn from local and folk cultures, apart from sacred texts and other systems of medicine like the Unani system, and also religious systems like Buddhism (Panikkar 2001).

Today, Ayurveda is often juxtaposed with the modern bio-medical system but also seen to be distinct from modern medicine, especially in the way it conceptualises health and illness. The psychic and somatic component are

³⁵ The IKS or Bharatiya Jnana Parampara, a division of the Ministry of Education of the Government of India was established in 2020 to promote indigenous systems of knowledge. (iksindia.org)

integrated in Ayurveda, unlike in modern medicine. Scholars like Gananath Obeyesekere (1976) and Sudhir Kakar (1982) note that, in bio-medicine, the body is fixed and bounded. But, in Ayurveda, it is 'fluid and penetrable' (Langford 2002: 11), constantly engaged in a dialectical relationship with the social and natural environment around it.

The modern institutionalised version of Ayurveda however, integrate elements of bio-medicine, but at the cost of letting go of all that is not 'rational', to uphold the principles of a positivist science (Chakravarty 2014). Contrary to its previous practice of integrating the rational and the religio-socio-cultural framework even in the pre-Vedic times.

Ayurveda has undergone several courses of change- modernisation being primary in the current context. Three important trends need to be mentioned here: (i) the growth and expansion of colleges teaching Ayurveda, (ii) the use of apparatus and techniques of modern medicine to assess severity of the disease or confirm diagnosis, and (iii) research on modern lines of Ayurvedic drugs and their marketing and sale (Banerjee 2009, Jaggi 1976). Inadvertently though, modernisation has meant interface with bio-medicine.

As foundational courses, many programmes in Ayurvedic education teach fundamentals of basic science such as physics, biology, chemistry and zoology, and anatomy and dissection as well. Ayurvedic physicians use clinical pathology laboratories to ascertain various parameters, like haemoglobin levels or blood sugar level. Modern methods of clinical research are being used to test efficacy of drugs, by finding out its active chemical components.

Ayurveda resultingly has a pronounced bio-medical and organic element woven into its teaching and practice. The modern pharmaceutical rendition of Ayurveda emulates bio-medicine in areas like marketing strategy and product research too (Banerjee 2009; Bode 2009). Some practitioners of Ayurveda use bio-medicine in their treatment process as well.³⁶ However, for others, a patient's experience

³⁶ For instance, Bode (2012) mentions an Ayurvedic practitioner in his study who uses modern medicine to monitor the outcome of Ayurvedic diagnosis and treatment of heart disease. Yet, another Ayurvedic physician in the same study disagrees, because the disease categories are so different between both the systems and have no commonality.

of the illness is more important than indicators of bio-medical tests. Ayurveda engages with the individual experience of illness as much as the organic disease condition (Bode 2009).

The modern institutionalised Ayurveda focuses more on physiology and biology rather than ghosts and spirits; they exist in the same space as the bio-medical systems. Ayurvedic doctors are trained in the basics of the bio-medical system and use this knowledge. Interface between systems is a complex phenomenon and research shows that Ayurvedic practitioners express different degrees of acceptance. The system as a whole is open to the idea of interface with the bio-medical system. However, contact with practitioners of the bio-medical system is not always obvious or official (Chakravarty 2014).

Pharmacotherapy is a part of modern Ayurveda.³⁷ But interface between systems is also a struggle for power between these systems of knowledge. Events in Kerala reflect this sufficiently. Conceding to the demands made by the Kerala chapter of the Indian Medical Association (IMA), the Kerala government rolled back on an earlier decision to co-locate Ayush hospitals with primary health centres (PHCs)³⁸. Similarly, according to a Deccan Herald newspaper report dated June 19th 2013, the Union Health and Family Welfare Ministry's proposal to allow doctors under the Indian system of medicine to practice modern medicine 'has come

37 An Indian Express report dated 19th November 2009 stated that mentally ill patients at the National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS, Bangalore) will be able to avail of Ayurvedic medicine, other than the psychotic drugs given, like Ayush Manas- The medicine, in the form of a tablet, is prepared from four natural herbs and is expected to work as nutrition for the neural cells. It serves as a memory booster and improves the brain's capacity (Chakravarty 2014)

38 <http://www.homeobook.com/kerala-ima-opposes-move-to-co-locate-ayush-to-phcs/> (Accessed on 11.05.24) The integration of Ayush and allopathic facilities was a national level proposal submitted to the Union health ministry by the steering committee on Ayush for the 12th Five Year Plan, and, the government of India launched the project of co-locating Ayush facilities with primary health centres under National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) scheme. A report of the Union health ministry reveals that Ayush facilities are co-located with 416 district hospitals, 2942 community health centres and 9559 primary health centres till 2011. There is integration of Ayush and modern medical systems in the district hospitals of Goa, Haryana, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Mizoram, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Tripura, Lakshadweep and Pondicherry. The states that have more than 50 per cent of the district hospitals co-located with Ayush facilities are Chhattisgarh, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh and Uttarakhand. <http://pib.gov.in/newsite/relcontent.aspx?relid=87871> Accessed on 08.05.2024

under attack from the allopathic doctors who termed the decision as illegal and illogical' (ibid.)³⁹.

Hence while at a micro level interface does happen (Chakravarty 2014), a larger policy level decision to promote interface is ridden with contention. Some of it stems from a deep distrust of modern medicine towards Ayurveda. Such protest is certainly reflective of the power and authority that bio-medicine claims, and is constituted through accepted forms of 'scientific' knowledge, understanding and truth. The fact remains that Ayurveda as a non-dualistic system does not fit well within the dominant discourse of a positivist bio-medicine (Leguizamón 2005). Its location within this fraught space, forces it to be dual and non-dual, and assume a concomitant integrated and disintegrated epistemology

Concluding Remarks

Within an increasing post-colonial space, there is now the potential for new world-views opening up and accepted- that which opposes the hegemony of bio-medicine and allows for the re-formulation and re-thinking of indigenous systems like Ayurveda. Khan (2006) identifies three strands in the nationalistic discourse – conformity to bio-medicine, defiance against this dominance and the third is the quest for an alternative.

According to Langford (2022) Ayurveda moved from being an eclectic set of healing practices to becoming co-opted into a national and nationalistic culture, making it a healing force not just of the body but also of 'colonial and post-colonial ills.' (ibid.)

Ayurveda has undergone multiple changes over time- in the pre-Vedic and Vedic age it combined physical with metaphysical elements; over time adopted partly a bio-medical approach, even while western bio-medicine and colonialism

39 In 2014 the government elevated AYUSH to a separate ministry. A hundred AYUSH hospitals were proposed including an All-India Institute of Ayurveda along the lines of AIIMS. And about four thousand practitioners of AYUSH were to be posted across the country. [http 9://www.deccanherald.com/specials/what-ayush-and-controversy-703993.html](http://www.deccanherald.com/specials/what-ayush-and-controversy-703993.html) Accessed on 08.05.2024

dented it. Post-independence it manages to find its grounds, engages with modernity, while getting co-opted into a nationalist agenda. Currently it is a part of the IKS or Indian Knowledge Systems apart from the earlier AYUSH system being propagated by the government. Another impetus to the system was received during Covid – when Ayurvedic medicines arrested the progress of Covid within a short period (Girija and Sivan 2022).⁴⁰

Ayurveda has proved to be resilient and tenacious and despite its very long, varied and chequered history, remains rich, vibrant and relevant, destabilising ‘categories of medicine, culture, science, symptom and self’ (Langford, 2022), addressing the wounds of colonialism as much as modernity (ibid.). It continues to be located in several interfacing templates even now – reflected in the nomenclature within which Ayurveda is still variously located – indigenous, Indian, traditional, and now within the framework of the Indian Knowledge Systems⁴¹, each category reflecting a variously formulated position about Ayurveda.

Ayurveda is unique not just as a system of health, medicine and healing epistemologically, but this polyvalence has enabled it to traverse multiple contexts across time– reflected in a series of dichotomies that Ayurveda has occupied and negotiated: physical-psychological, psychosomatic-somatic, individual/cosmological, metaphysical/rational medical/spiritual, sacred/secular, medical/cultural, urban/rural and so on. It is truly a remarkable system of thought and practice that has stood the test of time, from antiquity to now and continues to flourish.

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40 <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0975947620300425>

41 The Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS), or the Bhāratiya Jñāna Paramparā Vibhāga, is a division of the Ministry of Education of the Government of India to promote indigenous Indian systems of knowledge. It was established in October 2020 (iksindia.org)

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Approaches to Attain and Sustain Peace: Indian Philosophical Traditions and its Epistemological Understanding

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Abstract

This article explores the profound concept of Peace in different Indian philosophical traditions and its connection to epistemology as well. In today's world, the need for Peace has become increasingly urgent. Throughout history, humans have recognised the importance of Peace, a focus that has persisted since ancient times. However, in the 21st century—an era defined by technological advancement and a consumer-driven lifestyle. Present life has become more complex, miserable, unrestful, and chaotic. These conditions, coupled with the failure of our age to achieve socioeconomic and political justice, have hindered the attainment of true peace and harmony. Thus, the pursuit of peace alone is insufficient; it is crucial to establish a society where at least a minimum level of harmony, justice, tolerance, and non-violence prevails. Such conditions would help sustain peaceful coexistence within society. This paper offers a review of the philosophical perspectives on peace, drawing on both Vedic and non-Vedic conceptual frameworks. By engaging in this conceptual exploration, we aim to uncover the root causes of suffering and conflict, identify pathways to prevent suffering in human life, and ultimately, realise peace.

Keywords:

Consumer-driven lifestyle, Sustain peaceful coexistence, Exploration

Introduction

Our world is disintegrating with wars, nationalism, sectarianism, idealism, and every form of division, opinion against opinions, data against data, judgment against judgment, and so on. Therefore, Peace and war are socio-political phenomena and it is unavoidable circumstances. Philosophical outlook, notions are important to understand the importance of peace. If anyone wants to study

and comprehend the idea of Peace, it is inevitable to consider philosophical knowledge combined with scientific and intellectual viewpoints. Peace cannot be seen physically; it can be apprehended— it is a state of mind of tranquillity. A life without struggle, difficulties, conflicts, worries, and tension turned into an ideal life where nobody can ask for peace. Any conflict gave birth to the idea of peace. Presently, we are asking if we can achieve peace in this world. Can we live peacefully in harmony within society and the world? How epistemic analysis can define peace and how epistemological approaches can enhance human peace. How does an epistemic understanding help build the idea of 'Peace?' It is a difficult task. Unfortunately, great wars are happening all over the world. The entire human world is facing catastrophic disasters. In ancient times, our forefathers, philosophers, sages, and visionaries, both in East and West, were committed to establishing a peaceful atmosphere. They live peacefully in the forest, subjugate all their opinions, and establish certain patterns of idealism, dogma, monastic life, and so on. Apart from them, what is the way to achieve peace for other common people? In such a current situation, Wisdom about 'Peace' is not properly understood and imbibed in contemporary societies. It has become very important to discover ways of intervening so that societies can rebuild/re-cultivate their internal peace. This intervening process can be fruitful through an epistemic understanding of peace. This research is an exploration of the knowledge system of India (commonly known as IKS). According to the wisdom, understanding, and way of life in India, 'Darshana' (Philosophy) should become a stepping stone to re-construct values according to the needs of the world.

Irrespective of the comprehension, understanding, and definition of the word 'peace' very much associated with the words 'conflict', 'violence' etc. It is a well-known fact that conflict, and war - are created by humans for their existence and survival, and on the other hand humans are seeking peace for their well-being as well. Therefore, it is part and parcel of our life. Now the point is if war or conflict is allowed to continue, then the survival and existence of human beings will be threatened. Presently, the existence of humanity is at risk. Hence peace is essential and is perhaps of utmost importance in our conflict-ridden world today, where every individual strives to outsmart and surpass others. This tendency creates/escalates competition to an intense level. While competition is necessary and

important for progress, it has a negative impact when competition will drive in an unhealthy manner. It can lead to a situation where success is only felt when a rival fails. It's similar to how a person with unlimited freedom might still feel constrained if that freedom comes at the cost of someone else's well-being.

This article aims to discuss how peace and war are both eternal and crucial phenomena for human beings. The good and evil consequences of peace and war have been studied differently but it has been proven that war and conflict have played a major role in the unrest condition for the entire world and the idea of peace has always been discussed in the context of war. Therefore, the conceptual and critical analysis method is used in this article as a methodology. The notion of peace and its sustainability is always explained when there is any devastation, violence, conflict, damage, and ill health like a pandemic that people faced largely.

As mentioned, people do not realise the importance of the blessings of peace unless and until they are faced with any kind of horrors of terrorism, death, or natural calamity leading to the almost destruction of human beings. It is a fact that the attainment of peace and sustaining peace or building peace is a complex idea and depends on the many layers of personal, social, political, historical, cultural, etc. Therefore, the discussion of peace requires a philosophical approach and a synthesis of scientific analysis of peace. Now-a-days, we are observing different various issues going on. Globalisation and its impact can be seen in every sphere of life but still, the horror of terrorism, warfare, attack, sexual abuse, murder, and threats from the nuclear holocaust persist. The question arises: Which place is secure for us? We, human beings are creating technological progress, we have achieved many things except peace. In such a context of unrest, chaos, and violence, the quest for peace has become an essential concern, only sustainable peace can secure humanity and the world at large. In this connection, let's discuss the concept of peace.

Concepts of Peace and its Different Approaches

To truly comprehend this concept, it is essential to understand the genuine meaning of peace. The term peace has a wide range of meanings. The word

'peace' originates from the Latin word 'pax', which refers to a pact, a control, or an agreement to end war, disputes, and conflicts between individuals, nations, or antagonistic groups.¹ In American military history, the term "peace" is often defined as the "absence of war." This perspective suggests that the act of engaging in warfare is a means to achieve peace, positioning peace as the ultimate objective within the military framework. Conversely, some scholars challenge this ideology, arguing that peace should be regarded as a more valuable, transcendental, and enduring concept, rather than merely a means to an end.

Albert Einstein posited that peace transcends the mere absence of war, encompassing the presence of justice, law, order, and governance within society.² Again, Martin Luther King once said that peace is not only explained through the absence of war or absence of happiness. It is more than that. According to him — 'True peace is not merely the absence of tension; it is the presence of justice'.³ The 14th Dalai Lama articulated a perspective on peace that emphasises its connection to preserving human rights. He argued that the absence of war holds limited value; true peace can only endure in environments where human rights are upheld. Peace can create a situation where human beings can live freely, where people are fed, and where nations and individuals are free. From his point, peace can be understood as means of respecting human rights.⁴ Benedict Spinoza, a 17th-century Western philosopher, articulated his understanding of peace as a state of mind characterized by benevolence, confidence, and justice. He emphasized that true peace is intrinsically linked to virtue, suggesting that both the disposition towards goodwill and the cultivation of a virtuous mindset are essential components of peace. For Spinoza, peace is not merely an external condition but rather an internal state that reflects moral and ethical ideals. Johan Galtung, a Norwegian peace scholar, posits a nuanced understanding of the concepts of "peace" and "violence." He asserts that peace should be viewed

1 Ven. B. Khemanando (1995), 'Buddhism and Peace', Bloomsbury, Dictionary of Word Origins, Lazo Print, Calcutta, p. 387

2 P. Aarne Vesilind, (2005) 'Peace Engineering': when personal values and engineering careers converge, Lakeshore Press USA, p. 43.

3 Coretta Scott Kin (2008), The Words of Martin Luther King, Jr., Newmarket Press, p. 83.

4 Irwin Abrams (ed.) (1995), 'The Words of Peace: Selections from the speeches of the winners of the Noble Peace Prize', Newmarket Press, New York: p. 16

as a social goal and is fundamentally linked to the absence of violence. Galtung distinguishes between two dimensions of peace: negative peace and positive peace. Negative peace refers to the absence of personal violence, while positive peace encompasses the absence of structural violence and the presence of social justice. According to Galtung, peace cannot be solely defined as the absence of war; it must also include the eradication of all forms of internal and external violence. He argues that true peace is unattainable if violence persists within social and political structures.

Former Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru articulated that peace is essentially a mental state, asserting that it is "not merely a relationship among nations but rather a mindset cultivated by inner tranquility." He emphasized that true peace goes beyond simply lacking conflict and that it can only be achieved by individuals who foster peaceful attitudes.

Similarly, former Indian President Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam underscored the relationship between peace and prosperity, stating that to attain peace, one must let go of the notions of "self" and "I." He advocated for the removal of ego and animosity, believing that freeing oneself from these negative feelings is vital for achieving authentic peace.⁵

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) conceptualises peace as a set of beliefs, values, attitudes, traditions, modes of behaviour, and a way of life based on virtues. It is adherence to the principles of love, devotion, compassion, justice, honesty, etc.⁶ In this context, Mahatma Gandhi's perspective on peace offers valuable insights. He believed that non-violence is a powerful tool wielded by the strong. Gandhi asserted that the principle of love operates similarly to the law of gravity; it functions effectively regardless of whether we choose to acknowledge it.⁷ Another influential leader, Swami Vivekananda, emphasized that every individual possesses inherent

5 Dr. A.P.J Kalam, (2012), *Turning Points: A Journey Through Challenges*, Harpar Collins; New Delhi, p. 21

6 Sumit Paroi and Kalyan Senapati (2024), *Perspectives of Peace with Special Reference to Indian Philosophy*, <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/381925810>, p.11

7 Ibid, p. 11

divinity and is interconnected with all of creation. He taught that recognizing this divine nature requires engaging in self-inquiry and serving humanity. This awareness deepens our understanding of our connection to the cosmos and cultivates compassion and empathy for others.⁸ These perspectives guide us toward a multidimensional understanding of peace.

Peace has multidimensional approaches but can be discussed in two ways: **first**, peace can be achieved through economic, political, social, scientific, and technological progress. **Second**, peace can be achieved through inner realisation. It is essential to categorize the multidimensional approaches to peace. The first dimension is **Philosophical and Spiritual**. A unique example of this dimension is "*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*" (the world is one family). This is from *Maha Upaniṣad*, it includes the inclusive attitude that India has been practising for a thousand years.⁹ The underlying belief is that humanity evolves from one reality, encapsulated in the idea that the earth is one family. India feels this unique idea can bind every corner. Another crucial lesson in the context of peace is the significance of compassion and universal love for all. This concept emerged in the wake of Emperor Ashoka's Kalinga War, a conflict characterized by considerable devastation and loss. The experiences following this tragic war prompted a deep understanding of the futility of violence and the need to cultivate empathy and understanding. Ashoka's transformation ultimately led him to advocate for non-violence and peace, highlighting that genuine strength is rooted in compassion rather than in conflict.

Second, the **Religious and Ethical Dimension** discusses ethical knowledge for well-being. Righteous action motivates us to maintain social cohesiveness; then, only one can know how to maintain social stability. *Dharma* teaches us how to take responsibility in different situations. Though it includes the term 'religious', Indian traditional systems have introduced different aspects of peace like

8 Swami Vivekananda, *Awakening the Soul: Swami Vivekananda's Teachings on Self-Development*, Prabhat Prakashan, p.1

9 Das, Tuhin, K. Development of Peace Studies in India: With Special Reference to the Relationship between Sustaining Peace and Democracy; December 2022; p.4 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/366464569_Development_of_Peace_Studies_in_India_With_Special_Reference_to_the_Relationship_between_Sustaining_Peace_and_Democracy

Satyagraha, *Ahimsa Satya*, etc. The Bhakti movement is another stepping stone to inner peace.

Third, the **Cultural and Social Dimension** explains the deep-rooted Indian culture and heritage. This dimension is deeply intertwined within the community. In the cultural sphere, folk dance and music play a crucial role in fostering social cohesion and peace. Celebrating different festivals and rituals among different cultural people enhances mutual respect and fosters cultural exchange and social coherence.

The fourth dimension focuses on promoting inclusive economic growth and creating job opportunities for all, while also protecting the environment from degradation to ensure sustainable social development. Additionally, the international dimension contributes to national peace.

This multifaceted approach prompts a thought-provoking discussion. Accordingly, we shall now examine the Indian philosophical perspective on peace.

Indian Philosophical Traditions and Peace

Human beings desire to live their lives enlightened by knowledge. They have realized that knowledge provides a means to understand the world around them. Humans as rational beings have a desire for knowledge and philosophy provides the knowledge of truth. Human life encompasses three main dimensions: intellectual, rational, and spiritual. Therefore, our existence is not solely focused on fulfilling biological needs; it also involves embracing higher moral values, seeking spirituality, and yearning for inner peace and tranquility.

The Sanskrit word for Philosophy is '*Darśana*' (the vision of truth)¹⁰. Indian philosophical thought is centered around the cosmos and emphasizes introspection, offering timeless principles for our well-being. It seeks to understand peace through our cognition and knowledge of the external world, the inner world,

¹⁰ Sathishchandra Chatterjee, D.M. Dutta (1948), *An Introduction to Indian Philosophy*, University of Calcutta, Calcutta, p.2

and the connections between them, all of which are essential for achieving a peaceful state of mind. This exploration encompasses two main trends: orthodox (*Āstika*) and heterodox (*Nāstika*). Within the Brāhmanical traditions, the thoughts on peace from *Sāṃkhya*, *Yoga*, *Nyaya*, *Vaiśeṣika*, and *Advaita Vedānta* are relevant. Meanwhile, the Nāstika tradition, including Cārvāka, and the Śramaṇic traditions of Jainism and Buddhism, also provide insights into the nature of peace.¹¹

A) Peace in Sāṃkhya Tradition

The oldest system of Indian philosophy within the Brahmanical traditions is Sāṃkhya. This philosophy is mainly focused on evolution and is considered a dualistic system. *Sāṃkhya* philosophy begins by addressing three types of suffering: Adhyātmika suffering (related to the soul, mind, and body), Adhibhaūtika suffering (related to the outer world), and Adhidaivika suffering (related to divinity).

At the beginning of the creation initiated by matter (*Prakṛiti*), the subtle body is formed for each individual soul (*Puruṣa*). Each *Puruṣa* is regarded as the true enjoyer but not the active agent in its actions. Therefore, it depends on matter for the performance of any activity by the soul. This explanation leads to the next question about *Kaivalya* or emancipation i.e. how can one be free from sorrow and get peace? In answer, the *Sāṃkhya* tradition replies that because of ignorance we cannot understand the real nature of *Puruṣa*. The epistemological and metaphysical background states that *Puruṣa* accepts Buddhi's activities as his own activities, and then *Puruṣa* experiences the three qualities of *Prakṛiti*. Problems arise when one embodied soul recognizes the existence of another embodied soul. Conflicts only arise for a soul with a body, and all dispositions are for the embodied soul. Failure to understand this leads to repeating the same mistakes. Hence, in a state of peace, humans recognize their true nature, free from the influence of Buddhi, and consequently become free from three types of sorrow. Therefore, it is essential to gain the right knowledge to distinguish between

the elements (24 tattvas). Thus, peace, according to this tradition, eliminates all suffering and paves the way for liberation.

B) Peace in Yoga Tradition

Yoga philosophy, as articulated by Patanjali, represents one of the most significant contributions to spiritual practice. The original texts are known as the Patanjali *Sūtras*. In contemporary society, characterised by rampant consumerism, negative traits such as hatred, greed, anger, and cruelty have become prevalent among individuals. Humanity often seems to have strayed from its compassionate and humane essence, adopting increasingly brutal behaviours. There is a growing disconnection from our foundational values, ethics, and roots. In this environment, where love is largely absent and hatred dominates, peace seems elusive, overshadowed by violence and conflict. Integrity is often replaced by hypocrisy. In light of these challenges, Yoga emerges as a vital means to foster awareness, enhance focus and concentration, and cultivate mental calmness and inner peace.

The word Yoga comes from the word 'yuj' which means 'to join'¹². The ultimate goal of *Yoga* is to unite with the infinite and to realize this cosmic unity within oneself and live in it in every moment. Such a person can achieve harmony, unity, peace, and happiness in his/her surroundings. Patanjali defined *Yoga* as '*Citta-vrittī-nirodhaḥ*', which means that Yoga helps/provides the technique for the removal of the fluctuations of the mind.¹³ By the practice of Yoga, one can get to know the real nature of 'I'. The two Moral backbones of Yoga are Yama and Niyama along with *Āsana*, *Niyama*, *Prāṇāyāma*, and *Pratyahara*- these all enhance our 'will-power' which is built at our physical and physiological level. The last three limbs are *Dhāraṇa*, *Dhyāna*, and *Samādhi* enhance the 'will-power' at our mental and spiritual levels.¹⁴ Therefore, everyone should follow this practice gradually, it brings inner peace that will lead to social peace, justice, and harmony.

12 K.V. Raghupati, *Yoga of Peace*, Abhinav Publication, New Delhi, 2007, p.15

13 Sumit Paroi and Kalyan Senapati, *Perspective of Peace with Special Reference to Indian Philosophy*, Selective and Scientific Book, Delhi, 2024, p.15

14 K.V. Raghupati, *Yoga of Peace*, Abhinav Publication, New Delhi, 2007, p. 17

C) Peace in Nyāya–Vaiśeṣika Tradition

The *Nyāya-Sūtras* is a philosophical masterpiece covering a wide range of topics in an argumentation, critical, and detailed manner. It is noted that self-realization is the ultimate purpose of this tradition. The founder of the Nyāya tradition, Gautama, and the founder of the Vaiśeṣika tradition, Kaṇad, both have accepted that liberation (Apavarga) is only possible when worldly bondage can be removed by the proper knowledge of Padārthas. According to both traditions, ignorance is the root cause of all pain and suffering. The purpose of these two traditions is mostly the same in the context of liberation.

According to the Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika traditions, some people are happy, some are unhappy, some are born into rich families, some are poor, some are mentally and physically healthy, and some are unhealthy. The root cause of these differences is the Law of Karma. Good Karma leads to positive outcomes, while bad Karma leads to negative outcomes. Therefore, according to these traditions, peace and happiness can be achieved through a proper understanding and knowledge of Karma. The concept of liberation in this system is a peaceful state. It is a state of fearlessness with no physical or mental suffering.¹⁵ They have suggested that knowledge of sixteen (Nyāya) and seven (Vaiśeṣika) can help destroy ignorance, internalized through Śravaṇa, Manana, and Nidhīdhyasana.

D) Peace in Vedānta Tradition

The philosophy of Vedānta embodies the wisdom of the Vedic Sages. For thousands of years, it has inspired us to understand the true nature of reality and to seek genuine solutions to life's challenges. This philosophy, tested and verified by Indian seekers, emphasizes that life is inherently uncertain and mysterious. It teaches that problems and solutions are interconnected, but ignorance is the primary obstacle preventing us from realizing this fundamental truth. According to Vedānta, our happiness depends on peace of mind. Peace of mind depends

¹⁵ Sumit Paroi and Kalyan Senapati, *Perspective of Peace with Special Reference to Indian Philosophy, Selective and Scientific Book*, Delhi, 2024, p.18

on self-control, and self-control depends on awareness of our true self.¹⁶ The illuminating understanding from the Vedantic perspective is that peace is never absent, but it is present in sporadic form. The objective of human life is to attain ultimate release. When a human being gains knowledge that the experiential world is Mithyā, they can overcome all sorts of sorrow. In this state, one can realize that Brahman is the ultimate reality and understand the meaning of the phrase ‘*Tat-Tvam-Asi*’.

The following text explains peace as described in Non-Vedic traditions, particularly Buddhism and Jainism. Buddhism focuses on understanding and alleviating suffering through the Middle Path, an ethical approach that advocates for balance. Its philosophy is rooted in the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path, which guide practitioners toward the cessation of suffering and enlightenment. Similarly, Jainism is centered on non-violence. This philosophy believes only in Non-Violence and their peace-building strategies depend on the right knowledge of non-violence. The idea of Three Jewels ultimately leads to a peaceful state. These traditional overviews will be conceptualized if we have understood their epistemic standpoint.

Epistemological tools play an important role in a holistic understanding of peace. After this discussion question automatically comes how does the knowledge/epistemic system enhance peace among our generation? Before getting into this, let us discuss ‘Knowledge’ and ‘Peace’.

Indian Epistemology and Peace

In India, epistemology is known as *Prāmāṇya-Śāstra*. The Vedic corpus can be regarded as the body of sacred texts that incorporates all knowledge. The *Indian knowledge systems* encompass several different types of studies, including philosophy, literature, sciences, medicine, astrology, and many other things. Indian epistemology, which has a rich diversity of thought, provides unique perspectives on how knowledge can influence peaceful living. The principles and methods of Indian epistemology inform and enhance the practice of peace

¹⁶ Swami Adiswarananda, *The Vedanta Way to Peace and Happiness*, Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Centre for New York. New York, p.1

on personal, social, and global levels. Peace cannot be understood unless and until there is no change. Changing and dynamism cannot be ruled out; it is a necessary step toward peace.¹⁷ The discussion of *Pramāṇas* is essential in Indian approaches to epistemology. *Pramāṇa* is the instrument used to ascertain the reality or essence of reality (प्रमीयते परिच्छिद्यते वस्तुतत्त्वं येन तत्प्रमाणम्)¹⁸. The word *Pramāṇa* signifies the instrument to know the 'object'. (प्रमाकरणं प्रमाणम्).¹⁹

Role of *Pramāṇas*: Understanding Peace

According to the Indian traditional approach, many *Prāmanas* are depending on their objects. This article explains how peace can be an object for *Pramāṇas*.

a) ***Pratyaksha* (Perception)** is an important *Pramāṇa* of establishing peace. It is also known as direct understanding. Our sense organs are responsible for the direct perception and understanding of the world. Direct sense perception allows us to see the situation transparently without bias. Perception is critical for maintaining social and individual peace. Direct knowledge involves reducing conflict between two or more people through proper understanding and empathy. In this connection, one can observe others' behaviors, intentions, and ways of reacting to the situations, etc. After understanding others' views, one can modify their understanding based on empathy, logic, and unbiased reasoning. This environment is created by constructive dialogue and cooperation, which foster peaceful relationships. This is easily understood because perception is a powerful component in the pursuit of peace-building.

b) ***Anumana* (inference)** emerges, playing a crucial role in the establishment of peace through logic. *Anumana* generates critical thinking in the masses. Critical thinking involves eradicating prejudice and helping people avoid unpleasant situations in society and the world. Overall, *Anumana*'s conclusion is based on evidence. Interpersonal relationships, leadership and governance policies, and

17 Galtung J; (1967), Theories of peace: a synthetic approach to peace thinking. Oslo: International Peace Research Institute. Pp.13-15.

18 Tarkabhasha 1.2; Pa. 3.3.117

19 Ibid.

cultural and social dynamics are also based on inferential (*Anumana*) knowledge. Well-informed *Anumana* can guide leadership, social, and cultural cohesiveness throughout life and the world to establish sustainable peace.

c) **Śabda Pramāṇa**, or verbal testimony, is highly valued in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism as a reliable source of knowledge. According to these belief systems, scriptures, epics, and authoritative texts are considered trustworthy sources of wisdom and ethical teachings. For example, the Bhagavad Gīta, rooted in verbal testimony, promotes righteousness and inner peace through selfless acts and devotion. The power of *Śabda* has been historically used by sages to impart their deep understanding of life. Buddha's teachings, considered as *Śabda Pramāṇa*, are centered on inner peace, resolving conflicts, fostering social cohesion, promoting individual transformation, and advocating nonviolence. This concept is fundamental in the processes of listening, contemplation, and meditation, and through this knowledge source, one can attain a peaceful and harmonious existence.

d) **Upamana, a comparison ground**, is another significant tool for preserving peace. The concept of using analogies is effective in promoting peace. Analogies are powerful tools for resolving conflicts between two parties. Third parties can use analogies to help the conflicting parties understand each other better and find common ground. Analogies can also simplify complex issues and help in finding peaceful solutions. For instance, many religious parables and stories teach kindness, patience, forgiveness, and promote harmony and peace. In Indian traditions, there are practical examples in Hindu philosophy where Lord Krishna uses parables to explain duty, righteousness, and devotion to Arjuna. These parables help Arjuna easily understand philosophical ideas. Similarly, in Buddhism, Buddha used analogies to teach his disciples about mindfulness and peace. Using analogies helps in reducing student frustration and improving the peaceful learning environment.

e) **Arthapatti, or postulation or hypothetical reasoning**, is another instrument of epistemology that enhances the multidimensional approach to peace. When neither *Anumana* nor *Upamana* can establish a fact, postulation becomes important. In cases where perception is inconclusive, postulation allows

mediators to infer the most reasonable explanation. This approach can lead to finding solutions and maintaining lasting peace. If direct evidence is unavailable, *Arthapatti*, or hypothetical reasoning, provides a way to make coherent decisions by assuming the most ethical action. This is how *Arthapatti* can lead to a peaceful and thoughtful approach.

f) **Anupalabdhi**, or non-apprehension, is another influential tool, especially in *Advaita Vedānta* and other philosophical traditions. At times, we may perceive a conflict or subtle violence, but Anupalabdhi helps us realize that there is no actual evidence of conflict as we initially thought. This awareness of peace holds great value in promoting the idea that what may appear as conflict from a societal standpoint is not necessarily conflict at all. Therefore, the absence of potential conflicts contributes to maintaining peace within the community. This study emphasizes the unseen link between humans and the environment, leading to sustainable peace for all beings. Additionally, peacekeeping organizations utilize Anupalabdhi to identify the lack of conflict prevention methods such as political dialogues or economic interventions. By recognizing these indicators, conflicts can be prevented. In educational settings, Anupalabdhi can be widely applied to detect the absence of critical thinking, empathy, and skills. Identifying these factors and integrating them into their respective fields can contribute to promoting overall peace.

Following this discussion, it is pertinent to explore how epistemology integrates various philosophical, social, political, ethical, and practical frameworks to achieve and sustain peace.

Integrating Indian Epistemology into Peacebuilding

The epistemological insights from India provide a strong foundation for peacebuilding. A deep understanding of Indian knowledge is essential for achieving inner peace and for reducing conflict resolution. Peacebuilding is not just a concept but a journey of taking one step toward the next. The Indian knowledge system includes integral ideas such as Ahimsa (non-violence), which promotes the core principle of respect for all living beings. This idea was endorsed by Jainism and Buddhism and was later prominently advocated by Mahatma

Gandhi for peaceful resolution.²⁰ **Satyagraha** emphasizes the power of truth and moral persuasion. **Dharma** encourages individuals and leaders to fulfill moral duties and adhere to social order and justice, fostering a sense of responsibility for maintaining peace within communities. Karma helps guide ethical actions, reducing conflict and is widely accepted in Indian traditions. **Upaya** (skillful means) encourages individuals to adopt specific methods to address societal needs and resolve conflicts, a predominant idea in Buddhism. The concept of Oneness promotes interconnectedness among individuals and communities, fostering unity and harmony.²¹

Several practical steps for integration are proposed as suggestions:

Please remember the following key points:

1. **Educational programs:** The curriculum should focus on teaching learners about the Indian ethos and incorporating philosophical ideas and their practical application.
2. **Dialogue and tolerance initiatives:** It is important to facilitate interfaith, intercultural, and interreligious dialogue, allowing everyone to share their ideologies with mutual understanding. This approach helps us realize that there is strong unity despite diversity.
3. **Policy formulation:** Government and policymakers should incorporate ethical principles that bridge social divisions, reducing unnecessary biases and prejudices.
4. **Community workshops:** Interactive meetings among leaders should be held, and any supreme authority can conduct training sessions to reduce local conflicts using these epistemological ideas.
5. **Ecological harmony:** *Indian Knowledge Systems* (IKS) promotes profound respect for nature in both lifestyle and mindset. Indian scriptures contain

²⁰ Gandhi's Way: A handbook of conflict Resolution; Juergensmeyer, Mark; University of California press; London; 2005; Pp. 13-16

²¹ Indian Knowledge Systems; Kapil Kapoor, A K.. Retrieved from [www.ikouniv.ac.in: https://www.ikouniv.ac.in/site/writereaddata/siteContent/202004120632194475nishi_Indian_Knowledge_Systems.pdf](http://www.ikouniv.ac.in/site/writereaddata/siteContent/202004120632194475nishi_Indian_Knowledge_Systems.pdf). 2020, April 11

practices and rituals for ecological balance and harmony, promoting peace and harmony with nature.

6. Mindfulness practices: Meditation should be encouraged as a habit, as it helps maintain inner peace and resilience.²²

Conclusion

The human race is constantly pursuing development without considering the need for peace, harmony, and sustainability. Violence, conflicts, and cold wars are leading to devastating circumstances. Peace is essential for meaningful and sustainable human development. Despite our advanced knowledge and resources in science and technology, we are neglecting the importance of inner strength and spiritual development. We have failed to understand the significance of values and morality, and as a result, we have reached a state of neurosis and paralysis. It's time for us to rediscover our inner strength and our true peaceful nature.

Indian traditions advocate for universal principles that foster future peace. As articulated by Swami Vivekananda, "Do not ask for peace; ask for strength." He posited that in the pursuit of peace, one may find it elusive; instead, the focus should be on cultivating strength. This strength serves as a vital remedy for overcoming various challenges. The Upaniṣads impart the essential concept of fearlessness, identifying fear as the root cause of misery, evil, and suffering. This raises critical inquiries: How can we cultivate fearlessness? What strategies can be employed to develop strength?

Knowledge of action (Karma) is essential for our daily activities, prompting reflection on the ethical dimensions of our actions and the potential transition from Dharma to Adharma. When one's inner voice signals that a particular action is immoral and may result in harm to others, it is imperative to halt that activity. Consequently, possessing ethical principles and a moral grounding is foundational to spirituality. The moral framework of life serves as the primary

²² Inner Peace, World Peace: Essays on Buddhism and Non-violence; Kraft, Kenneth (edit.); Buddhist-Christian Studies; University of Hawaii Press; Hawaii; 2001; Pp. 155-157

basis for attaining peace; while one may be a moral individual without spiritual orientation, genuine spirituality cannot exist without a moral underpinning. This moral grounding represents a fundamental prerequisite for peace. An advanced perspective shifts from Karma to Karma-yoga, recognizing that many of our actions are initially driven by self-interest—such as pursuing education, career, and familial welfare—centered on the concepts of "me" and "mine." However, the quest for collective peace requires a broader approach. Given the impermanence and constant evolution of the world, new challenges will inevitably arise. This raises the critical question of how peace can be achieved amid these difficulties. If peace is sought externally, it often remains elusive. This underscores the importance of epistemic understanding in relation to peace, suggesting that there is no intrinsic connection between the transient nature of the world and the eternal. The eternal and non-eternal cannot possess a meaningful relationship. Therefore, it is vital to explore how peace can be attained and to identify possible pathways toward its realization.

There are four ways to attain peace through the teachings of the Bhagavad Gīta. Peace can alleviate suffering and conflicts, and these are practical pieces of advice. First, being unselfish rather than selfish. This means doing things for others without thinking about one's own problems, which surprisingly leads to peace. Second, cultivating a love for God and humanity. The more we nurture this love, the more it will manifest in various forms that resonate with us. By loving the people around us, we can experience love in the form of humanity. This involves cultivating a general feeling of goodwill towards everyone, which is the cultivation of universal love. The third way is through a commitment to meditation. By exploring and understanding the silence around us and experiencing solitude, we can access the deep silence in the universe, leading to peace. The fourth practice involves inquiry into the nature of our existence. By pondering the question "Who am I?", we can realize that we are beyond material things. This knowledge gives us a profound understanding of 'Peace', which is the master key of the Indian Knowledge System (IKS).

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Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) in the Higher Education Curriculum: Prospects and Challenges¹

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Abstract

This article delves into the meaning and implication of the infusion of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) in curricula of higher education institutions. It outlines various state initiatives to formalize IKS mainly through the inauguration of specialized centres, funding of research projects and programmes of teacher training over the past few years, and shows how the unveiling of the National Education Policy (NEP) in 2020 only provided an impetus to teaching and learning IKS in educational institutions across India. The IKS thrust on regional languages and forefronting an 'Indian' perspective much in line with global discussions around managing students' cultural needs alongside curriculum delivery is praiseworthy and transformative. This article suggests that the stated objective of "integration" of IKS with modern curricula glosses over fundamental questions about knowledge and power, more so, as some of the challenges in this endeavour remain to be fully understood. Further, conversations around IKS's relations with "traditional knowledge" or "indigenous knowledge" will open multiple, interesting lines of inquiry.

Keywords:

Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS), higher education, National Education Policy (NEP), integration, traditional knowledge, indigenous knowledge

The National Education Policy (NEP) introduced in July 2020 seeks to provide a new vision and direction to the Indian education system. Whilst wide-ranging changes have been proposed in curriculum design and delivery, governance and leadership as well as financing and accreditation across the board; some striking transformations can be readily foreseen in primary, secondary, and

¹ This is a substantially revised version of my plenary address delivered in-person on 13 January 2024 at the international conference 'Reconnecting with roots: Indian Knowledge Systems for the 21st century' organized by Dr. BMN College of Home Science, Mumbai (12-13 January 2024).

tertiary education. The accent on multilingualism in the policy is reflected through the three-language formula in school education. Multidisciplinary education operationalized through the flexible four-year undergraduate curriculum with several entry and exit options and dissolution of the boundaries between technical and traditional colleges and the inception of MERUs (Multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities) seeks to recast the post-secondary teaching-learning ecosystem in a new mould. Although the implementation of NEP devolved on individual states, the Union government has been releasing a steady stream of new prescriptions since 2020.² The introduction of Indian Knowledge Systems (hereafter IKS) or Bharatiya Gyan Paramapara can be easily described as the most groundbreaking of all the many directives that have followed in the wake of NEP.

The IKS mandate runs through school to university education. Syllabi and teaching-learning material for IKS for grades XI and XII are currently under preparation and discussions underway on adding IKS elements to junior grades. But more than a year ago, detailed guidelines for incorporating IKS in undergraduate and postgraduate programmes were released (UGC, 2023b). There were separate guidelines to train and “orient” faculty in teaching IKS courses and several in-person training programmes and workshops have already been conducted. (UGC, 2023a; Jigeesh and Chakravarty, 2023). All students, at least in public universities, offering undergraduate and postgraduate programmes have to gather at least 5% of their mandated credits from these courses. Moreover, half of these credits are to be preferably sourced from IKS courses related to the student’s major discipline of specialization. Students of medicine, for instance, are expected to read a foundation course in Indian systems of Medicine followed by another elective course on a similar theme in the subsequent semester. Further, students are encouraged to undertake internships and field projects under IKS. IKS also figures prominently in Mulya Pravah 2.0, the curriculum for inculcating human values and professional ethics (Bhushan, 2023:23).

In this article, the focus will be on mapping the meaning and implication of IKS in the higher education landscape. I will begin with a summary of state initiatives

to institutionalize IKS through close reading and analyses of press releases and documents in the public domain. I will draw out the prospects and then point to a few challenges in operationalizing this initiative in colleges and universities across the country.

Institutionalization of IKS

In the NEP “the rich heritage of ancient and eternal Indian knowledge and thought” is lauded for providing the impetus for the proposed overhaul (p.4). The document makes a strong case for “knowledge of India” and teaching “Knowledge traditions”, although the popular acronym IKS is not listed in the policy. Nonetheless, research on IKS and efforts to build an institutional base has had a longer history. Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Gandhinagar’s Humanities and Social Sciences discipline initiated a semester course on Introduction to Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) in 2015–16. An unconventional, multi-instructor course with a different theme each year, the course has had seven editions so far.³ Department of Science and Technology’s (DST) Science and Heritage Initiative (SHRI) and Ministry of Human Resource Development’s (MHRD) Sandhi led to massive multi-institution, multidisciplinary collaborative research projects on IKS spearheaded by various university-level science and technology departments.⁴

An important milestone was the setting up of the IKS division by Ministry of Education with its office in the All-India Institute of Technical Education (AICTE)⁵ in October 2020.⁶ This was rapidly followed by the inauguration of an IKS centre in IIT Kharagpur in November 2020. Since then, several IKS centers have been established in various science-rich public institutions in the country.⁷ Many private universities have also set up similar centres.

³ <https://iks.iitgn.ac.in/>

⁴ <https://dst.gov.in/science-and-heritage-research-initiative-shri>, <https://prev.iitbhu.ac.in/rnd/pvns/activities/sandhi>

⁵ <https://iksindia.org>

⁶ <https://kgpchronicle.iitkgp.ac.in/centre-for-indian-knowledge-system-at-iit-kharagpur/>

⁷ <https://www.iitm.ac.in/happenings/press-releases-and-coverages/iit-madras-launches-centre-study-indian-knowledge-systems>.

In February 2021, the IKS division launched a series of lectures, conferences and other outreach programmes in conjunction with the Ministry of Culture headlined “Dhara: An Ode to Indian Knowledge Systems” to initiate popular conversations around IKS. Organized under the aegis of the Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsava to commemorate 75 years of Indian independence, at various universities and academic institutions, the “Dhara” programmes drew academics, students, practitioners as well as the lay public to the IKS initiative.⁸ Around the same time, the IKS division invited proposals for setting up centers in various academic institutions. The next two years saw rapid expansions with successive calls inviting proposals for Research Centres (Bharatiya Gyan Samposhana Gaveshana Kendram), Bhasha (language) Centres (Bharatiya Gyan Samposhana Bhasha Kendram) and teacher training centres (Bharatiya Gyan Samposhana Shikshak Prashikshana Kendram) (Iftikhar, 2023).

By early 2024, 27 research centres, 17 teacher-training centres and 7 bhasha centres were set up (IKS Newsletter, 2024). More importantly, IKS division invited research projects with clearly identified priority areas accompanying each call. The themes were expanded with each call. While mathematics, astronomy, chemical technology featured in the first few calls, successive calls invited projects in fields as diverse as sustainable agriculture and food practices, water management to IKS approaches in sociology and psychology, amongst others. Students are also partaking in the IKS initiative through the IKS internship programme (Bharatiya Gyana Samvahini). The IKS division’s dynamic website populated with resources like textbooks, documentaries, webinar recordings, details of IKS training programmes and reports of country-wide initiatives in the field provides a good overview of the contours of IKS.

Most importantly, teaching-learning IKS for undergraduate students all over the country was enabled through online foundational courses on the government’s online MOOC platform SWAYAM in July 2023 (Kachroo, 2023). AICTE began offering IKS as non-credit courses in 2020 although it has now provided model curricula for as many as seven elective courses (Ghosh, 2022).⁹ In the past year,

8 <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1903868>

9 <https://fdp-si.aicte-india.org/download/Elective%20Courses%20for%20Minor%20Degree%20in%20IKS%20v9.pdf>

most colleges and universities around the country have begun piecing together their own IKS curricula drawing upon the UGC guidelines aiming to honour the NEP mandate.¹⁰

Teacher training and coaching for curriculum delivery has been initiated through the flagship Malviya Teacher Training Programme.¹¹ The UGC released its guidelines for conducting training programmes for university faculty to orient and prepare them to teach IKS (2023 a) although almost all NEP – centred orientation and sensitization programmes include an IKS component.¹² In addition to training teachers through specialized programmes and workshops, run through UGC–overseen Human Resource Development Centres (HRDCs), the UGC unveiled a series of tiered programmes for faculty in higher educational institutions. According to its notification dated 9th August 2024, the UGC has imparted basic training to 1000 teachers, while another 193 have received advanced training which will enable them to teach other teachers. Known as “Master trainers”, the latter have also received “discipline-specific training in IKS”, which ostensibly further equips them to train others.¹³

Prospects

There is an increasing recognition all over the world that students learn better in culturally-sensitive learning environments. The term “culturally compatible” pedagogies has been used particularly when arguing for improving academic performance of minority students (Native American / Hawaiian / Black/ Latino). Gloria Ladson- Billings (1995) uses the term “culturally relevant pedagogy” to steer student learning in culture-affirming ways, more so, as she recognizes that successful students from minority backgrounds (in her fieldwork Black American) generally experience difficulties “fitting in” and tend to become social isolates. She argues that it is essential that teachers understand culture (their

10 <https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/karnataka/2023/Apr/13/indian-knowledge-systemsto-focus-on-sanskrit-texts-indian-math-proofs-2565728.html>

11 https://mmc.ugc.ac.in/Home/Indian_Knowledge_System

12 See, for example, Sharda Srinivasan’s lecture in the NRC-IUCAA playlist, <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL3jLiVc5sr3NPRkoKpxo78gQTpDnYlfx>

13 https://www.ugc.gov.in/pdfnews/7529940_IKS-MT.pdf

own and others) and the way it functions in education, although her insights are admittedly directed at training teachers to achieve success with Black students. Not only aimed at bridging the gap between home and school, it also underlines the significance of pedagogies being relevant to the cultural experiences, practices and home environments of young people. Django Paris (2012) uses the term “culturally sustaining pedagogies” to argue for the necessity of supporting multiple linguistic and cultural competencies as part of the democratic project of education.

The significance of embedding curricula and pedagogy in the “Indian” ethos has been particularly emphasized in the NEP. Instilling pride in the civilizational achievements of ancient Indians, primarily through recounting Indian contributions to modern disciplines is one of the key objectives of the generic IKS courses. India’s continuous living traditions can indeed be instructive to instill cultural awareness and provide students with both identity and belonging.

UNESCO has pioneered an innovative programme of teaching and learning with living heritage, albeit in school education.¹⁴ Based on the insight that living heritage shapes identities, builds a sense of belonging and self-esteem, teachers across Europe and Asia are integrating living heritage elements through innovative pedagogies. In Nepal, for instance, students studied the traditional terracotta jars used to filter water, whilst Sri Lankan students compared ancient water management systems with their modern equivalent. The UGC guidelines, similarly, accord primacy to teaching about living heritage elements, say for example, Ayurveda or Vastushastra. Nonetheless, a more productive and challenging approach is teaching with living heritage wherein living heritage provides examples, content, pedagogic tool, or method to teach other subjects. For example, a schoolteacher in Brussels (Belgium) used the age-old Japanese Hanga printing tradition practised by one of his student’s grandfather in art education as well as to teach concepts in mathematics like geometric transformation-reflection, translation and rotation.¹⁵ As an example, a biology class on molluscs could be connected to the craft of mother-of-pearl inlay.

¹⁴ <https://ich.unesco.org/en/clearinghouse-education>

¹⁵ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zyayr3MmIf4&ab_channel=UNESCO. Other examples here, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/resources-for-teachers-01180>

The craft's impact on local employment and economy could be addressed in subjects like social studies, history, or philosophy. The students could discuss the environmental issues related with raising molluscs. One can think of any number of living traditions being brought up in class from students' diverse experiences to promote inclusion, tolerance, and intercultural dialogue among learners. IKS offers a similar opportunity of a deep dive into multiple Indian traditions to both create new subject matter as well as novel ways of organizing learning in the classroom. Mulya Pravaha 2.0 (UGC, 2023 c) on designing Value -added Courses (VAC) for the undergraduate curriculum if read alongside the IKS mandate, also affirm the significance of schooling students in intercultural understanding and global citizenship.

The NEP offers detailed guidelines for the introduction of multilingual education in schools. At the undergraduate and postgraduate levels, the accent is not only on offering degrees in various regional languages, but also offering options to students to engage with Indian languages through school and university education. NEP's liberal arts approach means that the continued learning of language will be possible (and encouraged) throughout the degree programmes whether in science, engineering or medicine. Along with the focus on various modern and living classical languages (Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam, Telugu and Odia), a major policy shift is the recommendation of accommodating Sanskrit as part of the three-language formula in school education and through references to Sanskrit texts, literature and knowledge-systems at higher education curricula.

In UGC's IKS curriculum, Sanskrit and Sanskrit literature has been decidedly promoted through the recounting of several texts of classical Sanskrit. The model curricula of Indian mathematics and Indian Astronomy are also replete with readings and references to commentaries and texts in the Sanskrit language (UGC, 2023b). Similarly, in the guidelines for conducting training programmes for university faculty to orient and prepare them to teach IKS, all the courses seem to be modelled around Sanskrit texts (UGC, 2023a). Sanskrit is an important world language and offers a world of delights in its literature, but one had hoped to hear more in these guidelines about strategies to overcome practical pedagogical challenges of learning Sanskrit as well as negotiating its complicated social history (Gupta and Pradhan:2021). It might be argued that mainstreaming

Sanskrit and treating it as a “modern language” and “taught in ways that are... contemporarily relevant” (NEP: 14) is a means to democratise Sanskrit education and make it more inclusive.

The model curriculum for Foundational course in IKS prominently features Indian literature and “Indian language sciences”. Since all knowledge is linguistically and socially embedded, teaching IKS in Indian languages itself can be a powerful affirmation of the rich linguistic heritage of our country. One can read the pronouncements in policy documents alongside government initiatives like the increase of over 20% (over the previous year) in budgetary allocation in 2023-2024 for teaching, promoting, and encouraging the youth in regional languages.¹⁶ Efforts are underway to impart training in professional courses like engineering and medicine in regional languages. In 2022, three MBBS subjects – anatomy, biochemistry and physiology were taught in Hindi in all thirteen government medical colleges in Bhopal, in a bid to eventually provide full-fledged medical degrees in Hindi.¹⁷ Engineering education in regional languages has, however, seen greater success since the AICTE has permitted ten states to use eight regional languages, and several engineering books in Marathi language have already been released. Similarly, various nation-wide entrance tests like CUET (Combined University Entrance Test for undergraduate programmes), NEET-UG (National Entrance cum Eligibility Test for admission to undergraduate medical courses) and JEE-Mains (Joint Entrance Examination for admission to engineering courses) have begun to be conducted in as many as thirteen Indian languages.¹⁸ There is a drive to create technical dictionaries, textbooks and teaching-learning material in regional languages. The Commission for Scientific and Technical Terminology (CSTT), which was founded in 1961 and has been consistently working to standardise technical terms in various Indian languages, recently launched a unique website, www.shabd.education.gov.in to provide ready access to technical terms in all 22 official Indian languages. In January 2024, the UGC invited expressions of interest for preparing textbooks for undergraduate

¹⁶ The budgetary allocation was Rs. 300.7 crore. See, <https://www.freepressjournal.in/education/indian-knowledge-system-grant-goes-up-by-100-regional-language-education-promoted>

¹⁷ <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/madhya-pradesh-to-introduce-more-hindi-mbbs-textbooks-minister-4226967>

¹⁸ <https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2023/Feb/21/interview--priority-to-local-languages-is-a-game-changer-says-mos-education-2549422.html>

teaching in the arts and humanities, social sciences, commerce and science in twelve languages – Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi, Odia, Punjabi, Tamil, Telugu, and Urdu, indicating considerable political will in steering this endeavour (Pandey, 2024). On the one hand, these initiatives aim to diminish the importance of English and the English-centredness of our higher education system, on the other, they will undoubtedly enrich and energize regional languages. Despite the challenges of inadequate study material, unavailability of compendiums containing translations of technical terminology in various languages, scholarly journals and even trained language- teachers, one can be upbeat about the promise inherent in this initiative. If genuinely supported through the infusion of resources, it might set off all Indian languages on a new pair of wings.

Challenges

The NEP unambiguously advocates an 'India-centred' education system (Tilak, 2019:688) and IKS is conceived as a key instrument in formalizing this vision. An IKS scholar describes it as an "umbrella discipline" (Tripathy, 2024). In the guidelines, IKS appears eclectic and encompassing "...of the systematized disciplines of Knowledge which were developed to a high degree of sophistication in India from ancient times and all of the traditions and practises that the various communities of India—including the tribal communities—have evolved, refined and preserved over generations". (UGC, 2023 b:5). The eminent Sanskritist, Ganesh Thite (2023) similarly recognizes unique Indian disciplines like painting, music, aesthetics, etc which need to be conserved but disapproves of compulsory enforcement of these subjects in the curriculum. Ganesh Devy (2020, 43) posits that any single and comprehensive formulation of an "Indian body of knowledge" remains impossible. The caste system engendered a splintered vision of knowledge and labour which meant that the whole corpus of "non-canonised knowledge traditions" belonging to large sections of 'knowledge producers' –the adivasis and "untouchables" –transmitted and disseminated orally, remained unclaimed and unrecognized in pre-modern India.

Significantly, in government pronouncements, IKS is also tasked with offering innovative solutions to contemporary problems (IKS India, 2024). Finding alternatives

to “white”, Western ways of knowing, drawing upon ancient wisdom and knowledge from non-Western cultures to mitigate pressing concerns is quietly being researched and taught in many quarters. To cite an example, the North-West University has introduced a cross-disciplinary course on African socio-political thought in global perspective, on healing, water management, peace and conflict resolution, cultural and bio-diversity conservation, in response to local developmental needs. (Devy et al 2014: 4). The examples all over the world are slowly multiplying.¹⁹

For nearly quarter of a century, traditional knowledge (hereafter TK) and practices of local communities.²⁰ have been recognised to bear profound insights for mitigating several global crises. Formalized through the Global Convention on Biological Diversity (1992), TK offers alternative visions of nature and biodiversity preservation. India has been a prominent voice in various global forums like World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) urging protection of the intellectual rights of traditional communities and fair usage of bio- information (Singh, 2007). A long-running project run by the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) is the pioneering Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL), a dynamic database accessible in various languages. Currently comprising over 418,885 formulations used in various traditional medicine systems, it aims to provide ready information to global patenting organizations in a bid to prevent biopiracy of India’s traditional knowledge.²¹ However, one is not sure as to how this deep-running engagement with traditional knowledge systems informs existing iterations of IKS. The interdisciplinary Indian Journal of Traditional Knowledge²² does not feature in any of the reading lists appended in the UGC documents while the two-decade Centre for Traditional Knowledge Systems²³ seems to be languishing in neglect.

19 The Science and Indigenous Knowledge Systems project at the University of the Western Cape has done pioneering work to produce teaching materials. (Keane, 2015)

20 <https://uis.unesco.org/en/glossary-term/traditional-knowledge>.

21 <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1809661>

22 <http://op.niscair.res.in/index.php/IJTK>

23 <http://www.ignou.ac.in/ignou/aboutignou/icc/ctks/introduction>. The Centre was established at Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) in 2010.

More recently, “indigenous knowledge” is in the spotlight for fields as diverse as climate change, fishery and forest management. Simply stated, indigenous knowledge (hereafter IK) is the knowledge acquired by local/ indigenous people²⁴ through the accumulation of experiences, informal experiments and intimate understanding of the environment and results from communities having resided in close contact with nature. Shunned for years for being incompatible with science and scientific paradigms, it is increasingly being recognized as a valid way of knowing the world (World Bank, 1998). In fact, it is being lauded for offering new insights into the relationship that humans can establish with nature (Walsh et al., 2023)

A related and highly debated topic concerns whether IK can be “integrated” or amalgamated with scientific knowledge to find solutions for practical problems. A very strong scholarly position argues that both these knowledge systems are incommensurable; since they do not share any epistemological ground. IK has its own rules about processes of knowing, which diverge from the rules of science. Further, integration is impeded because of hierarchical power relations between indigenous societies and the government, and between indigenous cultures and the dominant western culture (Mistry and Berardi, 2016). However, other scholars argue that knowledge integration can be successful if the culture-knowledge link is acknowledged and power is equally shared with all the knowledge producers (Bohensky and Maru, 2011).

Another underlying issue in IK’s “integration” with science frequently involves a validation process that is based exclusively on scientific criteria (especially when IK and Western science diverge, the latter is chosen as the final authority). In this scenario, some aspects of IK are validated and accepted while others are discarded. The process of evaluation itself is problematic, rather scholars urge a respectful acknowledgment of IK’s distinctiveness and epistemology (Mistry and Berardi, 2016). Further, it helps to be reminded that all forms of knowledge (including scientific knowledge) are produced by socially –situated actors in response to context-specific challenges and are value-laden. This view also

24 https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf. No single definition of indigenous peoples has been accepted by any UN-system body. India is not a signatory to this convention. See, <https://sdg.humanrights.dk/en/instrument/signees/28>

counters the conceptualization of knowledge as a formal, codifiable, and easily transferable commodity based on managerial rationalities. (Puri, 2007:357)

How can these debates on the “integration” of IK with scientific knowledge illustrate and clarify some of the issues around IKS? I cite an example. The NEP proposal (p.50) that the mainstream academic curriculum of allopathic medical education be informed by traditional health care knowledge in AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, and Homeopathy) has been met with demands of producing “science-based evidence for integration of traditional medicine” (Chandna and Sharma, 2020). But, this plea and other exhortations that promise validation of IKS through “empirical research and scientific inquiry” (Kumar, 2024; also Agrawal, 1997), are riddled with conflicts. The tendency to seek validation in “science” takes for granted that the latter is correct or superior. What if we expanded the boundaries of what knowledge we valued to embrace a deeper and broader understanding of the world and ourselves? This would necessarily inject scepticism about glib pronouncements of a “seamless integration of Indian traditional knowledge with modern subjects”.²⁵ Can different ways of knowing not be individually and equally valuable?²⁶ The project of “integration”, in this way, would not be conceived as the melding of different items into one “unified” system or nudging IKS to become “more scientific”—but by conceiving of integration as a process that honours the originality and core identity of each knowledge system (Mazzocchi, 2018:29). As a final point, the complexities around “integration” are not fully understood and are further obfuscated by the paucity of information about how different knowledge systems will be combined in pedagogy and practice.

Finally, there seems to be little discussion on how the common curriculum of IKS will be received across the diverse regions in a heterogenous society like India. The curriculum, we now know, is read in different ways, according to how students are placed in social relationships and culture (Apple, 1993) There is then an urgent need for the common curriculum to explain itself and to “acknowledge

25 7017038_Public-Notice-IKS.pdf (ugc.gov.in)

26 This social constructionist view of science has come under fire from scholars like Meera Nanda. (Nanda:2005).

its own roots” so that it does not homogenise all students. Only when it recognizes the subjectivity of students will it empower them in a democratic manner.

Conclusion

This short article has offered a critical appraisal of the mandatory introduction of IKS in higher education curricula in public universities across the country. It begins with an overview of the state’s efforts at its incorporation and accommodation in formal institutional spaces. By spotlighting, studying, and revering the civilizational achievements of ancient Indians, IKS seeks to infuse students with cultural awareness and critical appreciation of the “knowledge” of India; and its multiple civilizational voices. However, the main challenge lies in a rethink as to how IKS does not get limited to an “add and stir” approach of extolling Indians’ successes in disciplines as diverse as architecture, metallurgy, health sciences to fine arts and economy but creates a genuine expansion of horizons through radically innovative pedagogy and practices. A realignment of the purposes and structures of learning will make education truly holistic, experiential, and enjoyable, as enunciated by NEP-2020.

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Indian Knowledge Systems: Phule–Ambedkarian Perspective

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Introduction:

While implementing the action plan of the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) mandates a theoretical component called the Indian Knowledge System (IKS). This policy decision to create new subjects titled “Indian knowledge system” and establish them as mandatory courses in our curriculum will have essential implications in shaping higher education in the coming years. Prima facie, it appears that the policy of IKS is being decided by a specific type of ideology influenced by the religious majoritarianism of our country. Questions regarding the nature of what can be considered as “Indian knowledge” are at the forefront. Knowledge systems in India are diverse, each with peculiar histories and contexts, hence the complication of homogenising this diversity as an ‘Indian Knowledge System.’

The positions of diverse traditions are sometimes mutually contradictory and disagreeing with one another, for example, the diversity in positions of the Vedic and non-Vedic traditions. It raises concerns whether one can be unbiased in defining something as ‘Indian’ knowledge. The fact that this has generated much debate in the Indian intelligentsia is a positive sign. This review discusses some of these precise theoretical issues that follow from the Phule–Ambedkarian perspective of caste-based exclusions.

‘Indian Knowledge’: Systematic framework of Vedic Hegemonic Knowledge–Tradition or Multicultural Debate and Dialogue?

The first theoretical issue regards terminology. The NEP 2020 draft, paragraph 4.23, page 14¹, uses the term Indian Knowledge ‘System’ (IKS). The English draft uses the word ‘system’ while the Government of India’s Ministry of Education has translated its section into Hindi as The *Bhāratīya Jñyāna Paramparā*.² ‘Tradition’ is the English translation or alternative word for the Sanskrit–Hindi word “Parampara.”(परंपरा) The word ‘system’ is translated as ‘Pranali’(प्रणाली) in Hindi. The Ministry of Education’s website defines tradition: ‘Embracing the rich heritage and lineage of Indian knowledge systems, the IKS Division aims to uphold and carry forward the wisdom passed down through generations. The goal is to highlight the continuous unbroken knowledge traditions of Bhārata since time immemorial.’(p.3)³ The word ‘system’ means structured methodology and classification scheme to access the available corpus of knowledge. (Mahajan and other: 2023, 9) Thus, the currently scattered Indigenous and local knowledge must be collected, grouped and arranged systematically to become a ‘system’, a distinct and organised discipline. The attempt is to establish it as a scientific discipline in the modern education system, creating new disciplines and subjects and establishing them in the curriculum. IKS has a vision of combining traditional wisdom with modern knowledge.⁴ ‘Bharatiya’ Knowledge Systems and Traditions, also known as Indian Knowledge Systems and Traditions, refer to the vast and diverse body of knowledge, philosophy, sciences, arts, and spiritual traditions developed and evolved in the Indian subcontinent over several millennia. These systems and traditions have been integral to the cultural fabric of India and continue to play a significant role in shaping its society, thought processes, and way of life. Propagation of IKS rests because the “Western criteria” are not the only benchmark by which another cultural knowledge should be evaluated. Although the word ‘traditional’ sometimes conveys ‘primitive’ or ‘outdated’ in the sense

1 https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/NEP_Final_English_0.pdf accessed on 20th September 2024 at 9.10am.

2 <https://iksindia.org/about.php>

3 https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/nep_update/NEP_final_HI_0.pdf accessed on 20th September 2024 at 9.10am. /<https://iksindia.org/about.php>

4 <https://iksindia.org/about.php> accessed on 23th September 2024

of 'pre-modern', many traditional sciences and technologies were considered "advanced" even by standards set by Western scientific practitioners. Yet, they are guilty of homogenising diverse ancient traditions, folk culture, and classics as a unified heritage. Yet, the question is whether the current IKS approach considers the contradiction and diversity of the indigenous system or whether they are also guilty of reconciling them with mainstream education practices. Hence, the concerns of understanding IKS. While reviving the ancient tradition of knowledge and organising it into a system, the two words 'Tradition'-'Parampara.' (परंपरा) and 'System' are confused. Understanding traditional and modern knowledge systems requires their identification with different epistemologies. The word system (as explained earlier) signifies an enclosure of knowledge and thought. At the same time, tradition signifies the continuity of a particular ideology and practice. It is a symbol of the past in changing times for future generations. Hence, there is confusion in implementation; is it to be treated as a 'system of knowledge' or a 'tradition' that demands continuity (and revival) of the past?

One of the dangers with the acceptance of IKS as 'tradition' would be the continuity of the caste system that is widely recognised today as an unfair practice as opposed to the constitutional morality of the country. Not all traditions in India have been equally beneficial to all. By considering different caste groups' dominance, subordination, and exploitation, the Indian value system of equality adopted in the Indian Constitution promotes traditions applicable to human values in the field of knowledge. Hence, a practice such as Sati or Caste-based hierarchy cannot be considered a tradition; its criticism of violating fundamental rights and constitutional values of freedom, equality, and justice is well accepted. The challenge is if, in the name of IKS, such practices are being sublimated/ rerouted. The danger of them re-appearing as 'traditional knowledge systems' cannot be ruled out; hence, discussing what constitutes IKS and implementing the same in curriculums must be protected from such dangers. According to the guidelines of NEP, while determining the core of Indian knowledge, Vedas, six darshans, and other Vedic literature have been considered major streams (the table of contents makes this sufficiently clear)⁵. The ancient Vedic culture also sanctioned practices based on gender and caste exclusions. Hence, there

5 https://www.ugc.gov.in/pdfnews/6436045_Guidelines-IKS-in-HE-Curricula.pdf accessed on 30th September 2024, 11.28am.

have been objections to Vedic traditions (Dr Ambedkar and Phule's philosophy appear as pioneering critiques of the same). Since an explicit rejection of the discriminatory practices inherent to Vedic traditions is not mentioned in the description nor guidelines of the implementation of the IKS, there is always the danger that caste-based discriminatory practices may find a way into curriculums and pedagogies as Indian 'traditions'.

While there is acknowledgement of other knowledge systems, such as Charvakas, Jains and Buddhists, it is seldom studied as protest ideologies (against the Vedic systems). Instead, they are spiritualised and studied as religions independent of the social and political context, making little room for explicit rejection of caste-based discriminatory knowledge and opening the possibility of caste-based exploitative systems to creep into the knowledge systems as Indian knowledge.

Yet, there is potential and value in studying diverse Indian traditions with their fluidity (rather than a homogenous whole); if NEP-2020 emphasises this nature of Indian knowledge, many possibilities for progress and development can be opened. Knowledge creation and development do not occur in a vacuum; studying it through the dialectical process of social and political development over centuries will always be helpful. In the Indian context, while constructing a 'system' such as the Indian Knowledge System, it would be most important to consider the multiple layers of ideologies that have shaped knowledge, both ancient and modern, caste being one of the central components. By centralising the study of Vedic and post-Vedic literature and institutions within the framework of IKS, not only are the foundations of pre-Vedic and Vedic conflicting streams conveniently ignored, but the glorifying roles of Vedic and post-Vedic literature and institutions made obsolete and regressive in contemporary changing society. For example, claiming an advanced form of scientific knowledge in Vedic times (based on deductions from religious beliefs and mythologies) without discussing the inequality-ridden exploitative society of the glorious Vedic age as discussed by Ambedkar in his work *Who Were the Shudras?*)

At this point, Mahatma Phule and Dr Ambedkar's critique on eradicating caste inequality during the colonial period becomes essential. It is not merely a mindless imitation of knowledge from Western traditions that criticised modern

capitalist development. They adopted those ideas to develop constructive frameworks against oppressive colonial ideology and internal discriminatory cultural practices and towards social emancipation. There is desired room for similar liberal, critical engagement with Indian traditions rather than a nostalgic return to tradition resulting in a regressive, non-democratic educational system.

A multilingual and multicultural country like India has a tradition of many streams of knowledge that cannot be confined to assimilated knowledge in forms of homogenised 'systems' or 'traditions'. It is not immediately clear whether policymakers want to revive the knowledge of ancient India, introduce new practices, and build it into an organisational system. If so, which of the various streams/ traditions of ancient expertise should be given centrality to construct that 'system'? The traditions of many streams of knowledge are not closed systems but are constantly in flux. Although many traditions are to be studied with equal justice, it is necessary to highlight their similarities while clarifying their differences and conflicts. How does one resist the hegemonic tendencies that become systemic and embrace the dialectic nature of systems that make more room for the fluidity and flux that characterise Indian knowledge systems? This remains a challenge. The policymakers must consider how the historical study of multiple religions, philosophies, sects, and folk traditions can be done from the perspective of Indian nationality without assimilating into one another. The need to emphasise 'unity in diversity' presents the challenge of making the value of equality (not a particular religious, social or cultural tradition) the foundation of all diversity. The danger of making the Vedic tradition the basis of unity in diversity is to continue the knowledge about India during the British colonial period, which had three points in common; firstly, The Vedic tradition of the Aryas is considered the mainstream of Indian history and culture. Secondly, they constructed a Hindu image of ancient India and defined it as non-contradictory and culturally unified. Thirdly, they ignored the struggle of Jains, Buddhists and other rebel sects with Brahmanical religion and the Varna-Jati (caste) system. (Bagade: 2006, 80-84). The idea of Hindu society as a national society arose from these three principles. It created an image of Hindu Rashtra, i.e., an Indian nation made up of Brahmin-centric Hindu history and culture. The English-educated middle-class intellectuals born out of the caste system came from the upper caste. Thus, they applied that knowledge through the dual struggle of their desire to preserve and

reform the Brahminical tradition and instil a sense of 'Indianness' against the British rule in India.

Unless the concerns mentioned in this section are considered, the values of IKS will likely be shaped by the above-mentioned historical caste-power relations. This requires an inquiry and questioning of the idea of 'Indianness'. To answer the same, we must engage with what is the theoretical understanding of the Indian nation-state framework. How exactly have policymakers seen this concept of 'Indianness'? These points are subject to scrutiny. It is true that 'Indianness' is derived from a multi-linear ancient history and culture, but it was shaped more and more during the British colonial period. The idea of 'Indianness' has evolved through socio-religious reform movements, anti-colonial political freedom movements, and later in the constitutional welfare state system (post-independence India). It advocates social and religious harmony, respect for diversity, and scientific vision. (Khilnani, 2012)

After liberally embracing diversity, the modern Indian elite Enlightenment tradition advocated the polycentricity of art, literature, culture, historical, scientific thought and practice in the Indian milieu. However, regarding the idea of India, it seems that it has absorbed the vision of Western modern values of liberty, equality, and fraternity and balanced it with the timeless human values and ideas of Indian culture and tradition. The same is reflected in our constitutional values and Preamble. Adopting socialist liberalism involved integrating diverse traditions; for example, in Nehru's socialist vision, the idea of 'Ganga-Jamuni Tehjeeb' continued to be constructed in a conceptual structure. (Garud and Desai: 2022,118-19). At the other extreme is the cultural nationalist model, which rejects the model of secular democratic socialism as a Western or colonial project and glorifies the caste-based hegemonic structure in the native model. It also directly leads to the exaltation of the upper caste and class authority. The aspirations and life experiences of the exploited-oppressed marginalised classes are most often excluded or find minimal representation. Oppressed classes, castes, races, and women are subsumed under the control of dominant groups and explained as '*Samarasatā*.' (Harmony). Though it has spiritual implications, materially, its expression is observed as unequal power relations of exploitation and oppression. Indian politics has rapidly changed over the past few decades

as it grows more inclined towards the ideology of independent monocultural nationalism. It proposes the idea of 'Bharat', 'Akahand Bharat', inspired by the idea of a religious majoritarianism.

The narrative of religious and cultural nationalism rejects the idea of India in its polycentric nature and aims towards constructing a culturally centralised dominant system. Is the project of the Indian knowledge system that strives towards a new India a step in the same direction? In the guidelines for incorporating Indian Knowledge in Higher Education Curricula issued by the University Grants Commission (UGC) in March 2023, the idea of 'Bharatvarsha' was highlighted. However, in the context of ancient Indian geography, there is always a danger of understanding it in a religious majoritarian sense, hence the urgent need to examine and seek clarification regarding the meaning, context and practice of 'Indianness'.⁶

Unless the idea of Indianness is located in constitutional values of liberalism separated from cultural nationalism, there will always be a danger of a new discourse reinforcing the traditional dominance of the upper caste and related principles and practices of inequality. The idea of 'Indianness' in its secular and democratic sense may be threatened as it may spell the revival of the theological hierarchical foundation of society. (Patil: 1993, 297-98) Here, a discussion of Phule-Ambedkar's ideology becomes pertinent.

According to Phule-Ambedkar's ideology, the philosophical basis of Indianness is to destroy the systems of inequalities, pertinent being caste discrimination, towards building an equal structure. It aims to reframe knowledge systems as emancipatory and egalitarian, which would count as Indian wisdom (Omvedt: 2003, 19-20). Most of the colonial oriental literature emphasised the Hindu-Brahminical literature as 'Indian' and brought forth a communal reading of Indian history by dividing it into Hindu and Muslim periods. While the Indian nationalist movement countered the unfavourable 'Indian backwardness' narrative, it seldom found powerful resistance in its lopsided version of the idea of 'Indian' as that which was hierarchical and unequal in nature. Unfortunately, this approach

⁶ https://www.ugc.gov.in/pdfnews/6436045_Guidelines-IKS-in-HE-Curricula.pdf accessed on 25th September 2024 PP-10

continues in the post-colonial literature, too. The Phule–Ambedkar–Periyar tradition and philosophy deconstructed this knowledge and brought forth the contradictions and conflicts of the various traditions. (Chentharassery: 2000, 90–104)

Yet, the idea of IKS in NEP 2020 seems to be more inclined towards an orientalist's glorified version of ancient Indian history and culture, which may be more suited to be termed as Hinduism rather than 'Indian'. The Orientalist presentation of knowledge and culture of ancient India was based on Sanskrit texts. Max Muller, W. J. Wilkinson, Colebrooke, William Jones, and Muir, to name a few, established the knowledge of Vedic literature, the Puranas, Ramayana, Mahabharata, *Manusmriti* as central to Indian Hindu knowledge. As the colonial rule rested on the secondary power of the upper castes, the British contributed more to the learning and teaching languages like Sanskrit and gave a central place to Sanskrit-based knowledge. The NEP and UGC drafts have also prioritised the study of the Sanskrit language and seem to reflect this Oriental ideology. Ancient studies of other Prakrit languages– Pali, Ardhamagadhi, and Paisachi have not been equally important⁷. Let's consider the contents of what is accounted as "Foundational Literature of Indian Civilisation". Under this main heading, there is more focus on Vedic literature and Sanskrit language. The drafts claim that the Sanskrit language has knowledge-based concepts and branches of knowledge such as science, philosophy, art, and literature. This rules out the argument that Sanskrit was the language of the Brahmin priestly class; women and persons from lower castes were denied access to the language. Thus, it may not be counted as "Indian" in an inclusionary sense; instead, it was a reinforcement of the Brahminical system that separates labour and knowledge, a means of exploitation (Ambedkar: 1987, 67). The sanctity of Sanskrit only reinforces the religious sanctity that insists on social inequality. Undoubtedly, it has value as a language, yet can it be the focus of constructing it as an Indian Knowledge System is an important question to consider.

Early Indologists organised their knowledge of Indian culture from Vedic literature in Sanskrit. They did not consider the anti-Brahmanical stance behind Sanskrit, which was developed by the Mahayana movement during the Buddhist period.

⁷ https://www.ugc.gov.in/pdfnews/6436045_Guidelines-IKS-in-HE-Curricula.pdf accessed on 25th September 2024 pp.10–12

Incorporating the Buddhist stream into the Hindu structure, the Buddha's varna caste opposition was treated as an internal subordinate line of opposition. (Mookerji: 1947, 336-37) Indologists refer to ancient India as Hindu India, with the Varna system as an ideal society. The ancient Aryan culture was considered the central Indian culture. (Bagade: 2006, 46-52) (Pennington:2005,111&117). Despite the archaeological discoveries of the Indus Civilization, most later Indologists still needed to change that view. What remains to be seen is whether the introduction of IKS will spell a repetition of some of the same exclusions.

While the issue of decolonisation of Indian knowledge remains one of the primary commitments for the NEP through the introduction of IKS, what seems to be exhibited is a complex dilemma of countering what is believed as 'Western' on the one hand and dealing with problems of inequality and injustice within what is considered 'Indian' primary challenge being caste (though Indian patriarchal value of gender, class, language, region and religion are also related and important difficulties). It may only translate into a battle of power between the and interest between upper castes and lower castes in India; its pace and nature of interest may depend on the direction given to the project of Indian knowledge. Such polarization is not healthy for the democratic future of the country.

This discussion takes us to another critical aspect- understanding the lens to view India's diversity. The widespread conflicts on citizenship and rights based on diversity caste, gender, region, language and religion do not present an encouraging picture. There is a need for a healthy understanding of society. While NEP aims to build an educated understanding of diversity, it remains trapped in a monolithic cultural knowledge of the country. (Chatterjee: 1992, 10) There is a selective understanding of what constitutes ancient, medieval and modern, with emphasis throughout all fields of sciences, ethics, languages and fine arts on preserving Vedic studies and their legacies. Even where traditions such as Bhakti and Sufi traditions are acknowledged, it is discussed as an independent universal knowledge rather than as an ideological awakening of the oppressed against the caste system and other exploitative practices based on caste hierarchy. There is little justification as to why there must be a preference for the Vedic systems and practices (such as the Gurukul system) over more egalitarian traditions, such as

the Buddhist traditions. While there is a reference to such traditions, they remain at the periphery of what constitutes IKS.

Lastly, this review makes a case that if one genuinely aspires to uplift the marginalised through education, then the Phule-Ambedkar philosophy of knowledge would provide valuable frameworks for building a more democratic system of knowledge. In *Buddha and his Dhamma*, Ambedkar argues for equality (Samanta), compassion (karuna), joy (mudita), Maitri (love) and rationality as the basis of a just society; these values can prove helpful to constructing what can be termed as an Indian Knowledge system.

It can form the basis of emancipation and empowerment of the oppressed victims and marginalised groups as knowledge systems will no longer be confined to Vedic traditions that the historically oppressed communities had to submit to. In the field of Indian knowledge, this offers the crucial dimension of critical reasoning and calls for a careful examination of tradition, literature and culture in a way that can lead to emancipation. The term Phule-Ambekarite movement is not merely a historical period but a social movement. It does not simply point towards a social conflict; it was also a process of development of knowledge systems, where there is a review of old traditional knowledge and the creation of new knowledge. The Phule-Ambedkarite movement has struggled to emancipate the *Shudra* and *Ati-shudra* castes from the caste system. It has also been a battle for women's liberation against caste-related patriarchy. At the same time, it developed into a field of epistemological inquiry concerned with dismantling the caste and patriarchal historical sociological realities. (Rege: 2010, 92-94)

The Phule-Ambedkarite movement picked up inspirations and ideas from modern Western thinkers who supported rationalism, scientific vision and egalitarianism. The same was read in the context of dismantling the caste system in India. Phule brought forth an ideal critique of anti-Brahmin traditions and values. (O'Hanlon:1985,135-36,140-156) and Dr. Ambedkar continued the legacy of Phule and innovated the Buddhist movement. (Anand: 2003,62). This role of carefully selecting which parts of the Indian tradition to reject and which to accept to build a just society is noteworthy and much needed today in the

true spirit of critical thinking. This can become the unique quality of what can be characterised as the Indian knowledge system. Further, by embracing all systems, including the *Sramanic* traditions (that is, Jain, Buddhist and Lokayata, to name the primary ones), thinkers of syncretic traditions will lead to constructing an Indian knowledge based on rationalism and modern scientific vision, democratic socialist values and justice. Following the Phule–Ambedkar tradition, all systems that leave room for caste-based hierarchical power relations should be rejected, and the knowledge of ancient texts must be revisited with the contemporary contexts of building meaningful knowledge systems relevant to human rights and social justice. NEP 2020 and the policy guidelines of IKS will have to coordinate all Indian religions and traditions and have one critically engage with each other without assimilating one into the other or privileging one over the other. The Phule–Ambedkarian perspectives, methodology and practices can be useful in advancing this balanced approach to Indian knowledge and culture.

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Understanding Buddhist Culture: A Content Analysis of the Dhammapada and Mapping to Universal Values

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Abstract

The Dhammapada contains the essence of Buddhism and understanding the hidden values within the text will enable us to understand Buddhist culture. A team of three students performed content analysis on the Dhammapada. Each of the 423 stanzas of the Dhammapada was coded against a set of 58 universal values. The aggregate scores from the students' analysis for the entire scripture were then compared to Buddhist experts' ratings of the values proposed by the Dhammapada. The coding process by students was fairly consistent and the value rating done by students' content analysis matched well with the experts' understanding of the values of the Dhammapada. Hence, the study illustrates how value-coding scriptures is a reliable and valid method to understand the essence of a sacred text.

Keywords:

Content analysis, values, Buddhism, Dhammapada.

Introduction:

There are numerous ways of understanding the culture of a set of people. One may study racial differences, geographic differences, historical events, legends, or political dynamics to know the culture and customs of a group of people. One of the best ways to appreciate the culture and worldview of a group of people is to understand their religion, which is best understood by reading the scriptures. This paper has three main objectives. First, to identify if the concept of values can provide a template for understanding cultures. Second, to see if the process

of content analysis provides meaningful interpretations of religious scriptures. Third, to understand the basics of Buddhism – a major world religion.

In order to address these research objectives, I did a content analysis of the Dhammapada and mapped each verse of the text to universal values. Later I compared the results of the content analysis to the views of Buddhist scholars. Based on this, I show that content analysis and mapping to universal values can be an effective technique for understanding the basics of any text or belief system.

In the next few sections, I start by describing the basics of beliefs and value systems and how they capture the essence of an individual or a group's core ideology. Next, I describe the process of content analysis and its usefulness in understanding the main thesis of a text. Next, I describe Buddhism and its key tenets leading to the main research question – Can we understand the culture of a group of people by analyzing their scripture? The further sections describe the method and findings.

Beliefs and Value Systems

A belief is an understanding that something is true, often describing a connection between two things or between a thing and its characteristics (Sproull, 1981). Rokeach (1968) classifies beliefs into three types depending on their nature: (i) Descriptive beliefs, which may describe something as true or false, correct or incorrect e.g. I believe that the sun rises in the east (ii) Evaluative beliefs, which assess something as good or bad e.g. I believe this ice cream is good (iii) Prescriptive beliefs, which advocate a certain course of action or a certain state of existence as desirable or undesirable e.g. I believe one should be religious. The third kind of beliefs viz. prescriptive or exhortatory beliefs are also known as values. Values are criteria for guiding behaviours and for developing opinions towards objects and situations for defending one's own and others' behaviours and opinions. Values are trans-situational, and they help us to judge behaviour and events and are hierarchically arranged by relative importance (Schwartz and Bilsky, 1987).

Schwartz and Bilsky (1987) conceptualized values as cognitive interpretations of three fundamental needs: biological needs, interpersonal interactions, and social well-being. The defined values are an individual's understanding of a goal which reflects the individual's interests in a particular motivational domain. The goal could then be evaluated on a scale of importance on the extent to which it served as a guiding principle of life. The above definition has three variable parameters viz. the goal which could be terminal or instrumental, interests could be individualistic, collectivistic or both, and motivational domains. It is these motivational domains that Schwartz defines as the key to understanding the differences between individuals and groups of people. Schwartz identifies the ten motivational domains as power, achievement, hedonism, stimulation, self-direction, universalism, benevolence, tradition, conformity, and security. All ten motivational domains represent the core values recognized around the world as validated in a cross-cultural study of five societies, which were substantially different viz. Australia, the United States of America, Hong Kong, Spain, and Finland (Schwartz and Bilsky, 1990).

A later study (Schwartz and Bardi, 2001) showed a high level of similarity in the hierarchical ranking of values across 13 nations. The values of benevolence, self-direction, and universalism were most important; power, tradition, and stimulation values were least important; and security, conformity, achievement, and hedonism were of average importance.

Schwartz (2005) explains the structure of the motivational domains as organized along two dimensions each with two contrasting values. One dimension consists of openness to change vs. conservation values. This dimension contrasts the values of self-direction and stimulation (which are based on expressing one's independence and favouring change) on the one hand and restricting one's self, submitting to authority, retaining traditions, and ensuring stability (security, conformity, and tradition) on the other hand. The second dimension contrasts 'self-enhancement' and 'self-transcendence' values. Self-enhancement is about pursuing one's own goals, success, and dominance (power and achievement). On the other hand, self-transcendence is about concern for others (universalism and benevolence). The value of hedonism has characteristics of both openness to change and self-enhancement.

A recent review of cross-cultural studies stresses the need to directly integrate the study of values and beliefs to better understand cultures (Goodwin, Williams, Snell Herzog, 2020). Since Schwartz's value system provides a universal set of principles, they can be effectively used to understand the nuances of a culture or a group of people.

Content Analysis

Content analysis is a method used to understand and categorize data for better interpretation (Harwood & Garry, 2003). Content analysis was first used more than 200 years ago to analyse patterns in news and media and has been applied to diverse fields since then. It has been used to analyze texts from newspapers and magazine articles, advertisements, political speeches, stories and hymns. In the field of organizational behaviour, the role of content analysis has been emphasized (Kabanoff, 1996) and has been used effectively in several studies (House et al., 1991; Tan & Wee, 2002) especially to analyze attitudes, opinions, and beliefs (Metzger, 2019).

In cross-cultural studies, one of the approaches to understanding a culture is by reading the religious, historical, and mythological literature of that culture. Content analysis has also been used in the study of religions specifically to understand the meaning of scriptures or sermons (Badzinski, Woods, & Nelson, 2021). In this paper, I attempt to see if I can apply content analysis to effectively glean the import of a religious text of a culture in terms of relative importance given to universal values.

Buddhism

Buddhism began with the enlightenment of the prince Siddhartha (subsequently known as the Buddha) around the 5th to 6th Century B.C.E. The early life of the Buddha was full of luxury like any other Indian prince. Around the age of 30, he encountered the realities of life in the form of old age, sickness, and death and he took it upon himself to discover the path towards the end of suffering for mankind. For a couple of years, he practised various austerities and finally, after his enlightenment, he chose a middle way between extreme materialism and

extreme austerity and called it the middle path. Buddha's first sermon at Benaras contains the essence of this teaching in the form of the four noble truths viz. life is suffering, attachment is the cause of suffering, it is possible to end suffering, and the noble eightfold path is the way to end all suffering. The noble eightfold path included, the following: right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. The power of the Buddha's message, coupled with missionary zeal of the monastic order and royal patronage saw the spread of Buddhism across Asia. Today Buddhism is one of the largest religions in the world with over 535 million followers comprising about nine percent of the world population of which an estimated 240,000 are in the United Kingdom (Harvey, 2021).

The entire Buddhist canon is comprised of the three Pitakas or baskets, viz. the Vinaya-pitaka, Sutta-pitaka, and Abhidhamma-pitaka. The Vinaya-Pitaka consists of texts that deal with the rules for the monks. The Sutta-Pitaka is a collection of discourses by the Buddha and his closest disciples. The Abhidhamma-pitaka consists of texts in which the principles of the Sutta Pitaka are arranged into a systematic framework to explain the philosophy and metaphysical principles of Buddhism.

The Sutta-pitaka is divided into five collections or Nikayas, viz. Digha Nikaya (long collection), Majjhima Nikaya (the middle-length collection), Samyutta Nikaya (the grouped collection), Anguttara Nikaya (the numerical collection), and Khuddaka Nikaya (the collection of small texts). The Dhammapada, which forms part of the Khuddaka Nikaya, is a Pali word that means "Words of Doctrine" or "Way of Truth." It is the most well-known text of Buddhism, consisting of simple aphoristic style teachings. As a text in the Khuddaka Nikaya ("Short Collection") of the Sutta Pitaka ("Basket of Discourse"), the Dhammapada contains 423 stanzas arranged in 26 chapters (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2005).

In this study, the focus lies in the exploration of the salient values inherent in a culture through an analysis of its scripture. Hence an approach to the Dhammapada devoid of prior knowledge about Buddhism has been used, seeking to ascertain the utility of extracting salient values from the text as a means of gaining insights into the belief system of the people. The extent to which the salient values

extracted from our content analysis are congruent with the views of scholars on the salient beliefs of Buddhism, to that extent we will conclude that content analysis of scripture using universal values is a useful tool for analysis of culture.

Can we understand the culture of a group of people by analyzing their scripture?

The behaviour and culture of a group of people is a complex interplay of geographical, social, and historical forces. Even if scripture were to have an impact on society over the years, it would depend largely on what parts the people had chosen to focus on and what parts they had decided to ignore (Pryor, 1990). For example, the complex interplay of social and historical factors affecting organizational behaviour in India has been well studied. Sinha (1997) has shown how there have developed in India two sets of values – the traditionally idealized values and the operative values. The scriptures are the source of traditionally idealized values and while they may not be able to explain current behavior directly, they give us a glimpse of the most fundamental beliefs and life goals of people which are likely to be major drivers of their motivation and sources of inspiration. Krishnan (2003) explains that modernization has two aspects and that while changes take place to be in line with an increasing knowledge base, all societies move along paths shaped by their cultural heritages. Hence for us to be effective leaders of change, it is important to know what to change and what not to change. Since leadership involves making followers better human beings, leaders need to be able to distinguish between transformation that is along desirable lines (authentic transformation) and transformation that makes followers worse off (pseudo transformation). Traditional cultural values are inspirational end states and hence they provide us with a yardstick to distinguish authentic transformational leadership from pseudo-transformational leadership (Krishnan, 2003).

Methodology

The version of the Dhammapada used for this study was the translation from Pali by F. Max Muller which was part of Vol. X. of The Sacred Books of the East, published in 1881 by Oxford, The Clarendon Press. The translation was available

in soft copy format on the internet at <http://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/sbe10/index.htm>.

The text was first pasted onto an MS Excel sheet such that each row contained one verse. In certain instances, two verses were combined into one, and hence there was only one verse for two verse numbers. The classification scheme for the content analysis was the 57 values suggested by Schwartz with one exception. The value of ambition is defined by Schwartz as a combination of “hard-working” and “aspiring”. In the Indian traditions, both Hindu and Buddhist these are completely different values. The value of “hard-working” is desirable as indicated by verse numbers – 7, 21, 22, 23, 30, 112, 116, 144, 168, 226, 236, 238, 280, 282, 313, 366, and 375. On the other hand the value of “aspiration” is undesirable as indicated by verses numbers 73, and 216. Hence these two values cannot be clubbed together under a single heading and have been separated. The distinction between being “hardworking” and “aspiring” and hence the error of combining them in the value of “ambitious” has been illustrated in an empirical study (Mulla & Krishnan, 2011). Hence, in all, there were 58 values available for the classification of each verse.

Three persons (i.e., the author and two other persons) did the content analysis of the Dhammapada using the framework of the 58 values. One of the coders had a post-graduate degree in psychology, another had a post-graduate degree in management, and the third had a post-graduate diploma in education. None of the three coders had an expert knowledge of Buddhism. While going through each verse, the coders tried to identify which values were being positively suggested and which values were being negatively suggested or condemned by the text. A value that was positively suggested got a score of +1 while a value that was negatively suggested or condemned was given a score of -1. Two examples of the classification are shown below –

1. Chapter 17, Verse 231 says, “Beware of bodily anger, and control thy body! Leave the sins of the body, and with thy body practice virtue!” This sentence was marked as positively suggesting the value of “Self-discipline”.
2. Chapter 26, Verse 408 says, “Him I call indeed a Brāhmaṇa who utters true speech, instructive and free from harshness so that he offends no one.” This sentence was marked as positively suggesting the values of “Politeness” and “Honesty”.

Whenever a principle is explained and then its consequences are elaborated in other verses, the values illustrated in the original verse are repeated each time e.g. Chapter 4, verse 50 says "Not the perversities of others, not their sins of commission or omission, but his misdeeds and negligences should a sage take notice of." Here we consider the values of "inner harmony", "wisdom" and "forgiving". These same values are counted again in verse 51 – "Like a beautiful flower, full of colour, but without scent, are the fine but fruitless words of him who does not act accordingly." and verse 52 – "But, like a beautiful flower, full of colour and full of scent, are the fine and fruitful words of him who acts accordingly." The logic for doing this is that since the fundamental assumption of our content analysis is that frequency is a reflection of importance, we must capture all the values propagated in their full frequency. Thus we assume that if the authors of the original text, thought it fit to repeat a particular thought by simply modifying the sentence slightly they must have done so to emphasize that value.

Whenever two verses were combined in the translation, it has been assumed that in the original they were two incomplete thoughts e.g. 57, 58 and 87, 88, hence counting of values was done only once.

Out of 423 verses, 91 verses could not be classified into any of the values. This was either because they dealt with general terms such as "good" and "evil" (e.g. verses 15–18) or because they dealt with some metaphysical descriptions (e.g. verses 44 & 45) or because they dealt with outcomes of good or bad deeds (e.g. verses 55, 56, & 69).

Simultaneously while the coding was going on, I reached out to six experts in Buddhism. Two of the experts were senior researchers in Buddhist studies, one was a Buddhist monk, one was a Buddhist nun, and two were lay Buddhist practitioners. Each of the experts was provided with the list of 58 values and was told to rate each value on a scale of -1 to 7, where -1 meant that the value was opposed to the recommendations of the Dhammapada and 7 meant that the value was of supreme importance according to the Dhammapada.

Analysis

The coders each coded the 423 verses based on the 58 values. The scores for the 58 values across the 423 verses were then added together to yield consolidated scores across the text for each of the 58 values for both coders. The inter-rater reliability of the coded values across the three coders was checked and the Cronbach alpha was 0.89. I also tested the consistency of the coding across the three coders for each value. Twenty out of the 58 values had a reasonable consistency (Cronbach alpha > .40) and only those were used to calculate the average score for the value. The average scores for the twenty values rated by coders along with the Cronbach alphas are shown in Table 1.

The results of the experts' scores were compared and I checked the consistency across experts. Twenty-seven values of the 58 values had a reasonable consistency i.e., the range of scores was less than five points and only these 27 values were used in the further analysis. The average scores for the 27 values rated by experts are shown in Table 2.

I then standardized the scores for the content analysis and the expert ratings and performed a correlation analysis for all the values to check their extent of agreement. The correlation was positive and highly significant ($r = .79, p < .001$).

Results

If one were to go through the list of values of the Dhammapada identified by coders (in Table 1) and the list of values identified by experts (in Table 2), we find a lot of similarity in the ranking of the values. The standardized scores on the values by both coders and experts are also highly correlated as seen by the high value of the correlation coefficient.

The top five values of the Dhammapada as per the experts' ratings are – wisdom, freedom, self-discipline, moderation, and inner harmony. The top five values based on the coders' ratings are – wisdom, inner harmony, self-discipline, honesty, and a world at peace. Three of the five values in both lists are common. These three values are wisdom, self-discipline, and inner harmony.

The bottom five values that are most condemned by the Dhammapada as per experts' ratings are – pleasure, enjoying life, preserving my public image, self-indulgence, and ambition. The bottom five values based on the coders' ratings are – self-indulgent, pleasure, enjoying life, wealth, and authority. Here also, three of the five values in both lists are common. These three values are – pleasure, self-indulgence, and enjoying life.

Hence, there seems to be very high consistency between the rating of the coders and the experts in Buddhism.

Discussion

This study seeks to answer two questions. First, does the process of content analysis provide a valid interpretation of the Dhammapada? And second, can the concept of universal values provide a template for understanding the central message of religious scriptures?

I used two methods to identify the central message of the Dhammapada. First, three coders analyzed the content of each of the verses of the Dhammapada using the universal values framework and then I asked a panel of six Buddhist experts to provide their understanding of the Dhammapada.

I found that there is a very strong and significant correlation between the two methods. When all the 58 values rated by experts and content analysis were ranked, I found a high level of correlation between the two methods. When the top five values selected by experts were compared with the top five values selected through content analysis, we found that three out of the five values viz. wisdom, self-discipline, and inner harmony were common across the two sets. Similarly, on comparing the bottom five values selected by experts with the bottom five values selected through content analysis, I found that three out of the five values viz. pleasure, enjoying life, and self-indulgent were common across the two sets. This shows that the procedure of content analysis using universal values does provide a valid template for understanding the central message of the religious scriptures. This is especially accurate in identifying the more extreme values.

The values most condemned by the Dhammapada are pleasure, enjoying life, and self-indulgence. These three values make up the motivational domain of hedonism. Hence it is clear that the Dhammapada severely condemns hedonism. The text emphasizes three key values: wisdom, self-discipline, and inner harmony, falling under the motivational domains of universalism and conformity. These values provide a useful complement to counteracting the negatively rated domain of hedonism.

The message of the Buddha has been summarized in the form of *panna* (wisdom or discernment), *sila* (virtue or moral conduct), and *samadhi* (meditation and concentration). The value of *sila* is fully reflected in the content analysis as the values of low hedonism and high self-discipline. The importance of the value of *panna* is shown in the content analysis as wisdom. The value of *samadhi* is also reflected in high scores for inner harmony. Hence it is clear that the content analysis reveals results that are identical to the fundamental Buddhist beliefs.

Inconsistencies in the results of our content analysis and the views of Buddhist scholars

According to Buddhist scholars, it seems as if the most important value and the source of all the other values is wisdom (interpreted as discernment or an understanding of the law of nature). Even though wisdom has a high score in our analysis, when compared to the complementary values of high conformity and low hedonism, it seems like a distant second. Perhaps this could be because the Buddha feels that even though wisdom is necessary, the absence of wisdom does not justify immoral behaviour. Until a person develops wisdom, he or she must continue to live a moral life even if the person is ignorant of the real reason for being moral. Since the Dhammapada is a text for the lay people, it will likely lay more stress on morality. This is further validated by the fact that the most fundamental tenets of Buddhist doctrine include the five precepts, all of which propagate values of self-discipline and low hedonism and are identified by our content analysis. Other discourses to lay people like the Sigolovada sutta further validate this belief. In the Sigolovada sutta, where the Buddha gives specific instructions for the welfare of laypeople, he explains in detail how a layperson must behave with friends and with family members. In order to convince the

listener, in each of the admonitions, the Buddha gives very practical and worldly outcomes for each of the moralistic practices e.g. in Verse 3 (a) the Buddha says: "There are, young householder, these six evil consequences in indulging in intoxicants which cause infatuation and heedlessness: (i) loss of wealth, (ii) increase of quarrels, (iii) susceptibility to disease, (iv) earning an evil reputation, (v) shameless exposure of the body, (vi) weakening of intellect." (The full text of the sutta is available at <https://accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/dn/dn.31.0.nara.html>). Hence it is clear that the Buddha feels that morality is a goal that lay persons should follow irrespective of whether they have developed the necessary wisdom or not. This is in sharp contrast to the Hindu view where the focus is not on outward actions but on the state of mind of the doer, and no action in itself is held to be good or bad.

Another inconsistency is the comparatively low score on *Samadhi* or meditation. In our content analysis meditation can be likened to inner harmony and spiritual life. The total score of these two values is still much lesser than the scores of the complementary values of high conformity and low hedonism. There are two possible reasons for this. Firstly, *samadhi* may be seen as an instrumental state, to be used to develop the ultimate goal that is, *panna*, and hence its importance may be lesser. Secondly, since the Dhammapada is mainly a text for the laypeople and not the monks, less space has been given to meditation. This is validated by the fact, that Buddha has given several detailed discourses on meditation for monks. Some of the most popular suttas in this regard are the Anapanasatti Sutta and the Mahasatipathana Sutta which go into minute details of meditation techniques and various states achievable through meditation.

Limitations

While some of the values may be accurate, some of their motivations may be misplaced in the context of Buddhism. For instance, the value of intelligence is the sense of a person who thinks through his or her actions and reflects on their consequences, whereas the motivational orientation of this value given by Schwartz is "achievement" which gives a different sense to the value.

Another limitation of our study is that the Dhammapada is not the be-all and end-all of Buddhism. The Buddha was enlightened at the age of 35 and continued to preach for 45 years until his death at the age of 80. During that period there were numerous discourses given to monks and lay people on various aspects of life. Specifically for lay persons the Sigolovada sutta is the most appropriate. In this Sutta, the Buddha instructs lay people to work diligently and faithfully fulfilling one's duties to superiors as well as subordinates, and properly appropriately treating subordinates.

Even if we were to accept the Dhammapada as a valid text, Max Muller's translation may not fully reflect Buddhist values and may be limited by a Western perspective. Perhaps it may be a good idea to look at a translation by some Buddhist scholars like Narada or Bhikkhu Bodhi.

Above all my limitations in understanding the essence of the text and my own perceptions of the teaching of Buddhism have coloured this study greatly. A more scientific basis for identifying values must be developed to make this study valid.

Conclusion

The system of universal values and motivational domains developed by Schwartz provides a powerful framework for analyzing any form of communication. When combined with the technique of content analysis, this approach can help us understand the deeper impact of almost any communication, including religious scriptures, mythology, legends, speeches by great leaders, or even novels. It is often suggested that the best way to understand a culture is to read its literary classics. However, many of us may not have the time to read and assimilate those lengthy works. Even if we could, understand these for ourselves, it would be difficult for us to articulate and compare their import objectively.

The approach put forward in this paper provides a way out of this dilemma. First of all, we must create a library of words akin to a thesaurus to describe each of the values given by Schwartz. I am sure while arriving at the universal values; Schwartz would have grouped a large number of related concepts and finally reduced them all to 57. We must retrieve all those earlier concepts and enter

them into a database. Having done that, software for content analysis must be developed which builds on the rules of grammar and uses the database and word library. This software must be self-learning and must allow the user to update new words and new forms as and when he or she comes across them.

Life is becoming increasingly fast-paced and more and more persons are losing their links with their past. At the same time, sectarian beliefs and vested interests are constantly reinterpreting scriptures in ways that suit their ends. Also, with increasing exposure to media and the internet, across the world cultures seem to be losing their nuances to match up with the Anglo-American stereotypes. At such a time, discerning the real values of a culture becomes increasingly difficult. Fortunately, content analysis seems to show a path, and once the supporting technology is available, we may be able to understand the true import of all texts free of sectarian and individual biases.

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Table 1: Scores for Dhammapada Values – Rated by Coders

Rank	Value	Total Score across 423 verses (Cronbach alphas)
1	Wisdom	106.33 (.46)
2	Inner Harmony	74.00 (.45)
3	Self-discipline	63.33 (.47)
4	Honest	23.00 (.62)
5	A world at peace	17.33 (.51)
6	Politeness	17.00 (.64)
7	Hardworking	14.33 (.68)
8	Forgiving	14.00 (.47)
9	Humble	12.33 (.62)
10	Healthy	6.00 (.43)
11	Honoring one's parents and elders	5.57 (.62)
12	Loyal	4.33 (.40)
13	True friendship	4.00 (.65)

14	Preserving my public image	1.00 (.54)
15	Family security	-1.33 (.50)
16	Authority	-2.00 (.43)
17	Wealth	-9.00 (.56)
18	Enjoying life	-59.00 (.64)
19	Pleasure	-64.33 (.62)
20	Self-indulgent	-65.67 (.68)

Scores for Dhammapada Values – Rated by Experts

Rank	Value	Total Score for Dhammapada (Consistency – Range)
1	Wisdom	7.00 (0)
2	Freedom	6.83 (1)
3	Self-discipline	6.33 (2)
4	Moderate	6.33 (2)
5	Inner harmony	6.17 (2)
6	Independent	6.17 (3)
7	A world at peace	6.00 (2)
8	Honest	6.00 (2)
9	Healthy	5.67 (3)
10	A spiritual life	5.67 (4)
11	Forgiving	5.67 (4)
12	Honoring of parents and elders	5.50 (2)
13	Hardworking	5.50 (3)
14	True friendship	5.17 (4)
15	Meaning in life	5.00 (3)
16	Capable	5.00 (3)
17	Loyal	4.67 (4)
18	Intelligent	4.67 (4)
19	Self respect	3.83 (4)
20	Sense of belonging	1.50 (4)
21	Wealth	0.50 (4)
22	A varied life	0.50 (4)
23	Ambitious	0.33 (3)
24	Self-indulgent	0.00 (3)
25	Preserving my public image	-0.50 (1)
26	Enjoying life	-0.83 (1)
27	Pleasure	-1.00 (0)

Bhakti as a Pedagogical Movement

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Abstract

This essay explores the transformative role of Bhakti as a pedagogical movement within India's cultural and philosophical landscape. Historically, Bhakti emerged amidst debates among Darshanas and the Bhasha movement, challenging established norms and advocating for regional languages and cultural diversity. Bhakti poetry, rooted in oral traditions and public singing, not only resisted orthodox practices but also became a vital tool for subaltern communities to express their spiritual and social aspirations.

While Bhakti's social, political and spiritual impacts are well-documented, its pedagogical dimension remains underexplored. This essay argues that Bhakti's values and methods can enrich contemporary educational frameworks by fostering holistic development, character formation, and a deeper sense of purpose among students. Drawing parallels with modern social and political movements like the Zapatistas, Black Lives Matter, and the anti-apartheid struggle, which integrated education as a tool for empowerment and social change, this essay posits Bhakti as a model for creating a knowledge-based society rooted in compassion, inclusivity, and ethical awareness.

By examining Bhakti's historical context and its relevance in modern education, this essay seeks to inspire educators and policymakers to reconsider Bhakti's teachings as a framework for nurturing resilient, empathetic, and socially conscious individuals.

Keywords

Bhakti, Pedagogy, Social-Political Movements.

Introduction

Over centuries, India has faced knowledge turbulence, reflected in debates among the Darshanas (Indian philosophical schools) over the evidentiary value of the Vedas and in the Bhasha movement, which saw the rise of regional languages and cultural forms challenging the dominance of Sanskrit and Tamil. This movement, closely tied to the Bhakti movement, rejected rigid hierarchies, affirming regional identities and fostering new social philosophies and aesthetics.

Bhakti poetry, an oral tradition spread through public singing, emerged as a vital expression of this subaltern resistance, opposing orthodox rituals and formal knowledge and embodying the lived experiences of marginalised groups. While the Bhakti movement has been studied for its social, political, and spiritual effects, its role as a significant pedagogical movement emerging from the grassroots has been overlooked. This essay highlights the pedagogical aspect of the movement and argues that adopting the values and methods of the Bhakti movement would contribute to creating a knowledge-based society.

Social-political movements and pedagogy

This section will examine how some social and political movements became pedagogical movements over time and contributed to social learning and knowledge-making.

The Zapatista Movement developed into a pedagogical movement, where the Zapatistas emphasised the use of education to empower indigenous communities, preserving their culture and resisting neoliberal policies. Schools established through this movement centred their curriculum around indigenous knowledge, social justice, and political awareness. This led the indigenous communities to engage critically with the world, preserving their identity while advocating for rights, and inspiring similar educational approaches among other indigenous groups globally. Holloway's research highlights how the Zapatistas' educational efforts are integral to their broader political project, providing a model of how education can be a tool for social transformation (John Holloway 1998).

Katie Sarachilds' (Sarachild 1973) work on small Informal groups in the 1960s and 1970s in the United States became an important part of using Consciousness Raising group (CR). Women shared their personal experiences, helping in turn to analyse their situations in a broader social context and help develop political awareness. Consciousness- Raising groups played a pivotal role in politicising women's personal experiences and leading them into collective action. CR groups were used as a pedagogical tool to educate women about their rights, gender inequality and patriarchy and demonstrate how personal learning can be a powerful tool for collective empowerment.

Education is used as a key strategy against racial segregation and oppression by the anti-apartheid movement. The South African anti-apartheid movement recognised education as a tool of resistance and liberation. The movement established alternative education systems, initiatives like 'People's Education for Power focusing on critical pedagogy, teaching students about apartheid and empowering them to participate actively in the struggle. Using Paulo Freire's principles of Critical pedagogy, emphasising dialogue and critical consciousness, the movement politicised a generation of South Africans helping them with the knowledge and skills necessary to challenge the apartheid regime (Chisholm 1996).

Juris examines the role of education in the Occupy Wall Street (OWS) movement. He emphasizes the role of participatory learning and knowledge-sharing as crucial to the movement's identity and strategies. The pedagogical activities within OWS helped raise awareness about issues related to economic inequality and empowered participants with the knowledge to articulate and advocate for change. Though its goal was to protest inequality and corporate influence in politics. Though it did not meet its political objectives, the educational initiatives inspired similar actions in other social movements (Juris 2012).

The Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement also utilizes education as a core strategy. Garza, in her writings, emphasizes the importance of education in the movement's strategy that has helped cultivate a new generation of informed and engaged activists in the fight for racial justice. The combination of social media, workshops, and community-based education to raise awareness about racial justice, police

brutality, and the history of systemic oppression represents a blend of traditional and modern methods to achieve the objective of mobilizing and sustaining the BLM movement (Garza 2020).

Faber and O'Connor explore grassroots environmental movements and how they are used in the U.S. to employ education to raise awareness about ecological racism and mobilize communities. They highlight how the Global Environment Justice Movement uses community-based participatory research as a pedagogical tool to help affected communities actively research environmental hazards and develop solutions. The movement's educational aspect empowered marginalised communities by equipping them with the knowledge to challenge polluters and advocate for policy changes. This pedagogical approach was effective in bringing about environmental justice. (Faber 1998)

The research on the role of social media in education in Arab Springs saw the use of social media not only for mobilisation but also as an educational platform. Tufekci and Wilson studied how social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter disseminate information, educate participants on non-violent protest strategies and share legal advice during the uprisings. The study finds that social media served as a crucial educational tool, enabling activists to learn from each other, spread awareness of human rights abuses and coordinate actions. This educational dimension contributed to the widespread participation and resilience of the movements (Zeynep Tufekci 2012).

Integrating Disability Studies into academia has been instrumental in transforming societal attitudes towards disability and advancing the goals of the Disability Rights Movement. The Disability Rights movement's pedagogical approach has impacted education and policy by advocating for the rights and inclusion of people with disabilities. The movement's advocacy led to the establishing Disability studies programmes in universities. These programs challenge traditional perceptions of disability and educate both disabled and non-disabled people about disability rights, social justice and the social model of disability (Linton 1998).

The Peace and Reconciliation Movements in Northern Ireland give us an interesting insight into the role of educational programmes aimed at fostering mutual understanding and healing among the divided communities. Boulding study analyses how the educational programmes in North Ireland communities like Corrymela integrated schools by bringing together students from different religious backgrounds which helped break down sectarian barriers and promote a culture of peace. Thus integrating peace education into the movement contributed to long-term reconciliation and social cohesion (Boulding 2000).

Battiste explores Indigenous movements in Canada and other parts of the world that have incorporated Indigenous Knowledge Systems into educational frameworks to preserve culture and assert political authority. He finds that by embedding IKS into both formal and informal educational settings, Indigenous knowledge influences mainstream education policies and curricula. Strengthening the idea that revitalising and transmitting Indigenous Knowledge as a form of resistance and empowerment (Battiste 2002)

Queer pedagogy also finds a way to challenge heteronormativity and promote inclusive education through the LGBTQ+ movement. In a study, Britzman found how theoretical and practical approaches were effective in creating more inclusive educational environments and raising awareness about LGBTQ+ issues. This pedagogical approach was central to the movement's broader social justice and equality goals (Britzman 1995)

Molyneux researched how the women's movement in Latin America employed popular education to address issues of gender inequality and human rights. Molyneux's work focuses on the Latin American women's movement in the 1970s and 1980s, particularly inspired by Paulo Freire's methods to empower women and raise awareness about gender oppression. The study showcased how popular education was critical in mobilizing women, especially those from marginalised backgrounds, to participate in the movement. The pedagogical strategies employed helped women articulate their demands and engage in collective action for social change (Molyneux 1985).

Social and political movements have often evolved into pedagogical movements, using education as a means of empowering marginalized communities and fostering social change. The Zapatista movement, for instance, utilized education to preserve indigenous culture and resist neoliberal policies, while the Black Lives Matter movement raised awareness about racial justice through workshops and community-based education. Consciousness-Raising (CR) groups from the feminist movement politicized women's personal experiences, transforming them into collective action. Similarly, movements like Occupy Wall Street and the Global Environmental Justice Movement used participatory learning and research as tools for raising awareness and advocacy. Across contexts, education in these movements has been pivotal in challenging power structures, promoting critical consciousness, and equipping individuals with the tools to pursue social transformation. This demonstrates that pedagogy, rooted in social justice, has consistently been a powerful catalyst for both individual empowerment and collective action.

Bhakti – the tool and the goal

Bhakti is the best tool to achieve divine grace and emancipation. Bhakti is easily intelligible and accessible and hence, on the path of dharma, it finds more followers. The other two tools are karma and jnana. At different times in India's knowledge explorations proponents of these three tools have given importance to one over the other. At times they have aligned one with the other. The consensus appears to be that although these three tools are different, they complement each other.

What follows is an overview of the literature on how Bhakti has been perceived and studied from different perspectives.

The word Bhakti comes from the root Bhaj which means 'to serve'. Some of the texts that define and discuss Bhakti are the Bhakti Sutras composed by seers like Shandilya, Garga and Narada, the Bhagavata Purana, the Bhagavata Gita, the Mahabharata etc.

A common thread in these definitions is love for the divine that seeks nothing in return (Joshi 1998). Shandilya, in the second verse of his Bhakti Sutra says that Bhakti is the ultimate affection for the Divine (Yati 1991). Bhakti is the tool as well as the goal. As a tool Bhakti is a practice and as a goal it is oneness with the Divine, a becoming. There are five aspects or limbs of Bhakti according to the Bhagavata Purana (Verse 29 of chapter three and verse 14 of chapter seven). These are the worshipper, the worshipped, the material for the worship, the process of worship and the words to meditate upon.

The teachings of the Bhakti Sutra, as articulated by Narada (Sivananda 1957), offer a profound framework for integrating educational principles that foster holistic development, character building, and a deep sense of purpose among students. By emphasizing virtues like truth, purity, compassion, and self-experience as the ultimate evidence of truth, education can move beyond mere intellectual growth to nurture emotional and spiritual well-being. Narada, underscores the transformative power of Bhakti. It describes Bhakti as the supreme love, ceaseless and immortal, capable of transforming individuals into perfect, immortal, and fully satiated beings. Those who attain Bhakti transcend desire, loss, hatred, and sensual pleasures, becoming intoxicated yet peaceful, wholly immersed in the enjoyment of the atman. This transformative power of Bhakti is not just a concept but a living force that inspires hope for a society free from worldly attachments and conflicts, thereby contributing to social learning and knowledge-making. The Sutra's focus on single-minded dedication, inclusion, and equality can inspire an educational environment that celebrates diversity and promotes a love for learning. Through the integration of spiritual and secular education, students can connect their learning to larger societal goals, developing resilience, ethical decision-making, and mental fortitude. Reflective practices, community collaboration, and the promotion of peace and social harmony further align with the Bhakti Sutra's ideals, creating an educational experience that not only imparts knowledge but also cultivates wisdom and a commitment to the greater good.

Chapter twelve of the Bhagavata Gita is known as the Bhakti Yoga. It combines the nuances, values and methods of both Bhakti and Yoga treating Bhakti itself as Yoga. Those who fix their minds on the Divine and always engage in devotion with steadfast faith, are considered to be the best yogis just as those who worship

the formless aspect of the Absolute Truth—the imperishable, the indefinable, the unmanifest, the all-pervading, the unthinkable, the unchanging, the eternal, and the immoveable restrain their senses, become even-minded everywhere engage in the welfare of all beings. Fixing the mind on the Divine, surrendering the intellect to the Divine, living in the Divine is Bhakti. It leads to perfection (Prabhupada 2015).

The saints spread this message of Bhakti throughout the length and breadth of the Indian subcontinent as well as in regions extended to south and southeast Asia. By and large, no community in this region remained untouched by the influence of Bhakti. It offered a profound philosophical framework that could be integrated into educational principles and practices to foster learning, awareness, and social development.

Bhakti emphasizes holistic development and character building through the cultivation of virtues like truth, purity, compassion, and faith. It emphasizes self-experience as the ultimate evidence of truth, beyond mere scriptural knowledge. Bhakti requires a unified and single-hearted approach, where one lets go of all distractions and emphasises inclusivity and empathy where there is no distinction among Bhaktas based on caste, learning, or wealth. It underscores having a single-minded sense of purpose, integration of spiritual and secular education, and a love for learning. The company of great persons is emphasised as crucial for developing Bhakti fostering community and collaboration. The practice of Bhakti develops ethical and moral decision-making, resilience and mental fortitude, reflective and contemplative learning and promoting peace and harmony.

Ramachandra Shukla (Shukla 1949) pointed out two main reasons for the rise of the Bhakti movement. The first was social inequality. There was a vast difference between the rich and the poor, and the ruling class, along with the elite castes, continuously exploited the lower class. The arrival and rule of foreign invaders in India was the other reason. The invaders destroyed Hindu temples, tortured people and forcibly converted people out of their faith. The Bhakti movement thus addressed people's travails while at the same time giving them an insight into their own philosophical, theological, and cultural ideas.

Eleanor Zelliot (Zelliot, *From Untouchable to Dalit: Essays on the Ambedkar Movement* 1992) (Zelliot, Chokhamela and Eknath: *Two bhakti modes of legitimacy for modern change* 1981) took a liberal-reformist stance, viewing the Bhakti movement, particularly in Maharashtra and among Dalits, as more inclusive and egalitarian in its spiritual approach. The movement emphasized devotion (bhakti) as a means to transcend caste barriers and rejected Brahmanical authority. Zelliot highlighted how lower-caste Bhakti poets like Sant Tukaram and Chokhamela used spiritual expression to challenge caste discrimination and assert dignity. However, she argued that while Bhakti preached spiritual equality, it fell short of dismantling caste hierarchies. Though saints like Chokhamela criticized untouchability, their critique remained within the religious sphere and did not fully confront the social and political dimensions of caste oppression. Zelliot noted that Bhakti's focus on personal devotion limited its transformative potential, as saints often lived within caste-bound communities. She concluded that while Bhakti was significant in critiquing caste oppression, it needed to be supplemented by political action, such as Ambedkar's leadership, to fully address caste-based inequalities.

Romila Thapar (Thapar, *Cultural Pasts Essays in Early Indian History* 2003) (Thapar, *Early India: From the Origins to AD 1300* 2004) emphasized that Bhakti was not only religious but also a socio-political response to early medieval India's increasing social stratification. She saw Bhakti as a reaction against the rigid caste system and Brahmanical orthodoxy, using vernacular languages to make religious expression accessible. Thapar argued that Bhakti also served as a counter-hegemonic force, challenging both religious and political elites.

K. Satchidanandan (Satchidanandan 2019) viewed Bhakti as a revolutionary movement that challenged religious, caste, and social hierarchies. He stressed Bhakti's inclusive nature, bringing Dalits, women, and marginalized communities into the spiritual fold. However, he noted that institutional religion eventually co-opted Bhakti, diluting its transformative edge.

Ganesh Devy (G.N 2009) (Devy 2023), focused on Bhakti's linguistic and cultural resistance, highlighting how Bhakti poets used vernacular languages to break

Brahmanical religious dominance. He viewed Bhakti as part of India's oral traditions, which resisted both Brahmanical and colonial cultural hegemonies.

Aparna Devare (Devare 2019) focused on Justice M.G. Ranade's reinterpretation of Bhakti in colonial India. Ranade used the teachings of saints like Eknath and Tukaram to advocate for egalitarianism and religious tolerance, opposing the emerging hyper-masculine nationalism of the time.

R.C. Dhere (Dhere 2012) (Dhere, Santa, Lok Ani Abhijana 2013) (Dhere, Musalman Marathi Santkavi 2014) made substantial contributions to the study of Bhakti traditions, focusing on Maharashtra and beyond. He emphasized Bhakti as both a religious and social movement that challenged caste hierarchies and Brahmanical orthodoxy, offering marginalized groups like women and lower castes a platform for spiritual expression. Dhere highlighted Bhakti's localization, showing its deep roots in regional cultures and languages, especially through traditions like Maharashtra's Varkari movement. He explored saints such as Dnyaneshwar, Tukaram, Eknath, and Namdev, presenting them as spiritual revolutionaries who democratized access to God through poetry, music, and teachings. His work also recognized the syncretic nature of Bhakti, blending Shaivism, Vaishnavism, and Sufi Islam, and emphasized the movement's oral origins in regional languages like Marathi. Dhere traced Bhakti's historical evolution, from Vedic roots to its adaptation in modern times, underscoring its enduring relevance and inclusivity.

In chapter seven of the Shrimad Bhagavat Mahapurana Prahlada tells his father, Hiranyakashipu, about the nine forms of Vishnu bhakti which he learnt from his preceptor. These are, shravana (listening to the praises of the Divine), kirtana (singing the praises of the Divine), smarana (remembering the Divine), pada-sevana (serving at the feet of the Divine), archana (worship of the Divine), vandana (prayer and prostration before the Divine), dasya (serving the Divine), sakhya (becoming a friend of the Divine) and atma-nivedana (surrendering oneself to the Divine). Saints of Maharashtra emphasised a particular form of Bhakti called Kirtan. The form is believed to have emerged in Tamil Nadu and from, saint poets spread and developed it in a variety of ways across the country. The message was egalitarian and pluralistic as they challenged various hegemonies like caste, gender, and class (Pathak 2003).

Krishna Sharma (Sharma 2015) however does not view Bhakti as a single, cohesive movement, but the movement is examined in terms of its various regional expressions in both North and South India. Numerous devotional rituals and modes of worship resulted from the cultural, linguistic, and social influences that determined the expression of Bhakti in each place. She emphasises that although the basis of Bhakti remained the same, there were significant differences in how it was expressed, from Bengali Vaishnava devotion to southern Shaivism and Shaktism. She emphasises that the Bhakti movement's legacy is complex, and its impact on modern-day religious, social, and political issues continues to be felt.

She takes Kabir as a case study to explain that not all Bhaktas can be fitted with existing definitions of Bhakti. She discards the 'conventional framework' to study the Bhakti movement. According to her, the movement's discipline did not emerge from historical studies but from Indologists. According to Sharma, Bhakti is not a cult or a doctrine and is not specific to any religion. Its grouping under monotheism is a misinterpretation of Hindu monotheism. Nirguna Bhakti cannot be understood in the contemporary academic definition. According to Sharma, Ramanuja, Nimbaraka, Madhava and Vallabhacharya were not initiators of Bhakti, they were consolidating Vaishnava thought in the language of Vedanta. On the other hand, Sankara's focus on the concept of Nirguna Brahman was seen as a contestation to sects that depended on the worship of personal deities. The various interpretations of Vedanta were a response to this Nirguna Brahman. The Nirguna Bhaktas were more in tandem with Sankara and its beginning can be traced to the convergence of the astika and nastika tradition during the medieval period. The intermingling of the two had ushered in religious beliefs with the combination of the two.

The Bhakti movement involved both men and women and brought significant shifts, emphasizing personal devotion, a feminization of the devotee, and an intimate relationship with God without the need for intermediaries like priests or husbands. It broke social barriers, empowering women and lower castes, while making devotion accessible through colloquial language and non-verbal arts like music. Unlike other revolutions, which marginally benefited women, the Bhakti movement allowed them to redefine morality, freedom, and desire, transcending the traditional roles of wife and mother. Women bhaktas had to

navigate challenges like economic independence and reconciling devotion with domestic life. Bhakti offered an alternative to patriarchal norms, enabling women to resist sexual exploitation, claim their space in religious practices, and express creativity. This marked the emergence of female consciousness in the 16th century, challenging social injustices and exclusionary boundaries. Indian feminism continues to deconstruct traditional images of women while engaging with socio-political and legal systems (Jain 2011). Mirabai, for instance, is the only poet in Hindi literature who, like the Tamil saint, Andal, and Mahadevi of Kannada literature, expresses her love for the Divine as that of a wife for her husband, portraying God as her true beloved. Her poems are filled with intense emotions of love, and this deep devotion allows her Bhakti to reach a level of sublime perfection in expression (Zide 1965). Spiritually inclined women often had to opt out of a patriarchal society and marriage due to their restrictive norms. Virasaivism is distinctive in that not only do many Virasaivite couples find equal importance within the Lingayat canon but even unmarried 'deviant' women like Akka Nagamma and prostitutes like Gangamma, Soole Sankawe and Vaijjakawe manage to create a sacred space for themselves.

Though these women rejected patriarchy at the worldly level, they paradoxically adhered to patriarchal symbolism in their spiritual devotion. Their worship remained tied to male symbols like the Linga, reflecting a tension between rejecting and using patriarchal modes. This tension stemmed from the oppressive social structure of feudalism and patriarchy. For women saints, transcending social norms often involved nudity, a defiant act that symbolized liberation from societal constraints, unlike male saints whose nudity did not carry the same transformative significance (Ramaswamy 1996).

The socio-economic preconditions for the rise of the Bhakti Movement stemmed from widespread changes in production patterns, impacting social, cultural, and political spheres, which were then mirrored in the religious realm. B.D. Chatopadhyay (Chatopadhyaya 1997) highlights the progressive transformation of society through agrarian expansion, artificial irrigation, peasantization of tribes, and the assimilation of folk cults into Puranic religions. These shifts occurred alongside urbanization and the rise of a dominant ruling caste. The Bhakti movement emerged during this period of restructuring and played a

role in unifying society by integrating tribal and local cults into the Brahmanical framework. Bhakti saints, often from lower social sections, preached in vernaculars to make religion accessible to all, emphasizing devotional worship. Temples became institutionalized, serving as centers of socio-political power, with a large network of priests and professionals supporting their operations. The rise of temple culture reflected the alignment of religious and political authority, with sectarian movements like Saivism and Vaisnavism using Bhakti ideology to manipulate state power (Pande 2010). Thus, we find that Bhaktins or the women Bhaktas brought a culture of social, political and cultural protest to Bhakti.

The study of Bhakti reveals it as a multifaceted spiritual path that emphasizes devotion as both a means and an end in itself. Rooted in the Sanskrit word "bhaj" meaning "to serve," Bhakti transcends mere religious practice, embodying a profound love for the divine that seeks no personal gain. Across diverse texts like the Bhakti Sutras, Bhagavata Purana, and Bhagavad Gita, Bhakti is portrayed as inclusive and transformative, offering a path to spiritual unity and personal growth. While proponents at times emphasized Bhakti over Karma and Jnana, the consensus recognizes their complementary roles. Scholars like Ramachandra Shukla and Eleanor Zelliot highlight Bhakti's historical context, addressing social inequalities and challenging hierarchical structures. Through its diverse expressions and regional variations, Bhakti continues to influence religious, social, and political discourse, emphasizing inclusivity, ethical development, and spiritual fulfillment. Thus, Bhakti stands not just as a religious practice but as a universal path towards enlightenment and societal harmony.

From the foregoing, we can see that Bhakti has been seen from a variety of lenses chiefly as a social, political, and cultural phenomenon. However, Bhakti involved significant pedagogy cutting across social, political barriers. Invariably, all the saints, regardless of caste, gender or other social, political cultural markers, pointed at a teacher or more specifically a guru.

The precise meaning of the Sanskrit word guru is uncertain since the term has a cluster of meanings with significance beyond that of the English translation 'teacher'. Within the Hindu worldview there are gurus not only for spiritual development specifically, but also for such preoccupations as dancing,

music, wrestling, and even cooking, doing artisanal work etc. The word implies accomplishment, knowledge, experience, literally influence or 'weight' referring to power or potential. While the Vedas speak of one gaining knowledge from a guru it is the *Upanishads* that explicitly insisted on the necessity of a guru for learning. The formal method of teaching-learning included a dialectical approach whereby the student asked questions, and the teacher discoursed upon them. There was more to the method than simply asking and listening. There was the insistence, as the shishya advanced, on contemplating the truth and realizing or activating it in one's life. This involved critical thinking on the part of the guru as well as the shishya. The guru was revered not because of academic knowledge or birth but because of their individual, inspirational qualities, rooted in their own personal practices. Questioning and critical evaluation of all evidence brought to fore by the guru is an essential ingredient of this tradition and is very well documented from Vedic times. Buddhism, Jainism, Sankara, and in more recent times Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, Swami Sivananda, Paramhansa Yogananda, Swami Muktananda, and more recently, Srila Prabhupada and Sri Satya Sai Baba have all exhorted the critical teaching-learning that happens between the guru and the shishya (Gonda 1965) (Mlecko 1982) (Sookal 1990).

Some scholars such as Paulo Freire, the Brazilian 20th-century philosopher of education who dedicated his life to helping oppressed people through their philosophy and practice of critical pedagogy, aimed to improve the living conditions of the oppressed. With his plea for acquiring consciousness and critiquing oppressive models of pedagogy, Freire was a pioneering figure in decolonizing education and introducing the element of care. He could very well be describing a guru when he says that the more radical a person becomes, the more fully reality is entered into, so that, by knowing it better, it can be transformed. This individual is unafraid to confront, to listen, and to see the world unveiled. There is no fear of meeting people or engaging in dialogue with them. This person does not consider themselves the proprietor of history, of all people, or the liberator of the oppressed, but rather commits to fighting alongside them within the course of history (Freire 2005). Taking a page out of Freire, scholars in India complain that in contemporary India, dominant elites perpetuate the colonial mindset by positioning themselves as morally superior leaders, reinforcing social hierarchies.

The masses are viewed as incapable of independent thought, echoing colonial attitudes. Like a teacher in a classroom, the intellectual elite holds moral authority, with the privilege of speaking up reserved for them, while the masses are relegated to passive consumption (Mahadevan 2022). They, however, miss the impact of Bhakti and its teachings on the Indian masses confining their readings and their investigations of the teaching-learning and knowledge-making among the people of India to post-Independence classrooms.

Bhakti holds a pedagogical power which can bring about critical self-inquiry and compassion in both teaching and learning, unlike the modern-day classroom that driven by commercial and industrial interest. Every saint has a guru, is taught by the guru and made a guru, and teaches, imparting knowledge in turn, making another guru. This essay argues that India has had its own specific public sphere of debate and dissent right from Vedic times that has evolved through educational institutions like the gurukul and the guru-shishya tradition and the Bhakti movement contributed significantly to this sphere. The essay argues that more Indians learn, acquire knowledge and make a purposeful living outside of formal classrooms and that a significant contribution to this comes from the pedagogical process that emerged from Bhakti.

Integrating Bhakti into an educational framework

Transforming a social or political movement into a pedagogical movement involves integrating educational principles and practices to foster learning and awareness among participants and broader society. Let us see how Bhakti can help realise this. Very clearly, Bhakti was practice-based. It emphasised action. It created a framework to disseminate knowledge and empower the participants. The chief tool for this was language used by the saint-poets. They addressed the people in their language and engaged with their everyday reality, articulating for them and on their behalf their trials and tribulations while presenting their own experience as proof for salvation and emancipation. It enhanced understanding as well as critical thinking. It was a means of empowerment as well as encouragement for activism. Community engagement and mobilisation was an important aspect of Bhakti. So was long-term sustainability. Bhakti provided the

bhakta with hope and energy to imagine and strive for a better engagement with the present and the possibility of shaping a better future.

The principles of Bhakti can be effectively integrated into an educational framework designed to foster holistic development, character building, and a deep sense of purpose among students.

1. Foundation of the Framework: Core Principles of Bhakti

Devotion and Commitment: Encourage students to dedicate themselves to their studies and personal growth with devotion, much like how devotion to the Divine is emphasized.

Steadfastness and Focus: Teach students to fix their minds on their goals and responsibilities, practising discipline and consistency in their pursuits.

Compassion and Humility: Foster an environment where students are encouraged to be compassionate, humble, and free from malice towards others, reflecting the attitudes Krishna describes as dear to Him.

2. Curriculum Design: Integrating Bhakti Principles

Holistic Learning:

Mind-Body Integration: Incorporate practices like meditation, yoga, and mindfulness to help students develop focus and inner peace, reflecting the idea of fixing the mind on the Divine.

Character Education: Introduce subjects or modules that focus on values such as compassion, humility, self-control, and forgiveness, ensuring that students grow not just academically but also ethically and emotionally.

Purposeful Education:

Service Learning: Encourage students to engage in community service and projects that benefit others. This will help them understand the importance of selfless action (Karma Yoga) and devotion to the welfare of all beings.

Goal Setting and Self-Reflection: Regularly involve students in activities that require them to set personal and academic goals, reflect on their progress, and align their actions with their broader life purpose, echoing the advice to fix the mind on the Divine.

3. Pedagogical Approaches: Teaching and Learning Methods

Experiential Learning:

Simulated Challenges: Create learning experiences where students face challenges that teach them resilience, equanimity in success and failure, and the importance of perseverance, similar to the practice of being even-minded.

Mindful Assignments: Assign tasks that encourage deep thinking, meditation, and reflection. This will help students renounce attachment to the fruits of their actions and instead focus on the learning process.

Collaborative Learning:

Group Projects: Promote teamwork and collaboration where students learn to be friendly, compassionate, and supportive of each other, fostering a community of learning based on mutual respect and understanding.

Peer Mentoring: Establish peer mentoring programs where more experienced students guide others, reflecting the principle of guiding others towards the Divine or higher knowledge.

4. Assessment and Evaluation: Measuring Holistic Development

Balanced Assessment:

Character and Values: Include assessments that evaluate not just academic performance but also students' growth in character, ethical understanding, and emotional intelligence.

Self and Peer Assessments: Encourage students to engage in self-assessment and peer assessment, focusing on how well they have embodied the principles of compassion, humility, and devotion in their academic and personal lives.

Feedback and Reflection:

Regular Reflection Sessions: Incorporate regular reflection sessions where students contemplate their actions, decisions, and progress towards their goals, similar to meditating on the Divine.

Constructive Feedback: Provide feedback that emphasizes improvement and growth rather than just outcomes. This approach aligns with the idea of focusing on devotion and service rather than the fruits of one's actions.

5. School Culture: Creating a Supportive Environment

Values-Driven Environment:

Respect and Inclusivity: Foster a school culture that respects diversity and inclusivity, ensuring that all students feel valued and supported in their learning journey.

Ethical Leadership: Encourage teachers and administrators to model ethical behaviour, selflessness, and a commitment to student's holistic development, which are similar to the qualities of the ideal devotee described in Bhakti.

Community Engagement:

Partnership with Families: Engage families and the broader community in the educational process, encouraging a collective commitment to students' holistic development.

Social Responsibility: Instil in students a sense of responsibility towards society, encouraging them to use their education and skills to contribute positively to the world.

6. Continuous Improvement: Evolving the Framework

Feedback Loops: Regularly gather feedback from students, teachers, and parents to refine and improve educational practices and ensure they continue to align with the principles of holistic development and character building.

Adaptability: Stay open to incorporating new methods and ideas that enhance the integration of Bhakti principles into the educational framework, ensuring that it remains relevant and effective in fostering well-rounded individuals.

This framework seeks to create an educational environment where students excel academically and grow into compassionate, responsible, and purposeful individuals grounded in the principles of Bhakti.

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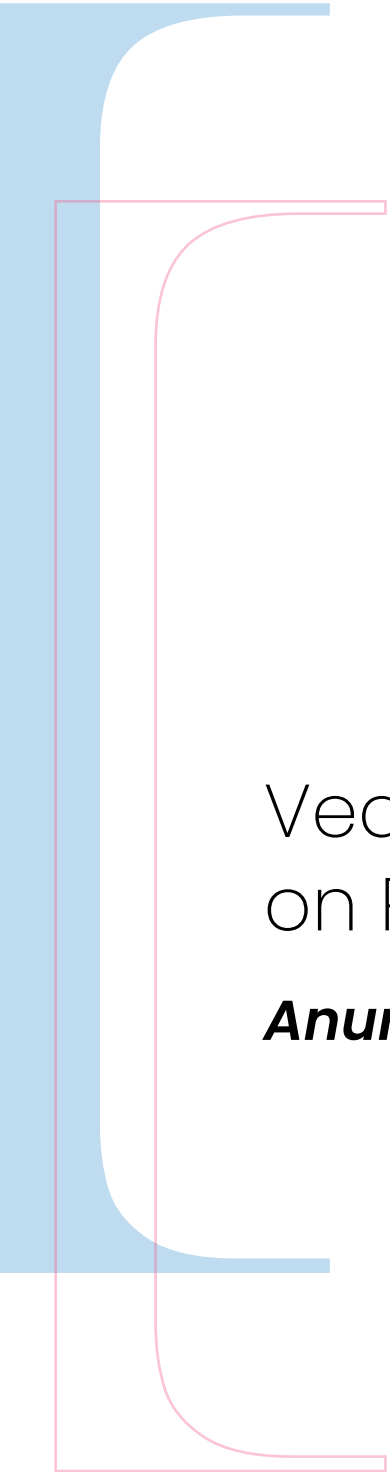
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Vedantic Perspectives on Personality

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Abstract

Indian psychology has to reflect and be embedded in the Indian cultural ethos. India has an extraordinarily rich heritage of classical literature, the content of which is particularly pertinent for Indian psychology. Vedanta, one of the six orthodox schools of Indian psychology, has been identified as a foundational resource for Indian psychology, and is considered to meet the criteria for a formal theory of personality. Accordingly, the lens used in this paper is that of the nondualist *Advaita* position in Vedanta. Whereas this Indian knowledge system is ancient (with the *Upanishads* dated approximately 2000 – 600 BCE), more recent Indian Vedic scholars' commentaries of original texts, including the Bhagavad Gita, have been used as resources in this paper. Relevant Vedantic concepts are first reviewed. For example, the Vedantic Atman and the Body-Mind-Intellect, types of sheaths (i.e., Panchakosha), and types of states (e.g., the waking state). Chapter XIV of the Bhagavad Gita is the main focus of the paper, as it is in this chapter that Lord Krishna explains how Spirit when bound to Matter through the three types of attachment, yields three broad types of personality, each representing one dominant mode of material nature (i.e., the Sattva or Rajas or Tamas Guna), with the other two modes present in a less powerful form. However, the essence of this explanation is definitely not taxonomical. In the Indian classical tradition, human development is synonymous with psychospiritual development, and transcendental goals outweigh any typology. Thus, although the Sattva Guna is the most divine of the three material modes, or three types of personalities at the material level, it too represents a bondage to the material world through attachment to happiness and attachment to knowledge. In sum, a person is urged to make concerted efforts to move from Tamas to Rajas, from Rajas to Sattva, and next, beyond Sattva, to realise the Supreme Self or Brahman. Unequivocally, Self-realisation is positioned as the one true goal, the highest purpose in life. The knowledge in Chapter XIV is considered Supreme Knowledge because the Path to Self-Realisation is made visible. Recognising the tyranny and trickery of the Gunas or material modes, surrendering agency to the Lord, quietening the mind, practising equanimity, engaging in devotional service to God, acting selflessly without eyeing the fruits of one's labour, are ways to progress on this path. The Gunas or material modes regulate Vasanas, the latter being mental impressions, desires,

and tendencies that become inherent and perpetuate entanglement in the material world, veiling the Atman, the spiritual core of a person. Vasanas need to be exhausted and/or purged in the path to Self-Realisation. In a latter section of the paper, comparisons are drawn between the Vedantic personality and Allportian personality. For example, both the Vedantic personality and Allportian personality are stable; in fact, the Vedantic personality can remain stable across multiple lifetimes. However, transcendental and psychospiritual aims are unique to the Vedantic perspective on personality.

Keywords:

Indian psychology, personality, Vedanta, Guna, Vasana, psychospiritual development

“I am not this body, the bundle of elements, nor am I the senses, I
am something other than this.” (Aparokshanubhuti, Verse 13, p. 12)
(Shankaracharya, 8th–9th century CE/2011)

Introduction

Rao and Paranjpe (2016) have distinguished between Indian psychology and psychology in India. Indian psychology, they justifiably assert, “is rooted in classical Indian thought” (p. 5), whilst psychology in India is largely an “alien discipline” (p. 3), disconnected from the Indian cultural ethos. Whereas, Euro-American or Western psychology is based on more than “twenty-three centuries of Western thought” (Peters, as cited in Rao & Paranjpe, 2016, p. 1), including religio-philosophical work (Brett, as cited in Rao & Paranjpe, 2016, p. 1), regrettably “the rich psychological tradition prevalent in India for nearly 3000 years has had little influence on what is regarded as psychology now” (p. 2) both in India and outside India (Rao & Paranjpe, 2016).

The classical wisdom of Indian psychology is extraordinarily complex, prolific and diverse, yielding multiple interpretations and models which are applicable for authentic living (Rao & Paranjpe, 2016). Vedanta is one of the six principal orthodox schools of Indian philosophy (Paranjpe, 1988), a cultural resource that Rao and Paranjpe (2016) have proposed as foundational to Indian psychology. The lens selected in this paper is that of the nondualist *Advaita* position in Vedanta. The origin of this Indian knowledge system dates back to the *Upanishads* (approximately 2000 – 600 BCE) and the compelling reinterpretations of Adi Shankaracharya (788 – 820 CE) (Paranjpe, 1988). The resources used to write this paper are from

(more) recent Indian Vedic scholars' commentaries and syntheses of original texts, whose work exemplifies *Advaita* philosophy (i.e., Sw. Chinmayananda, 2013; Parthasarathy, 2023; Sw. Vivekananda [1863 – 1902]/2018). Also presented in this paper are Sw. Prabhupada's (1971) insights, whilst acknowledging that there are differences in *Advaita* philosophy and the ISKON (International Society for Krishna Consciousness) teachings.

The literal meaning of Vedanta is "culmination of knowledge" because Veda means knowledge and anta is end (Parthasarathy, 2020, p. 19). Paranjpe (1988) has contended that Vedanta meets the criteria for a formal theory of personality, not just because of the relevance of its content, but also due to the precision, comprehensiveness, thoroughness, and organisation of the knowledge, openness to being tested empirically or verified experientially, and applicability to life.

Overview of Relevant Vedantic Concepts

In any theory, there is a set of interwoven concepts, that simultaneously represents the key vocabulary or jargon of the theory. Accordingly in this section, a few relevant Vedantic concepts are explained briefly. Other concepts are introduced and explained in later sections.

Dualism, Qualified Monism, and Monism

Three Vedic scholars (from earlier times) have arrived at different conclusions about the relationship between a human being and God, using the same literature; these three sub-schools of Vedantic thought are dualism (*Dvaita*), qualified monism (*Vishishtadvaita*), and monism (*Advaita*) (Parthasarathy, 2020). The *Dvaita* school, with Madhvacharya (1238 – 1317 CE) as its protagonist, claims that a person is separate from God; the person is finite, and God is infinite (Parthasarathy, 2020). Thus, a person can never merge and become one with God. In comparison, the *Vishishtadvaita* school, led by Ramanujacharya (1017 – 1137 CE), maintains that God represents the whole and the person is part of this whole; and finally, the *Advaita* school, with Adi Shankaracharya (788 – 820 CE) as the protagonist, declares oneness with God as the only truth (Parthasarathy, 2020).

These seemingly incompatible positions, however, need not be considered disparate and can co-exist as portrayed in Lord Hanuman's answer to Lord Rama about the distinction between him and Lord Rama (Parthasarathy, 2020, p. 356):

When I consider my body, I am your servant.

When I consider my mind, I am part of you.

When I consider my Self, you and I are one.

Furthermore, Sw. Vivekananda (d.1902/2018) asserted that *Dvaita*, *Vishishtadvaita*, and *Advaita* represent three progressive steps in a person's development, with *Advaita* being the goal.

Vedantic Atman and BMI

Parthasarathy (2018, 2020) has diagrammed the composition of the human being, an amalgam of Spirit and Matter. The divine or spiritual core of the person, Atman, is Spirit; the Spirit enlivens the Matter, which comprises the body, mind and intellect (Vedantic BMI). The body contains the perceiver (yielding perceptions) and actor roles (yielding actions); the mind contains the feeler (generating feelings, emotions, likes, dislikes); the gross intellect, the thinker (generating thoughts, reasoning, decisions to do with the material or corporeal world); and the subtle intellect, the contemplator (transcendental knowing). Thus, Parthasarathy (2018) has outlined the physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual personalities of a person (corresponding to the body, mind, gross intellect, and subtle intellect respectively). At a material level but not at a transcendental level, Vasanas (i.e., the person's inherent nature, proclivities) determine the quality of perceptions, actions, feelings/emotions, thoughts and knowledge. The Atman is and remains pure unconditioned Consciousness, universal in all beings; when viewed through Matter, it appears as if conditioned just like the sun seen in the reflection of a pink mirror will appear pink (Parthasarathy, 2020). The drastically limited experience of the Unlimited Pure Consciousness is because of identification with and attachment to the body-mind-intellect (Parthasarathy, 2020). The goal in human development is Enlightenment (i.e., Self-realisation), which entails transcending the perceptions, actions, emotions and thoughts yielded by the body-mind-intellect, thereby unshackling the conditioning and merging with Pure Consciousness (Parthasarathy, 2020).

The Three Yogas and BMI

Regaining one's Supreme Self is possible through dedicated practice of one or more of three paths, each a spiritual discipline: *Karma Yoga*, *Bhakti Yoga*, and *Gnana Yoga* (Parthasarathy, 2020). *Karma Yoga* is a "Path of Action for the body", *Bhakti Yoga* is a "Path of Devotion for the mind", and *Gnana Yoga* is a "Path of Knowledge for the intellect" (Parthasarathy, 2020, p. 164).

Types of Sheaths, Bodies, and States

To reiterate, the Atman is the core of a person. Five material layers or sheaths (i.e., the Panchakosha) form the outer layers in an embodied being, Jiva: from innermost to outermost (and from grossest to subtlest), these are the Anandamaya Kosha, the Vignanamaya Kosha, the Manomaya Kosha, the Pranamaya Kosha, and the Annamaya Kosha (Parthasarathy, 2020). These five material layers yield three types of bodies: from inner to outer, these are the Causal Body, the Subtle Body, and the Gross Body (Parthasarathy, 2020). Each of the sheaths and bodies is experienced in one of three material states, with Pure Consciousness as the constant substratum: the waker or waking state, the dreamer or dreaming state, and the deep sleeper or sleeping state (Parthasarathy, 2020). The waking, dreaming and deep-sleep states are also known as "the three ordinary states of consciousness", distinguished from Turiya, the fourth state, which is the Self-realised state of Pure Consciousness (Sw. Chinmayananda, 2013, p. 701; Parathasarathy, 2023).

The outermost layer is the Annamaya Kosha or the Food Sheath, which corresponds to the physical body in the Vedantic BMI, impacted by and requiring food for maintenance (Parthasarathy, 2020). Inner to this sheath and subtler, is the Pranamaya Kosha, the Vital-air Sheath, requiring air to breathe, with the following five functions or Pranas: perception or sensing; the physiological functions of excretion, digestion, and circulation; and, thought absorption (Parthasarathy, 2020). The Pranamaya Kosha controls the Annamaya Kosha; when the Pranas function well, the physical body is healthy (Parthasarathy, 2020).

The next two inner layers are first the Manomaya Kosha or the Mental Sheath, which corresponds to the mind in the Vedantic BMI, and second, the Vignanamaya Kosha, the intellectual sheath, which corresponds to the intellect in the Vedantic BMI (Parthasarathy, 2020). The Manomaya Kosha controls the Pranamaya and Annamaya Koshas; thus, when the mind is at peace, the Pranas function well and the physical body is healthy (Parthasarathy, 2020). However, there are two red flags: first, the mind is a cauldron of emotions, likes, aversions, attachments, impulses, desires, and passions which produce agitations and restlessness; second, the mind is also prone to anxiety and worry because it tends to dwell in the past or an imagined future rather than stay focused in the present moment (Parthasarathy, 2020). Clearly, an uncontrolled mind can wreak havoc (Parthasarathy, 2020). Here is where the subtler Vignanamaya Kosha is very important. The intellect controls the Manomaya, Pranamaya and Annamaya Koshas. Sensory indulgence of the physical body and the capriciousness of the mind can be regulated through a powerful intellect, an intellect which is distinct from intelligence that is based on academic subject-matter knowledge (Parthasarathy, 2020). Parthasarathy (2020) has distinguished between intellect and intelligence by using examples of intelligence such as that of a scientist, brilliant in his/her academic field, who is addicted to alcohol. In such a case, no doubt the person is very intelligent but has a strong mind and a weak intellect.

The innermost material layer is the subtlest material sheath and is called the Anandamaya Kosha or the bliss sheath (Parthasarathy, 2020). It is the storehouse of the unmanifest Vasanas, and therefore the seed form of the personality, also called the Causal Body (Parthasarathy, 2020). Although the Anandamaya Kosha is experienced in dreamless deep sleep, it is from this Causal Body that thoughts, desires and related actions emerge in other material states such as the dream or waking states. As the Vasanas are not manifest in this layer, it means that thoughts and desires remain latent or dormant, and therefore there are no corresponding mental agitations; this allows the person to experience relative peace, which, of course, falls well short of the absolute bliss that accompanies Self-realisation (Parthasarathy, 2020).

The Subtle Body is constituted of the subtle parts of the Pranamaya Kosha along with the Manomaya and Vignanamaya Koshas (Parthasarathy, 2020). The

unmanifest Vasanas of the Causal Body are expressed in the Subtle Body as feelings, emotions, desires and thoughts (Parthasarathy, 2020). The Annamaya Kosha and the less subtle parts of the Pranamaya Kosha comprise the Gross Body, engaging in perception and action, under the influence of the Subtle Body, which in turn is under the influence of the Causal Body (Parthasarathy, 2020).

Bhagavad Gita

The Bhagavad Gita, or the “Song of the Lord” is part of the epic Mahabharata, written by the sage Vyasa (Parthasarathy, 2023). It is also referred to as Gitopanishad (Sw. Prabhupada, 1971). The Bhagavad Gita is a dialogue between Lord Krishna and the mighty warrior king, Arjuna; Lord Krishna urges the despondent Arjuna to engage in right action, aligned with his highest purpose, and fight the battle of life (which in the Mahabharata referred to Arjuna leading the Pandavas against the aggressing Kauravas in the Battle of Kurukshetra). In this dialogue, Lord Krishna presents, explains and summarises every aspect of Supreme Knowledge (i.e., Vedic knowledge), ranging from the creation of the universe to one’s deepest purpose in life. Arjuna’s questions are invited, and Lord Krishna’s answers and clarifications are immeasurably helpful and impactful, for both a scholar and a layperson.

The Bhagavad Gita, the essence of the Vedas, is considered by many (e.g., Huxley, as cited in Sw. Chinmayananda, 2013; Parthasarathy, 2023; Sw. Prabhupada, 1971) to transcend the boundaries of any one faith or religion and instead to exemplify a holistic, universally applicable way of life which is simultaneously simple and profound. Parthasarathy (2023) states that all the knowledge and tools are provided in the Bhagavad Gita to overcome the negative with the positive (within our own selves) even if the negative appears to greatly outnumber the positive at the outset. Thus, the Bhagavad Gita offers philosophical guidelines for charting, monitoring, evaluating and restructuring one’s life course, with the thought-action-consequence sequences extending prior to and beyond the current lifetime. Unapologetically, any notion of a debate over one’s purpose in life is

rejected and Self-realisation is identified as the only goal, as the true goal, whilst also declaring that (ironically) seekers are far and few between. Unquestionably in classical Indian thought, human development has been synonymous with psychospiritual development regardless of whether and how many individuals pay heed to this knowledge.

Introduction to Gunas

Chapter 14 of the Bhagavad Gita spells out the three Gunas, the threads of attachment that bind Spirit to Matter. It is through these three types of attachments, that unlimited universal Spirit, at the individual person level (i.e., at the level of Jiva), is experienced as confined, limited and separate (Sw. Chinmayananda, 2013). Sw. Prabhupada (1971) has referred to the Gunas as the three modes of material nature.

Together the three Gunas comprise Maya at a macrocosmic level and Avidya at a microcosmic level (Sw. Chinmayananda, 2013); Maya as material nature is also called Prakriti (Sw. Chinmayananda, 2013; see Sw. Prabhupada, 1971). To understand Maya/Avidya, consider an (approximate) analogy from physics: Maya/Avidya is to Brahman what naïve realism is to relativity. Brahman refers to the all-encompassing Universal Self: When the individual wave loses its sense of separateness and merges with the reality of the ocean, it realises it is the ocean, one with all the waves (Sw. Chinmayananda, 2013; Parthasarathy, 2023). Similarly, our essential nature is Infinite and Divine, and we can attain and experience our “Absolute Universal Nature” (Sw. Chinmayananda, 2013, p. 1035). Brahman can also be called God, the Supreme Reality and Pure Consciousness (Parthasarathy, 2023), or the Supreme Personality of Godhead Krishna (Sw. Prabhupada, 1971). Although Maya is Matter, it too is Brahman itself (but with name and form) which Parthasarathy has likened to a mirage in a desert; after all, a “mirage in the desert is nothing but sand” (Parthasarathy, 2023, p. 295). Despite appearing diametrically opposed to Brahman in nature, Maya is a projection of Brahman (Parthasarathy, 2023). Sw. Prabhupada (1971) has noted that (lower) Prakriti, or the manifestation of the material world, is the separated energy of Brahman or God; being Brahman notwithstanding it can veil Brahman, but it is not false, it is real for what it is: “a reflection of the spiritual world” which is “but a shadow of reality” (p. 45).

Avidya can be defined as “egocentric misconceptions of life” (Sw. Chinmayananda, 2013, p. 1033) wherein the person, lacking the right knowledge (a-vidya), mistakenly identifies with their body, mind and intellect, rather than the Supreme Self or Brahman. Because of the workings of the Gunas, the person believes and experiences their own self as defined by the limitations of their body, mind and intellect; and, in fact, most frequently as defined by the limitations of the body and vagaries/agitations of their mind (Parthasarathy, 2011). Therefore, to reiterate, Maya and Avidya are experienced because of the Gunas. It is also important to note that Brahman, from which all originates, and the Atman, the Brahman core of the embodied being, remain unaffected by Maya or Avidya just as a piece of wood attached to a metal remains unchanged, even though the combination would now be attracted to a magnet (Parthasarathy, 2023). Likewise, Sw. Prabhupada (1971) has explained that Brahman or the Supreme Personality of Godhead is never materially contaminated (whereas the consciousness of the Jiva is materially contaminated or conditioned).

Although each of the Gunas becomes manifest through its pattern of distinctive characteristics, the Gunas are not attributes or characteristics by themselves (Sw. Chinmayananda, 2013). Each of the three Gunas represents a type of attachment that serves to bind us to the material or corporeal world, resulting in a typical pattern of either inactivity/underactivity (Tamasic or Tamo Guna), overactivity (Rajasic or Rajo Guna), or balanced activity (Sattvic or Sattva Guna), with the Sattva Guna also being termed as trans-active (Parthasarathy, 2023). Thus, each Guna represents and fosters a climate or conditioning, which predisposes a person towards a typical pattern of either under-action/inaction, overaction or balanced action (Sw. Chinmayananda, 2013). What is important to note is that the climate is fostered by the individual themselves, a consequence of the quality of their prior thoughts and actions (whether in this lifetime or in previous lifetimes); it is not thrust on the individual. Thereby, the individual is neither a victim of heredity nor a victim of circumstances but is judged to be accountable for earlier actions and reparations thereof (Law of Karma).

Each of us has all three Gunas. However, the proportionate dominance of each Guna varies for each individual and this defines the person’s overall demeanour, personality and character (Sw. Chinmayananda, 2013). Depending on which of

the three Gunas is most prominent in the mental climate that one has fostered (up until that moment), overall one's personality is either Tamasic, Rajasic, or Sattvic.

Sattva, Rajas, Tamas

Gunas represent chains or chords that tie the Unlimited to the limited, deluding the individual in identifying with gross Matter, in experiencing a weighing down of spirit, becoming ever entangled in desires and agitations (Sw. Chinmayananda, 2013). The Sattvic Guna is characterised by purity, Rajasic Guna by passion, and Tamasic Guna by inertia (Bhagawad Gita, XIV.5). Sw. Prabhupada (1971) has referred to these as the three modes of Prakriti: the mode of goodness, the mode of passion, and the mode of ignorance. Although a Jiva or person is transcendental, whilst conditioned by the material world, the person acts "under the spell of the three modes of material nature", either happy (Sattva), very active (Rajas) or helpless (Tamas) (Sw. Prabhupada, 1971, p. 914).

Whereas all three Gunas are present in any person, the typical features of each Guna are visible when that Guna is most predominant in the mental climate of the person. Thus, the Sattva Guna rises when Rajas and Tamas are overpowered, Rajas when Sattva and Tamas are overpowered, and Tamas when Sattva and Rajas are overpowered (Bhagawad Gita, XIV.10). Sw. Prabhupada (1971) has termed this as differential conditioning in the material world.

Whilst the core of Sattva remains attachment to the world-of-matter, among the Gunas it is considered the most divine, fairly free as it is from rajasic agitations and tamasic indolence (Sw. Chinmayananda, 2013). The ever-present Light of Self, that was veiled because of ignorance (Tamas) and agitations (Rajas), now begins to shine forth (Parthasarathy, 2023). Thus, Sattva is described as stainless, thereby healthy and luminous; at the same time, Sattva binds the Infinite to the finite, sustaining Avidya through attachment to happiness and attachment to knowledge (Bhagawad Gita, XIV.6). Discernment and subtle comprehension, a keen intellect, a steady mind (not prey to emotional turmoil), astute observation, clarity, wisdom, and happiness and peace directed inward, characterise a person

under the influence of the Sattva Guna (Sw. Chinmayananda, 2013; Parthasarathy, 2023). Good action results in Sattva and purity (Bhagawad Gita, XIV.16).

The relative absence of both emotional turmoil and indolence, allows the Sattvic person to be inspiring and creative, to gain vast material knowledge and build deep understanding (Bhagawad Gita, XIV.17; Sw. Chinmayananda, 2013). To the extent that the person continues to desire the higher inner joys that accompany inspiring creativity and incisive knowledge, the person will effectively remain bound to the world-of-matter through the Sattva Guna (Sw. Chinmayananda, 2013). Here, goodness itself binds the person to the world-of-matter (Sw. Chinmayananda, 2013).

Rajas is characterised by passion, and it binds through attachment to action (Bhagawad Gita, XIV.7). Thirsting for worldly acquisitions and successes, engaging in frenzied repeated action to acquire more and more, possessiveness towards what is already acquired, driven by the orientation that, “I am the doer”, lost in sense gratification, are some of the features of Rajoguna (Parthasarathy, 2023; Sw. Chinmayananda, 2013; Sw. Prabhupada, 1971). The focus is on external objects of the material world rather than a seeking inward, and chasing happiness (futilely) through incessant action to procure and possess external objects (e.g., wealth, status, property). Self-absorbed in “acquiring, aggrandising and indulging in the world” (Parthasarathy, 2023, p. 899), the mind is in a constant state of agitation rather than dynamic quietude (Sattva) or indolence (Tamas). Greed, longing, (over)activity and restlessness become the defining traits of the person (Bhagawad Gita, XIV.12 & 17). Pain, distress or sorrow is the fruit of Rajas (Bhagawad Gita, XIV.16).

Tamas is the Guna which causes the maximum delusion, with the person appearing to be in the deepest state of forgetfulness, with no apprehension of their Supreme Self (Sw. Chinmayananda, 2013). Born of ignorance, it binds Spirit to Matter through heedlessness, indolence and sleep (Bhagawad Gita, XIV.8). Under the influence of Tamo Guna, knowledge is shrouded, intellect is unavailable, the person fails to discriminate between right and wrong, lacks judgement, and is heedless of a higher purpose (Bhagawad Gita, XIV.9; Sw. Chinmayananda, 2013). Dullness or a complete lack of luminous light, inaction and idleness, lethargy,

delusion, ignorance and heedlessness (imperviousness to a higher calling) arise when the Tamo Guna has overpowered Sattva and Rajas (Bhagawad Gita, XIV.13, 16 & 17).

Gunās and Vasanas

The Gunas direct and control the Vasanas (Sw. Chinmayananda, 2013), which also shape the personality, at a much more differentiated and articulated level. Thus, two individuals under the Sattvic Guna, will have their own unique set of Sattvic-influenced Vasanas. Sw. Chinmayananda (2013) has clarified that the distinctiveness of an individual's personality is known through the "texture of the thoughts entertained" (p. 306) by the individual. Moreover, this texture of thoughts is because of an established pattern of thinking (i.e., Vasanas), based on the individual's own past. Vasanas, therefore, are defined as "pre-determined 'channels-of-thinking' created by one's own earlier ways of thinking" (Sw. Chinmayananda, 2013, p. 306). Parthasarathy (2018) has referred to Vasanas as innate inclinations or tendencies. As already noted, the quality of perceptions, actions, emotions and thoughts is contingent on Vasanas (Parthasarathy, 2020), which in turn are controlled by the Gunas.

Each experience in the material world creates mental impressions, and the ever-burgeoning storehouse of these in the mind lead to Vasanas; engaging in desire-provoked actions with an eye to the results multiplies Vasanas (Sw. Chinmayananda, 2013). Life after life, opportunities are provided to express and exhaust one's Vasanas through Svadharma (alignment with one's inner nature); each individual, therefore, can be viewed as a "bundle of Vasanas" (Sw. Chinmayananda, 2013, p. 182). However, whilst exhausting Vasanas even through Svadharma, we run the risk of inviting and hoarding new Vasanas, which will need their own fields of expression for exhaustion. Therefore, Vasana-purging is necessary for Self-realisation (Sw. Chinmayananda, 2013). Material austerity (alone) will not suffice here. Rather, Vasanas can be purged, for example, through surrendering the "I" and allowing the wayward mind to be regulated by discriminative intellect, engaging in selfless activities without expectation of reward, devotedly serving God in everyday activities, reducing attachment, quietening the mind, and practising equanimity in the face of challenges (Sw. Chinmayananda, 2013).

Continuity of Gunas across Lifetimes

The Gunas are not absolved at death; in other words, at death the slate is not wiped clean. The Vasanas typifying each Guna have to be exhausted in embodied form. In Verse 14, it is clarified that if Sattva is predominant at the time of death, the person attains to the higher realms such as Brahmaloka (Bhagawad Gita, XIV.14; Sw. Chinmayananda, 2013; Sw. Prabhupada, 1971), conducive to further movement on the path to Enlightenment (Parthasarathy, 2023). However, should Rajas be predominant, the person is reborn among those attached to action; whereas if Tamas is the overpowering Guna, the person is reborn as an animal or a plant (Bhagawad Gita, XIV.15 & 18; Sw. Chinmayananda, 2013). It is the Gunas and Vasanas that are carried forward past death and not material gains such as positions achieved in one's career (or in society at large) and possessions acquired (Parthasarathy, 2023). Unlike the focus of many in everyday life, neither is the yardstick a comparison with others, because it is not about getting ahead of others.

Malleability of Gunas

With each new thought and action, one is likely to continue to ingrain the dominant Guna, as the tendency is to think and act in ways aligned with the prominent Guna. The mental climate, despite arising from and being bolstered by one's own thought-action sequences, begins to serve as an inherent predisposition. And yet it is not foreordained, or a chapter closed forever. Changes in actions and/or thoughts that are sustained can restructure the mental climate and the personality can change. Multidirectional changes are possible. Ideally, the Tamasic personality can be changed to Rajasic, and the Rajasic to Sattvic. However, it is also possible to move from Sattvic to Rajasic and Rajasic to Tamasic (and Tamasic to the animal or plant kingdom).

What are some strategies to effect a positive change towards the Sattvic Guna? Sw. Chinmayananda (2013) has pointed out that it is easier to change our behaviours than our thoughts. He has recommended disciplining our external actions and practising goodness; when the practice of goodness becomes a habit, the mind becomes disciplined in due course.

The malleability of Gunas can be understood also through Sw. Prabhupada's (1971) delineation of five subject matters in the Bhagvad Gita: Ishwara or Brahman, Jiva (the living being), Prakriti (material nature), time, and karma (activity). Of these five, the first four are considered eternal: Brahman or God is eternal, and Jiva is eternal (across births and deaths and transcendently). The cycle of Prakriti is eternal, despite each material manifestation being temporary: each expression of Prakriti manifests, stays, dissipates, only to start a new cycle of manifestation, maintenance and dissolution. Time is also eternal. However, karma is not eternal. A person can be afflicted or be benefited by the fruits of their actions for the longest time, across lifetimes; yet karma is not eternal, it can be changed through perfecting knowledge and engaging in right action and devotional service (Sw. Prabhupada, 1971). Thus, Gunas are malleable because Karma is not eternal.

Beyond the Gunas

Sw. Chinmayananda (2013) has positioned the seeker as the driver of the car and the Guna-determined personality as the car's engine: "an experienced driver, knowing the nature and behaviour of the engine...can immediately stop the car...readjust the machine, and drive on towards the goal" (p. 1031). Knowledge of Gunas can help a person understand the workings of the mind, the mental influences that trigger reactions that deter the seeker from the one true path. Knowledge of how the "tyranny" (Sw. Chinmayananda, 2013, p. 1033) of these influences is created through one's own past and current thoughts and actions can provide the seeker a way to transmuting Gunas and becoming Self-realised (Bhagawad Gita, XIV.1). Thus, the ideal journey of reconstruction does not stop at Sattva, as Sattva is also characterised by attachment and bondage albeit to higher goals. The eventual goal is to renunciate all three types of attachment, and thereby renunciate desire, and be Self-realised. In this vein, Parthasarathy (2020) has stated that a human being minus desires is God.

Self-realisation

When the seeker is able to see through the Gunas, recognising that the (limiting) thought-action patterns are all an outcome of the play of the Gunas, that there is a higher reality, and (once again) knows that Supreme Self, the seeker attains

Self-realisation (Sw. Chinmayananda, 2013). The seeker realises that the agency previously attributed to the “I” belongs to the Gunas, and in fact above the Gunas, to the Supreme Self. The “I” is annihilated, and the Self is realised. This is articulated in Verse 19 (Chapter XIV): *When the Seer beholds no agent other than the GUNAS and knows him who is higher than the GUNAS, he attains to My Being.*

Equanimity and equipoise characterise the Self-realised or the “transcendentally situated person” as opposed to the “materially situated person” (Sw. Prabhupada, 1971, p. 939). First, attention is drawn to equanimity with regard to the three Gunas: Now the person is AWAKE to the undeniable Supreme Reality and has neither hate nor longing for light (Sattva), activity (Rajas), and delusion (Tamas) (Bhagawad Gita, XIV.22); the Gunas do not have a hold on the person any more, the workings of the Gunas no longer shatter the inner peace of the Self-realised (Bhagawad Gita, XIV.23; Sw. Chinmayananda, 2013). As already noted, even a Sattvic person is attached to joyous quietude, and is uncomfortable and unhappy when this quietude is ruffled by their own or another’s lack-lustre sluggishness (Tamas) or fervency (Rajas) (Sw. Chinmayananda, 2013). But the Self-realised person has neither antipathy nor attachment and yearning for any of the Gunas, including the Sattva Guna; the presence or absence of any particular Guna no longer matters because one is liberated from the “thralldom of ...thought entanglements” (Sw. Chinmayananda, 2013, p. 1072). Equanimity is further elaborated in Verses 24 and 25: For example, the Self-realised person is “alike in pleasure and pain” (Bhagawad Gita, XIV.24), “same in honour and dishonour”, and “same to friend and foe” (Bhagawad Gita, XIV.25). Moreover, it is not just that the transcendentally situated person is equanimous; the practice of equanimity, coupled with devotional service, can itself facilitate Self-realisation (Sw. Prabhupada, 1971).

The final verses of Chapter XIV of the Bhagawad Gita bring us back to our Ultimate Refuge—Brahman. A person who has transcended the Gunas and is selflessly devoted in everyday service to God, “is fit to become Brahman” (Bhagawad Gita, XIV.26; Sw. Chinmayananda, 2013). Sw. Prabhupada (1971) has remonstrated that devotion must not and cannot be sidelined in the path to Self-realisation. As is clear in Verse 26 (Chapter XIV), devotional service, along with transcendental knowledge, is essential for Self-realisation. Devotional service allows detachment from the modes of material nature, and movement from mortality, ignorance

and misery in the material world to the sat-chit-ananda (pure eternal being—pure awareness/knowledge—pure bliss) of Brahman or Krishna Consciousness (Sw. Prabhupada, 1971). By surrendering one's thoughts, emotions and activities to the Supreme Consciousness continually, and realigning these in service of the highest, one need no longer be swayed by the three modes of material nature (Sw. Prabhupada, 1971).

Lastly, in Chapter XIV, Lord Krishna declares that He is the Abode of Brahman, the Immortal and Immutable (Bhagawad Gita, XIV.27). Thus, in the tradition of *Advaita* philosophy, once the “false identifications with the body, mind and intellect are broken down” (Sw. Chinmayananda, 2013, p. 1092), the wave merges into the ocean and is the ocean (Parthasarathy, 2023). The person's consciousness becomes One with the Supreme Self, who is none other than God.

Comparison with Allportian Personality

Of the numerous positions on the personality in the Western literature, one that has a stronghold is Gordon Allport's trait theory (Bakshi, 2014). Therefore, in this section a comparison is drawn between the Allportian and Vedantic perspectives on the personality.

Is there a personality?

In Western psychology, there has been an older debate whether it is the person and their traits or whether it is the situation that determines their behaviour. Allport's perspective was that it is always the person, that traits are “determinative”: “It is not the stimulus that is the crucial determinant in behavior that expresses personality; it is the trait itself that is decisive” (Allport, 1929, p. 369). Moreover, different traits function in a coordinated, inter-related pattern rather than independently of each other (Allport, 1929). In the Vedantic perspective, there is a personality at the matter-identified level, but not at the deepest level.

Origin

Allport represents the realist position in personality psychology (Caspi & Shiner, 2006), such that it is presumed that there is a real internal structure determining the personality; this real internal structure is not directly accessible but is visible in the consistencies observed in the person's behaviours. Allport cast his traits as causal entities; in other words, traits directly cause behaviour (Zuroff, 1986). Hence, Allport's stance with regard to personality is also called the explanatory position (Caspi & Shiner, 2006).

The Vedantic personality is the outcome of the play of the Gunas (Sw. Chinmayananda, 2013). It is a result of the identification with Matter, namely, with the body, mind and intellect (Sw. Chinmayananda, 2013). The personality belongs to the waker-dreamer-sleeper, the matter-identified person (Sw. Chinmayananda, 2013). The matter-identified person or the materially situated person does have an internal structure that determines the personality, namely, the unmanifest Vasanas in the Causal Body that are controlled by the Gunas.

Genetics

The Allportian personality is attributed to an inherent structure that is inherited. The Vedantic personality is not passively received (i.e., it is not a genetic endowment), the person's quality of thoughts and actions creates a mental climate that results in a personality. Depending on the quality of a person's mental climate at the time of death, the person will be reborn among better (Satva), similar (Rajas), or worse (Tamas) circumstances.

Typology

Typology for the Allportian and neo-Allportian perspectives on the personality is provided through the five-factor model of personality (also known as the Big Five), represented by the acronym OCEAN: Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism (Caspi & Shiner, 2006; see, for example, McCrae & Costa, 1987). In the Vedantic perspective, there are three Gunas, and therefore broadly three types of personality. However, the proportion of Sattva, Rajas and

Tamas vary for each individual, yielding much greater individual differences; also, the Vasanas under each Guna are numerous, further amplifying the uniqueness of individual personalities (Parthasarathy, 2023). Importantly, there is a hierarchy within the three broad types, or the three modes of material nature, with the Sattva Guna being the most divine, Rajas in the middle, and Tamas representing the most pronounced disconnect from one's inner divinity and true nature.

Stability & Whether Innate

Stability is the cornerstone of the Allportian personality. Allport (1929) defined traits as more generalised habits. Of course, without observed consistencies in behaviour, and therefore, patterns of thinking, emoting and behaving, there can be no personality (Bakshi, 2014).

The Vedantic personality can be stable. The Vedantic personality generates inherent tendencies that endure over time, which can include multiple lifetimes. The stability is seeded through the Causal Body wherein these tendencies (i.e., Guna-regulated Vasanas) are latent; the tendencies become manifest in the Subtle Body influencing the quality of thoughts and emotions, and in the Gross Body as the quality of sensory perceptions and actions (Sw. Chinmayananda, 2013).

Malleability

In the realist position of Western personality theory, as the personality is the manifestation of an internal structure that cannot be accessed, the personality essentially remains unmodifiable. Unlike process theorists of personality such as Walter Mischel (e.g., Mischel, 2004), Allport dismissed outright any notion of the changeability of the internal structure. Instead, he contended that outer manifestations of the fixed internal structure could display some variability (Bakshi, 2014). When individual differences are conceptualised as fixed and unmodifiable, in effect one has ended up "declaring the irredeemable inequality of individuals" (Bakshi, 2014, p. 130).

In stark contrast, the Vedantic personality can be modified for the better with conscious effort (i.e., Tamas to Rajas, and Rajas to Sattva). Without conscious

effort, change need not occur, or the change can be detrimental rather than progressive. Therefore, without effort a Rajasic person can be stuck in a time warp such that the person continues to strive for worldly ambitions through overly zealous activities across current and future lifetimes. Without effort a Tamasic person invites a worsening state across current and future lifetimes.

Trans-personality

A transcendental perspective is not indigenous to the Western personality literature, whereas it is fundamental to the Vedantic perspective on personality. Transcendence is essential when the fulcrum is psychospiritual development.

The Vedantic personality is part of Avidya. The waker, dreamer and deep-sleeper states are conditioned states, whereas one's real state is Brahman or the unconditioned Consciousness (Parthasarthy, 2023). Knowledge of the Supreme Self allows a movement beyond the limitations of the waker-dreamer-sleeper personality. Self-realisation is trans-Guna and therefore trans-personality.

Conclusion

This paper was started with a verse from Adi Shankaracharya's Aparokshanubhuti. It would be befitting to end the paper with another verse from the Aparokshanubhuti, a verse which sums up the essence of this paper:

"Thus, when the Self is not known, the idea that I am the body, persists, when the Self is known, the same will dissolve in the Supreme Self." (*Aparokshanubhuti*, Verse 87, p. 75)
(Shankaracharya, 8th–9th century CE/2011)

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Indian Knowledge System and Contemporary Relevance of Vedas

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Abstract

The Indian Knowledge System is ancient, rich and diverse collection of knowledge, beliefs, and practices developed in the Indian subcontinent. Vedas, Upanishads, and Puranas have contributed to the diversity of knowledge systems. According to the Hindu tradition, the different philosophical ideas that were developed in the philosophical systems originated in the Vedas. In the present era, we must study them for our personal and professional development.

Keywords

Indian Knowledge System, Vedas, Hindu Philosophy

Introduction

Indian civilisation has always attached great value to knowledge with its amazing large body of intellectual texts, the world's largest collection of manuscripts, and its attested tradition of texts, thinkers, and schools in so many domains of knowledge. In the Bhāgwad Gita, Krishna tells Arjuna that knowledge is the greatest purifier and liberator of the self.¹ Hence, great emphasis has been on achievement of knowledge or Jnana as the goal and quest of all philosophical and spiritual inquiry in India.²

Three terms are closely connected in all discussions of knowledge- Darśan, Jnana, and Vidya. Darsana, is a "system", a point of view, which yields/leads to jnana, knowledge. When knowledge gathered about a particular domain is

organized and systematized for purposes reflection and pedagogy, it is called vidya, “discipline”. The entire body of organized knowledge is divided into two sets in the Mundakopanisad, they are- Para vidya and Apra vidya.³ It also places a strong emphasis on self-realization and inner transformation. This is achieved through practices like meditation, yoga, and the pursuit of knowledge and wisdom. Despite the influence of modernization, these practices continue to be a vital part of Indian society serving as a source of guidance and inspiration for individuals and communities. Its teaching of compassion, harmony, and balance has helped shape national culture and continues to influence the global community.

According to the Hindu tradition, the various philosophical ideas that were developed in the philosophical systems originated in the Vedas, While the Vedas contain a myriad of different themes, ranging from hymns for deities and rules of fire sacrifices to music and magic, there is also scope to find in them an exemplary spirit of inquiry into “the one being” (एकम् सत्) that underlies the diversity of empirical phenomena, and into the origin of all things (was there being or nonbeing at the beginning). There are also predefinitions of concepts of ऋत (truth or moral order), Karma and the afterlife, and the three qualities (gunas), sattva, rajas and tamas, constituting nature (Prakrti). It is in the Upanishads that develops a more strictly philosophical character, while retaining its poetic flavour.⁴

The Bhāratīya Darśan may appear to be a small book by ordinary standards but it contains a revelations about the absolute principles of Vedas, it is also claimed to be the end product of the most advanced and lofty thinking. The darshans contain the fundamental values of the ancient code of conduct. The understanding of darshans are based on the Vedas. The repeated application in real life of the teachings of the darshans facilitates the understanding of the Vedas. It may be said that application of the teachings of the Vedas, and Upanishads and the Bhagwat Geeta can only be done through the repeated practice of the preachings of the prescriptions of the darshans.

In India, there are different traditions of religion and philosophy handed down in regular succession. Although the exposition and interpretations of all the

darshans are different from one another, they have a common goal which is to acquire knowledge of the highest truth. All the Darshans have their own separate codes of conduct and propriety.

The word 'darshan' terminates in the verb 'दृष्टि' which is 'to see'. The word 'darshan' means to know, to inspect, examine, or to view with due respect. The Sanskrit saying 'दृश्यते अनेन इति दर्शनम्' defines darshan as that which enables one to see. One can see in two ways namely the large, coarse viewpoint or the minute, subtle, and delicate viewpoint. When we see with our external eyes, it is called the macro or coarse vision. When we see with our subtle internal eyes, which are also termed as 'divine eyes', 'the eyes of knowledge', or the 'eyes of wisdom', it is called the micro or fine vision. The macro and the micro visions constitute the instruments used to study any subject. In other words, if any truth exists, one can determine its veracity only by examining it with both macro and micro visions.⁵

According to the Vedic system of philosophy, nine darshans or visions are considered the most important. These nine darshans are divided into two categories. The first category is the one that has faith in and reverence for the Vedas and considers the Vedas as being beyond the need for proof or verification. The other category is that which does not consider the Vedas as infallible or authoritative and seeks independent proof. On this basis, the Darshan Shastra or Scriptures of Indian Philosophical Vision are divided into two main groups namely आस्तिक or Theist (Believers) and नास्तिक or Atheist (Non-believers). It is generally accepted that the Darshan which reposes absolute faith in the authority of the Vedas and draws conclusions based on the heard scriptures i.e., the Vedas are the Astik Branches of Indian Philosophy. The other category; in which the respective founder Acharyas, not accepting the Vedas as the authority, have drawn conclusions based on their won intellect and reasoning; constitutes the Nastik Branches of the Darshans. In the Astik Branches there are six Darśans as follows:

(1) Nyaya Darśan (2) Vaiśeṣika Darśan, (3) Samkhya Darśan (4) Yoga Darśan (5) Purvamimamsa and (6) Uttarmimamsa. The non- Vedic branches consist of three Darśans as follows:

(1) Charvak Darśan (2) Bauddha Darśan, and (3) Jain Darśan,

The Nyaya sutras attributed to Gautama, called also Aksapada, and the Vaiśeṣika sutras attributed to Kanada, called also Uluka, represent the same system for all practical purposes. They are, in later times, considered to differ only in a few points of minor importance. As far as the sutras are concerned, the Nyaya sutras particularly emphasize the cultivation of logic as an art, while the Vaiśeṣika sutras deal mostly with metaphysics and physics. The Samkhya is ascribed to Kapila, but the earliest works related to the subject are probably now lost. The Yoga system is attributed to Patanjali with the original sutras called the Patanjala Yoga Sutras. The general metaphysical position of these two systems concerning the soul, nature, cosmology, and the final goal is almost the same. However, the Yoga system acknowledges a God (Isvara) as distinct from Atman and emphasises certain mystical practices (commonly known as Yoga practices) for achieving liberation. On the other hand, Samkhya denies the existence of Isvara and thinks that sincere philosophical thought and culture are sufficient to produce the true conviction of the truth and thereby bring about liberation.

The Purva Mimamsa cannot properly be spoken of as a system of philosophy. It is a systematic code of principles by which the Vedic texts are to be interpreted for the purpose of sacrifices. The Vedic texts were used as mantras (incantations) for sacrifices, and people often disputed the relation of words in a sentence or their mutual relative importance with reference to the general drift of the sentence. The sutras of Mimamsa are attributed to Jaimini and Sabara are Kumarila Bhatta and his pupil Prabhakara, who criticised the opinions of his master so much, that the master used to call him guru (master) in sarcasm, and to this day his opinions pass as guru-mata, whereas the views of Kumarila Bhatta pass as Bhatta-mata. The Hindu Law accepts without any reservation the maxims and principles settled and formulated by Mimamsa.

The Vedanta sutras, also called Uttara Mimamsa, written by Badarayana, otherwise known as the Brahma-sutras, form the original authoritative work of Vedanta. The word Vedanta means 'end of the Veda,' i.e., the Upanishads, and the Vedanta sutras are so-called as they are but a summarized statement of the general views of the Upanishads. The most famous commentator of Vedanta sutras is Sankara, and the darshan propounded by him is called Advaita Vedanta.

The study of these philosophy traditions rooted in Vedas enhances a person's problem-solving capacities. It helps us analyse concepts, definitions, arguments and problems. It contributes to our capacity to organise ideas and issues, to deal with questions of value, and to extract what is essential from large quantities of information. Philosophy seeks to understand existence and reality through analysis and inquiry. It examines fundamental questions about truth, knowledge, values, humanity's place in the world and the relationships between individuals and society. The Vedas provide detailed descriptions, analysis and justifications of the same. They are known to have influenced human life in many ways through its impact on institutions, education systems and other aspects of society. They contain basis of metaphysical, epistemological, logical and ethical inquiry much useful to studies today. Some of the skills that Vedic philosophy helps develop are described below-

Some of the spiritual and theological questions such as meaning of life, existence of person after death, immortality of soul, and life after death are dealt with philosophically in the Vedas. It builds a personal outlook in life that can help people gain clarity about what they believe and what they must reject. It forms the basis of people's way of day to day life. Further it helps in building general problem solving skills.

The Vedas contain a detailed methodology of interpretation that helps one build skills to analyse concepts, definitions, arguments, and problems. It contributes to our capacity to organize ideas and issues, to deal with questions of value, and to extract what is essential from large quantities of information. It helps us, on the one hand, to distinguish fine and subtle differences between views and, on the other hand, to discover common ground between opposing positions. It also helps us to synthesize a variety of views or perspectives into one unified whole.

The poetic as well as verse form of the Vedas can be useful in building communication skills. It contributes uniquely to the development of expressive and communicative powers. It provides some of the basic tools of self-expression, skills in presenting ideas through well-constructed, systematic arguments and express one's own distinct views that enhances our ability to explain complex ideas without ambiguities and vagueness in ones writing and speech.

Further, poetry and hymns are known to touch people not only at intellectual level but also at emotional level. Hence , they can be useful to develop ones skill of persuasion. Construction of clear and good arguments, use of appropriate examples and non fallacious reasoning skills are important for building skills of convincing and persuasion. It also helps build and defend one's own views while appreciate competing positions, and to argue meaningfully why we consider one considers one's own views preferable to alternatives. These are useful as classroom pedagogy and education in general .

The formal aspects of the Vedic language can serve as useful illustrations of effective writing. A close study of same can help develop ones writing skills. Vedas provide important lessons in interpretive writing as it enables skills to develop examination of challenging texts, comparative writing through an emphasis on fairness to alternative positions, argumentative writing, meaningfully establishing one's own views and descriptive writing through detailed portrayal of concrete examples. The philosophical arguments of the Vedas thus provide good illustration of structure and technique that can help develop ones imagination and express the same in writing. The same can then be extended and used for developing skills of research and analysis. It can help build capacity to frame hypotheses, do research, and put problems in a manageable form. It can help make clear formulation of ideas and problems, selection of relevant data, and objective methods for assessing ideas and proposals. It can also facilitate development of a sense of the new directions suggested by new hypotheses and questions one encounters while doing research. To conclude, a study of Vedas can prove useful in building skills that directly help improve day to day life as well as build employability abilities. It can help in jobs both of academic and non-academic nature.

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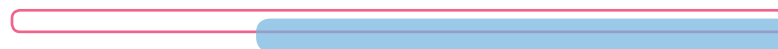
¹ Srimadbhāgavad Gita, Geeta Press, Gaurakhpur, Publication year 2012, 4/33, 37-38.

² Sri Aurobindo says in his letter, "We Indians born and bred in a country where Jnana has been stored and accumulated since the race began, bear about in us the inherited gains of many thousands of years..." India's Rebirth, (1905), p.14.

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BOOK REVIEW

Indigenous Indian Management: Conceptualization, Practical Applications and Pedagogical Initiatives

by Ashish Pandey, Pawan

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Indigenous Indian Management is a resource that offers insights into the distinctive philosophies and practices in the field of management and organisational psychology as derived from the country's rich and diverse cultural heritage. It attempts to explore traditional Indian management knowledge systems and blend the wisdom contained within those frameworks with modern management philosophies by drawing on a multitude of disciplines spanning philosophy, history, religious scriptures, management, and education to provide a holistic overview of management as grounded within the Indian context across a total of 16 chapters. Furthermore, the book also provides practical applications of these conceptualisations by analysing social settings, cultural landscapes, and business environments in India. It offers a fresh perspective on how these interconnected entities could influence the way we can leverage core cultural ideals of the Indian traditionalist management philosophies and the distinctive nature of the uniquely diverse socio-economic arenas thriving in the country, thereby portraying the potential of these two characteristics in shaping the behavioural manifestations of Indian management.

The premise of the book is novel as it strives to present a holistic overview of the several indigenous concepts, ethos, and ideas that lie tangentially to the topic of management having originally evolved from distinct fields. The volume is an impressive effort in drawing out the underlying frameworks to demonstrate how these ostensibly disparate concepts are in fact interlinked and can be viewed

through a unifying lens to provide the foundation for a synthesised knowledge system of Indian management. This unique conceptualisation of the book makes it a valuable and enjoyable read for practitioners of management and organisational psychology, especially those with a deep interest in the intersection of management practices, cultural studies, and the integration of traditional wisdom with modern theories. The key themes covered in the book address the core concepts and issues within contemporary management literature albeit from the perspective of ancient texts, thus, enabling the application of indigenous Indian management principles to organisational settings in the current times. Some themes explored include culturally relevant management philosophies, sustainable and holistic management practices, leadership, ethics, and social responsibility to name a few. Such an eclectic perspective offers a little something for the reader who is interested in the idea of trying an innovative approach to management in the contemporary organisation.

The book is structured such that the first chapter provides the context and need for developing a theoretical framework focussed on Indian management primarily based on the indigenous literature and philosophies. Chapters 2-6 present the various concepts and ideals of management derived from several fields in the indigenous literature and propose an ontological framework for integration of these concepts into a knowledge system on Indian management. Chapters 7-15 present the evidence for how these indigenous management concepts and philosophies apply to Indian economic and business systems, and underscore implications for policy and practice as well as provide directions for future research on the topic. Finally, chapter 16 reviews the key insights from the previous chapters and discusses the opportunities for the emergence of Indian management as a discipline. This structure allows the reader to gain an overview of several themes as noted previously that draw out the timeless nature of management principles as rooted in traditional Indian texts thus enabling a broad discussion around the adaptation of these principles to address current challenges of the modern Indian business world.

Given that the emphasis of the volume lies on the premise of the fusion of traditional Indian philosophies and values with contemporary management strategies and practices, several of the concepts reviewed are from ancient

texts such as the *Bhagavad Gita*, the *Upanishads*, and the *Arthashastra*. There is a strong focus on ethical leadership as the book advocates for a value-based leadership style that emphasises integrity and social responsibility in the context of corporate governance. Relatedly, the book delves into concepts like *Vasudaiva Kutumbakam* and *Sarvodaya* such that practitioners are encouraged to actively adopt a more inclusive and equitable approach such that business systems can contribute to community well-being and social welfare. In doing so, the authors also reflect on values such as balance, harmony, and sustainability, thus urging readers to prioritise holistic management practices that cater to global concerns around the negative impact of conducting business on the environment. The resource shuns the idea of a management framework that emphasises a one-size-fits-all approach, and promotes ideas around designing management principles and strategies that are aligned with the prevalent cultural and social contexts and underscores the importance of adopting culturally sensitive practices. Another bold proposition in the book is the appeal to integrate spirituality with management processes to enhance well-being and culture for the achievement of greater meaning, purpose, and fulfilment at both the individual and organisational levels. Furthermore, the volume highlights the importance of diversifying content in management education which the authors propose can be done by incorporating teachings from indigenous texts and designing pedagogical initiatives that aim to amalgamate traditional philosophies and modern strategies in the space of management.

Across the aforementioned themes the book explores, it offers a fresh approach to management based on cultural context and proposes a range of practical applications. The reader stands to gain a deeper understanding of Indian culture especially in the business context. The book introduces alternative approaches to management while challenging the reader to critically think about why organisations manage the way they do. However, there are also a few points that the volume may fall short on. Since it relies heavily on ancient texts, some of the ideas are not thoroughly supported by robust scientific approaches backed by data-driven analysis. This particularly becomes a cause of concern for practitioners since the operationalisation of the theoretical concepts remains largely subjective precluding empirical research that can ultimately lead to a consistent body of knowledge. Furthermore, the book is rather content heavy

with high narrative complexity in terms of the indigenous concepts and ideals it reviews. While this may encourage and further discussions around traditional versus modern management philosophies and theories, it fails to be readily applicable to organisational settings. The lack of actionable strategies, insights, and tools that can help practitioners better integrate traditional concepts with modern practices also speaks to the limited scope of application of the takeaways from the book. Furthermore, while the thrust of the volume is on traditional Indian management philosophies, the book tends to overemphasise concepts that it borrows heavily from the holy texts of one religion. This has the effect of underrepresenting the teachings from the myriad sub-cultures that have originated and evolved in the country over several centuries. In doing so, a real risk that the volume runs is that of excessive romanticisation and idealisation of some cultural ideals and concepts. Thus, a lot is left to be desired in the context of a more objective critique of these traditional philosophies and a critical examination of their limitations in applicability to the contemporary business world.

Perhaps the most important area that the book fails to deliver on is its insufficient focus on the application of the traditional concepts, ethos, and ideals it extols to modern management. There is little real estate within the volume that addresses challenges of today's business environment ranging from evolving organisational structures to the rampant advancement of technology. Rising geopolitical tensions and their subsequent impact on economies and trade networks worldwide, the modern-day trends that impact the future of work – hybrid work models, four-day work weeks, the rapidly booming start-up culture in the country, the growth and adoption of new technologies such as artificial intelligence and machine learning, the ever-increasing threats from the country's immediate neighbourhood are all very real challenges to the economic landscape and business organisations in the country. These factors have several ramifications for management as well. The volume fails to adequately discuss how the indigenous concepts of management in the Indian culture can be leveraged to address and potentially resolve these complex challenges. Lastly, while the resource offers directions for research and enquiry into several of these traditional concepts, an in-depth discussion on the potential research methodologies that can be explored from an epistemological stand-point would have been much appreciated.

On the whole, Indigenous Indian Management is a good read for someone interested in learning about Indian culture and how the ethos and ideals therein apply to the world of management. One may even gain a broad understanding of how those traditionalist ideals align with modern management philosophies and principles. However, hoping to takeaway actionable strategies to implement an integrated management approach rooted in tradition to tackle your modern day organisational challenges may be expecting too much from the book.

Indigenous Indian Management: Conceptualization, Practical Applications and Pedagogical Initiatives by Ashish Pandey, Pawan Budhwar, and Dharm Bhawuk, Palgrave Macmillan, 2022, 581 pp., INR 14,826 (hardcover), ISBN 9783030879075.



BOOK REVIEW

Mind and Society. From
Indian Studies to General
Sociology by J.P.S. Uberoi (2020),
Khalid Tyabji (ed) Oxford University Press, 2019

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The book lays out an expository analysis of Western epistemology from a formerly colonised and decolonised perspective. It is striking work- bold, intrepid, analytical, intellectual, expansive and Indian. It offers critical insights into the Western perspective while assuming a reflexive position that India and its diversity represents. Given this complex interface, it is an astounding and rare sociological and interdisciplinary work, as it examines a series of dualisms and non-dualisms that underline knowledge production in the context of a series of themes and sub-themes.

The book is a compendium of eighteen essays, written and presented between 1968 and 2013 by JPS Uberoi¹, covering three major topics and multiple sub-topics. The first set examines '**imperialism versus nationalism**', both isms inherent in the production of knowledge.

The second set examines multiple aspects of '**modern Western mentality**'- tracing the idea to key 'thinkers' like Marx, Durkheim and Weber, juxtaposing the latter with a set of 'doers'- industrial workers in the West and farmers in the East.

The third set of essays explore '**vernacular Indian modernity**', its problems, principles and impact upon the understanding of society, through the lens of 'vernacular usage, labour and language' (xiv)

1 JPS Uberoi will henceforth be referred to as JPS in this review

JSP was greatly inspired by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, an influential German thinker, writer and literary figure of the modern era. Goethe worked across several fields covering literature, botany, geology, science, religion, society and art and put forth a hermeneutic philosophy of nature, versus a positivist one. Goethe was thus part poet, part scientist, constantly negotiating logos and mythos through his work.

Drawing inspiration, JPS, similarly explicates a 'non-dualist' position; between – positivism and hermeneutics, science and art, self and the world, subject and object. He further proposes a 'Trinitarian' doctrine- 'thesis, antithesis and synthesis', or 'equality, polarity and progression' (xv). Knowledge is the result of the interplay between method, theory and data and is implicitly social and cultural.

To this end, the book examines knowledge production, using the concept of science and swaraj. JPS locates this in a complex matrix comprising of rich/poor, international/national and white/black. He posits that science looks different in a rich western society and in one beset by poverty and deprivation.

Rammohun Roy introduced English education and applauded the West for 'the glorious ambition of planting in Asia, the arts and sciences of modern Europe' (ibid: 8). This view contrasted with that of Gandhiji's call for swaraj, and his promotion of vernacular education. Uberoi posits that swaraj will be achieved through the examination of the 'foundations of science, art, culture and politics and more importantly, their 'interrelations with philosophy' (ibid. 10).

He draws a parallel between Gandhiji's critique of modernity and of Western science in his work, 'Hind Swaraj'(1909) and of the 'European underground in science', including the work of Engels- seen as a 'non-dualist dialectical way of thinking' (ibid. 12). Another powerful framework that posits duality is Christianity; but can be juxtaposed with the more non-dualist Gnostic position. JPS himself takes recourse to Goethe's dialectical method, proposing an equality of man and nature.

Another example cited is China that adopted a non-dualist dialectical attitude through practice and policy. Ex . 'every worker a scientist', and 'over throw all

authority in science' (idib; 15); but this perspective had its own set of problems pertaining to politics and science. There is also a military-industrial complex to be added to the mix. But overall, a 'duopoly' of 'politics of the elite and science of the expert', (ibid: 17) seem to underlie modernism.

An alternative is offered by way of 'ethno science' and examining the space of agro-economics. Technocrats want to rationalise production processes, their knowledge forged in modern laboratories through verification and testing. But the fact is that people learn due to rational and scientific reasons but also due to metaphysical and traditional reasons. Farmers use techniques synchronous with themselves, the flora and fauna, placing emphasis on quality of life over just production, driven by an innate sense of social responsibility for the protection of their cultural values. The rational/approach to agriculture is centred on the orthodoxy of knowledge attributed to the agricultural scientist alone. But farmers must be equally considered while framing agricultural policies.

Similarly, in the context of the university as a site of knowledge production, the dichotomy is between English and the vernacular- centering on questions of swaraj and culture; is the vernacular included or kept out of schools. This along with the fact that the science and arts of modern Europe got transplanted in India, reinforces a separation between science and non-science- even though as JPS argues, innovation in science is an art and teaching of language within literature takes on scientific overtones through fields like linguistics. If pedagogy is seen as a 'craft', both science and art become significant aspects. Furthermore, the University can become the epitome of self-rule or Swaraj where students are encouraged to participate in dialectical debates between science and religion, tradition and modernity instead of avoiding it.

The Western university system is based on empiricism, rationalism and dialectics; three important principles of modernity. Systems of knowledge are organised according to a matrix comprising of the elements of fact/value and theory/practice. Underlying these oppositions are parallel dualism between truth/reality, subject/object and mind/world. Modernity draws distinctions between principles of fact versus value, theory versus practice, end versus means and a concomitant distinction between disciplines -science and arts.

Within these formulations, JPS posits a fundamental question – how is the mind to be conceived? Drawing from works of Saint Simon and Auguste Comte along with that of Marx, Durkheim and Weber, JPS explores the complex relationship between mind, body and the world. If ‘duality’ is the answer it means that only one of the pairs is real and true, and the other is a mere derivative. Bacon, Descartes and Kant are seen to express differing positions herein.

The relation of sociology to general science and philosophy in the modern system of knowledge unfolds a number of possibilities – Marxian dialectics on the lines of Hegel, dualism of Durkheim on the lines of Kant and Weber and double monism, first following rationalist Descartes and then empiricist Bacon. Or that between hermeneutics and positivism. But the essential idea of dualism versus non-dualism appears to remain unresolved.

JPS nonetheless contextualises Sociology and asks for swaraj and the development and adoption in India of an independent interpretation of international intellectual trends in the social sciences. He posits that the life of mind is both a group effort and an individual one, and to this end we have to strengthen national intellectual life and ensure that international exchanges are to be based on mutuality, reciprocity and equality, and not dominance and dependence.

Independence of mind is important for the advancement of knowledge. Methods of science are universal but at the level of theory we can develop a ‘swarajist’ attitude and propagate a structural sociology – India indeed has been home for structuralism – from Panini and the Sanskrit school of grammar to ‘*PakhaSanjam*’, journal of the department of anthropological linguistics, Patiala, in circulation since the 60s. Similarly, India is a great example of sociolinguistic study, as reflected in the work of foremost Indian linguist, Prabodh Pandit. In fact, diversity in languages coincides with a structure of cultural pluralism.

JPS examines other facets of modern world cultures like civil society, post-modern economies, and the sociological study of work, examining these in the context of dualities of the mind and the world, and concluding the section with are markable Marxian analysis of labour in Central Asia, Russia and Europe.

Vernacular Indian modernity, is also examined through an interface between religion, civil society/society and politics/State in India, and the role of metaphysics; by looking at the concept of *bhakti* and also examining the tenets of Sikhism at great length, including its interface with Islam.

The book makes a significant contribution to Indian Sociology without a doubt. The sheer range and depth and expanded understanding of ideas and concepts and their interrelations is staggering. JPS analysis reflects his brilliance and underlines a deep commitment to his subject as much as to swaraj – batting for an independent Indian perspective and going a long way in establishing it.



BOOK REVIEW

Life Interrupted:
Understanding India's Suicide
Crisis by Amrita Tripathi, Abhijit Nadkarni,
and Soumitra Pathare Simon & Schuster India 2022, 209 pp, INR
599 (hardcover), ISBN 978-81-951317-8-5

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Life Interrupted: Understanding India's Suicide Crisis by Amrita Tripathi, Abhijit Nadkarni, and Soumitra Pathare offers an insightful examination into one of India's most pressing public health concerns—suicide. With over 1.7 lakh suicides in 2022 alone, suicide has become a national crisis, reflective of deep socio-economic, cultural, and psychological undercurrents (National Crime Records Bureau, 2023). This book navigates through the complexities of these factors, weaving together journalism, psychiatry, and policy to offer a multifaceted understanding of the issue. The authors invite readers to critically evaluate whether the current approaches to mental health, social policies, and cultural norms are sufficient, or if more radical interventions are required.

The *Introduction* sets the stage by framing suicide not merely as a mental health issue but as a societal phenomenon, implicating a wider range of structural and cultural factors. The discussion immediately resonates with Durkheim's (1897) sociological perspective on suicide, which posits that disruptions in social equilibrium can contribute to heightened suicide rates. As India undergoes rapid urbanization and socio-economic change, one must question: how are these shifts contributing to feelings of isolation and distress? The book pushes readers to think beyond the individual and to consider the societal structures that exacerbate mental health issues.

Chapter 1, *Understanding Suicide: Who is Dying of Suicide and Why?*, takes a data-driven approach, analyzing demographic trends in suicide. It raises questions about the effectiveness of India's current mental health strategies in reaching vulnerable populations, such as rural communities and economically marginalized groups. The chapter encourages reflection on whether policy interventions adequately address the root causes, such as unemployment and social inequality, that drive people toward despair. Should we be looking more critically at how social systems perpetuate cycles of vulnerability, especially when combined with the stigma surrounding mental health?

The discussion becomes more specific in *Not Too Young to Die* (Chapter 2), which examines the alarming rise in suicides among India's youth. The authors explore how academic pressures, societal expectations, and the pervasive influence of social media create a toxic environment for young people. Given the intense competition and societal pressures placed on the younger generation, are educational institutions doing enough to offer psychological support? The chapter provokes deeper questioning: Is the educational system designed to foster resilience and well-being, or does it inadvertently prioritize achievement at the expense of mental health?

Chapter 3, *Final Innings: Suicide and the Elderly*, introduces an often-overlooked demographic in discussions about suicide—the elderly. With the erosion of traditional family structures and the rise of nuclear households, elderly individuals increasingly experience isolation, loss of purpose, and chronic illness, all contributing to their vulnerability. This chapter compels readers to consider whether the social fabric of India, once reliant on strong family bonds, is adequately evolving to meet the needs of aging populations. How can societies foster intergenerational solidarity in a world where the elderly are often marginalized?

In *Women and Suicide* (Chapter 4), the authors tackle gender-specific issues, such as domestic violence, societal expectations, and structural inequalities that disproportionately affect women's mental health. The chapter offers a poignant critique of how deeply entrenched gender norms can trap women in cycles of emotional abuse and despair. Are current social and legal frameworks enough

to protect women, and more importantly, do they address the mental health implications of these systemic inequalities? This chapter serves as a reminder that mental health interventions must be intersectional, accounting for the compounded vulnerabilities women face.

Chapter 5, *Drinking to Death*, shifts focus to the relationship between substance abuse—particularly alcohol—and suicide. The prevalence of alcohol addiction, especially among men, is explored as both a symptom and cause of mental health deterioration. It raises essential questions about whether India's healthcare system is equipped to tackle dual issues of addiction and mental health. How can public health initiatives be recalibrated to address substance abuse holistically, ensuring that mental health treatment includes a focus on addiction recovery?

Marginalized and At Risk in India (Chapter 6) further sharpens the lens on marginalized communities, including those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, caste minorities, and religious groups. These populations, often systematically excluded from accessing quality healthcare, face disproportionately high suicide rates. The authors provoke critical questions: How can healthcare services be made more equitable, and what role does systemic discrimination play in perpetuating mental health crises? This chapter encourages readers to contemplate how mental health intersects with social justice and what policy reforms might be needed to reduce these disparities.

The agrarian crisis, which has led to an epidemic of farmer suicides, is dissected in *Farmer Suicides* (Chapter 7). This chapter unearths the structural failures—such as inadequate agricultural policies, climate change, and unmanageable debt—that contribute to the staggering suicide rates among farmers. What does the recurring cycle of despair among India's farming communities say about the country's economic and policy priorities? The chapter leaves readers with an uncomfortable truth: the backbone of India's economy is also its most neglected demographic. The broader question emerges—what radical changes in agricultural policy and rural mental health support are necessary to stop this wave of preventable deaths?

Suicide and the Media (Chapter 8) critiques how suicide is portrayed in Indian media, often sensationalized in a way that exacerbates the issue. The chapter brings forth the ethical dilemma faced by journalists: how do you report on such a sensitive topic without contributing to the "Werther effect," where media coverage can lead to copycat suicides? Should stricter guidelines be enforced on how the media reports suicides, and what role can social media platforms play in mitigating the spread of harmful narratives?

The concluding chapter, *Me First*, provides a synthesis of the arguments made throughout the book and offers actionable strategies for suicide prevention. The authors emphasize that interventions must be comprehensive, spanning policy reform, community education, and increased access to mental healthcare. They stress that solutions cannot be piecemeal—systemic change is needed. This final chapter raises an essential question: How far can current mental health frameworks go in addressing the deep-rooted social and structural issues contributing to India's suicide crisis? The urgency of the issue is clear, but are policymakers and society at large prepared to take the necessary steps?

In its entirety, *Life Interrupted* challenges readers to think critically about the cultural, social, and policy frameworks that shape mental health in India. By examining suicide through multiple lenses, the book compels a re-evaluation of both societal norms and governmental responsibility in addressing this crisis. Its interdisciplinary approach is its strength, and while it offers no easy answers, it leaves readers grappling with profound questions about the future of mental health in a rapidly changing society.

Upon examining the chapters, we are faced with a challenging question: How do we reconcile the rising suicide rates with India's cultural and philosophical foundations, which historically emphasized mental resilience, social harmony, and collective well-being? The book's methodical exploration of suicide across various demographics and social contexts underscores the need for systemic reforms in mental health policy. It also prompts a deeper reflection on cultural, existential, and philosophical questions underpinning this crisis.

Philosophers and writers have long grappled with the concept of suicide. Albert Camus, in *The Myth of Sisyphus*, argued that "there is but one truly serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide" (Camus, 1942). For Camus, suicide was a response to the absurdity of existence—a refusal to confront the meaningless nature of life. This notion resonates with the book's exploration of contemporary India, where rapid shifts in identity, values, and economic structures may be driving individuals toward a sense of life's absurdity. As India modernizes, is it possible that individuals, particularly among the youth and marginalized, are experiencing alienation from traditional support systems that once provided meaning and resilience?

In contrast, Viktor Frankl, in *Man's Search for Meaning* (1946), argued that finding purpose even in suffering can protect against despair. The book's focus on the existential crisis faced by India's youth, as discussed in Chapter 2, mirrors Frankl's belief that meaninglessness can lead to profound despair. Are India's youth, caught between achievement pressures and inadequate mental health support, experiencing a crisis of meaning? This philosophical inquiry points to the broader question of how societies can nurture meaning amid socio-cultural upheavals.

The erosion of traditional structures and values, such as the decline of joint families and the marginalization of elderly and rural communities, raises questions about the role of indigenous knowledge systems in addressing the mental health crisis. Indian philosophies, and the principles of mindfulness and yoga, traditionally emphasize resilience, interconnectedness, and acceptance of life's cyclical nature. While these frameworks have historically been seen as sources of strength, the question remains: can these traditional concepts be effectively integrated into modern mental health approaches? Is there a risk that the focus on contemporary Western psychiatric models might overlook or inadequately engage with the potential contributions of Indian spiritual and philosophical traditions? In critically evaluating the role of the indigenous knowledge system, it is essential to assess whether these traditional frameworks offer meaningful solutions or whether they might need adaptation to align with current mental health challenges.

Philosophers like Schopenhauer, who viewed life as inherently filled with suffering, offer a contrasting perspective. Schopenhauer's pessimistic view that acknowledging suffering is a fundamental part of existence (Schopenhauer, 1818) resonates with the realities of marginalized groups in India, as highlighted in Chapter 6. Could part of the solution lie in helping individuals confront and navigate suffering rather than attempting to erase it?

The book also critiques the commodification of mental health in modern India, where wellness industries and practices like yoga are increasingly commercialized. This trend risks reducing complex emotional and existential struggles to market-driven solutions, such as meditation apps and self-help books. Is this superficial engagement with well-being sufficient to address the deep-rooted causes of despair outlined in the book?

In conclusion, *Life Interrupted* leaves readers grappling with critical questions about the interplay between mental health and societal structures. It challenges us to consider whether our current approaches to mental health care are truly comprehensive or merely address symptoms without tackling underlying causes. The book invites reflection on how indigenous knowledge systems and philosophical insights might inform more holistic mental health strategies, suggesting that meaningful solutions may lie in integrating traditional wisdom with contemporary approaches.

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Contributors

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Pravat Ranjan Sethi completed her studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) from the Centre for Historical Studies (CHS), SSS. Her area of specialization is Modern History, with a focus on Indian National Movement, Legal History, Caste Studies, Policy Making, Gender, Culture and Folklore studies. From July 2012 to September 2015, she served as a Guest Faculty at the Arjun Singh Centre for Distance and Open Learning and the Department of History at Jamia Millia Islamia for both undergraduate (B.A.) and postgraduate (M.A.) courses. In addition, she taught at Delhi College of Arts and Commerce of Delhi University for six months, from January to June 2014. She has been employed as an Assistant Professor at the Amity School of Liberal Arts at Amity University in Rajasthan from October 1, 2015 to 2019. At present, she is working as an Assistant Professor at the Department of History, Central University of Himachal Pradesh.

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Multiple Authors

Kinlger, Samuel A., and Paul H. De Vries. 1993. “The Ten Commandments as values in Soviet people’s consciousness.” In *Religious Policy in the Soviet Union*, edited by Sabrina Petra Ramet, 187–205. New York: Cambridge University Press

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(Dunstan 1993, 158–86)

(Kinlger and De Vries 1993, 190)

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IN-TEXT CITATION:

(Borel 2016, 92)

(Hodgkin 1897, chap. 7)

(Maalouf 1991, chap. 3)

4) JOURNAL ARTICLE

REFERENCE LIST ENTRY:

List should follow alphabetical order and mention the page range of the published article. The URL or name of the database should be included for online articles referenced.

Anheier, Helmut K., Jurgen Gerhards, and Frank P. Romo. 1995. "Forms of Capital and Social Structure in Cultural Fields: Examining Bourdieu's Social Topography." *American Journal of Sociology* 100, no. 4 (January): 859–903.

Ayers, Lewis. 2000. "John Caputo and the 'Faith' of Soft-Postmodernism." *Irish Theological Quarterly* 65, no. 1 (March): 13–31.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/002114000006500102>

Dawson, Doynne. 2002. "The Marriage of Marx and Darwin?" *History and Theory* 41, no. 1 (February): 43–59.

IN-TEXT CITATION:

Specific page numbers must be included for the parenthetical references within texts (Anheier, Gerhards, and Romo 1995, 864)

(Ayers 2000, 25-31)

(Dawson 2002, 47-57)

For further details please see 15.46–49 of *The Chicago Manual of Style*.

5) NEWS OR MAGAZINE ARTICLE

REFERENCE LIST ENTRY:

List should follow alphabetical order and need not mention the page numbers or range. The URL or name of the database should be included for online articles referenced.

Hitchens, Christopher. 1996. "Steal This Article." *Vanity Fair*, May 13, 1996
<https://www.vanityfair.com/culture/1996/05/christopher-hitchens-plagiarism-musings>

Khan, Saeed. 2020. "1918 Spanish Flu cure ordered by doctors was contraindicated in Gandhiji's Principles". *Times of India*, April 14, 2020.

http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/75130706.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst

Klein, Ezra. 2020. "Elizabeth Warren has a plan for this too." *Vox*, April 6, 2020.
<https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2020/4/6/21207338/elizabeth-warren-coronavirus-covid-19-recession-depression-presidency-trump>.

IN-TEXT CITATION:

(Hitchens 1996)

(Khan 2020)

(Klein 2020)

See 15.49 (newspapers and magazines) and 15.51 (blogs) in *The Chicago Manual of Style* for further details

6) BOOK REVIEW

REFERENCE LIST ENTRY:

Methven, Steven. 2019. "Parricide: On Irad Kimhi's Thinking and Being." Review of *Thinking and Being*, by Irad Kimhi. *The Point Magazine*, October 8, 2019

IN-TEXT CITATION:

(Methven 2019)

7) INTERVIEW

REFERENCE LIST ENTRY:

West, Cornel. 2019. "Cornel West on Bernie, Trump, and Racism." Interview by Mehdi Hassan. *Deconstructed*, The Intercept, March 7, 2019.
<https://theintercept.com/2019/03/07/cornel-west-on-bernie-trump-and-racism/>

IN-TEXT CITATION:

(West 2019)

8) THESIS AND DISSERTATION

REFERENCE LIST ENTRY:

Ruston, Mohammed. 2009. "Quranic Exegesis in Later Islamic Philosophy: Mulla Sadra's *Tafsir Surat al-Fatiha*." PhD diss., University of Toronto.

IN-TEXT CITATION:

(Ruston 2009, 68-85)

9) WEBSITE CONTENT

REFERENCE LIST ENTRY:

Website content can be restricted to in-text citation as follows: “As of May 1, 2017, Yale’s home page listed . . .”. But it can also be listed in the reference list alphabetically as follows. The date of access can be mentioned if the date of publication is not available.

Anthony Appiah, Kwame. 2014. “Is Religion Good or Bad?” Filmed May 2014 at TEDSalon, New York.
https://www.ted.com/talks/kwame_anthony_appiah_is_religion_good_or_bad_this_is_a_trick_question

Yale University. n.d. “About Yale: Yale Facts.” Accessed May 1, 2017.
<https://www.yale.edu/about-yale/yale-facts>.

IN-TEXT CITATION:

(Anthony Appiah 2014)

(Yale University, n.d.)

For more examples, see 15.50–52 in *The Chicago Manual of Style*. For multimedia, including live performances, see 15.57.

9) SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT

REFERENCE LIST ENTRY:

Social media content can be restricted to in-text citation without being mentioned in the reference list as follows:

Conan O’Brien’s tweet was characteristically deadpan: “In honor of Earth Day, I’m recycling my tweets” (@ConanOBrien, April 22, 2015).

It could also be cited formally by being included in the reference list as follows:

Chicago Manual of Style. 2015. “Is the world ready for singular they? We thought so back in 1993.” Facebook, April 17, 2015.

<https://www.facebook.com/ChicagoManual/posts/10152906193679151>.

Souza, Pete (@petesouza). 2016. “President Obama bids farewell to President Xi of China at the conclusion of the Nuclear Security Summit.” Instagram photo, April 1, 2016.

<https://www.instagram.com/p/BDrmfXTfNCI/>.

IN-TEXT CITATION:

(Chicago Manual of Style 2015)

(Souza 2016)

9) PERSONAL COMMUNICATION**REFERENCE LIST ENTRY:**

The expression "personal communication" covers email, phone text messages and social media (such as Facebook and WhatsApp) messages. These are typically cited in parenthetical in-text citation and are not mentioned in the reference list.

IN-TEXT CITATION:

(Sam Gomez, Facebook message to author, August 1, 2017)

Notes should preferably be listed as endnotes, followed by a works cited/references column.

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