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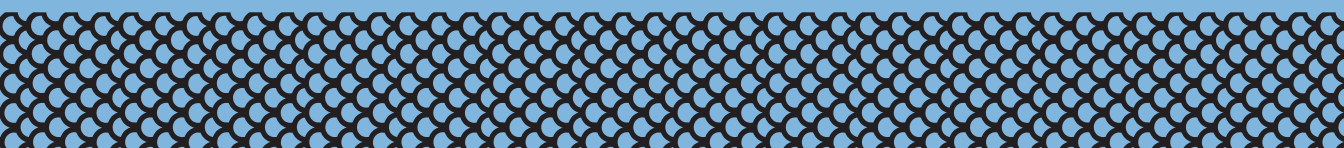
Decolonising the Knowledge System in India

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Decolonising the Knowledge System in India

Kishore Singh

In 1835, T. B. Macaulay, Law Member of the Council of the Governor-General of India, wrote a 'Minute on Education' in which he stated, 'a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia' (1835: 107). Later in the same document he expressed the thought,

We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern—a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect. To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of the country, to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from the Western nomenclature, and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population (*ibid.*: 115).

Ever since, Western education has become profoundly engraved in Indian mindsets. Its hegemony over academia and disciplines of education in India remains unabated. Being educated in westernised education, ideally in western universities, continues to be highly esteemed among Indians. 'Western knowledge superiority syndrome' is still very visible in the form of a continued, even reinforced, superiority of the occidental knowledge system. India needs to discard it by casting off the colonial mindset and devising a knowledge system inspired by her own traditions in education and her philosophical and spiritual heritage.

The epistemological foundation of India's knowledge system, with highest respect for spirituality and intellectual pursuits, provides the prism for decolonising the knowledge system, comprehensively covering all disciplines, fields of knowledge and education systems. The writings of a very large number of renowned Western intellectuals, in tandem with those of eminent Indian thinkers, who acclaimed India's philosophical traditions and spiritual heritage, are invaluable for edifying the knowledge system which is truly Indian, and which accords supremacy to spiritual and moral values in life as against materialistic pursuits. As such, revivification of India's traditions in education makes it imperative to weed out the current phenomenon of commodification of knowledge or 'edu-business' since allowing education (*vidya*) to be made business (*vyapar*) is an affront to India's spiritual heritage and her traditions where knowledge is free and heads are held high.

The challenges in decolonising India's knowledge system are compounded by the 'platform Imperialism' of our digital age, where, as John Naisbitt aptly remarked, 'we are drowning in information but starved for knowledge' (1982: 24). Digital technologies in education—'edu-tech' and especially Artificial Intelligence—erode 'meditative thinking' and are dehumanising in many ways. Their deleterious implications for the Indian knowledge system require careful consideration.

Introduction

Macaulay's 'Minute on Education' is most thought-provoking when one looks at the knowledge system of today's India. Macaulay commented, nearly 190 years ago:

I certainly never met with any orientalist who ventured to maintain that the Arabic and Sanscrit poetry could be compared to that of the great

European nations. But when we pass from works of imagination to works in which facts are recorded and general principles investigated, the superiority of the Europeans becomes absolutely immeasurable. It is, I believe, no exaggeration to say that all the historical information which has been collected from all the books written in the Sanscrit language is less valuable than what may be found in the most paltry abridgments used at preparatory schools in England. In every branch of physical or moral philosophy, the relative position of the two nations is nearly the same (1835: 107–08).

He then stated, ‘English is better worth knowing than Sanscrit or Arabic, that the natives are desirous to be taught English’ and proposed ‘it is possible to make natives of this country thoroughly good English scholars, and that to this end our efforts ought to be directed’ (ibid.: 114).

Nearly 50 years later, Friedrich Max Müller (1823–1900)—a great scholar with profound knowledge of Vedic literature—not only enlightened the English élite most eloquently about the hidden knowledge treasures of ancient India and her unfathomable spiritual heritage but, contrary to Macaulay, also urged them to learn from these invaluable human assets uniquely possessed by India. A profound esteem for India flows from his acclaim of India’s knowledge system:

Whatever sphere of the human mind you may select for your special study, whatever it be, language or religion, or mythology, or philosophy, whether it be laws or customs, primitive art or primitive science, everywhere, you have to go to India whether you like it not, because some of the most valuable and most instructive materials in the history of man are treasured up in India, and in India only (Mueller, 1883: 15).

It is understandable that the colonial power which redesigned India’s knowledge system in keeping with Macaulay’s far-sighted strategic thinking,

did not give much heed to Max Müller's scholarly acclaim of India's knowledge system as this would have been at loggerheads with their imperialistic mission. But educational authorities in Independent India even today are not taking radical policy measures to dismantle the knowledge system in India imposed by the colonial power. Max Müller's teachings remain largely unknown, whereas these should have been the cornerstone in devising independent India's education system so that it reflects India's true knowledge identity and is nourished by India's knowledge treasures and her spiritual heritage. The knowledge system of today's India as imposed in the form of colonial imperialism—with its genesis in Macaulay's thinking and strategy—remains robust, whereas the knowledge system founded upon India's spiritual heritage and philosophical traditions, where 'the most valuable and most instructive materials in the history of man are treasured up' (ibid.), remains far from being a characteristic feature of the education system in India. The British legacy in the education and knowledge system remains in vogue in independent India's education landscape, and the 'Western knowledge superiority syndrome' is still very visible in the form of a continued, even reinforced, hegemony of the Western knowledge system. In the academic world, intellectual community and even in social circles one can witness a persistently subservient attitude towards the Western education and knowledge system, placing it on a higher pedestal. India's academic world and intellectual community continue to look towards the West for gaining knowledge and wisdom. India's higher education system bears witness to this. Indians having received their education or pursued their studies in Western universities are viewed as belonging to a superior academic world. This is also given great weightage in professional recognition and promotion of higher education teaching personnel.

In spite of Max Müller's acclaim of India's knowledge heritage, the Indian education system continues to idolise the Western knowledge system to the detriment of her own knowledge treasures. India's international educational exchange programmes are lopsided, with a unidirectional flow towards

Western universities. This is borne out even by schemes like India's Global Initiative of Academic Networks (GIAN), launched in 2015 by the Government of India, with the objective of bringing in distinguished scholars worldwide to India to impart 'GIAN' (knowledge) to Indian students and this, of course, without any consideration of reciprocity. Needless to say, such 'GIAN' also brings in its fold culture. A much better option would be to make India's knowledge system an embodiment of '*gyaan*' in its true sense, as developed in India millennia ago.

The Epistemological Foundation of India's Knowledge System

A distinguishing feature of Indian philosophy and of her knowledge system is its epistemological foundation. Max Müller enlightens us on this: "The highest wisdom of Greece was "to know *ourselves*"; the highest wisdom of India is "to know our *self*" (1883: 47).

In India's philosophical traditions, supreme value is attached to 'meditative thinking', to intellectual pursuits. The epistemological foundation of India's knowledge system has been elucidated by Heinrich Zimmer who, like Max Müller, brought into the limelight the path of knowledge and pursuit of wisdom as the outstanding feature of Indian philosophy and of her knowledge system. As he has described, knowledge in India is a philosophic quest of the '*Jñāna-marga*' (path of knowledge and wisdom)—'the highest principle, to be discovered and mastered through wisdom', where the goal is to 'establish effective contact with the paramount, all-controlling principle' (Zimmer, 2005: 344–45).

The heritage of India's knowledge system, rich in spirituality, is worthy of being emulated by the West, according to Heinrich Zimmer:

Our academic secular philosophies are concerned rather with information than with that redemptive transformation which our souls require. And this is the reason why a glance at the face of India may assist us to discover and recover something of ourselves....Then we will join, from our transoceanic distance, in the world-reverberating jungle of India's wisdom (Zimmer, 2005: 14).

In decolonising India's knowledge system, Heinrich Zimmer's observation that 'By far, the greatest measure of Indian thought, research, teaching and writing has been concerned with the supreme spiritual theme of liberation from ignorance and from the passion of [the] world's general illusion' (2005: 41) is enlightening for 'redemptive transformation'—for chartering a new path of a knowledge system which can be instrumental in solving many crises that afflict the world today.

The human depth of India's knowledge heritage has been applauded by many other Western thinkers and scholars. For instance, according to Paul William Roberts, the knowledge and wisdom contained in the Vedic hymns are 'mankind's loftiest thoughts. Thoughts that also seem to have been mankind's first thoughts' (Roberts, 1996: 304). This echoes Swami Vivekananda's saying that India is 'the ancient land, where wisdom made its home before it went into any other country' (1897).

Therefore, an essential prerequisite for decolonising India's knowledge system is to resolutely cast off the colonial mindset and to do away with the deeply entrenched superiority of the Western knowledge system. And this in appreciation of the richness of the epistemological foundation of India's knowledge system which encompasses the realm of physics, empirical knowledge, but also the realm of metaphysics, spiritual knowledge. This epitomises according to Max Müller 'a mind bent on transcending the limits of empirical knowledge' (1883: 47). This is shown by the science and the philosophy underlying Yoga, which according to Heinrich Zimmer is

‘yoking of empirical consciousness to transcendental consciousness’ (2005: 580). Expounded in its various dimensions in the simplest form and most comprehensively in the spiritual discourse in the Bhagavad Gita, which is held in highest esteem in India as a revered sacred text, ‘Yoga’ is a living example of the universal value of India’s legacy for the whole of humanity, acclaimed worldwide. It creates harmony between inner and outer ‘self’, as well as fosters physical and mental well-being. Revivifying knowledge of yoga and, more importantly, the science and philosophy underlying it must be an essential element of the knowledge system, with a corps of yoga specialists and teachers, well versed in science and philosophy of yoga.

Spirituality—the Flowering and Fulfilment of Human Life

Spirituality constitutes the pinnacle of India’s heritage of knowledge system. It is, to use an expression by Joseph Campbell, ‘the flowering and fulfillment of a human life’ (Campbell and Moyers, 1991: 245). His view that ‘The world without spirit is a wasteland’ (ibid.: 183) is most profoundly characteristic of India’s traditional approach to knowledge. Similar appreciation of spirituality in India’s philosophic traditions flows from the writings of many other western intellectuals of great eminence. In Sylvain Levy’s opinion, ‘India has the right to reclaim (...) her place amongst the great nations summarizing and symbolizing the spirit of humanity’. In the eyes of Stephen Knapp, India embodied ‘the oldest of wisdom and a highly developed philosophy’, based on ‘the eternal principles of spiritual knowledge’ (Knapp, 2006: 1). Arnold Toynbee has viewed India’s ‘spiritual heritage as a common treasure for mankind’ (1960: 58–9).

Spiritual knowledge in India today has perished with the rise of materialistic forces in society. The challenge before India is, can she revivify her spiritual heritage which covers all aspects of Indian life and thought and make it a

crowning attribute of her knowledge system? This will be a redemptive transformation in its true sense. Moreover, this will respond to global concerns voiced by the international community for embedding the ideals of spirituality in the education system. The World Declaration on Education for All (1990) adopted under the auspices of UNESCO reflects the importance of spirituality and human values in promoting basic learning needs in today's world. The Declaration states that

The satisfaction of these needs empowers individuals in any society and confers upon them a responsibility to respect and build upon their collective cultural, linguistic and spiritual heritage, to promote the education of others, to further the cause of social justice.⁶

India played a prominent role in the adoption of the Declaration, with full political commitment to give effect to it. It is, therefore, India's moral obligation to embed spirituality in her education system, bearing in mind that the spiritual values emphasised in the Declaration are distinguishing characteristics of India's traditions in education. Similarly, a key role devolves upon India in view of her spiritual heritage to construe a knowledge system in keeping with the stipulations in the World Declaration on Higher Education, adopted more than two decades ago by UNESCO in 1998, which gave a call for radical change and renewal of higher education, 'so that our society, which is currently undergoing a profound crisis of values, can transcend mere economic considerations and incorporate deeper dimensions of morality and spirituality'.⁷ Inspired by the Declaration, public policy in the field of higher education needs to be reoriented so as to 'help protect and enhance societal values and the reinforcement of humanistic perspectives, ... inspired by love for humanity and guided by wisdom',⁸ which are much needed today.

In decolonising India's knowledge system, Mahatma Gandhi's saying that India is an 'Empire of the Soul' constitutes a perennial source of inspiration.

This can pave the way for India's renaissance, with spirituality— the flowering and fulfillment of human life—as its supreme goal.

Freedom of Spirit and Pluralistic Epistemics

Spirituality in India's traditions encompasses freedom of spirit. Supremacy given to intellectual pursuits in India, characterised by respect for freedom of thinking, for fostering of diverse schools of thought, is a mark of respect for the freedom of spirit. India's knowledge system was premised upon the principle that knowledge springs from freedom of spirit and is an unfathomable universal human treasure for the welfare of the whole of humanity. India was, therefore, open to all streams of thought. Her traditional knowledge system accords high importance to pluralistic epistemics, founded upon freedom of spirit and of thought. It is epitomised by India's philosophy of knowledge and her spiritual heritage as reflected in the Vedic hymn: 'Truth is one, the wise perceive it differently'. '*Ekam Sat Vipra Bahudha Vadanti* (एकम सत विप्रा बहुधा वदन्ति)'. This hymn is dedicated to the 'Truth' as the Ultimate Reality, the Supreme Divinity, which the enlightened or the wise call by different names or perceive differently. India's knowledge traditions do not claim a monopoly over the Truth but recognise a variety of ways for its perception and its quest. Knowledge is universal in the sense that it is an expression of the unfathomable universal spirit, whereas knowledge systems may be culture or civilisational specific. For example, the indigenous knowledge system is different from the Western knowledge system; the Age of Enlightenment in Europe ushered in a new knowledge system. India's knowledge system has its unique characteristic—the pursuit of knowledge as a spiritual treasure of humanity. Knowledge is spiritual and is, therefore, infinite, beyond material limitations. Spirituality in India is correlated with 'Sat' (Truth), all-pervading spiritual force in the cosmos.

‘Sat’ and Truthfulness

India gave the world profoundly spiritual concepts of ‘Sat’ (Truth) and ‘*rta*’ (or *rita*, रित् in Sanskrit). These are amalgamated concepts in the Vedic philosophy. ‘*Rta*’ pervades the regularity of the universal process and perfection with which this takes place. It expresses the idea of ‘order, rule, truth’. It thus provides sustenance to the natural and moral order of the Cosmos. The Western notion of ‘right’ is said to be derived from the word ‘*rita*’.

Sat (Truth), *dharma* (righteous conduct) and respect for *gyaan* (education and wisdom) constitute core concepts of India’s spiritual and societal ideals. In India’s philosophical heritage, *sat* has its abode in the human heart and conscience—all permeating spiritual force in the Cosmic Divine Order, the Ultimate Reality. Accordingly, an essential feature of the Indian knowledge system is to nurture truthfulness in daily life. As Max Müller has remarked, ‘A man becomes impure by uttering falsehood’. He has most lucidly explained India’s philosophic concept of ‘*sat*’, showing how it is unique among all philosophic traditions and religious philosophy: ‘I doubt whether in any other of the ancient literatures of the world, you will find traces of that extreme sensitiveness of conscience which despairs of our ever speaking the truth’ (Müller, 1883: 34).

Unwavering truthfulness in precolonial India is attested by Sir William Henry Sleeman. Reputed for his work from the 1830s in suppressing the organised criminal gangs known as Thuggee, he has given vent to his real experience and true feeling which mirror India’s ‘soul’: ‘I have had before me hundreds of cases,’ he has written, ‘in which a man’s property, liberty, and life has depended upon his telling a lie, and he has refused to tell it.’¹⁰ Such were India’s traditions recognised even by its colonisers.

In decolonising India’s knowledge system, it is, therefore, imperative to put the ideals of truthfulness (*Sat*), all permeating spiritual force in the Cosmic

Divine Order, at the heart of the education system and to inculcate in children and youth from an early age an attitude for being truthful in life so that it becomes ingrained in them along with a culture that avoids falsehood. This will reinvigorate India's philosophical traditions, making Indian truly respectful of India's national motto, 'Truth alone triumphs' (सत्यमेव जयते, *satyameva jayate*) adopted upon India's becoming a Republic on 26 January 1950.

Decolonising the Knowledge System: The Prism of Indian Epistemology

Decolonising the knowledge system is a deeper exercise for systemic transformation. Embracing India's epistemological approach is its starting point and perennial concern.

Decolonising the knowledge system does not merely mean cleaning up or removing the archaic elements of a system, for instance, the Indian legal system is not decolonised by merely repealing laws and regulations in vogue since British days which are anachronistic today. It cannot be decolonised without fundamentally transforming the legal knowledge system so that it reflects India's culture and educational traditions. The legal knowledge system, to become truly Indian, for instance, has to discard a legal education within the frame of the 'higher education market', and reconstruct India's legal system respectful of principles and ideals reflected in Indian philosophy and culture.

Similarly, India's knowledge heritage needs to be revalorised in decolonising her knowledge system in other fields. For example, as regards neurology and especially the human psyche, knowledge in India was highly developed and must be revalorised. Carl Gustav Jung (1875–1961), a Swiss psychiatrist and psychoanalyst who founded analytical psychology, enlightens us on the profound knowledge base of the human psyche in India:

We do not yet realize that while we are turning upside down the material world of the East with our technical proficiency, the East with its psychic proficiency, is throwing our spiritual world into confusion. We have never yet hit upon the thought that while we are overpowering the Orient from without, it may be fastening its hold upon us from within (Jung, 1970: 90–1).

Jung's professional experience made him convinced about spirituality as the most prized possession of life:

I have frequently seen people become neurotic when they content themselves with inadequate or wrong answers to the questions of life. They seek position, marriage, reputation, outward success of money, and remain unhappy and neurotic even when they have attained what they were seeking. Such people are usually confined within too narrow a spiritual horizon. Their life has not sufficient content, sufficient meaning. If they are enabled to develop into more spacious personalities, the neurosis generally disappears (Jung, 1989: 174).

This indeed bears evidence to the fact that spirituality plays a critical role in preventing and in overcoming depression becoming so common in a world devoid of spirituality.

India can benefit from the scholarly writings of Western scholars such as Carl Gustav Jung, Joseph Campbell and Heinrich Zimmer who have elucidated India's understanding of the human psyche. Joseph Campbell has observed: 'In India, there is a system of seven psychological centers up in the spine. They represent planes of concern and consciousness and action' (Campbell and Moyers, 1991: 217).

Heinrich Zimmer provides deep insight into the human psyche, founded in the Self, the most subtle, absolutely intangible, divine essence hidden in every human being. He has written:

According to the analysis of the psyche rendered by the ‘Sankhya’ and taken for granted in the disciples of Yoga, a human being is ‘active’ through five ‘organs of action’ and ‘receptive’ through the five organs of ‘perception’. Since the intellect (*manas*) cooperates directly with the ten faculties, it is reckoned as number eleven and is termed ‘the inner sense’ (*antar-indriya*)... ‘*Manas Ahankara*’ and ‘*Buddhi*’ (faculty of judgement) constitute ‘inner sense’ (*antah-karana*). ‘Ahankara, the ego-function, causes us to believe that we feel like acting, that we are suffering, etc., whereas actually, our real being, the *purusa*, is devoid of such modifications. Ahankara is the centre and prime motivating force of ‘delusion’ (*abhimama*). One is continuously appropriating to oneself, as a result of ahankara, everything that comes to pass in the realm of the physique and psyche, superimposing perpetually the false notion (and apparent experience) of a subject (an ‘I’) of all the deeds and sorrows... ‘Buddhi’, on the other hand, is predominantly sattvic (characterised by a predominance of *sattva* ‘*guna*’; for it is the faculty of awareness. It reveals the ‘*purusa*’ in its ‘serene unconcern’ (Zimmer, 2005: 317–22).

These fundamental concepts of India’s epistemological foundations of the psyche are known even today in their rudimentary sense to people in Indian villages, but they are alien to the formal education system of India.

India is also known for having developed Ayurveda, the traditional herbal based Indian medicinal system.¹² A highly developed science of life with a holistic approach to health and personalised medicine, Ayurveda is one of the oldest traditional medical systems. The concept of Ayurveda treatment is broad, premised upon healing the human being as a whole. Ayurveda has evolved as a holistic system having an understanding of physiology enabling it to maintain and restore health with a few side effects. India needs to intensify studies of Ayurvedic Science in a scientific way. She owes it to herself to revive and revamp her philosophical knowledge in the field of Ayurvedic science by promoting research, norms and standardisation so as

to give to its underlying scientific approach the necessary empirical shape so that it becomes a scientifically proven field of health sciences. Ayurveda knowledge, therefore, needs to be developed as per modern needs and at par with international scientific standards of allopathic sciences.

Similarly, as regards medicinal uses of plants and herbal therapy, India has a huge knowledge potential lying hidden in her knowledge traditions.

The epistemological foundation of India's knowledge system thus provides the prism through which to decolonise India's knowledge system in its entirety. This needs to be given full consideration as it covers all disciplines of knowledge, including sciences and mathematics. In decolonising her knowledge system, India needs to take bold steps for 'total rejection of the Macaulay system of education', and for 'Indianisation of the education system', giving up the 'colonial mindset', pursuant to the call given that effect on the occasion of the 75th year of her Independence by Venkaiah Naidu, the then Vice President of India. Venkaiah Naidu also urged Indians to learn 'Sanskrit to know our scriptures, which are a treasure trove of knowledge'.¹⁴

The decolonisation of India's knowledge system cannot be said to be fully achieved without revivifying Sanskrit, considered to be Dev Vaani—the language of the gods and goddesses¹⁵ and an unfathomable source of wisdom. Jawaharlal Nehru had acclaimed Sanskrit as 'the basic genius of India'.

If I was asked what is the greatest treasure which India possesses and what is our finest heritage, I would answer unhesitatingly—it is Sanskrit Language and Literature, and all that it contains. This is magnificent inheritance and as long as this endures and influences the life of our people, so long the basic genius of India will continue (Goel, 2003: vii–viii).¹⁶

Sanskrit can, therefore, be pivotal in designing India's knowledge system. Max Müller, who considered Sanskrit as the progenitor of all languages, eulogised it as a vehicle of expression par excellence, for Sanskrit allows one 'an insight into strata of thought deeper than anyone has known before', 'and rich in lessons that appeal to the deepest sympathies of the human heart' (Müller, 1905: 14).

If the British Raj could succeed in making English the most coveted language for education in India, there is no reason why with determined political commitment, Sanskrit cannot be revived, along with Hindi and all other regional languages in India as mediums of instruction, and even be made the *lingua franca*. Constitutional bases exist for progressing in that direction.¹⁷ India can create *centres of excellence* for Sanskrit in the same way as India created the Indian Institutes of Technology and the Indian Institutes of Management, with a revamped *Rashtriya Sanskrit Vidyapeetha* as one of them, accelerating the pace of Sanskrit education and learning and simultaneously raising the profile of a number of Sanskrit universities. Besides, Sanskrit could be given a privileged position in the civil services and made progressively a compulsory language in schools, universities and educational institutions, with the objective of making it the medium of instruction as soon as doing so becomes feasible.

Spirituality in India's knowledge system, discussed above, also implies highest esteem for *gyan* (knowledge and wisdom) and for those who are engaged in intellectual pursuits for cultivating and imparting *gyan*.

Highest Esteem for Intellectual Pursuits and Meditative Thinking

In India's epistemological foundation of knowledge, highest respect is given to knowledge and wisdom—*gyaan*. Philosophy, literature, poetry and

music as well as artistic creations emanate from intellectual pursuits and are a manifestation of the spirit of freedom with which human beings are gifted. Knowledge, education and learning are supreme human virtues in India's educational traditions and constitute key pillars in edifying India's decolonised knowledge system. The philosophy of knowledge (*gyan*) above all is spirituality based in the sense that by imparting and sharing, knowledge becomes enriched. As a saying in Sanskrit goes, learning (*vidya*) and wisdom (*gyan*) cannot be stolen by thieves nor taken away by kings, nor is it heavy on the shoulders to carry. If spent well, it always grows. Highest esteem for knowledge sharing is shown by the ideals of the historic Nalanda University, known for welcoming foreign students and scholars, who in the course of their learning pursuits were gifted with knowledge treasures, considered as being free and universal. Nalanda University is also exemplary in showing that education and knowledge generation is a social responsibility and a public good. According to Hsüen Tsang (also known as Xuanzang), 'Nalanda was supported by the revenues of an enormous estate of one hundred villages, and by the alms of many patrons, including great Harsa himself' (Basham, 1956: 165).

In India's traditions in education, the pursuit of *gyan* (knowledge) is a noble human endeavour and imparting knowledge and education (*gyan daan*) a contribution *par excellence* to human and social life. Those devoting their life to this noble cause—to reflection and thinking, to generating knowledge and disseminating it—were held in great esteem in India and placed on the highest pedestal in society. This is borne out by the reverential way in which Swami Vivekananda was received upon his return from the United States of America where the speech he delivered at the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago (1893) earned global fame for its expression of India's spiritual heritage and freedom of spirit.¹⁸

A knowledge system to be truly Indian must, therefore, give the highest importance to intellectual pursuits and meditative thinking. It must be

premised upon Indian's philosophy of education, reflected in the concepts of *vidya* and *gyan*. It can draw inspiration from many great Indian thinkers and scholars but also a very large number of renowned Western intellectuals, notably French and German, who have acclaimed ancient India's knowledge and spiritual heritage and philosophical and educational traditions.

Max Müller's work *India What Can It Teach Us?*, as already mentioned, enlightened the West on the astounding knowledge systems of ancient India. Mark Twain similarly glorified India's knowledge heritage:

India is the cradle of the human race, the birthplace of human speech, the mother of history, the grandmother of legend, and the great grandmother of tradition. Our most valuable and most instructive materials in the history of man are treasured up in India only.¹⁹

Robert Arnett has written: '... every metaphysical thought there ever was, is or ever will be, has already been expressed in Hinduism' (2014: 19). A. L. Basham tells us about the universal esteem of the ideals preached by India's philosophy: 'The sages who meditated in the jungles of the Ganges Valley six hundred years or more before Christ are still forces in the world' (1956: 487). For Victor Cousin, a French philosopher, India was a 'native land of the highest philosophy' (1852: 32). Schopenhauer has spoken of the Upanishads as 'products of the highest wisdom'.²⁰

A number of Indian intellectuals of repute have acclaimed India's unfathomable spiritual heritage and philosophical traditions. Mahatma Gandhi's vision of India as an empire of the spirit is most inspiring. Similarly, Swami Vivekananda who gave the world the message of universal tolerance, of 'harmony and peace' (Rolland, 2019: 45), was a torchbearer and a pathfinder for India's knowledge system and education: 'Look back, therefore, as far as you can, drink deep of the eternal fountains that are behind, and after that

look forward, march forward, and make India brighter, greater, much higher, than she ever was.²¹

Aurobindo's message is most profound for making the knowledge system sublime, for elevating human consciousness and advancing towards Universal Consciousness. For construing India's knowledge system, the vision of Karan Singh is both enlightening and inspiring: We need to give old Vedanta new wings to fly' (Singh, 2020: 43). S. Radhakrishnan similarly shows India the way for decolonising the knowledge system in a forward-looking spirit, with its roots in her past spiritual and intellectual heritage: 'If the Indian thinkers combine a love of what is old with a thrust for what is true, Indian may yet have a future as glorious as its past' (Radhakrishnan, 1999: 58).

These writings point to the need for introspection when today's India pays scant attention to her knowledge heritage. It has been rightly remarked that while Westerners come to India seeking spiritual knowledge, Indian intellectuals look to the West with an adulation that is often blind, if not obsequious. In edifying her decolonised knowledge system, India can gainfully draw upon the writings of thinkers of great repute, highlighted above. Their views and perceptions can be an asset in making India's knowledge system truly Indian in spirit, embodying the ideals of education in Indian traditions. This requires resolute efforts for adhering to India's philosophy of knowledge and education. It requires nurturing moral and ethical values and fostering the humanistic mission of education—making knowledge generation the highest coveted purpose of an education system where the noble cause of education as a public good cannot be compromised and where there is no place for treating education as a commodity. This is of fundamental importance in today's India where education has been reduced to a commodity and where business in education—'edu-business'—is thriving. Purging India of the vice of 'edu-business' is an imperative for India's education system.

Purging India of the Vice of ‘Edu-Business’

In 2003, in his inaugural address at the third meeting of the High Level Group on Education for All, organised in New Delhi, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, then Prime Minister of India, stated: ‘The difference between the poor man’s school and the rich man’s school is becoming starker with each passing year’.²² Since then, privatisation of education has been flourishing in India, reducing education to a commodity. Terms like ‘return on investment’, ‘learning outputs’ ‘marketable knowledge’, etc; have become commonplace, indicating policy underpinnings of commodification of education, termed as ‘an emerging brand of academic capitalism’. This seeks to make education subservient to the neoliberal economy and to market forces and is an affront to India’s spiritual heritage and her traditions in education where knowledge was free and head held high. Knowledge, wisdom and education—*gyaan* and *vidya*—in India’s traditions have been considered as spiritual, not as a commodity or *vyapaar*. Education is, therefore, something ‘invaluable’ above any monetary or materialistic value. Allowing *gyan* and *vidya* to be made *vyapar* (edu-business) is not in keeping with India’s traditions and her spiritual heritage in education (*vidya*) as a noble cause, as a common good.²³

Commodification of education and ‘edu-business’ also throws overboard India’s constitutional law obligations to control an unregulated free market in education and preserve education as a fundamental human right. This is commendably articulated by the Supreme Court of India:

when the State Government grants recognition to the private educational institutions, it creates an agency to fulfill its obligation under the Constitution to enable the citizens to enjoy the right to education. Charging capitation fee in consideration of admission to educational institutions is a patent denial of a citizen's right to education under the Constitution.²⁴

However, in spite of the ruling by the Supreme Court, the phenomenon of 'edu-business' continues to flourish in India, with speedy growth of private universities, sponsored by a range of entities, including individual proprietors and profit-seeking businesses. Any business or trade can run their own university, or education institution, for the sake of gaining social esteem of their business, while in fact engaged in lucrative 'edu-business'. A number of scholars have critically examined the neoliberal model of schooling, which is characterised by 'State withdrawal in favour of privatisation' with 'market-anchored conceptions of schooling' and which legitimises a departure from decades of the welfare state (Zajda, 2006: 25) and one can add, from India's spiritual and knowledge heritage.

Moreover, private entities and enterprises running private educational institutions propagate materialist values and cater to their own business interest. They breed a commercial outlook and longing for cultivating a corporate sector culture. As a result of 'edu-business', the vocation of schools as a bedrock of human values and of universities as seat of learning for the pursuit of ideals of humanity is being scuttled as these are being drawn into the stronghold of a materialistic values system. Moral and ethical values are on the decline and corporate culture driven by business interests and privatisation in education is prospering.

How can India's composite culture whose respect is a constitutional duty of every citizen be preserved when private entrepreneurs or enterprises running private schools propagate materialist values and establish a learning system devoid of respect for cultural diversity, as they cater to particular social strata and breed social segregation? This is devoid of the *dharma* (righteous path as the way of life) which is of paramount importance in India's philosophical traditions (Basham, 1956: 170) and to which *artha* (trade and business and material gain) is subordinate.

Decolonising the knowledge system necessarily implies uprooting the deeply entrenched phenomenon of ‘edu-business’ which has reduced education to a commodity, and which makes a mockery of India’s ideals and traditions in education. It is a moral imperative to ensure that education is safeguarded against forces of privatisation and preserved as a public good and as a human right. Any attempt to decolonise India’s knowledge system in the first place should seek to dismantle ‘edu-business’. It is also necessary to put an end to policies soliciting universities from the Western world, especially from the US to instal themselves in India and pursue their ‘edu-business’ to give ‘GIAN’ in a country which was acclaimed by renowned Western intellectuals as being the progenitor of all knowledge systems.

Decolonising India’s higher education system must also look into the emerging global marketplace and a growing spirit of competition in higher education which are a manifestation of what is termed as ‘an emerging brand of academic capitalism’ (D’Antoni, 2006: 52) and which runs counter to India’s traditions in education. In this context, it is pertinent to refer to ‘Decolonizing Higher Education: The University in the New Age of Empire’ (Enslin and Hedge, 2024: 227–41), which indicates the cultural consequences of imperialism and throws light on the material implications of colonialism which has persisted in new forms since formal decolonisation and which have colonised the university,

Indeed, so strong is the influence of late capitalism in the form of neoliberalism on the contemporary university that its modes of practice are likely to foster superficial strategies to ‘decolonize’ the curriculum instead of addressing how capitalist structures and practices sustain current forms of coloniality (ibid.: 227).

In a resolute national endeavour, India should, therefore, devise a stringent regulatory system for regulating of universities in order to ensure that there is no space for this ‘emerging brand of academic capitalism’. India also has

some philanthropic educational institutions, and if at all the private sector wants to contribute to education, that can and should be done in a way that it is genuinely philosophic without lucrative purpose and is respectful of India's traditions in education and of her spiritual heritage.

Moreover, India's traditions of education and knowledge is what enlightens a person by way of studies in literature, philosophy, ethics and human sciences. However, in today's India, the space for these disciplines is shrinking whereas subjects like management, business and finance, informatics, data-scientist, E-commerce are becoming predominant fields of study, reducing education and learning to 'technicity' to the detriment of the humanistic mission of education.

India's education system must give the highest importance to its humanistic vocation of education as against materialistic pursuits devoid of spiritual and moral values in life. In this respect, it is useful to recall a historic judgment by the Supreme Court of India in 1993 in which the highest court of the country interpreted the right to life as established in Article 21 of India's Constitution in a broader spirit. It ruled that the right to education is an integral part of the right to life and, as such, it is a fundamental right. In another judgment, the Supreme Court enunciated in 1996 the legal as well as philosophical and moral bases of the right to education, founded upon India's philosophical traditions with esteem for the noble cause of education. The Supreme Court thus concluded its landmark judgment,

We part with the fond hope that the closing years of the twentieth century would see us keeping the promise made to our children by our Constitution about a half century ago. Let the child of the twenty-first century find himself into that 'heaven of freedom' of which our poet laureate Rabindranath Tagore has spoken in *Gitanjali*.²⁶

This is momentous in face of the ‘values-crisis’ of today when moral and ethical values are sinking and corporate culture driven by business interests and privatisation in education is fast spreading. The ‘values-crisis’ is becoming all pervading. It is manifested in growing incidences of violence in society which does not spare even schools nowadays. Uprooted of human values, children and adults lack respect for parents and teachers. The challenge before public policy is how to nurture human virtues, inspired by teachings like those of Mahatma Gandhi and Swami Vivekananda? A new architecture of the education system needs to be evolved so that human values so necessary in today’s world become its bedrock.

Confronting Digital Imperialism

As already mentioned, decolonising India’s knowledge system necessitates doing away with Western hegemony. It also requires reconstructing the knowledge system based on India’s epistemological foundation. In today’s digital age, Western knowledge hegemony has taken a new contour. We are living in a world dominated by ‘platform imperialism’, to borrow the term expressed in *Reimagining Our Futures Together* (UNESCO, 2021a: 36). Digital power that a few tech giants wield today constitutes in a way a new form of hegemony and imperialism, much more difficult to grapple with since it is virtual. Its increasing hold on public policies is evidenced by the fact that renewal of education by dint of what is termed ‘edu-tech’ has become a buzz word. Digital technologies are being harnessed in education at all levels and in all its forms and private entrepreneurs and operators are becoming powerful players in digital-based ‘edu-business’. Digital giants are making the foray into education and learning because a digitalised education system is invaluable for their own digital business to flourish.

The deleterious impact of digital technologies on the knowledge system has become an issue of critical importance today. Repercussions of digital

technologies on India's spirituality-based knowledge system and traditions in education, on cognitive faculty, intellectual pursuits and meditative thinking need to be critically examined. The phenomenon of 'edu-tech' is side-tracking, if not wiping out altogether, India's traditions in education, and is shaking the epistemological foundation of India's knowledge system—the cultivating and nourishing of the human spirit and mind by the study of literature, philosophy and the humanities.

In our so-called 'knowledge society', the very concept of knowledge is being substituted by information. Abundance of information, often trivial, floating on digital devices, absorbs the attention of their users for most part of their daily life to the detriment of time which could be devoted to thinking and reflection. Richard Paul Evans has given vent to today's digital culture overloaded with mere information, devoid of knowledge: 'What a culture we are living in? We are swimming in the ocean of information and drowning in ignorance' (Evans, 2014: 208). The real knowledge is being devalorised and space for scholarly pursuits is shrinking. Dependency on the Internet and digital technologies saps the faculty for critical analysis. It also dispenses with the need for nurturing the mind, intellectual faculty and 'thinking'. As Roberto Calasso has most insightfully observed, the digitally dominated world of today can be characterised as being 'the insubstantial, the unnamable present' (Calasso, 2019: 4).

The deleterious impact of digital technologies is far-reaching and the knowledge system is becoming its victim. Universities which should have the mission of excelling as seats of learning and knowledge generation, are becoming subservient to the corporate world. Students are encouraged to demonstrate their mettle as founders of new start-ups. Scholarly pursuits for research and thinking are relegated to the background. One's prowess is judged by skills in using digital devices, in operating various 'apps' and online platforms. Knowledge is thus reduced to mere technical skills, useful for the corporate sector, without consideration for cultivating the human spirit, for

philosophical and literary pursuits, for the faculty for ‘meditative thinking’. Technical skills are deemed as a prized possession. It is no wonder that a large number of private educational institutions are specialising in technical areas. Skills for operating various apps, and handling and even manipulating data are considered coveted pursuits, with the thrust as to how to become of some use, any use to the corporate sector.

The use of digital devices erodes *per se* the intellectual faculty—the capacity to think, reason and reflect, to which high importance is given in India’s philosophy of education. The Internet-based learning which fosters compliant thinking and impoverishes scholarship is at loggerheads with such a philosophy of education.

The very nature of digital technologies is different and special; in many ways their use or very recourse to them is inherently insidious, even destructive of what is human. With their constantly seeking attention and causing chronic distraction, the digital devices dissipate users’ capacity for concentration. Moreover, in their use, digital devices place the focus on application rather than on contemplation. Nicholas Carr has warned us about the dehumanising impact of the Internet on our brains and on meditative thinking,

How sad it would be, particularly when it comes to the nurturing of our children’s minds, if we were to accept without question the idea that ‘human elements’ are outmoded and dispensable....‘meditative thinking,’ as the very essence of our humanity, might become a victim of this (2010: 13).

India with her traditions of giving primacy to ‘meditative thinking’ and to the supremacy of intellectual pursuits should take this warning seriously. She needs to be wary of the potentially harmful and pernicious impact of various virtual sites on the minds of children, youth and adults, on human values, on the education system and society of today and tomorrow. Online and

web-based learning leads to deprivation of human interactions in education, so important for imparting human values in teaching and learning. Digital technologies breed virtual isolation and a culture of alienation. 'Rapid technological change may not help pressing social needs, and despite rising connectivity, many feel lonely and voiceless' (OECD, 2022). Lured by virtual sites and video games, children and adults remain mostly engrossed in them. This saps what is human and nurtures in them a craze for the virtual world and for remaining confined to screens and computers for long hours in schools and even at home. This and online teaching and learning makes children and adults apathetic and asocial. It has serious psychological repercussions on their behaviour. Subjecting children to E-learning and to the virtual world is to dehumanise them from an early age.

India, which is at the forefront in embracing digital technologies, should recalibrate her thinking, taking into consideration the deleterious effects of these technologies. While there may be economic advantages of the flagship programme 'Digital India' launched by the Indian Government which aims at transforming India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy, endowed with digital infrastructure for digital delivery of services, it is also necessary to set limits to harnessing digital technologies in education, especially as 'Digital India' is penetrating the education sector rather earnestly with a quest for digitalising educational institutions at all levels, transforming the landscape of education. Abundant care is necessary by way of public policies that introduction of digital devices in education does not cripple or even compromise the humanistic mission of education and learning to bring forth the potential in every human being and nurture and nourish mental and intellectual faculties with focus on human values.

The pernicious impact of digital technologies and their dehumanising consequences are aggravated by the rapidly developing Artificial Intelligence.

Neuro-technologies for culture and education warrant regulation since recourse to them is susceptible to be a crushing blow to the cognitive faculty and human creativity. Roberto Calasso has thrown light on this most insightfully,

If intelligence is what is found in algorithms, then its place of preference will no longer be the mind. Indeed, the mind will tend to become the material on which those algorithms are applied. Information tends to replace not only knowledge, but thought in general, relieving it of the burden of having to continuously rework and govern itself (2019: 71–72).

The ban recently imposed on the use of ChatGPT and GPT4 in educational establishments in several Western countries²⁷ shows the need to prohibit Artificial Intelligence software applications as their use make it possible for students and researchers to produce work for assessment which, in fact, is not their original work. Besides, practices of fake information and ‘dark patterns’ resulting from generative Artificial Intelligence are on the increase which their users cannot even apprehend. Controlling Artificial Intelligence chatbots such as ChatGPT stringently would become even more critical, especially for education when one visualises that these devices could become susceptible to hacking and manipulation of thoughts by way of implants and wearables that wire computers to our brains. Our cognitive liberty is at stake (Farahany, 2023).

Artificial Intelligence applications are a monster in human hands but invisibly, the hand of this monster is becoming a dominant force over the human hand. Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems, often termed ‘killer robots’, present a profound threat to national security and sovereignty, raising critical ethical concerns. The daunting challenge is: how to ensure that Artificial Intelligence advancements serve humanity instead of posing risks fraught with perils for humanity?

The expanding horizons of digital technologies in the form of emerging Artificial Intelligence applications also involve questions of law, philosophy and ethics, so relevant to the vocation of education. Ethics of Artificial Intelligence is becoming a global concern today. The UNESCO Declaration on Ethics of Artificial Intelligence, adopted in November 2021, is a landmark document as it raises ethical concerns having relevance to the introduction of Artificial Intelligence in education and learning. The Declaration underlines the ‘need to ensure the transparency and intelligibility of the functioning of algorithms and the data from which they have been trained’, because these can influence ‘human rights and fundamental freedoms, gender equality and democracy’, whose defence is an avowed objective of education (UNESCO, 2021b: 5). These developments should be of especial interest for India as ethics has been a prominent feature of her knowledge heritage.

Ethics as a Prominent Feature of India’s Knowledge System

Sir William Jones has written: ‘We are told by the Grecian writers that the Indians were the wisest of nations, and in moral wisdom, they were certainly eminent. Their Nīti śāstra or system of Ethics is yet preserved’ (Jones, 2010: 27). Preserved, one can say, in ancient Indian literature but not in today’s education system.

India, therefore, needs to go back to the roots of her knowledge system, in which ethics is an integral aspect of philosophical speculations about the nature of reality. Vedic literature has been described as the oldest philosophical literature in the world, and what they say about how people ought to live may therefore be the first philosophical ethics.²⁸ As the progenitor of ethics, India can play a pioneering role for evolving ‘a global ethic for a globalised world, based on our common humanity’ (UN, 2013: 6). She can also be the

pathfinder in addressing ethical questions involved in digital technologies and Artificial Intelligence.

An important step in that direction is to introduce ethics as a subject in all educational establishments, including in particular technical higher education institutions and establishments such as engineering faculties, business management institutes, law faculties and medical sciences faculties. It is not enough, for example, to provide courses and programmes on business ethics and on corporate social responsibility in management institutes. It is more important to place emphasis on moral integrity, on the need to shun unethical business practices and on professional rectitude. In fostering ethics and moral values, India's knowledge heritage as a rich font can guide global endeavour. As Dr. Radhakrishnan has observed, 'we find in India from the beginning of history an impatience of spirit, a love of wisdom and a passion for the saner pursuits of the mind' (1999: 27).

India can also make a valuable contribution to the global drive towards decolonising her knowledge systems by participating in current discussions on 'knowledge archives of the world' as 'knowledge commons'.

Bringing India into the Spotlight in the Knowledge Archives of the World

Today, one can witness a global drive towards decolonising knowledge systems. The rationale underlying this drive is that knowledge and the standards that determine the validity of knowledge have been disproportionately informed by Western systems of thought and ways of being in the world.

Like other countries, India was the victim of 'epistemicide',²⁹ or the killing of existing knowledge systems; however, she did not engage herself

in epistemological decolonisation imminently in the wake of political decolonisation. As already mentioned, the hegemony of the western knowledge system not only has remained unquestionable; it has become more deeply entrenched.

By decolonising her knowledge system and embracing epistemic or epistemological decolonisation, India can play a pioneering role as regards the concept advanced in decolonial scholarship, which questions the hegemonic Western knowledge system, and seeks to construct and legitimise other knowledge systems by exploring alternative epistemologies, ontologies and methodologies. India's spirituality which gives supremacy to intellectual pursuits, respects freedom of spirit and welcomes flourishing diverse schools of thought is precious for creating a harmony of knowledge systems inspired by universal, humanist values in today's world. A basic characteristic of India's knowledge system, where 'Knowledge is neither a privileged discourse, nor a discourse of the privileged' (Kapoor and Singh, 2005: 30).

'Knowledge commons' as the treasures of knowledge hidden in the 'archives of the world' is evoking enhanced interest today, with a focus on bringing to light multiple knowledge systems as part of the decolonising process. Being endowed with unfathomable spiritual heritage and enlightening philosophical traditions, acclaimed by a large number of Western intellectuals of great repute, a special place devolves India in such a quest: 'to recognize what is damaged; to understand what needs to be repaired and to restore and rebuild by decolonizing knowledge systems'.³⁰ In a world dominated by the Western knowledge system, such a quest reckons with the need for a new planetary consciousness to transform the 'knowledge commons' into sustainable futures for the benefit of humanity so that it can fully rely on multiple knowledge systems—'archives of the world'—in facing global crises.³¹

By building her knowledge system inspired by her epistemological heritage, and by preserving and adhering to her own identity, philosophical and cultural moorings and knowledge heritage, India can become exemplary in reflections on 'knowledge commons', all the more so as her epistemological thinking was universalist in spirit, with esteem for all streams of thought and for other knowledge systems. By devising a knowledge system attuned to her traditions in education, India can make a mark on current discussions on 'knowledge archives of the world' as 'knowledge commons' for the benefit of humanity.

Notes

1. According to a news report, a majority of visiting academicians under the GIAN scheme, 41.4 per cent, were from the US. See, 'Fourth Phase Roll-Out of GIAN Scheme?', 5 December 2023, <https://www.drishtiias.com/daily-updates/daily-news-analysis/fourth-phase-roll-out-of-gian-scheme> (accessed 4 April 2025).
2. This can be related to the term for philosophy, which in India is *darshan*—'perception' of ultimate reality and truth, whereas the term 'philosophy' in the Western world has its origin in the Greek word '*philosophia*', meaning 'love of wisdom'. A philosopher in India is a *daarshanik*—someone akin to being 'visionary' with a discerning, reflective mind. Philosophy in India is '*darshan shastra*'—a kind of compendium of books or treatise of philosophic doctrines which are fruits of meditative thinking and the quest for truth as the ultimate reality.
3. The science of yoga is documented in the *Yoga Sutras* compiled sometime between 500 BCE and 200 BCE by the Indian sage Patanjali, who is said to have synthesised and organised knowledge about yoga from much older traditions. The *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali are a collection of Sanskrit *sutras* (aphorisms) on the theory and practice of yoga.
4. The International Day of Yoga was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly by its Resolution 69/131, adopted on 11 December 2014.
5. Quoted in Nehru (2004: 222–23).
6. See, 'The World Declaration on Education for All, adopted at the World Conference on Education for All, Jomtien (Thailand), 1990, Article 1 § 2 on Meeting Basic Learning Needs', https://bice.org/app/uploads/2014/10/unesco_world_declaration_on_education_for_all_jomtien_thailand.pdf (accessed 5 April 2025).

7. See, 'World Declaration on Higher Education for the Twenty-First Century: Vision and Action, adopted by the World Conference on Higher Education, organised at UNESCO in 1998, (Preamble)', <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000141952> (accessed 5 April 2025).
8. Ibid. Articles 1 and 2 (d), <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000141952> (accessed 5 April 2025).
9. *Encyclopædia Britannica*. 'The History of Western Ethics: Ancient Civilizations to the End of the 19th Century', <https://www.britannica.com/topic/ethics-philosophy/The-history-of-Western-ethics> (accessed 15 April 2025).
10. Cited in Müller (1883: 26).
11. 'The ten "faculties working outward" (*bahyendriya*) are classed in two groups: (i) That of the five "faculties of receptivity or apprehending" (*jnanendriya*) which are "seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and touch" and (ii) that of five "faculties of spontaneity or action" (*karmendriya*) which are "speech, grasping, walking, evacuation and procreating"' (Zimmer 2005: 317-18).
12. Ayurveda is attributed to Dhanvantari, the physician of the gods in Hindu mythology, who received it from Brahma. Its earliest concepts were set out in the portion of the Vedas known as the Atharvaveda.
13. Two future-ready Ayurveda institutes in India are the Institute of Teaching & Research in Ayurveda, Jamnagar, conferred the status of Institution of National Importance by an Act of Parliament, and National Institute of Ayurveda, Jaipur.

- ¹⁴. On that occasion, Venkaiah Naidu said: ‘Centuries of colonial rule taught us to look upon ourselves as an inferior race. We were taught to despise our own culture, traditional wisdom. This slowed our growth as a nation. The imposition of a foreign language as our medium of education confined education to a small section of the society, depriving a vast population of the right to education’. *The Hindu*. 2022. ‘Naidu calls for rejecting Macaulay's education’, 19 March, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/venkaiah-naidu-calls-for-rejecting-macaulays-education-asks-what-is-wrong-with-saffron/article65241251.ece>
- ¹⁵. Ancient India’s philosophical teachings and literature, most importantly, the Vedas and two great epics—Ramayana and Mahabharata—were written in Sanskrit.
- ¹⁶. See Preface by Murli Manohar Joshi in Goel (2003: vii–viii).
- ¹⁷. Sanskrit is among 22 official languages, listed in the 8th schedule of the Indian Constitution. It is the language of religious rituals across India, and also taught in schools across the country. Mattur village in Shivamogga district of Karnataka is known as a Sanskrit-speaking village of India.
- ¹⁸. The people of Ramnad (Ramanathapuram, in present-day Tamil Nadu), the Raja (King) among them, drove the carriage bearing Swami Vivekananda. The Rock Memorial on India’s shore is a mark of tribute to Swami Vivekananda who preached the cause of India’s renaissance inspired by India’s spiritual traditions and knowledge system.
- ¹⁹. See, ‘The Best of Mark Twain on India’, <https://learningindia.in/category/into-india/mark-twain/> (accessed 7 April 2025).
- ²⁰. See, <https://upanishads.org.in/quotes/others> (accessed 07 April 2025).

- ²¹. See, 'Swami Vivekananda's Message for the 21st Century India', <https://www.vifindia.org/article/2018/january/12/swami-vivekananda-message-for-the-21-st-century-india#:~:text=%E2%80%9CKnow%20your%20past%20%E2%80%A6,higher%20than%20she%20ever%20was%E2%80%9D>.
- ²². Inaugural address by Atal Bihari Vajpayee, former Prime Minister of India at the third meeting of the High Level Group on Education for All, Delhi, 2003.
- ²³. Even yoga is unfortunately being turned into a lucrative source of business by the corporate sector. Misusing or rather abusing its stature as a heritage for humanity, its practice is being publicised for the interest of corporate culture. One can witness this in a large number of so-called yoga practices and recreational centres catering to the management cadre and professionals working for the corporate sector so that they become better performers by acquiring the ability to minimise their stress and better concentrate on their work for the benefit of the corporate sector.
- ²⁴. *Mohini Jain vs State of Karnataka and Ors*, AIR 1858, 1992 SCR (3) 658.
- ²⁵. *Miss Mohini Jain vs State of Karnataka and Ors* on 30 July, 1992, <https://indiankanoon.org/doc/40715/> (accessed 15 April 2025).
- ²⁶. *M.C. Mehta vs State Of Tamil Nadu And Others* on 10 December, 1996, <https://indiankanoon.org/doc/212829/> (accessed 15 April 2025).
- ²⁷. ChatGPT was banned in New York's public schools due to concerns over its 'negative impact on student learning' and potential for plagiarism. The University of Sydney's latest academic integrity policy now specifically mentions 'generating content using artificial intelligence' as a form of cheating. The use of ChatGPT in higher education has also been banned in some leading educational institutions in France.

- ²⁸. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. 'The History of Western Ethics: Ancient Civilizations to the End of the 19th Century', <https://www.britannica.com/topic/ethics-philosophy/The-history-of-Western-ethics> (accessed 15 April 2025).
- ²⁹. The term 'epistemicide' is used by Enslin and Hedge (2024: 227–41).
- ³⁰. 'The Transformation of the Knowledge Commons: Perspectives from the Global South', lecture by Achille Mbembe at the International Conference to mark the 30th anniversary of the UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs, 3 November 2022. Paris: UNESCO Report ED-2023/FLI-UNITWIN/1. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000387435> (accessed 15 April 2025).
- ³¹. *Ibid.*

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About the Author

Dr. Kishore Singh has a PhD in international law (1977) from the University of Paris 1 (Sorbonne). Fluent in English and French, he has long-standing professional experience and expertise in the field of human rights and, especially, the right to education as a result of the work accomplished by him over the years at UNESCO (till his retirement in 2009). Subsequently, Dr. Singh was appointed as the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education—a position he held from August 2010 to July 2016. In that capacity, he has presented to the Human Rights Council and the United Nations General Assembly annual reports on thematic areas of priority concern for the international community. He also visited many countries for a dialogue with education ministers, and educational and public authorities for protecting and promoting the right to education, in keeping with international obligations of States. He has participated in a number of high-level fora and public events, including ministerial meetings and held informal consultations with State representatives, international organisations and civil society.

Dr. Singh has contributed to the development of the right to education in its various dimensions and to its better understanding as an internationally recognised right. He has collaborated with the intellectual community and professional bodies for raising public debate on issues of critical importance for the realisation of the right to education. He remains engaged in fostering the cause of education, giving lectures at universities and interacting with public institutions. Dr. Singh has a large number of publications to his credit in the field of the right to education, to which he has devoted his career.



The India International Centre was founded with a vision for India, and its place in the world: to initiate dialogue in a new climate of amity, understanding and the sharing of human values. It is a non-government institute, designed, in the words of its founder president, Dr. C.D. Deshmukh, to be a place where various currents of intellectual, political and economic thought could meet freely. In its objectives, the Centre declares its purpose as being that of society to 'promote understanding and amity between the different communities of the world by undertaking or supporting the study of their past and present cultures, by disseminating or exchanging knowledge thereof, and by providing such other facilities as would lead to their universal appreciation.'

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