

**Knowledge Dialogues -
*A 3-day Convention on Knowledge in Society.***

Kuvempu University, Shivamogga
20-22nd Feb , 2025.

Pre-Convention Publication

Summary of sessions being held

and

papers being presented

Organised jointly by

Kuvempu University Shivamogga

<http://www.kuvempu.ac.in/eng/>

and

the Journal of Dialogues on Knowledge in Society.

www.ppstindia.in

Contents

1. **Foreword** by Vice Chancellor, Kuvempu University
2. **Preface** by Meti Mallikarjuna and C N Krishnan
3. **Announcing the Convention** : Joint Statement by the Chairman and Co-chairman
4. **Convention Flier**
5. **Organising Committee Members**
6. **Convention Program**
7. **Details of the Sessions , including papers presented**
8. **List of contributors, alphabetical**
9. **List of Local Org. Comm. Coordinators**

Foreword

It is with great enthusiasm and pride that Kuvempu University is hosting this event: **Knowledge Dialogues - a 3-Day Convention on Knowledge in Society**. The Dialogues aim to engage seriously in presentations, discussions, and conversations among various representatives of the Knowledge Systems and traditions, including common people, artisans, practitioners of indigenous knowledge, universities, and modern institutions.

A central question that ties together all the themes being discussed at the Convention is: Modern Science and modes of Industrial Production and Technology have been in place in India for over 100 years. Post-independence, the Indian nation embraced the benefits of modern science and technology, hoping to bring positive changes to its citizens by alleviating poverty and raising health and living standards. Yet today, a vast majority of Indians remain poor and without access to basic provisions that would ensure a better life for them. Often, the reasons for the failure of such benefits reaching every citizen are attributed to economics or poor governance. In this convention, we pose the question whether the problem may also be fundamentally epistemic in nature. Is there a mismatch between the knowledge base founded on the principles and practices of modern science and technology, largely Western in origin, and the knowledge base that our common folk depend on for carrying out their lives? More importantly, one must recognize that across India, a large section of society without access to modern tools and technology continues to live and survive, sometimes with a sense of well-being and peace probably. They also possess forms of knowledge, although these may not be recognized in dominant Western knowledge systems or are placed lower in a hierarchy of knowledge. Examining this proposition involves bringing practitioners of these diverse knowledge systems together in one forum. Such dialogue, in its truest sense and spirit, must shun any implicit assumptions regarding hierarchies that grade these knowledge systems by placing so-called authoritative formal knowledge above people's or folk knowledge.

The convention will deliberate on a wide range of issues concerning knowledge choices made in various sectors and their consequences. The sessions will address poverty in India and its possible relation to these knowledge choices, and discuss the idea of Swaraj and its meaning in the current context. To exemplify the diversity of knowledge prevalent in India, a separate session on Kannada

Knowledge Traditions is also being held. Much has been written about the philosophy of Arts and Aesthetics, and a session on knowledge systems pertaining to Indian Art and Music is included, along with lecture demonstrations from the Dhrupad tradition. No discussion on knowledge can occur today without considering the role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in knowledge creation and dissemination, especially the philosophical, ethical, and social consequences of increasing dependence on AI. The Convention has a Session on AI. A separate session is devoted to India's role as an emerging power from the Global South as seen in the domain of Knowledge.

It will be interesting to see whether dialogue from different knowledge systems is possible, as it requires people to "talk to" rather than "talk at" each other. Are these diverse knowledge systems incommensurable? It is hoped that discussions and dialogues will occur at this Convention without succumbing to mere "standpoint views" or relativism. I am confident that Kuvempu University will witness three intense and intellectually exciting days!

Prof. Sharath Ananthamurthy

Vice Chancellor, Kuvempu University

Convention Chairman

Preface

We are happy to present to you this compilation of the programs and events that are scheduled to take place in the Knowledge Convention being held in the Kuvempu University, Shivamogga, during 20th - 22nd Feb 2025. This Convention is unique in many ways, as it is the result of the coming together of a Public University and an Online Journal being run by a group of intellectuals, thinkers and activists from diverse disciplines. The role played by Kuvempu University in making this happen clearly brings out the remarkable vision of its leadership, faculty and students; our universities are badly wanting in this readiness to dialogue with sections from the larger society whom it is ultimately meant to serve. The same holds true for the other party to this collaboration, viz. Journal of Dialogues on Knowledge in Society, who has abandoned the normally prevalent cynicism and negative views regarding public universities, especially those belonging to the State system, and come forward to work closely with Kuvempu University. We hope that this will get taken note of widely, and more efforts of this kind involving universities and various other players in the larger social space will happen, leading to a resurgence of meaningful intellectual pursuits on a large scale.

This work had started in the beginning of June 2024, and involved intense remote working and meetings among around twenty persons from both sides and living at far away places – the first and last face to face meeting of the Convention Organising Committee (COC) is happening only on 19th Feb 2025! Technology has played a key role, both for its possibilities as well as limitations, in the organisation of this Convention.

Much of what is presented in this document are already available on the Convention websites (<https://www.ppstindia.in/convention> or <http://www.kuvempu.ac.in/eng/KnowledgeConvention.php>) other than the paper summaries which have reached us only a few days back. There are over 60 contributing participants from diverse disciplines and backgrounds, participating in eight subject sessions, as described in detail later here, in addition to popular lectures and cultural events during the evenings and nights. There would also be many Registered participants, especially young scholars, teachers, students and activists, and we hope that they would actively participate in the deliberations, both inside the convention hall as well as outside.

Even though this compilation itself would be found wanting in many respects because of the time constraints under which it had to be produced, especially so in the case of the Papers/Abstracts included here, we propose to bring out a book later containing the selected and edited full papers presented here, with some possible additions as needed. The same would also be uploaded to our websites.

Of equal interest to the participants should be the 9th and last session on Saturday the 22nd morning on where do we go from Shivamogga in the intellectual journey that the Convention would be launching.

The key to whatever has been achieved here is the role played by the eight Session Conveners and their Working Groups, something that is deeply appreciated and acknowledged. The manner in which the University administration, faculty and students responded and supported have also been phenomenal, and should strongly dispel many of the misconceptions and prejudices harboured about the intellectual environments in our state level universities, especially those that are away from the metro centres.

It is our pleasure to acknowledge the support that we have received from the IKS Division of AICTE and Chanakya University, Bengaluru, towards the conduct of the Convention.

In this work, we are privileged to have had the guidance of the Convention Co-Chairman Shri Sunil

Sahasrabudhey, Founder President of Vidya Ashram, Varanasi. The activist-philosopher has spent over three decades dwelling on the issue of Knowledge in its connections to the individual and society. The concept of Knowledge in Society pioneered by him has considerable potential in evolving a more humane society.

The role played by the Chairman , Prof. Sharath Ananthamurthy, Vice Chancellor of the host university, has been the single most decisive factor behind the successful holding of this Convention. His support to the idea has been unstinting and unflinching all along, which has enabled the CoC to go about its work in full freedom to take things this far. We do hope that the intellectual courage and vision shown by Prof. Sharath would inspire others who occupy similar high positions of authority and leadership in the academic and intellectual world in our country.

We hope all the participants would have an exciting intellectual experience in the lovely wooded campus of the university in the Sahyadri region, named after an illustrious poet and thinker who has had a deep impact on Kannada society and beyond.

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Announcing the Convention

(<https://www.ppstindia.in/>)

Sunil Sahasrabudhey

President, Vidya Ashram Varanasi

Convention Co-Chair

Sharath Ananthamurthy

Vice Chancellor, Kuvempu University

Convention Chair

The focal theme of the Convention is ‘Knowledge in Society’ and the convention proposes to bring it into all discourses – economic, political, philosophical, cultural etc. As an epistemic idiom it should also be able to enter the discourses in the formal institutions of knowledge like the universities, on the internet and in places of spiritual persuasion – the three major organized locations of knowledge and knowledge activity today. Terms like traditional knowledge, local knowledge, indigenous knowledge, ethnic knowledge etc. would all be included in the term knowledge in society.

The science and technology discourse of the previous era has changed into a knowledge discourse largely after the Information Revolution. What was earlier categorized as skills and practices of the people at large has come to be recognized as knowledge in the present era. The domain of knowledge therefore stretches from one end in artisanal-peasant communities to the other end of artificial intelligence. Searl’s Chinese Room experiment has reappeared in a new guise.

This has far reaching consequences, for now different ways of thinking and doing, which unlike modern science do not abhor the ethical and aesthetic considerations, have a common address ‘Knowledge in Society’. ‘Knowledge in Society’ does not prioritize between the material, ethical, aesthetic, spiritual etc. So, now men and women are rational not just because they can construct analytical and scientific arguments, but also because they can, equally well, construct sound arguments for ethical, aesthetic and spiritual understandings and undertakings. This could liberate human rationality from the European yoke.

Through Knowledge in Society, the proposed convention hopes to address the entire width, and with a sense of non-hierarchy and equity built into it. The peasants and artisans are not inferior knowledge beings compared to the professionals from the university.

The convention shall explore the knowledge question and knowledge choices involved in the processes of nation building and development and also in people’s movements. We shall explore whether and how knowledge issue enters the realm of art and are also inclined to conceive a new political imagination, may be an idea of ‘swaraj’ suited for the contemporary times. There will be dialogue on regional/ cultural/linguistic knowledge traditions, specifically focused on Kannada traditions of knowledge. Put together this Knowledge Dialogue is at the same time also about ethics and aesthetics, not leaving out metaphysics, and about matters of language, policy and governance. It can take us to a new concept of emancipation, at the same time both political and philosophic. India should be a reasonably well suited land for heralding some such new idea and practice thereof, and this Convention should open doors for it.

Convention Flier

The Convention on Knowledge in Society is an open forum to critically examine the Knowledge question, including the Science and Technology question, in the light of our developmental and nation building experience of over 75 years. It would investigate whether the choices that have been made, and are being made, in the domain of Knowledge in our country have themselves contributed to our present state where the majority of the people continue to live under conditions of poverty, deprivation and indignity.

Though the role of Modern Science and Technology in development has been a subject of debates for long, the knowledge component of other spheres of human activity, such as economics, politics, social sciences, arts, philosophy, social organisation, family etc., have not received much critical examination. While the issue of Knowledge has so far not appeared as significant as those of Equity, Freedom and Sustainability, it is becoming apparent that in many cases of contending standpoints there is likely to be an underlying question of Knowledge and its foundations, going beyond those of preferences, interests and power. It has not been recognised widely that different societies and cultures through history have developed different knowledge systems and practices that suited their civilisational goals and purposes, and that the Modern systems and practices that have had their origins in the West are only one of them.

Knowledge and its practices pertaining to different fields of concern to most people (food, nutrition, health, housing, transportation, agriculture, water management, textiles, rural industries, social organisation, arts, family etc) still exist in a widespread and distributed manner in our society. This is distinct from the centralised modern institutional forms of knowledge organised hierarchically through universities, laboratories, academies etc. This "Knowledge in Society" transcends categories of Modern/Traditional, Western/Indigenous, Organised/Folk etc, and is a living and ever evolving entity, with values and culture appropriate to it embedded into it.

The journal "Dialogues on Knowledge in Society" (<https://www.ppstindia.in/>) that has evolved out of the earlier work of the PPST (<https://www.ppstindiagroup.in/>) is devoted to such a pursuit, and the Convention is expected to take the dialogue forward in an open and inclusive manner. Kuvempu University (Kuvempu.ac.in) in Shivamogga (erstwhile Shimoga) is born out of University of Mysore, and has been pursuing education and research in certain areas (Bio-Diversity in Western Ghats, Indigenous Nyaya Panchayats, Cultural Differences, Folklore, Local Traditions, Pluralism and Coexistence) that have a bearing on the indigenous/local aspects of the knowledge question.

Some themes for the Convention.

One of the main purposes of the Convention is to examine the Knowledge choices, including S&T choices, that had been made in the development process in our country, the reasons thereof, and their impact on the outcomes in different sectors.

Knowledge choices made in some core sectors of our economy.

Following are some of the key sectors whose inadequate performance has been very hurtful to the vast majority of our people: Food and Nutrition; Drinking Water; Toilets and Sanitation; Agriculture, Irrigation and Animal Husbandry; Land and Forests; Housing and Habitats; Health and Medicines; Clothing and Textiles; Household Energy needs; Industrial Development; Environment and Ecology; Literacy and School Education; Local Self-governance; Etc. In the Convention, we will get knowledgeable and experienced persons in each of these fields to speak on the kind of Knowledge choices that were made in their field from the time of independence, the reasons thereof, and how the process of selecting/rejecting among them was carried out. They will also tell us if any of these choices are still available to us, and if so, whether they should be examined and adopted even now.

Some foundational issues underlying the different Knowledge systems

In the Indian context at the time of independence, there were two broad contending systems or traditions of Knowledge : those that originated in the West around the 18th century and got introduced into our country as a part of the colonization project, and those that were of 'local' origin and which had been supporting the society and economy of this region for long periods of time. Efforts will be made in the Convention to bring out the differences in the epistemic foundations between these two Knowledge streams or traditions, and to what extent these differences may be responsible for the consequences that followed from the choices that were made.

It is also known that these two systems differ significantly in the way they get organised in society. "Knowledge in Society" seems to be the way indigenous Knowledge traditions get organised, with their embedded-ness in society enabling them to keep renewing themselves to whatever extent the circumstances permit. Did the differences in their organisation within society, especially under an aggressively centralizing and hostile state, also contribute to their differences in performance? Does the idea

of Swaraj have a role while making choices in the Knowledge domain even today?

Knowledge and its connectedness.

There are other aspects of Knowledge that the Convention should examine, such as its relationship with Power. Relationships with Arts, Films and the Media and Role of Knowledge in social relationships, family etc should also be discussed. What is the Knowledge basis of movements like the Ecological Movement, Farmers' Movement, Women's Movement, Tribal's Movement, etc?

Going forward

The central concern of the Convention should be on the initiatives in the knowledge domain that needs to be taken to address the central issue of largescale poverty that still exists in our country. We need to see how and to what extent the Modern Knowledge, including its S&T components, can be re-organised and adapted to meet the needs of the Indian people and the Indian nation in a more effective and just way. This should take into account, among other things, the shifting grounds of knowledge in the Digital and Internet age, as well as new developments like Artificial Intelligence. A similar exercise should be done on the Knowledge systems of Indian origin (called Indian Knowledge Systems, or IKS) and their value and relevance to the developmental processes to be freshly assessed. How can the emphasis be shifted from preservation to renewal? How can the idea of a partnership between the two traditions be formulated and promoted? Examination of IKS should also go beyond the domain of the material world, and encompass the social, cultural, artistic, moral, ethical and family dimensions. We should also examine a view existing in our society that IKS was elite knowledge in some kind of adversarial relationship with ordinary people's lives and their knowledge.

A New Knowledge Academy?

Do we need a new kind of Academy to pose the questions of knowledge, theoretical and practical, in a new way and support other initiatives which do so? The Convention may explore the setting up of such an institution.

Prof. C.N.Krishnan

Dr. J.K.Suresh

Journal of Dialogues on Knowledge in Society

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Note: DKS stands for Dialogues on Knowledge in Society.

Convention Program

Dates: 20-22 Feb 2025 Venue: Convocation Hall, Kuvempu University.

Day-1 (Thursday 20th Feb)

8.30 – 9.45 AM Registration and Tea

9.45 – 11.00 AM Inaugural Function

11.00 AM – 1.00 PM **Session-1: Knowledge in Society –**

The Foundation for an Equitable and Just Society Convener: Avinash Jha

1.00 – 2.00 PM Lunch

2.00- 4.00PM **Session -2: Poverty and the Knowledge question – *the role of Indigenous / Traditional Knowledge (Panel Discussion)*** Convener: Veena Joshi

4.00 – 7.00 PM **Session-3: Kannada Knowledge Traditions (in Kannada)**

(Includes live cultural programs) Convener: Meti Mallikarjuna

6.30 – 7.30 PM Popular Lectures:

High points of Indian Astronomy and Mathematics (in Kannada/English): M S Sriram

7.30 – 9.00 PM Dinner

8.30 – 9.30 PM Cultural Program

Day-2 (Friday 21st Feb)

9.00 – 11.15 AM **Session -4: Imagining Swaraj in the 21 st Century –**

Some Knowledge issues. (Presentation and Panel Discussion) Convener: B V Rama Prasad

11.15AM – 1.30PM **Session-5: Knowledge in Development Discourse and Peoples' Movements (Presentation and Panel Discussion)** Conveners: Umashankari N and Ramasubramanian O

1.30 – 2.30 PM Lunch

2.30 – 4.00 PM **Session-6: Artificial Intelligence and the Knowledge Question**

(Panel Discussion) Convener:Rajeev Sangal

4.00 – 7.00 PM **Session-7: Art and the Knowledge Question**

(Includes live cultural programs) Conveners: Sushruthi Santhanam and A Sashikanth

6.00-7.00PM Popular Lecture:

Artificial Intelligence – An introduction : M Sasikumar

7.30 – 9.00 PM Dinner

8.30 – 9.30 PM Cultural Program: *Film by A.Sashikanth*

Day-3 (Sat 22nd Feb)

9.00 – 11.00 AM *Session-8: India as a voice from the Global South –*

the Knowledge Dimension. Convener: *A V Balasubramanian*

(Panel Discussion)

11.15 AM – 12.45PM *Session-9: Taking the Shivamogga Dialogues forward --*

a New Academy and a Journal?

(Panel Discussion)

12.45 – 1.15PM: **Formal Closing Function**

1.15 – 2.15: PM Lunch

Details of the Sessions , including papers/abstracts presented

Session-1:

Knowledge in Society – *The Foundation for an Equitable and Just Society*

Working Group: Avinash Jha(Convener), J K Suresh, R.Goswami, A Shanmukha, Meti Mallikarjuna,
Sunil Sahasrabudhey

Summary: The term ‘Knowledge’ today is used to refer to formal and specialized knowledge which is transmitted and learnt in educational institutions like schools, colleges and universities and produced in research institutes. The existence of knowledge amongst ordinary people is considered knowledge only in a qualified sense – traditional knowledge, folk knowledge, local knowledge etc. Even when acknowledged, such knowledge in society is explained away as aphorisms and techniques learnt by imitation, rote, practice, or as unscientific folk wisdom etc. However, this knowledge in society continues to provide sustenance to a majority of ‘uneducated’ Indians by equipping them to serve large numbers of people in areas as diverse as indigenous medicine, agriculture, transport, construction, restaurants and food etc. Management of enterprises based on small and very small capital is an important part of knowledge in society. So is the knowledge that is evident in life patterns and aesthetic activities of ordinary people.

Moving away from the paradigm which considers ‘science’ and its cognates as knowledge per se and the rest as knowledge in an inferior sense, this session seeks to stress the significance and vitality of knowledge in society which might have its own organizing principles for acquiring, renewing and practicing knowledge in ways not always anticipated by the practitioners of formal and specialized knowledge.

Background

As human beings we are largely products of our learning and the ability to transmit our learning to the next generation, which also serves to distinguish us from all other animals. Hence, it is a truism to say that all human beings are knowledge beings. It is this endowment of knowledge in human society that makes possible the building up of human civilizations over millennia.

This trivial truth is in itself not very useful in understanding or explicating the nature and evolution of societies across centuries. Although as knowledge beings we all are equal, it must also be clear that there have been hierarchies in human societies and hence also of knowledge. No knowledge is innocent. Our knowledge has not only given us the power to dominate nature and control it to serve our needs but also to dominate other human beings. That knowledge is power is not only a Baconian or Western concept but was perhaps a larger understanding of human societies everywhere. However it must also be recognized that knowledge serves as a major resource providing strength to people to resist external domination and oppression in society.

In terms of their spread, various types of knowledge – of tools and machines, materials and minerals, agriculture, horticulture, behavior and interactions, social life, economics, arts, administration and politics, philosophy, spirituality etc. – that served the evolving needs of societies over time in history were situated partly within the society at large and partly within specialist groups. In terms of diversity, each region possessed its own version of knowledge types that best suited its environment, both human and natural. Interactions between communities enabled their development even as differences between them persisted. A common feature of knowledge was that it was not beyond social scrutiny and control, i.e., social norms would determine the scope and limits of its practice. For example, the village commons or forest patches would not be completely denuded even if it was an economically attractive proposition; open and strip mines would not be massively exploited so as to render the land around it infertile or degraded. And so on. In a distributed and de-centralized society such as pre-modern India, it is evident therefore that knowledge in society was diverse and multi-dimensional, while being largely governed by its endogenous values.

Today’s Scenario

An important development of the previous two hundred years is the growth of a nexus between power and knowledge. Power and knowledge were perhaps largely independent in pre-modern society.

However, from the time of the industrial revolution, they have attained a growing degree of affinity. Over time, every major development in the sphere of knowledge has come to be co-opted by power, whilst every new affirmation of power leads to a greater control over the process of knowledge creation and use. Power as we understand it, goes beyond political power symbolized by the State and its institutions. It constitutes in addition an ecosystem that is driven by the logic of Capital and utilizes instruments mediated by knowledge for social, economic and cultural influence and control.

The separation of human knowledge from its location advanced rapidly during and after the industrial revolution in Europe along with the capability to embed a progressively larger amount of complexity (i.e., knowledge) into machines; this capability gradually extended to areas such as large scale manufacture of iron, textiles, steam and machine tools in the 19th century and to mass manufacturing of cars in the 20th, enabling the reduction of human effort to mere manual labor to a large part. In the 21st century, global manufacture and services have triggered the development of vast, hyper-real and virtual devices to feed the demand for their production. Together, they have created a new global empire, whose knowledge intensive hubs exercise complete control over societies which in theory are independent and sovereign, but are subservient to the demands of consumption and progress, as exemplified by the empire and its physical and knowledge capital.

The consequences of the above developments are two-fold: one, a weakening of knowledge in society that leads to the society's inability to control the distribution of the fruits of its knowledge; which in turn leads to a general de-skilling and de-education of the majority. Two, it enables a few to monopolize the knowledge development process, overturn all norms in society and create great disruptions and inequities in society in their drive to maximize the return on Capital, which has become the ruling mantra of the World.

What this Session aims to do

How is Knowledge in Society constituted, what are its strengths and dynamics, how does it help fight oppression, can it help us envisage a society where a life of dignity and fulfillment is created for all without (much) capital are the central questions that will be explored in this session, in the form of the following topics:

- a) What do we mean by Knowledge in Society? How is it different from the Knowledge in the University, or of specialist groups, etc.?
- b) What are the organizing principles of this knowledge?
- c) How does it relate to the foundations of different knowledge traditions in society?
- d) How does Knowledge in society resist external domination and internal oppression?
- e) What is the relationship between Knowledge in society and modern political, social and economic processes?

The Session Program

Moderator: **Prof. G. Sivaramakrishnan**, Bangalore University (Retd.)

Speakers:

1. **Shri. Sunil Sahasrabudhey**, Vidya Ashram, DKS Journal; Formerly with Gandhian Institute of Studies, Varanasi.

Topic: *A Statement on Lokavidya - The Knowledge in Society*

“Knowledge in society, with the people, is called lokavidya. It cannot be held or stored in a book, caste, village, family, religion, library, university or computer. It is ‘living knowledge’ with the people.”

2. **Prof. Rajaram Hegde**, Visiting Professor, Chankya University, Bengaluru. Former Professor of

History and Archeology, Kuvempu University.

Topic: Configuration of Learning and Indian Knowledge System: What has gone wrong in our understanding

“In his theoretical framework, Balagangadhara conceives of cultures as configurations of learning and posits a hypothesis that India and the West embody distinct learning configurations. According to this framework, the Western configuration prioritizes theoretical knowledge, while the Indian configuration is predominated by practical or performative knowledge. Indian rituals and traditional learning methods predominantly rely on this practical knowledge. Consequently, normative texts are notably absent in Indian traditions, where practices are transmitted across generations through mimetic learning. In this context, stories, rather than theories, play a pivotal role in instructing individuals on how to devise new actions.”

3. **Prof. Madhulika Banerjee**, Department of Political Science, University of Delhi.

Topic: Pluriversal Knowledges as a Frame for Understanding Knowledge in Society

“...power resides not only in the dominant spaces of society, but outside of it, in myriad forms. And knowledge has been generated, innovated upon and practised by people in those spaces in every kind of society. Either in the context of oppressive dominant structures, or in maintaining local sanctity, the role of collective action from these spaces provides subversive power.”

4. **Prof. Sasidharan P K**, Sankara University, Kalady, Kerala

Topic: Emerging Talk of Epistemic Justice , yet another injustice.

Papers/Summaries Presented in Session-1

I. A Summary Statement on *Lokavidya* – The Knowledge in Society

Sunil Sahasrabudhey

1. Knowledge in society, with the people, is called *lokavidya*. It cannot be held or stored in a book, caste, village, family, religion, library, university or computer. It is ‘living knowledge’ with the people.
2. Everybody is knowledgeable in the sense that everybody possesses *lokavidya*, which is his/her knowledge life-line. Everybody lives with autonomy of decision making based on what he/she learns through lived life (informally as *lokavidya* and formally in school/college). That is to say that *lokavidya* is ubiquitous both in space and time.
3. Those who have not been to college or university are not ignorant people. They go through an elaborate learning process, in the family, peer group, village, community and the larger society, in and through their life activity. Markets, governance, work site, cultural phenomena, games, schools and places of knowledge dialogue may be specially mentioned where people learn.
4. Farmers, artisans, adivasis, service providers, small retailers, artists and generally women acquire their knowledge in society. They earn their livelihood and manage all their affairs by *lokavidya*, so they may be said to constitute *lokavidya samaj*.

5. Although lokavidya -samaj is composed of poor people, mainly in the former colonies, it should be noted that the professional classes also possess *lokavidya* and mostly their lived life (different from the professional earning life) is governed by *lokavidya*. This applies to professional classes across the world, be they in former colonies or in the Western Europe, England, USA, Japan, Australia.
6. People's way of thinking, manner of abstraction, methods of argumentation, social values, thoughts about and methods of organization, relations among themselves and with nature, information they command, skills they possess, their art and their *darshan* (philosophy), all put together constitute a world of knowledge, which may be called *lokavidyaloka*.
7. *Lokavidya* is fresh every day, for in response to their needs, people incessantly improve upon the given, by their genius and based on their experiences and fresh experimentation.
8. The source of people's strength is in *lokavidya*. It is on the basis of *lokavidya* that they earn their livelihood, build their relationships with other people and with Nature, distinguish truth from falsehood, right from wrong, confront injustices and build their worldview.
9. *Lokavidya* does not separate physical labor from the mind and its activity. From the *lokavidya* standpoint there is nothing that is done by labor alone and everything is done by coming together of the required labor and knowledge. In other words, in the *lokavidya* way of thinking, nobody is a mere worker, everybody is knowledgeable.
10. Talking about society: the social and the economic disparity can be eradicated only when *lokavidya* fetches economic returns equal to that obtainable by university knowledge and is accorded the same social respect as is given to university knowledge.

Lokavidya Jan Andolan is the knowledge movement of the *Lokavidya-samaj*. Its objective is to obtain an equal status for *lokavidya* and *lokavidya-samaj* in the world of knowledge and society.

II. Configuration of Learning and Indian Knowledge Systems – *what has gone wrong in our understanding?*

Dr. Rajaram Hegde

Modern research and thought within the realm of human knowledge are predominantly theoretical. By "theoretical," I mean that knowledge is principally regarded as a pathway to uncovering truths about the world. This form of knowledge is categorized as 'propositional knowledge,' 'declarative knowledge,' or 'knowledge-that' within the field of knowledge studies. It encompasses information about the world and meta-knowledge (knowledge of knowledge), consisting of three elements: 1. justifiable, 2. truthful, and 3. belief-based. The distinction between the act of knowing and knowledge itself lies in the fact that the former represents a subjective perception while the latter embodies an objectively structured or deeper understanding. Knowledge studies also acknowledge other types of knowledge, such as acquaintance knowledge or a posteriori knowledge, acquired through personal experiences and engagement with the world. Implicit knowledge, also referred to as 'knowledge-how' (or procedural or practical knowledge), and tacit knowledge, which stems from personal experience, are also recognized. Additionally, a priori knowledge, disseminated through logical reasoning such as in mathematics, plays a crucial role.

These forms of knowledge can broadly be classified into theoretical and practical or performative categories, or as 'knowledge-how' and 'knowledge-what' within the theories of knowledge. However, it is

essential to recognize that theories regarding all other types of knowledge primarily reflect a theoretical stance, considering these other forms as subsets of theoretical knowledge. For example, these theories often do not regard human action as a form of knowledge. Actions devoid of theoretical knowledge may appear irrational or anti-intellectual, as they do not inherently contain knowledge units unless accompanied by theoretical reflection.

Numerous cultures regard practical knowledge as a form of knowledge in its own right, independent of a foundational basis in reason. This perspective was notably held by ancient Roman sceptical thinkers. With the ascendancy of religious worldviews, theoretical knowledge came to predominate the Western intellectual landscape. In contrast, pagan and non-religious traditional cultures have continued to emphasize the importance of practical knowledge.

In his theoretical framework, Balagangadhara conceives of cultures as configurations of learning and posits a hypothesis that India and the West embody distinct learning configurations. According to this framework, the Western configuration prioritizes theoretical knowledge, while the Indian configuration is predominated by practical or performative knowledge. Indian rituals and traditional learning methods predominantly rely on this practical knowledge. Consequently, normative texts are notably absent in Indian traditions, where practices are transmitted across generations through mimetic learning. In this context, stories, rather than theories, play a pivotal role in instructing individuals on how to devise new actions.

The Indian state, society, and its institutions were profoundly shaped during the British colonial period, emerging as products of colonial rule. These entities are deeply rooted in the Western understanding of India. The theories of Western knowledge have significantly influenced their analyses of the cultures they encountered. Consequently, this analytical framework shaped their comprehension and portrayal of Indian culture, its knowledge traditions, and learning methodologies during the colonial era. The colonial intellectuals, steeped in theoretical learning, struggled to comprehend the Indian traditional practices and learning systems, which appeared irrelevant and primitive to them. This perspective played a decisive role in the misinterpretation and misunderstanding of Indian knowledge traditions.

The colonizers tirelessly worked to provide rational foundations intended to enhance Indian political and social life as part of their 'civilizing mission.' The introduction of English education, the application of Western social science concepts and theories, the establishment of Western social, political, and legal institutions, and administrative experiments such as the panchayat raj system, exemplify such efforts. These policies, institutions, and experiments encountered significant challenges within the context of a culture that traditionally lacked the tools to manage these unfamiliar impositions.

Exploring the aforementioned differences in the configuration of learning proves extremely productive for social scientists who aim to understand and explain the current crises and failures of modern institutions in India. The dominance of practical and performative learning within Indian culture,

markedly distinct from Western configurations centered on theoretical learning, suggests that if this indigenous system continues to prevail, it may precipitate a crisis in the contemporary theoretical learning-based system. It is expected that individuals immersed in this cultural context might struggle with, or have difficulty adapting to, this new system, potentially leading to performance failures or the distortion or corruption of practices when traditional knowledge resources are inaccessible.

This line of inquiry, grounded in cultural differences concerning knowledge, can also establish a productive foundation for research aimed at elucidating current practices and the literary information transmitted from ancient times. Moreover, it allows for an analysis of misconceptions about Indian culture during the colonial period. The present paper endeavors to highlight these aspects with appropriate references and detailed elaborations, supplemented by suitable examples.

III. Pluriversal Knowledges as a Frame for Understanding Knowledge in Society

Madhulika Banerjee

In this paper, I will present aspects of my work that have responded to the questions being raised in this session. I will first problematise the terms ‘traditional knowledge’, ‘already existing knowledges’ (another term that I have used before) and explain why ‘pluriversal knowledges’ make more sense, both in terms of history and epistemology. Second, I will present how locating knowledges in their political-economic contexts, help us understand their materiality--- in pre-capitalist, capitalist and non-capitalist space and time. Used for different kinds of production for society’s needs—whether for growing crops, building homes, managing water, weaving cloth, making medicines-- the materiality of their practice draw from the dominant philosophical and conceptual frames at one end, and the political-economic mechanisms of the society at the other. It is when we link the two that we can understand how the theory and practice of knowledge is linked and when transformations happen, what exactly changes and how and that too, within different structures of power in society.

This brings me to the third argument of my paper, which is, that power resides not only in the dominant spaces of society, but outside of it, in myriad forms. And knowledge has been generated, innovated upon and practised by people in those spaces in every kind of society. Either in the context of oppressive dominant structures, or in maintaining local sanctity, the role of collective action from these spaces provides subversive power. Yet we need to remember that social inequities and injustice are hallmarks of all three aspects and have to be recognised and dealt with, if knowledge is to provide a foundation for a just and equitable society.

IV. Emerging Talk of Epistemic Justice, yet another injustice

P K Sasidharan

In recent times, there has been emerging a new variety of knowledge movement in Europe, which highlights and calls for the recovery of non-western knowledge practices and cultural traditions, specifically the healthcare traditions. Though there is hardly anything new in the critique of western thought forms and cultures, either from within or outside, the present trend seems to be distinctive for its admission that the non-western knowledge systems are equally be characterised as or qualified enough to be treated as epistemologies. Thus goes the expressions such as 'traditional epistemology', 'indigenous epistemology', 'folk epistemology', 'ethnic epistemology', 'South epistemology', etc.

Such a critical stance, which is being imitated at global level, by way of resistance against the western mainstream structures of knowledge production, dissemination, and application, gives an impression of being capable to be more radical in resisting the western hegemony that has penetrated at the subtle and intimate spheres of individual and collective life of people everywhere. Consequently, it is perceived to be the emergence of new resistance against epistemicide (killing of knowledge systems and practices, which fall outside the western systems) from within the west, especially against the hegemonic conception of modern medicine with the biomedical model of health care and healing.

Those critical-knowledge movements seem to have their common point of target against the European epistemic framework as such, and impresses us by being able to counter it radically by replacing non-western, non-biomedical models of health care practices. However, if we go by the ways in which this perceived critical perspective gets operated at the accessible point of non-western medical practices, what gets revealed cannot be seen as making much difference from the hegemonic models. Instead of non-western practices being recognized as such, they are still being subjected to epistemic justification and scientific validation. The epistemic justice or equality of non-western medical practices seems to have been recognised only at the level of a dialogical intervention from the epistemic framework of modern medicine. The so-called epistemological research projects in the domain of health care and healing are still found to be carried out only within the integration scheme. Hence, the non-western medical epistemology perspective and research programmes operate mainly in the interest of seeking what is to be scientifically validated from non-modern traditional medical practices.

The so-called inclusivist programmes, such as ‘integrated medicine’, ‘complimentary medicine’, ‘alternative medicine’, ‘wholistic medicine’ have been floated from the side of modern medicine, and the non-modern traditions are being scrutinised for making the science proper. It is these scientific aspects within the non-modern practices that are conceived to be their ‘epistemological foundation’ as well. Here, the tenability of the idea of ‘epistemology’ to characterise the cognitive or knowledge features of non-western practices becomes a matter of dispute. Because, as per the western philosophical project, epistemology presupposes a methodological thinking through which rational and universal justification of any belief to be true knowledge. Thus, for both the western philosophy and science non-justifiable beliefs and non-rational practices cannot become knowledge. They would be falling outside the purview of what philosophy privileges as episteme (knowledge) against doxa (opinion). This seems to be the juncture in which concerns on the epistemological status of non-western practices have become crucial. The process of epistemizing of non-knowledge practices is seen largely in the area of medical and health care practices. To be specific, the talk of epistemic justice, equality, alterity, integration, inclusiveness, wholism, etc., has a critical stance of engaging with the continuing strategies of colonial policies of Europe over Afro Asian countries. Therefore, it becomes imperative to ask whether the recently emerging non-western epistemology movement could really be termed as counter-epistemology or alternative epistemology? If the cognitive potentials of non-modern medical practices are now found to be matters of recognition, why do they need to be counted on their epistemic status or scientific validity? Hence, what seems to matter is cognitive justice, rather than epistemic justice, as it has been made out to be in the discourse on non-western epistemologies.

Session -2:

Poverty and the Knowledge question – *the role of Indigenous Traditional Knowledge (Panel Discussion)*

Working Group: *Veena Joshi (Convener), Umashankari, Rahul Goswami, C N Krishnan*

While mass hunger may be a thing of the past, poverty and deprivation exist in India on a mass scale – large sections of people lacking in adequate food, nutrition, drinking water, healthcare, housing, education, transport, employment and wages, environment, etc. These sectors where poverty is still rampant are in reality our “core sectors” as far as the well-being of the people are concerned, and addressing this requires large scale investments going into them, and not merely into 'infrastructure' projects like airports, highways, harbours, bullet trains etc. Significantly, not much of these investments need to go into capital and energy intensive inputs like high technology, large machinery, high science etc, most of which anyway have to be imported. These investments need to go primarily into (i) employing much larger numbers of people in most sectors with reasonable levels of salaries and job security, along with appropriate training programs for them (ii) protecting our natural resources and assets and utilising them in a just and sustainable manner. The awareness, knowledge and skills available with the ordinary people, supplemented wherever needed with specialised knowledge, technology and training, would mostly be adequate to address the pressing problems of poverty in our country. This knowledge base available in the society, referred to as Knowledge in Society in this Convention, is composed of elements from both the Traditional/Indigenous and the Modern/ Western streams, created through a continuous process of experimentation, innovation, absorption, and integration practiced by the people in their day to day lives.

A Panel Discussion on

“The knowledge base needed for removal of mass poverty is largely available with the ordinary people and the small-scale sector”

The Panel will address this proposition from different stand points and taking different domains, highlighting how a partnership between the Traditional/ Indigenous and the Modern/ Western can effectively combat poverty and its consequences.

. India today is host to perhaps the largest share of world's poor --

- ill-fed and malnourished people, especially women and children
- heavy burden of disease and ill-health
- poor housing and unhygienic habitat conditions
- education that does not lead to secure jobs with decent wages.
- poor quality and unsafe means of public transport
- poor quality of governance practices, including justice delivery.
- degraded environment leading to poor quality of water, air, soil and vegetation

This is the reality that is clearly visible to anyone and gets mapped into figures like our country ranking 125th in terms of GDP (PPP), 104th in terms of Hunger Index. Etc.

2. Mass poverty and unemployment can be eliminated by significant investments going into ensuring
 - food and nutritional security with full coverage of the population

- essential healthcare needs, especially primary healthcare, with full coverage.
- proper housing, drinking water and sanitation for all
- school education that enables everyone to earn an adequate living after 12 years of schooling.
- affordable road and rail transport that is safe and comfortable for everyone.
- accessible and responsive system of governance, including security and justice delivery.
- Environmental and Ecological health and sustainability for all.

As has become amply clear by now, poverty removal targets are not achievable through a trickle-down process resulting from huge infrastructure investments, along with some acts of state charity that converts citizens into beneficiaries.

3. The most important part of this investment needed for poverty removal would go into, not advanced technologies, materials or machinery, but into large scale employment of people at different levels in all these sectors. For example, hiring and training teachers in large numbers, with reasonable salaries and job security, and with appropriate training is the key component of improving our school education system. The same applies to the other areas that are central to poverty removal. This single step also helps address the problem of unemployment to a good extent, and the resulting increased purchasing power will also expand the markets for manufactured goods and services.

4. None of the steps mentioned above for the removal of mass poverty need significant amounts of high science, technology or management, especially of the type that needs to be imported. The knowledge, skills and awareness available with the ordinary people can be the foundation on which this can be done, supplemented wherever needed with specialised knowledge, technology and training. This knowledge base available in the society is made out of elements from both the Traditional and the Modern streams, through a continuous process of experimentation, innovation, absorption and integration practiced by the people in their day to day lives.

The session is in the form of a Panel Discussion where the panellists having specialised knowledge and expertise in their own domains will comment on and discuss the following proposition:

“The knowledge base needed for removal of mass poverty is largely available with the ordinary people and the small-scale sector”

The Panellists:

Healthcare: **Darshan Shankar** (Bengaluru) and **Mangalath Prasad** (Thrissur)

Agriculture: **A V Balasubramanian** (Chennai) and **Krishna Prasad** (Mysuru)

Water: **Ravindra Kumar Phatak** (Gaya)

Textiles: **Samyukta Gorrepati** (Hyderabad)

Rural Industries: **Pradeep Sharma** (Raipur)

Discussion Moderator: **Veena Joshi**

About the panellists:

Darshan Shankar is the Founder-Vice Chancellor of the Trans Disciplinary University, Bengaluru, as

well as the recipient of many awards like the Padma Shri Award, Normal Borlaug Award for contributions to conservation of medicinal plants, etc.

Vaidya Mangalath Prasad MD (Ayur) is the Director and Chief Physician at Sunethri Ayurvedashram and Research Centre, Thrissur. The Research Centre specialises in the field of autism, and they have developed the Sunethri Protocol for Autism treatment.

A V Balasubramanian is a Biologist by training. Since 1982 he has been involved in exploring the current relevance and potential of various aspects of Traditional Indian Sciences and Technologies. He is the Founder- Director of the Centre for Indian Knowledge Systems (CIKS), Chennai. The CIKS is devoted to exploring the contemporary relevance and applications of Indian Knowledge Systems particularly in the area of sustainable agriculture.

Krishna Prasad is the Founder Director of Sahaja Samrudha, Desi Seed Producers Company, Sahaja Samrudha Organic Producers Company. He is an Ashoka Fellow and is known as Rural Karnataka's Native Seed Man. His organisations network with organic farmers, promote exchange of knowledge, information, and seeds.

Ravindra Kumar Phatak was Professor of Pali and Buddhist Studies, Magadh University, Bodhgaya. He has a special interest in traditional science, technologies and philosophy in different sectors, water being one of them. He leads a civil society group called Magadh Jal Jamaath which studies and advocates on water related issues in the Magadh region near Gaya.

Samyukta Gorrepati is a textile designer and a theatre actor. She works with Chitrika Foundation, Hyderabad. Her primary work is with weaver producer organizations in Andhra Pradesh in the domains of design and production, including capacity building. Her current work is with cotton spinners of Ponduru, Andhra Pradesh to take the craft experience to the public. She has authored the book "Learning the Heart's way".

Pradeep Sharma is ex Advisor to Hon. Chief Minister, Chhattisgarh. He is currently a mentor at the Rural Renaissance Innovative Solutions. The rural renaissance centres comprise of rural industrial parks and Gauthans to strengthen the rural livelihood activity wherein knowledge and knowledge holders are seen in a flow with minimum structural constraints.

Papers/Summaries Presented in Session-2

I. BUILDING ON LOCAL RESOURCES, KNOWLEDGE AND WISDOM FOR STRENGTHENING FARMERS LIVELIHOODS AND INCOME: SHARING SOME EXPERIENCES FROM TAMILNADU

A.V.Balasubramanian

"Everything else can wait, but not agriculture" – Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, 1947.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru made this famous remark in the context of the Bengal Famine of 1942–43 and the acute food scarcity prevailing in the country in 1947. It has been said for several years now that agriculture in India is in a state of crisis. This is tantamount to saying that India is in a crisis since about 70% of our population is still in rural areas with agriculture as their main livelihood source. This crisis manifests itself as increasing impoverishment of the farmers and lack of options for rural

non-farming employment. There is an alarming degradation of the resource base of agriculture, specially of soil, increased pressure and demand on land from non-agricultural activities, erosion of biodiversity in terms of both species and varieties of cultivated crops and decline in cattle population. This has led distress migration to the cities and caused scarcity of labour in rural areas for agricultural activities.

The Centre for Indian Knowledge Systems (CIKS) has been working since 1995 in an attempt to build on local resources, knowledge and wisdom to enhance livelihood and food security based on sustainable agriculture. The three essential elements of the material resource base required for agriculture are – soil (fertility), water and sunshine as well as seeds. The Indian subcontinent is a region of extremely high biodiversity of plants and in fact, two of the twelve global “biodiversity hotspots” are currently situated in India. It has been estimated by the National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources (NBPGR) of the Government of India that currently there are 75,000 to 100,000 landraces of paddy available in India. According to Dr. Richaria who was one of our outstanding rice scientists about 400,000 rice varieties existed in India during the Vedic period. He estimates that even today about 200,000 rice varieties exist in India — a truly phenomenal number. This means that if a person were to eat a new rice variety every day of the year he could live for over 500 years without reusing a variety! In every nook and corner of India farmers have nurtured and cultivated varieties suitable to those areas.

There are two broad categories of reasons why such diversity is important — agronomical as well as nutritional / therapeutic. In different parts of India paddy shows variation with respect to crop age (short, medium and long duration), resistance to pests and diseases, requirement of water, suitability to various seasons, capacity to grow in different attitudes (ranging from the Himalayan heights to lands below sea level) and in different kinds of soil (sandy, clayey and so on). This has ensured that a rice crop be harvested in almost every party of India through various times of the year.

A few indigenous rice varieties with interesting agronomic properties from Tamil Nadu illustrate this:

- ! *Sigappukuruvikar* – pest- and disease-resistant
- ! *Koomvazhai* – flood-resistant
- ! *JilJilVaigunda* – drought-resistant
- ! *Kullakar* – provides excellent straw for the roofs
- ! *PanangattuKudaivazhai* – good fodder.

There are also rice varieties suited for various types of soils — sandy, clayey, saline, etc. The value of indigenous varieties to act as insurance during times of distress and calamities was dramatically illustrated during the 2004 tsunami disaster in Tamil Nadu, when thousands of hectares of land under paddy were under sea water for a brief period along the coast of Nagapattinam district. This rendered the soil saline and no high-yielding or modern paddy varieties could be cultivated. However, an excellent solution was provided by the use of an indigenous paddy variety called *Kalarpalai* (literally meaning a

variety that grows in *Kalar* – salty soil) which can withstand soil salinity. It is also a hardy variety resistant to pests and diseases and provided an excellent solution to tsunami-affected farmers. During this period we found that even *Kalanamak* – an indigenous variety from northern India known to perform well in saline soil could be cultivated in these areas.

CIKS has been involved in the following activities namely-

1. *In situ* conservation of over 150 Traditional Rice Varieties (TRVs) both in its own conservation farm and in farmers fields.
2. Producing and distributing TRV seeds widely to farmers in Tamilnadu.
3. Building the capacities of individual farmers as well as farmers groups in seed production as well as organic cultivation of TRVs.
4. Facilitating linkages of farmers with consumers with respect to marketing of TRVs.
5. Undertaking studies on Nutritional and Therapeutic properties of selected TRVs and making authentic information available to farmers and consumers.

Catering to the requirements of Sustainable Agriculture

We see this activity as part of a larger framework to cater to the requirements of Sustainable Agriculture. Today if a farmer wants to take up chemical cultivation then all the inputs required by him are readily available in the market and they can be purchased such as – hybrid / modern seeds, chemical fertilizers, chemical pesticides/weedicides, etc. However, for sustainable agriculture the inputs required are not available in sufficient quantity or satisfactory quality. It is in this context that we have made efforts to set up micro/small scale units in rural areas that can provide the required inputs and also livelihood opportunities for farmers. Some of these activities are –

- ✓ Production of Traditional varieties of seeds for crops.
- ✓ Production of compost and vermicompost
- ✓ Production of biopesticides.
- ✓ Production of neem seed powder/cake units.
- ✓ Production of green manure seeds

We see our effort in the area of TRV seeds in this larger context.

II. Poverty and Knowledge: The Role of Indigenous/Traditional Knowledge in Agriculture

G Krishna Prasad

Farmers are scientists in their own right, with traditional agricultural knowledge passed down from their ancestors playing a pivotal role in the successful implementation of agricultural activities. From sowing to harvest, this knowledge, rooted in experience, experimentation, and environmental observation, proves indispensable. Women farmers, in particular, contribute significantly to this body of knowledge. For instance, practices

such as timing sowing with particular rain star patterns, based on generations of observation and experience, remain effective even amid changing climatic conditions.

Farmers have historically adopted mixed cropping systems tailored to their soil, climate, and food requirements. By cultivating a combination of cereals, pulses, oilseeds, and vegetables, they ensured household food security. Traditional seed treatment methods ensured good germination and healthy plants, while pest and disease management practices relied on abundant, cost-free, natural solutions. However, the advent of modern cultivars and the commercialization of farming have made farmers increasingly dependent on chemical pesticides and weedicides. These dangerous chemicals harm both health and the environment, disrupting sustainable agricultural practices. In the past, seeds were effectively stored using traditional methods, ensuring their longevity and viability.

Traditional knowledge is inherently local, economical, and eco-friendly, enabling farmers to remain self-reliant and economical. Unfortunately, dependency on external chemical inputs has made agriculture expensive and inaccessible for small farmers, leading to crop losses, debt, and in some tragic cases, farmer suicides.

To reverse this trend and reduce rural poverty, documenting, experimenting with, and popularizing traditional agricultural practices alongside farmer-led innovations is essential. This approach can pave the way for prosperity and sustainability in farming communities.

III. Poverty and the Knowledge question – the role of Indigenous / Traditional Knowledge

Darshan Shanker

Firstly, I have a few thoughts regarding the concept of poverty.

It amazes me that economists and social scientists continue to define poverty in terms of un just deprivation of large percentage of the global and Indian population. To my mind deprivation is a symptom of **systemic poverty** in all social classes specially the rich, promoted by a model of development that is designed to make the endowed richer and the deprived to continue in deprivation. The society needs to create an integrated index for measuring systemic poverty. Such an index would need to measure not merely economic and social deprivation but of obese excess and psychological traits. On the basis of such an integrated index of systemic poverty, the deprived would still get a relatively poor ranking but so would many other social groups. Systemic poverty solutions would not lie in focusing on the currently deprived alone. But need to also make radical systemic changes in the design of the political economy.

Secondly, I have a reflection on the education system

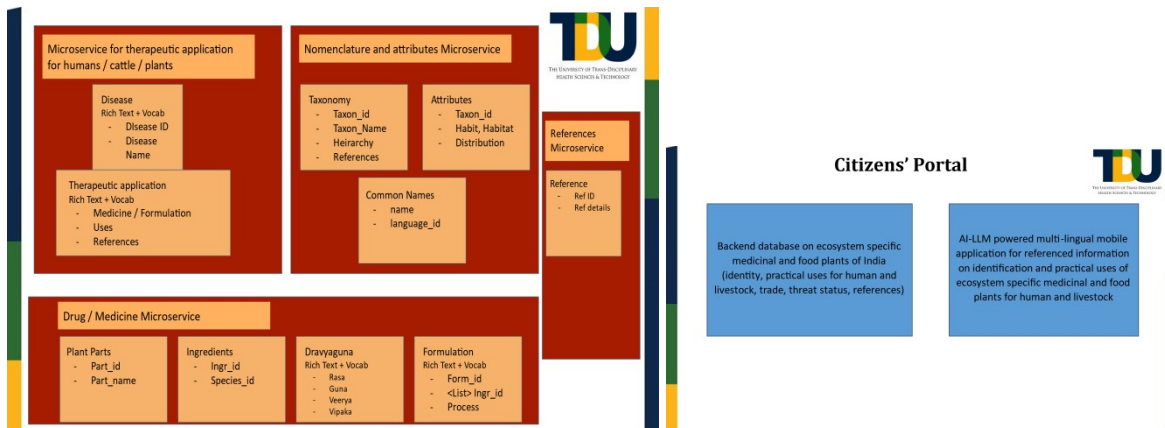
It surprises me that Indian intelligentsia has not even after major education commission, revised the core colonized **content** of school and university education as it functions even today. This was borrowed from UK and now from US and Europe. It continues to serve the development needs of western societies. The top cream of students from the education system in most parts of the world go to the west. The next level of students serve in institutions that are subsidiaries of western scientific, technological, financial and governance related institutions. The vast majority are lost

Thirdly I wish to strongly assert that in the healthcare space, there is no doubt, that in principle there is certainly potential to build both self-confidence and self-reliance in rural communities based on their own indigenous knowledge of ecosystem specific botanicals for health security of human and livestock, nutrition security and livelihoods. The society has over a million folk carriers of IK, around 5 lacs licensed indigenous medics, over 20,000 health knowledge texts for human, animal and food applications, over 7500 ecosystem specific species of botanicals distributed from the trans Himalaya to

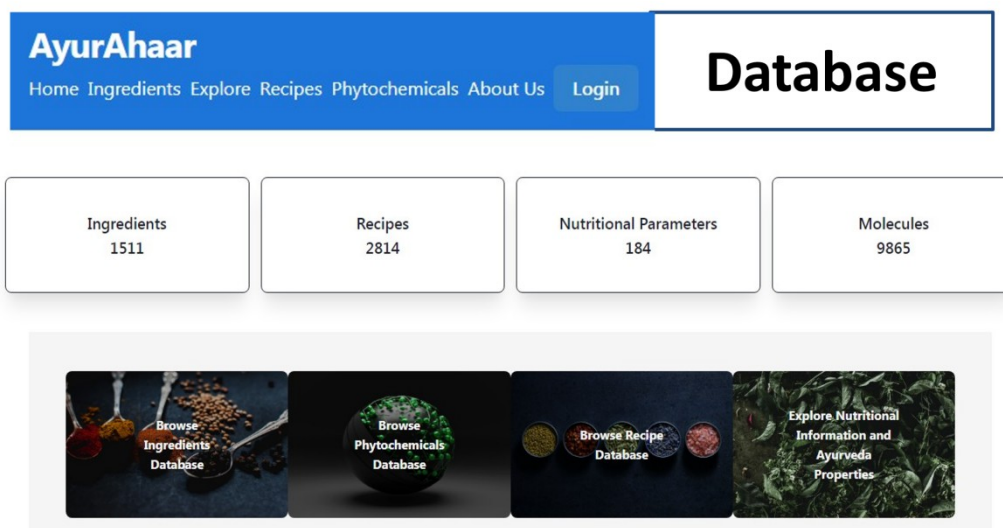
the coast.

In TDU we are building large Citizens Portal on ecosystem specific medicinal and food plants of India for human, livestock, food and livelihood security. We are engaging with AI-LLM experts to make this portal multi-lingual, multi-media and with applications that can be used by millions of citizens and communities for health security of human and livestock, nutrition security and livelihoods.

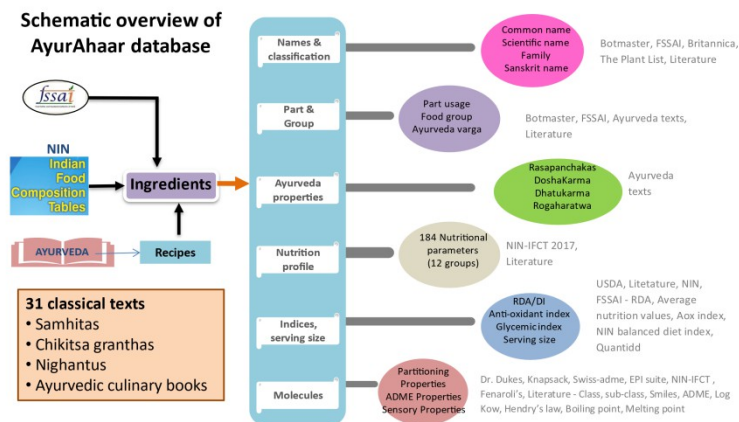
Architecture of Citizens Portal



Architecture of Ayur Ahaar



Schematic overview of AyurAhaar database



IV. Poverty and the Knowledge Question - Uramarunnu: A Traditional Gut-Health Practice.

Gut health is fundamental to overall well-being, playing a crucial role in both prevention and cure. Modern science now emphasizes the microbiome and gut dysbiosis in the context of health and disease. Ayurveda has long acknowledged this, as reflected in the South Indian proverb: “**Udaram Vyadhimandiram**”—the gut is the abode of all diseases. Traditional healing interventions have always prioritized gut health, particularly in childhood.

The Concept of Uramarunnu

In traditional South Indian communities, village physicians (Grama Vaidyas) and elders employed various methods to safeguard children's gut health. Among them, Uramarunnu was a widely practiced preventive approach, ensuring a strong digestive system from infancy. The term originates from “**ura**” (to rub) and “**marunnu**” (medicine), referring to the preparation method where medicinal herbs are ground into a paste and administered to infants in a very small amount.

Preparation & Administration

Uramarunnu is introduced after the neonatal period (28 days onward). Herbs are rubbed on a dedicated grinding stone using a suitable medium such as **breast milk, honey, butter, or ghee** to create a fine paste. This is given to the baby in minuscule amounts (approximately a quarter teaspoon or less), followed by breastfeeding. Preventive administration is typically once or twice a week and can continue until the child is 2–3 years old. Therapeutic use varies based on the condition.

Benefits & Common Uses

Uramarunnu is used to:

- Improve digestion and nutrient assimilation
- Relieve bloating and constipation
- Treat diarrhoea
- Induce restful sleep
- Enhance overall health and immunity

Commonly Used Herbs

Herb Name	Botanical Name
Vacha	Acorus calamus
Yastimadhu	Glycyrrhiza glabra
Haridra	Curcuma longa
Pippali	Piper longum
Ela	Elettaria cardamomum
Sunti	Zingiber officinale
Kutaja	Holarrhena antidysenterica
Chandana	Santalum album
Jatiphala	Myristica fragrans
Harithaki	Terminalia chebula
Jyotishmati	Celastrus paniculatus
Rudraksha	Elaeocarpus ganitrus
Lashuna	Allium sativum
Vidanga	Embelia ribes
Mayaphala	Quercus infectoria
Avartaki	Cassia auriculata
Bakuchi	Psoralea corylifolia
Mustha	Cyperus rotundu

Variations & Adaptations

While traditionally prepared fresh, Uramarunnu is sometimes made into pill form by grinding the herbs into a fine paste, shaping them into small pills, and drying them in shade for later use.

Relevance Today

Uramarunnu is just one example of the rich, traditional gut-health practices found in village communities. Proper exploration and documentation of such methods could significantly contribute to **preventive and curative** paediatric care in India, offering natural and time-tested solutions for common childhood ailments.

V. Poverty and the Knowledge Question: *Role of Traditional Water Management Systems*

Ravindra Kumar Pathak

Gist of the paper in English:

I will first comment on the difference between *garibi* and *daridrata*. I will then explain how to understand local traditional knowledge in the framework of health, autonomy and happiness in ordinary life i.e. like *lok jeevan*. This will be then illustrated through the application of traditional knowledge in water use in Magadh. My conference paper is written in the language used by the farmers to inform the audience the method of traditional conversation. I conclude with the challenges faced in continuing the use of traditional knowledge in water use in Magadh.

मुझे भारत में गरीबी और उसके निवारण में पारंपरिक विद्या की भूमिका, उसमें भी खास तौर पर जल व्यवस्था की विद्या पर बोलने का अवसर मिला है। जल व्यवस्था की विद्या पर बोलने के पहले कुछ बातों को स्पष्ट करना जरूरी समझता हूं क्योंकि आज कई शब्दों के अर्थ और कुछ बातों की मूल समझ ही बदल गई है।

1 गरीबी की न कोई सही परिभाषा है, न समझ। संसाधनों की उपलब्धता अगर मुफ्त में मिले तो वही न्यूनतम राशि, धन या संसाधन सुखी रचनात्मक जीवन जीने के लिए संसाधनों की वही सीमा अनुकूल पड़ती है। गरीबी नहीं होती। अमीर लोगों में जो अति संचय की प्रवृत्ति है, वह उन्हें कम संपत्ति वाला महसूस कराती है और दुखी करती है। अतः हमारे यहां कन्या दान के समय समाज के बुजुर्ग लोग सिखाते हैं कि रोजगार वाले, कमाने वाले गरीब के घर लड़की देना उचित है न कि किसी दरिद्र के घर। दरिद्रता एक अलग बात है। वह तथ्यात्मक या भौतिक नहीं होती वह संस्कार जनित व्यक्तिगत, पारिवारिक या कुछ और बड़े दायरे वाली हो सकती है। बाजार लोगों के संसाधनों पर कब्जा कर रहा है। सरकारें पारंपरिक विद्या के उपयोग पर नियंत्रण करने के लिए उसे अप्रामाणिक बता कर, कुछ बहाना नहीं मिले तो विकास विरोधी बता कर गैर कानूनी घोषित कर प्रतिबंधित और विद्याधर समाज को दंडित करती हैं। गुड़ बनाना विकास विरोधी और चिकित्सा करना अप्रामाणिक है, जहां बाजार और कारपोरेट को असुविधा हो।

2 मेरी शिक्षा, अनुभव और समझ में विज्ञान और साइंस दोनों पूरी तरह अलग हैं अतः हिन्दी में मैं साइंस के लिए साइंस ही लिखता हूं, विज्ञान के लिए विज्ञान।

3 साइंस, देशी परंपरागत विद्या या ज्ञान के बीच सार्थकता और प्रासंगिकता की तुलना मशीन-सापेक्ष और उसकी पदावली में नहीं हो सकती। वह लोक जीवन के स्वास्थ्य, स्वतंत्रता एवं खुशी में ही देखी महसूस की जा सकती है।

अब मैं सीधा एक उदाहरण के रूप में मगध की एक परंपरागत विद्या जो सिंचाई हेतु जल के उपयोग की विद्या

है, प्रस्तुत कर रहा हूँ। यह अभी भी चलन में है लेकिन नासमझी और सरकारी दबाव के कारण के सीमित होती जा रही है। वह है “आहर-पईन-गोआम” पद्धति। वैसे तो यह विद्या वराह मिहिर की जल व्यवस्था वाली उदकार्गला के साथ पूरी होती है। उदकार्गला भूमिगत जल के अन्वेषण, कूप, बावड़ी तालाब के निर्माण तक को समेटती है। ठोटे जल भंडारों के निर्माण को कौटिल्य ने सेतुबंध कहा है। यह सोच ई.1960 तक लागू थी, जब तक राज्य सिंचाई कर के रूप में एक भाग आनुपातिक पद्धति पर अन्न के रूप में स्वीकार करता था। सिंचाई में कारपोरेट (इंग्लैंड वाले) बड़ी नहर, फिर अधिग्रहण के बाद सरकार और नगदी पद्धति लागू होते ही यह रिश्ता समाप्त हो गया। अभी भी “आहर-पईन-गोआम” पद्धति लागू है, उसकी संचालन प्रक्रिया को सामाजिक बनाने के लिए मगध जल जमात के संयोजक के रूप में मैं ने 2006 से 2024 तक श्रम किया है। उसके पहले वराह मिहिर की विधियों पर प्रयोग तथा अनुसंधान का काम 1992 से पत्नी डॉ प्रमिला पाठक के साथ किया, जो कालेजों में भौतिकी की शिक्षिका रही हैं। मैं जानबूझ कर किसानों के बात करने के तरीके वाली भाषा में आलेख भेज रहा हूँ ताकि यह भी पता चले कि परंपरागत वार्ता की शैली कैसी होती है।

आहर-पईन संबंधी शंका-समाधान

आहर-पईन के महत्त्व को समझने के लिये जरूरी है कि इसके बारे में बनी गलत धारणाओं एवं सच्चाई से भी रूबरू हुआ जाय। इसलिये मैं शुरू में ही कुछ ऐसी बातें कर रहा हूँ ताकि अगर किसी के मन में कोई दुविधा या शंका हो तो मिट जाये। आदमी के मन में शंका हो तो पहले उसका समाधान करना जरूरी होता है। किसानों के मन में उभरे सवालों एवं शंकाओं का समाधान जरूरी है, तभी महसूस होगा कि यह काम करना सही है और जरूरी भी, और फलों बात बेतुकी तथा बेकार है। आइए, ऐसी ही कुछ चर्चाओं, शंका समाधानों से हम भी परिचित होते हैं। हिंदी भाषी सामान्य जन शंका समाधान की शैली में आपसी पत्रों का उत्तर ढूंढते हैं इसलिये इस आलेख को उसी शैली में प्रस्तुत किया गया है।

विचारणीय विषय हैं

शंका समाधान 1 बोरिंग/नलकूप या आहर-पईन सस्ता कौन?

दूसरे की बीबी हो या बेटा? उसकी लालच करने या उससे तुलना कर दुखी होने से अच्छा है कि दूर का ढोल सुनना बंद कर अपने हाल को समझें। सरकारी इंजीनियर एवं ठेकेदार जानबूझकर गलत प्रचार करते रहते हैं कि - आहर-पईन बेकार है? बोरिंग बनाओ, स्वावलंबी बनो। इसमें डीजल किसकी जेब से लगेगा? धान की खेती में चार-पाँच बार तक पटवन देना होता है। जितने का बाबू नहीं, उतने का झुनझुना। आहर-पईन से ढाल आधारित बिना पंप के ‘मेलबानी’ पटवन होता है। इसकी व्यवस्था में मजदूरी भी कम लगती है। यहाँ-वहाँ पंपिंग सेट को ढोना भी नहीं पड़ता। जमीनी पानी की तुलना में ऊपरी पानी से पौधों का बहुत फायदा देता है। सतही जल में जैव कचरा-खाद भी रहता है। इससे जमीन की ऊर्वरा शक्ति बढ़ती है। पंप भी तो तभी न चलेंगे जब जमीन के भीतर लेयर (जल स्तर) ठीक रहेगा और आप किसान लोग लेयर भागने (नीचे जाने) की समस्या से अच्छी तरह परिचित हैं।

हमलोगों ने बहुत अच्छी तरह कई पइनों पर हिसाब लगाया तो पाया कि सामान्य रख-रखाव के लिए प्रति बिगहा एक लीटर डिजल की कीमत का खर्च बैठता है और मरम्मत के लिए 3 लीटर की कीमत प्रति बीघा का खर्च अधिकतम आता है। आप ही सोचिए, सस्ता कौन हुआ? अगर सरकारी सहयोग मिल जाय तो खर्चा केवल एक लीटर का आता है। पानी के बँटवारे भव (मुँह) बाँधने, खोलने का खर्च अगर पईन पर जोड़ें तो इधर भी तो पंपिंग सेट लाने, ले जाने, चोरी जाने की समस्या रहती ही है। निगरानी कहाँ नहीं करनी पड़ती? और खर्च इसमें भी कम नहीं है।

शंका समाधान 2 आगे कौन आए?

पहले तो जमींदार लोग गोआमी (आपसी सहयोग से निर्माण, मरम्मत, देखभाल और जल के बँटवारे में सहभागिता की पारंपरिक व्यवस्था) कराते थे और कभी-कभी जोर जर्बदस्ती भी होती थी। अब किसान लोग

अंग्रेज और जमींदार दोनों से मुक्त हो गए हैं। हर आदमी अपना मालिक खुद है। इस प्रकार एक ओर तो हम आजादी का सुख भोगना चाहते हैं और दूसरी ओर यह भी चाहते हैं कि कोई दूसरा आदमी हमें डंडे से जानवर जैसा हाँके या कोई संत या मशीहा आए और जो काम हमें करना है, उसे वह कर दे। यह तो ईमानदारी नहीं हुई। आजाद और जिम्मेदार आदमी पहल भी खुद ही करता है और लोकतंत्र में जिम्मेदारी जब सबकी है, फायदा सभी उठा रहे हैं तो भार भी सबको लेना होगा। हाँ, पहल कोई भी कर सकता है अगर कोई पहल करे तो, उसे जिम्मेदारी तो उसकी क्षमता के अनुसार ही देनी चाहिए और अपना कंधा भी लगाना चाहिए। इसी तरह की कई बातें और भी हैं। इन बातों पर साफ-सुथरी समझ बनानी चाहिए।

शंका समाधान 3 अधिकार एवं कर्तव्य

आहर-पइन एवं गोआम (उसकी रखरखाव एवं पानी के बँटवारे के लिए समुदायिक सहभागिता की परम्परा) नई बात नहीं है। आज भी लोग आहर-पइन से सिंचाई कर रहे हैं। गोआम के बारे में नए लोगों को लगता है कि यह ठीक नहीं है। सरकार को ही व्यवस्था एवं बँटवारे की जिम्मेवारी लेनी चाहिये और पूरा धन उसे ही खर्च करना चाहिये। परंतु इस मामले में वे भूल जाते हैं कि नहरों से सिंचाई पर शुल्क लगता है और उसका दर भी सरकार ही निर्धारित करती है। आहर-पइन से सिंचाई पर तो शुल्क लगता ही नहीं और पानी का बँटवारा भी लोग परंपरानुसार आपस में ही करते हैं। यह परंपरा कोई गुप्त या रहस्यमय बात नहीं है। बाकायदा आबपाशी रजिस्टर में गाँवों के अधिकार एवं कर्तव्य वर्णित रहते हैं। आज किसान आहर-पइन से सिंचाई पर आबपाशी अधिकार तो अपना मानते हैं पर कर्तव्य दूसरे का, चाहे वह सरकार हो या गाँव का ही दूसरा व्यक्ति, यह तो सरासर बेईमानी है।

आधुनिक पढाईवाले लोगों ने, चाहे गाँव का बेरोजगार नौजवान हो या सरकार में बैठे कर्मचारी-अधिकारी उन्होंने अपने मन से ही मान लिया है कि संपत्ति केवल दो ही प्रकार की होती है - सरकारी या निजी। जबकि संपत्ति कई प्रकार की आज भी होती है जैसे व्यक्ति की संपत्ति, परिवार की संपत्ति, जाति की संपत्ति, ट्रस्ट की संपत्ति। तब गाँव की संपत्ति क्यों नहीं होगी? और जब रखरखाव की जिम्मेवारी के समय आहर-पइन गाँव की संपत्ति नहीं है तो उसके पानी का उपयोग करने के लिए कैसे गाँव या किसी किसान को मुफ्त में हक मिलेगा। आहर-पइन एवं उसमें बहने वाला पानी सामुदायिक संपत्ति है। कानूनन तो सरकार भी अगर इसका अधिग्रहण करे तो उसे मुआवजा देना होगा पर मांगता ही कौन है?

शंका समाधान 4 पानी कैसी संपत्ति है ?

अभी तक मोटे तौर पर हम चल एवं अंचल संपत्ति का बँटवारा जानते हैं जबकि नए जमाने में खाली जमीन, ज्ञान, तरंग आदि को भी संपत्ति माना जाने लगा है। पानी का स्वभाव चल संपत्ति वाला है। यह गाय-भैंस जैसा है। पानी स्वयं निर्जीव है, पर इसमें अनेक सूक्ष्म एवं घड़ियाल जैसे बड़े जानवर भी रह सकते हैं। आहर-पइन में आसमानी वर्षा से जल आता है। जंगल, पहाड़ या किसी पठार, ठाट जैसी ऊँची जगह या बहते हुए नाले या नदी से गुजरते हुए जल को आहर में संग्रह किया जाता है। आहर में संग्रह हेतु परंपरा से निर्धारित ऊपरी स्रोत के जल एवं आहर में संग्रहित जल दोनों को लोग अपनी संपत्ति मानकर व्यवहार करते हैं। आहर से पानी खेतों में जाता है और खेतों से बाहर निकलता हुआ नीचे की ओर बहता है। आहर का संचित पानी अगर किसी की संपत्ति है तो आहर-पइन टूटने पर उस पानी से होने वाली क्षति की जिम्मेवारी भी संपत्ति मानने वाले किसान को लेनी होगी। गाय हमारी, दूध निकालें हम, और फिर गाय को दूसरे का खेत चरने को छोड़ दें, यह न्याय पूर्ण नहीं है। धार और निगार पानी के संरक्षण, भंडारण वितरण एवं उपयोग के मुद्दे भारत में वैदिक काल से आज तक अनेक कारणों से विवाद में रहे हैं। वैदिक कथाओं के अतिरिक्त भगवान गौतम बुद्ध के गृहत्याग का मूल कारण बूढ़ा, बीमार और शव नहीं उनके कुल शाक्य एवं पड़ोसी कोलिय के लोगों के बीच नदी जल उपयोग को लेकर प्रतिवर्ष युद्ध एवं भारी संख्या में नौजवानों की मौत की संख्या बढ़ रही थी। वे किसी को समझा नहीं पा रहे थे। जब वे स्वयं परिवार, गोत्र, एवं राज्य की सीमा से विराट व्यक्तित्व पाये तब समाज को समझा सके और उसमें भी

अपने परिवार के सदस्यों को तो नहीं ही समझा सके, न अनुशासित कर सके। मगध के लोगों ने इसे सुलझा लिया क्योंकि रहना भी साथ है और खेती भी करनी ही है।

दक्षिण बिहार में धार एवं निगार दोनों शब्द व्यापक रूप से देहात में लोगों को ज्ञात हैं। पानी का अपना स्वभाव यात्री का है। वह रास्ता मिलते ही चल पड़ता है, गुरुत्वाकर्षण के बल पर समुद्र की ओर और केशिकाकर्षण, वाष्पीकरण,, वायुमंडलीय दबाव आदि के बल पर आसमान की ओर, भूमिगत जलभृतों से पेड़ की फुनगी की तरफ और समुद्र से हिमालय की ओर। पानी की बड़ी यात्रा जलचक्र कहलाती है - समुद्र, बादल, पहाड़, नाले, नदी, और फिर समुद्र। इस बड़ी यात्रा के साथ-साथ पानी छोटी-छोटी यात्राएँ भी करता है। वाष्पीकरण, पेड़-पौधों, जीवों के शरीर के भीतर की यात्रा, आकाश में ओसकण बनने-बिगड़ने की यात्रा, भूमि की सतह एवं उसके भीतर जलभृतों की यात्रा, जमीन के भीतर-भीतर अंतःस्त्रावी सरिताओं की यात्रा। ऐसी अनेक यात्राओं के द्वारा जल प्रकृति में जीवन को स्थिरता एवं गति दोनों देता रहता है।

पानी के साथ मनुष्य का रिश्ता बड़ा विचित्र है। पानी सबको चाहिए और वह भी सीमित मात्रा में क्योंकि अधिक मात्रा में तो आदमी डूब जाता है। इसके लिये पानी की धारा का उपयोग उसके सामर्थ्य की सीमा में होना जरूरी है। इसके साथ-साथ अधिक पानी एवं उपयोग किये गये पानी दोनों का निकास भी जरूरी है। सभ्यता के विकास के क्रम में प्राकृतिक नियमों के अनुरूप चलने एवं वैकल्पिक व्यवस्था कर लेने की सुविधा ने मनुष्य को अहंकारी बनाया है। परिणामतः मानव कभी-कभी यह भी मानने लगता है कि वह प्रकृति के नियमों के विरुद्ध जा रहा है।

धार अर्थात् धारा, जो सहज ढाल पर बहेगी। जितनी अधिक वर्षा उतनी बड़ी धारा, जितनी अधिक ढाल, उतनी तेज रफ्तार, जहाँ ठहराव वहाँ जमीन एवं फसल के साथ क्रिया-प्रतिक्रिया। वर्तमान दक्षिण बिहार में जहाँ 100 से 150 से.मी. वर्षा होती हो वहाँ मात्रा भी प्रचुर है, दक्षिण से उत्तर-पूर्व की तरफ ढाल भी अच्छी है। पठार से मैदानी भाग की ओर जल-यात्रा पथ है। हाँ, यह औसत के हिसाब से या सीधी समान ढाल नहीं है। पठार एवं पहाड़ी के नीचे मैदान हैं। यहां मुख्यतः धान की खेती होती है, जिसके लिये खेतों में लगातार पानी बहते रहना चाहिए। 'बहते रहना' सुनने में जितना सरल है, इसकी शर्तें उतनी ही कठिन हैं। वर्षा हर समय तो होती नहीं है। वह अपने मनमिजाज से होती है तो जरूरी है कि खेत से ऊँची जगह पर जल का भंडार बनाया जाय, उस में उस जलभंडार से ऊँची जगह से पानी लाया जाय, जैसे - पहाड़ी, टीला, पठार या नदी का ऊपरी भाग आदि।

यह आदि भी कम मजेदार नहीं है, जिसमें बाढ़ के समय उफनती नदी का ऊपरी जल सम्मिलित है। यह एक तरफ से नदी से प्राप्त होनेवाला अतिरिक्त जल है। जलाशयों तक पानी आ जाय तो खेतों में बहे, वह भी ऊपर से नीचे तक सबके खेतों में। पानी अधिक आ जाय तो नीचे की तरफ बहकर चला जाय ताकि फसल बरबाद न हो। पानी के बाहर जाने की इसी व्यवस्था को निगार कहते हैं।

किसी ढाल पर स्थित ऊँचे खेत से नीचे के खेत में पानी जाना ही है तो क्यों न इसे ही सामाजिक नियम मान लें? लोगों ने मान लिया। इस व्यवस्था में सबसे ऊपरी और सबसे निचले खेत को कभी-कभी हानि हो जाती है फिर भी नियम यही मान्य है, काम इसी तरह चलता है। निचली खेत वाला भी निश्चित रहता है कि उसके खेत तक पानी आना ही है। हा, वह अधिक पानी ऊपर से नीचे छोड़ने पर रोक नहीं लगा सकता, इसीलिये खेती करने के मुद्दे पर आधुनिकता के नाम पर व्यक्तिवादी एवं सामुदायिकता विरोधी खेती के लिये सरकार एवं कंपनियों द्वारा दिये गये अनेक प्रशिक्षण बेकार हो जाते हैं क्योंकि वर्षा का पानी अपने प्रवाह एवं सामर्थ्य के अनुसार किसानों को सामूहिक निर्णय करने पर विवश कर देता है।

नदी सिद्ध कर देती है कि जल का वेग केवल ढाल की सीमा में रहकर समुद्र यात्रा तक बलवान होता है। वह समुद्र के पानी को भी नदी में घुसने नहीं देता और समुद्र के किनारे भी इन नदियों से मीठा पानी उपलब्ध हो जाता है। इस प्रकार धार एवं निगार की व्यवस्था प्राकृतिक रूप से प्रभावकारी रहती है।

समझदार लोगों ने वर्षों के अनुभव के आधार पर समझा कि मानव निर्मित जल भंडारों के या तो ढाल-प्रवाह पथ

से नीचे गढा खोदकर बनाया जाय जो तालाबों के रूप में सर्वाधिक सफल है या अगर छोटी-मोटी ऊँचाई वाला तटबंध भी बने तो प्रवेश (धार) एवं निगार (निष्काशन) की व्यवस्था सुदृढ़ रहे। इतने पर भी गाद की सफाई भी नियमित अंतराल पर चलती ही रहती थी, चाहे वह कुँआ ही क्यों न हो। आज के चिंतन में दुर्भाग्यवश न तो धार की चिंता है, न निगार की, न गाद की। उत्तरी बिहार के जलाशय एवं नदियाँ गाद की भयानक समस्या से ग्रस्त हैं।

शंका समाधान 5 नहर के आकर्षण का रहस्य

प्रायः पढ़े लिखे लोग यह पूछते हैं कि आहर-पइन नहर से बेहतर कैसे है?, जो आप नहर की जगह आहर-पइन के पक्ष में हैं? सच यह है कि नहर बेईमानी पर आधारित है। उदाहरण के लिये, सोन नहर दक्षिण बिहार की बड़ी नहर है। छत्तीस गढ़ की एक पूरी रियासत, सैकड़ों गाँवों को डूबोकर रिहद-बान सागर जलाशय बने। वहाँ के किसान आज भी दुर्दशा में हैं। सोन नहर के किसान दूसरे इलाके के पानी पर निर्भर हैं और अब मध्यप्रदेश, उत्तरप्रदेश, झारखंड सभी सोन में पानी पहुँचानेवाली सहायक नदियों का पानी रोक रहे हैं और झगडा भी हो रहा है।

इससे भिन्न स्थानीय छोटी नदियों पर बनी नहरों एवं पइन में समानता यह है कि दोनों ही आस-पास की वर्षा पर निर्भर हैं, किसी संचित भंडार पर नहीं कि पानी की गारंटी रहे। पहाड़ी पइनों में आस-पास की पूरी वर्षा का सदुपयोग करने के लिए इसे खूब घुमावदार बनाया जाता है ताकि थोड़ी वर्षा में भी पइन चल सके। नहरों तो नदी में पर्याप्त पानी आने पर ही चलेगी। नहर में जल प्रवेश का स्थान एक होता है जबकि पइन में अनेक। गया जिले की बरसाती नहरों से आहर-पइन बेहतर हैं क्योंकि पइन के साथ तो आहर रूपी जल भंडार है परंतु इन नहरों में भंडारण की व्यवस्था नहीं है। इन पर बने बैराज भी केवल जलस्तर को उठाने का काम करते हैं। आहर-पइन की मरम्मत हो जाए तो यह निर्माण एवं रख-रखाव की दृष्टि से कम खर्चीली है। आहर छोटा भंडार है। छोटी नहरों में तो भंडार होता ही नहीं इसलिए ये प्रायः असफल हैं या किसान इसका पइन की तरह उपयोग कर आहर में पानी भर लेते हैं। आहर-पइन पर हमारा परंपरागत कानूनी अधिकार है। इसके लिए सिंचाई शुल्क नहीं देना पड़ता। अब नहर से सिंचाई के लिए शुल्क लगातार बढ़ता जा रहा है और निजीकरण (जो हो गया) के बाद अचानक नहर से सिंचाई का खर्च भी डीजल की कीमत की तरह बढ़ेगा तब तक मामला आपके हाथ से निकल चुका होगा। आहर-पइन के लिए अगर संगठन बना कर सिंचाई करें तो यह खर्च अपने नियंत्रण में रहेगा।

जिन पइनों में नई तकनीक का इस्तेमाल बिना सोचे समझे होता है, उसके मुहाने पर गड्ढा बन जाता है या बालू भर जाता है। इसमें दोष पइन का नहीं, बेदिमागी नकल का है। जब इंजीनियरों को आहर-पइन के बारे में पढ़ाया-सिखाया ही नहीं जाता तो वे क्या उपाय बताएंगे? दक्षिण बिहार के बाहर से आये पदाधिकारी और इंजीनियर आहर एवं तालाब का फर्क ही नहीं समझते। वे यहाँ तक मान लेते हैं कि आहर में रैयती जमीन ही नहीं होती और इसका पानी समय पर निकालना भी जरूरी नहीं होता है।

नहर केवल इसलिए बेहतर नहीं हो सकता कि हमें तो फायदा हो दूसरों का नुकसान हो, तो हो। इसी तरह की नीयत से जब सभी बेईमानी करने लगे हैं तो अब समय पर तो पानी मिलता नहीं और जब जरूरत नहीं तब रिहद बाँध का पानी बाढ़ लाता है। इसके उलटा आहर टूट भी जाय तो एकाध बीघे की फसल बरबाद होती है, जान-माल का भारी नुकसान नहीं होता।

शंका समाधान 6 आहर-पइन या नहर किसे बनाना आसान?

जो पइन किसी ऊँची पठारनुमा जगह, जिसे ठाट कहते हैं, या पहाड़ी नाले को मोड़कर निकाली जाती है, उसे सीधा बनाने की अनिवार्यता नहीं होती। पहाड़ी नाले के ही किनारे को कमजोर जगहों पर मजबूत कर देते हैं। बनने के बाद भले ही समझ में नहीं आ रहा हो लेकिन कई बार किसी-किसी प्राकृतिक नाले के बीच में ही आहर बना देते हैं। ऐसे में केवल आहर की दीवार बनाना पड़ता है। पइन तो 80 प्रतिशत तक प्रकृति से बनी-बनाई मिल जाती है।

उत्तर प्रदेश एवं कई अन्य राज्यों में पंप आधारित नहरें बनी हैं। दक्षिण बिहार में मुंगेर जिले में ऐसी नहरें बनीं

पर सफल नहीं हुईं क्योंकि बिजली ही नहीं तो पंप कैसे चले? मतलब कि ढाल आधारित सिंचाई को छोड़ अन्य सिंचाई कृत्रिम ऊर्जा पर निर्भर रहेगी और मँहगी पड़ेगी। मुफ्त या चोरी के माल का गणित नहीं होता चाहे बिजली ही क्यों न हो।

शंका समाधान 7 नलकूप क्यों नहीं?

हाँ, नलकूप की सिंचाई स्वार्थी व्यक्तिवाद को बढ़ावा देती है, जिसमें जल संरक्षण की चिंता या प्रयास नहीं होता। फसल में लगनेवाले रोग, पानी की गुणवत्ता, जानवरों-पक्षियों से रक्षा आदि कई महत्वपूर्ण मामले में सामूहिक खेती में आसानी से हल हो जाते हैं। दक्षिण बिहार का इतिहास एवं परंपरा हजारों साल की है। यहाँ अनेक प्रकार की सामाजिक व्यवस्थाएँ बनती बिगड़ती रहीं। जरासंध से लेकर ब्रिटिश जमींदारी तक सिंचाई व्यवस्था सुदृढ़ थी। अच्छी फसल और संतुष्टि दोनों थी। उसके बाद 1967 का अकाल क्या पड़ा। पूरा समाज ही दिग्भ्रान्त हो गया?

राजा या सरकार की नजर में आहर-पइन राजा का सब पर स्वामित्व है और राज्य है ऊपरी तौर पर लोक कल्याणकारी और अंदरूनी तौर पर पूँजीपतियों के हितों का संरक्षक। केन्द्र राज्यों में झगड़े करवाता है। प्रांतीय सरकारें जल स्रोतों की बंदोबस्ती, लोकहित ही नहीं दलित हित में कर रही है। राजस्व उसका, मछली उसकी, मरम्मत दूसरे की। ऐसी कथाएँ अनेक हैं। ब्रिटिश राज में भी जो तालाब, आहर, पइन आदि जमींदारों के कब्जे या सामूहिक अधिकार में थे उनकी मरम्मत जमींदारों की पहल पर हो जाती थी। अँगरेजों की नहर का पानी सिंचाई के लिए कम परिवहन के लिए अधिक जरूरी होता था। अंगरेज विरोधी कई क्रांतिकारी गाँव हर साल नहर काटते और सामूहिक जुर्माना भरते थे। आहर-पइन के मामले में बात उलटी थी। जमींदार इसके लिये प्रायः तत्पर रहते थे। जिस जमींदार के इलाके में दानाबंदी की परंपरा थी अर्थात् कर के रूप में राजस्व नगद न ले कर फसल के एक भाग के रूप में लिया जाता था वहाँ जमींदार इस बात के लिये स्वयं तत्पर रहता था कि फसल अच्छी हो और अच्छी फसल के लिये खेतों तक समय पर पानी भी पहुंचे। पानी संबंधी विवाद होने पर किसान एवं जमींदार दोनों साथ रहते थे। ऐसे विवादों एवं मुकदमों की कथाओं से कानून की किताबें भरी पड़ी हैं। नगद राजस्व लेने की परंपरा आते ही जमींदारों की रुचि कम होने लगी फिर भी लोकप्रियता बहाल रखने के लिये वे तत्पर न रहने पर भी समर्थन करते थे।

इस समय जो कानून लागू है, उसमें सारी समस्याओं तथा उलझनों को सुलझाने की जिम्मेवारी जिलाधिकारी पर डाल कर सरकार ने अपनी जिम्मेवारी से पिंड छुड़ा ली है। जिलाधिकारी को यह अधिकार दे दिया गया है कि वह जिस किसी भी एजेंसी को किसी भी आहर-पइन की जिम्मेवारी सौंप दे। यह प्रावधान खतरनाक है एवं भविष्य में निजीकरण को बढ़ावा देने की नीयत से बनाया गया है।

पारिभाषिक शब्द

आहर - एक मौसमी, मुख्यतः खरीफ की फसल के लिए बना जलाशय, जिसका पानी निकाल कर रबी की खेती की जाती है।

पइन - जल प्रवाह के लिए बनी नाली, छोटी-बड़ी, गैर सीधी रेखकीय, जिससे जल के संचय एवं वितरण दोनों काम लिए जाते हैं।

गोआम- सहभागिता की सामाजिक व्यवस्था

आपाशी - आबपाशी सिंचाई का हक

चाहें तो देख सकते हैं-

1 कौटिल्य के अर्थ शास्त्र में सेतुबंध संबंधी निर्देश

2 सी.एस.डी.एस से प्रकाशित डाइंग विज्डम

3 पुराने संयुक्त प्रांत- बिहार, बंगाल उड़ीसा के विभिन्न गजेटियर

4 प्राइवेट इरिगेशन ऐक्ट्स

5 बिहार जल अधिनियम एवं नियमावली

VI. Poverty and the Knowledge Question: *The Handloom Sector*

Samyuktha Gorrepati

India accounts for 95% of the world's handwoven fabric, easily making it the handwoven capital of the world. This can also mean that it is also the 'handwoven knowledge' capital of the world. However, the custodians of this knowledge live in a different reality. As per the handloom census 2019-20, there are 35.22 lakh handloom workers in the country, of which 26.73L (75%) are weavers and 8.48L (24%) are allied workers, doing pre and post-loom work. Among the handloom weavers, 72% are women. 67% of weavers earn less than Rs. 5000/-per month!

What needs to be done for these knowledge bearers to lead a dignified life with decent incomes? How can artisans move from mere wage earners, enjoy greater realization of the market pie and take charge of themselves? For over 75 years now, various experiments have been done, both by the State, organizations from the civil society with varying degrees of successes and failures. The handloom industry itself has many micro realities, based on region and the economic-socio-cultural contexts of different weaver communities. It is indeed difficult to treat this sector simply as just 'one whole' and offer simplistic solutions.

However, there are certain over-arching sectoral challenges plaguing the industry. Competition from other powerloom and mill-made imitations, poor implementation of Government Acts, failure of many state institutions like the State Handloom Cooperative Societies, lack of timely, affordable access to raw material, credit and market know-how being some of them.

Today there is talk of sustainability. India is endowed with possibilities to be the torch bearer because the knowledge to create products from textiles to almost everything sustainably already exists within our artisan community.

Despite our large domestic market segment, the market that consumes authentic handloom has become narrower. Awareness is also severely lacking on what is authentic and how to recognize it. Handloom cloth seems pricier than other available seemingly cheaper alternatives. However, that itself may not translate into greater realization for the weaver. Empowering weavers and creating an enabling ecosystem across the handloom value chain so that the entire sector along with its allied workers has maximum realization from handloom trade is important. This has been Chitrika's endeavour.

Chitrika Foundation, an NGO based in Hyderabad, Telangana has been working with handloom weavers for almost two decades in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana in three clusters. Its main approach has been to collectivise weavers and train them in various aspects of managing and running their own enterprises. It believes that a greater control of the value chain in the hands of the producers leads to greater bargaining power and market realization for the producers.

Chitrika's experience on working on this premise has been a mixed one. Today, Chitrika works with over 200 weaver households in three clusters in AP and Telangana. The weavers, largely women, are stakeholders of the Chitrika Artisan Producer Company with a combined turnover of over Rs. 3 Cr. What has worked and what has not - shall be discussed as a microcosm of the larger scenario and challenges confronting the community. Thoughts on the role of the state and the society at large in actively sustaining and supporting the artisanal ecosystem shall be put forward for discussion.

VII. Rural Industrial Parks (RIPA) :

A Unique intervention of rural industrialization in Chhattisgarh

Pradeep Sharma

PPST should be given credit to motivate us to identify 'Farmer' in the different context

altogether. A farmer is not only a producer but also an innovator and a communicator too. In reality farmer has always donned multiple hats depending on the season going from being a kisan to kaarigar to a kalakaar (agrarian-artisan-artist). As a result, India has traditionally been a producer country whose villages were always a hub of resources, innovation and skills.

Supporting these endeavors of the farmer were the producer guilds, trading guilds and ancillary cottage industries, all of which ensured that villages became holistic production ecosystems leading to prosperity. While the villages served as production centers, urban areas were the main centers of consumption and trading. However, in contemporary times, a decline in the production systems combined with a severe depletion of natural resources as well as underutilization of livestock has led to large-scale migration and livelihood issues in the villages.

Second important thing is to identify 'Resources' as base instead of only 'Natural resources'. NRM was a world bank led concept which reduces our vast base resources to comparatively small natural resources. Knowledge systems, cattle populations, medicine, music, production skill sets and theology is few example which is highly negated once we only focus on NRM. For example- A vibrant rural cluster is one where cattle graze peacefully in designated areas called Gauthans. Revival of Gauthans into organic fertilizer production centers is one such example in Chhattisgarh we did. After their morning rounds, with their waste being transformed into fertile compost. Complementing this activity a specifically developed production zone where employment is available for local inhabitants. This potential future is woven from the threads of two innovative rural development initiatives –

Gauthans and Rural Industrial Parks (RIPA).

Gauthan is a common place in the village where the cows take rest during the daytime after grazing. This routine allows them to return home during the evening (Godhuli Bela). The idea for such a place is to allow for judicious utilisation of cattle in the villages, as well as scientific enhancement of the agricultural land productivity, based on the traditional inter-dependent chain of 'Jan-Jantu-Jeev' (Life-Creature-People).

Indian agriculture has traditionally been based on bio-manure. Gauthan is thus envisaged as a

center where cow dung and cow urine can be collected to be utilized in production of vermi-compost, Jiv-Amrut etc. At the same time it can also provide a resting center where the cattle can gather in the daytime after grazing. This place not only provides water, shelter and nutritious fodder but also facilitates the delivery of veterinary services such as vaccination, artificial insemination etc.

Rural Industrial Park (RIPA), is a center which not only helps villagers upgrade their existing skills and learn new trades, but also convert their skills into products of local needs through entrepreneurial activities. It is a dynamic and innovative village production zone and served as an extension of Gauthan. RIPA aims to foster a vibrant production and distribution ecosystem through decentralized, cost-effective modern technology and an inclusive, participatory governance mechanism.

Key features of RIPA

- 1. Community-based Technology Transfer:** RIPA emphasises need-based community-oriented technology transfer, tailoring production and facilitation services to address specific challenges of traditional occupational communities and meet demand and supply requirements
 - 2. Entrepreneurship:** RIPA encourages individual and group entrepreneurs to produce goods or provide services that contribute to the village economy. Beyond traditional employment, RIPA units aim to create diverse business opportunities that leverage the unique skills, values, and leisure time of village members. This approach fosters entrepreneurship and economic diversification
 - 3. Hub for Multiple Villages:** RIPA units are strategically situated to serve as central hubs in a hub and spoke model, catering to the economic needs of 5-6 Gram Panchayats or villages. This regional approach allows for the efficient aggregation of resources and economic activities
 - 4. Enterprise support facilities:** Provision of support facilities such as worksheds, electricity and water connection, training and capacity building, credit support, marketing and branding, WiFi connection be provided through convergence of Union and State Government schemes
 - 5. Wide variety of enterprises:** Supporting a range of enterprises such as traditional village crafts, FMCG and daily utility goods, input goods for larger industries, Service enterprises, Digital/ IT-enabled enterprises
 - 6. Software Hub for Innovative Ventures (SHIV):** Hub for supplying Technology-driven services to the local and global market in form of Rural BPOs, Analytics centers etc
- The synergy between Gauthans and RIPAs is potent. Gauthan-produced biofertilizers fed RIPA incubated agro-processing units, thereby creating a closed-loop system that nourishes both land and livelihoods. RIPA's technical expertise is modernizing Gauthan operations, while Gauthans provide a ready workforce and organic resources for RIPA ventures.

This harmonious integration extends beyond economics. Both Gauthans and RIPAs prioritise community participation. Gauthan management can be seamlessly woven into a cluster of village governance systems, while RIPA's inclusive approach ensures local voices are heard in determining production priorities and market development.

Gauthans and RIPAs can craft a new narrative for creative and enterprising rural India. A narrative where villages combine traditional wisdom and technological innovation, where prosperity blooms from fertile fields nourished by healthy cattle, and where communities thrive in a vibrant ecosystem of shared purpose.

Experiences in Chhattisgarh

Gauthans and Rural Industrial Parks (RIPA) were launched in Chhattisgarh as part of an expansive

program of rural economic rejuvenation called Narwa, Garwa, Ghuruwa, Badi (NGGB).

Under the state-wide initiative, the Government of Chhattisgarh set up more than 10,000

Gauthans, which became the hubs for cow dung procurement, at Rs 2/ kg, as well as production of various dung-based products such as vermi-compost, Gobar paint etc. Over 130 lakh quintal of cow dung was procured for which Rs 260 crores reached 3.6 lakh cattle farmers in the form of direct benefit transfer. Further, 31 lakh quintal of vermi-compost was prepared in Gauthans which was sold to farmers and cooperative societies for Rs 310 crores,. The resultant profit of Rs 50 crores was shared among the Self-Help Groups involved in the functioning of these Gauthans. Over the last 3 years, this initiative has also increased the milk production in the state by 5 lakh litres. This endeavour has motivated cattle farmers and dairy owners to continue keeping their non-milching cattle with them, as opposed to earlier practice of abandoning them or keeping them in Gaushalas.

Government of Chhattisgarh also set up 300 Rural Industrial Parks across the state which led to creation of 1,400 enterprises, giving direct employment to around 11,000 households. These enterprises, over a period of 6-8 months, generated revenues of Rs 10.4 crores and profits worth Rs 2.5 crores.

Session-3.

Kannada Knowledge Traditions (Kannada - • [E])

*Working Group: Meti Mallikarjun (Convener), J. K Suresh, GSR Krishnan, A. Shanmukha and
Veena Joshi*

Kannada is a unique, classical and heritage language. The distinctive epistemological traditions that are rooted in Kannada have given birth to unique knowledge systems over times which are different from those of other languages in India. These differences stem from socio-cultural dimensions peculiar to the people and their environments. They are culturally rich and specific to Kannada. The core of each epistemological instance can be understood through an exploration of its expression in Kannada language, literature, history and culture.

A key focus of Kannada Knowledge Tradition Session is to ask broad questions about discursive formations of epistemology and traditions in relation to language, culture and power. The idea of knowledge is relying upon simultaneously knowledge, politics and power. Ways of thinking about social structure, knowledge traditions, politics of pedagogy and cultural practices are taken into consideration to address the pertinent questions regarding the politics of knowledge in the Kannada context. Both Indian (Bharatiya) and western dominant forms of rationality, have long been part of patriarchal power and control over Kannada knowledge traditions. As a result, Bhakti movements, Folk epics and traditions emerged as alternative knowledge traditions to draw their own experiences to guide lives and sociopolitical actions in Karnataka. All in all, in this particular session, the ways in which social relations of knowledge production and the types of knowledge produced are being focused to understand the totality of Kannada Knowledge Traditions within the framework of epistemologies and knowledge traditions.

A Proposition

If India is to be considered a civilization and not a mere nation, its history must lie in the story of the evolution, assimilation and interactions of its languages, and therefore, of various knowledge systems that they represent. Linguistic variety is central in shaping the diversity of beliefs, world-views, cultures and destinies of communities. In this multi-verse, when a language dies, a world dies along with it.

In our pre-occupation with development since independence, it appears that India has not been very serious in engaging with the speedily changing world through the socio-cultural-philosophical tools that language provides us in order to enable us accommodate and assimilate world-views, technologies or constructs that come from across borders; to all sectors that are critical to our society, viz., economics, arts, thought, entertainment, communication and trade. The examples of China and Japan may suffice in illustrating our failure in this task. This failure has also led to a mind-set that is apathetic to the death of languages, based on a mistaken belief that greater uniformity aids the process of nation-building.

How may we approach this task? In contrast with sub-continental Nationalism, languages grounded in the knowledge traditions of the region may bind people more cohesively through shared experiences, beliefs, mores and values in all walks of life. When viewed in the context of society, they offer a promise of enabling the development of a collective identity that can meet the challenges posed by evolving modern economics, social structures, and technological changes through continuous and creative assimilation and accommodation. In this session, we intend to investigate the experiences of the Kannada Desha as an exemplar of how regional knowledge traditions, as reflected by their linguistic expressions – both in their written and oral forms - have faced the challenges posed by social change, unrest, political uncertainty, natural and man-made disasters and sudden changes over time. Some examples of these may be found in the Santa parampare of the Kannada Desha (before, during and after the

Bhakti movement), the pre-modern eras of Buddhism, Jainism and multi-dimensional Hinduism; in the times of Colonialism, the nature of the language of ordinary life in the era of Kannada imperial conquest (Chalukya, Rashtrakuta, Sevuna, Hoysala and Karnata Samrajya periods), the Karnataka unification project, anti-Hindi agitation, Farmers' movements, Gokak agitation, etc.

We also seek to explore the promises offered by knowledge traditions such as of Kannada in resolving the vexatious relationship that has come to be between language and social development (e.g., in education), and well-being and justice for all (e.g., jobs for locals).

In addition to the above, there is a need to look at some questions that may be addressed in the session:

There are three broad questions that we ask at the beginning and all of them have relevance for not just Kannada but any of the Indian languages. The questions are as follows:

1. What should be the nature of the knowledge that we receive through Kannada?
2. Should the knowledge that we receive through Kannada be similar to the one we derive from English, Sanskrit or any other language?
3. Is there a need to also import the frameworks through which we receive knowledge, that is, should we also borrow the troughs in which knowledge is contained?

These questions also focus upon some significant thrust areas of Kannada knowledge traditions and philosophies. These areas are correlated to Kannada language, literature, culture, society, politics, Agriculture, Development, Folklore, Science, Technology, and other relevant areas;

Suggested topics for the session:

What are considered to be the core knowledge traditions of Kannada?

What are the different shapes these traditions have taken over the last two millennia to face challenges posed by political economics, wars and mass movements? What lessons do they hold for today?

Do the shared history, culture, practices and beliefs of a region, embodied in its language, promote a collective identity that can aid equity and justice?

What can young men and women do to learn from their language and knowledge traditions in order to carve out their own space in today's global village?

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4. What can young men and women do to learn from their language and knowledge traditions in order to carve out their own space in today's global village?

The Program

This session is consisting of keynote address, presentations and panel discussions. The tentative schedule as follows:

Keynote: Kannada Knowledge: Philosophy of Interdisciplinarity – K V Narayan

Panel discussion 1: Language, Classicism and Orality

- 1. Knowledge, Power Folk – Krishnamurthy Hanuru**
- 2. Towards a new imagination of 'Knowledge and Language' – K V Akshara**
- 3. Gender as alternative Discourses –Ashadevi M S**
- 4. Social Phenomena in Bhakti Traditions – Basavaraj Kalgudi**
- 5. Idea of Karnatak Studies – K Y Narayanaswamy**

These cultural theorists have already discussed the ways in which epistemological discourses function as a medium for social voices. That is, knowledge discourse is the means by which notions of caste, religion and gender are structured and reproduced within society. It is necessary to reestablish epistemological discourses of Kannada. The issues will be raised here are of such scope that they are the relevant discourses of native perspectives that evolved from various sociocultural contexts.

The relation between Kannada and Sanskrit is very ancient. The negotiation between modernity, English and Kannada is also paramount of important Dialogues that could be taken into consideration in order to deal with traditions of Kannada Knowledge. However, it is not possible to discuss all the changes, development, and negotiations in the relationship. Nevertheless, some important debates can be floated here.

Panel discussion 2: Exploring/uncovering the possibilities

1. Crises in the Perspectives of Social Science – Chandra Pujari
2. Knowledge Question and Cultural Hegemony – Rajaram Tolpadi

3. Alternative Discourses –Jayaprakash Benjagere
4. Knowledge of Oppressed Communities – Du Sarswathi
5. Social Phenomenon and Idea of Social Knowledge – Santhosh Naik

In a complex and rapidly changing sociopolitical environment, social scientific study examines how we produce ideas, knowledge, and perceptions to negotiate with this environment. This primarily focuses on communicating and implementing modalities, modes of governing ourselves to understand our socio-cultural environments. The methods that we adopt to solve the problems we face in the organization of social relations and processes. This session (panel) provides a basic overview of how social science contains deeply embedded sociocultural realities, assumptions and outlines the important relationship between philosophical thinking and practical implications in the research methods of social sciences.

Brief Profile of the Contributors to the Session (in alphabetic order)

K V Narayan: Professor (retired) and Renowned linguist and cultural theorist. He is an intellectual and educator in Karnataka, known for making his insights accessible in the areas of language, linguistics, literary criticism and cultural theories to a broad audience, including teachers, academics, students, and general public. KVN has published numerous books, research papers, and articles in various reviewed.

Krishnamurthy Hanuru: Professor of Kannada (retired), renowned creative writer and cultural theorist. He has worked primarily in the areas of tribal studies, ancient and medieval literature to organize knowledge in order to understand the collective phenomenon of Kannada knowledge traditions and its practical implications. His literary insights and creative writings help us to develop the poetics of Kannada. He has published numerous books, research papers, and articles in various reviewed journals.

Chandra Pujari: Professor (retired), renowned social scientist and director, higher education academy, Dharwad. His research focuses on the areas of development, cultural politics, and hegemony. His ideas are very significant to promote the pursuits of social science and the idea of just society. He has published numerous books, research papers, and articles in various national and international journals.

Rajaram Tolpadi: Professor (retired), renowned political scientist, Lohiaite socialist and former director of Nehru studies centre, university of Mangalore, Mangalore. His research focuses on the areas of lohiaite socialism, secularism and liberal democratic values. His ideas are so relevant to promote the political philosophy and sustainable lives. He has published numerous books, research papers, and articles in various national and international journals.

Basavaraj Kalgudi: Professor of Kannada (retired), literary critic, cultural theorist, member, Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi. He has made significant contributions to Kannada literature and cultural studies. He holds a doctorate in an interdisciplinary subject on Medieval Mystical Poetry and Historical Sense. Dr. Kalgudi has published numerous books, research papers, and articles in various national and international journals. Some of his important works include A Study of Sathi System and Mysticism: As a Study of Cultural Problem and Search for New Existence.

K V Akshara: He is a renowned theatre director, cultural theorist, and playwright in the Kannada language. He is a prominent scholar in the contemporary Kannada theatre. Akshara presently heads Ninasam, the theatre group and institution in Heggodu, Karnataka, founded by his father K V Subbanna. Ninasam is one of the premier theatre institutions which played a

prominent role in developing theatre culture in Karnataka. He has published numerous books, research papers, and articles in various previewed journals.

Banjagere Jayaprakash: He is a prominent Kannada poet, cultural theorist, critic, columnist, translator, and former Chairman, Kannada Book Authority, Govt. of Karnataka. He has been actively involved in various literary and cultural movements for the past three decades. Jayaprakash has served as the editor of the literary monthly magazine Honnaru Sahitya Maas and has contributed as a columnist for several other publications. He has published numerous books, research papers, and articles in various previewed journals.

K. Y. Narayanaswamy: He is a well-known Kannada poet, playwright, and scholar. he has made significant contributions to Kannada literature and theatre. He is currently a Kannada professor at the Maharani Cluster University in Bangalore. KYN is the author of several popular Kannada plays, including 'Kalavu, Anabhigna Shakuntala, Chakraratna, Huliseere, Vinura Vema. He has also translated Kuvempu's Shudra Tapaswi into Telugu and adapted Kuvempu's Malegalalli Madumagalu into a 9-hour play. One of his play Pampabharatha which is considered a milestone in modern Kannada theatre. His plays are known for their experimental approach and contemporary relevance.

Du Saraswathi: She is a prominent Kannada Dalit feminist writer, theatre artist, and activist. She has been actively involved in the Women's Movement and the Dalit Movement for over five decades. Du Saraswathi is well-known for her plays, particularly the Sannthimmi plays, which feature a rural woman character who addresses various social issues such as gender, sexuality, and economics. Her plays have been staged across Karnataka and beyond. Some of her notable works include "Henedare Jedananthe Jeeva Sampige , Neera Daari , Eegen Maadeeri (an autobiographical narrative), Baduku Bayalu (a Kannada translation of A. Revathi's "The Truth About Me: A Hijra Life story).

M. S. Ashadevi: She is a distinguished Kannada literary critic and feminist. She has made significant contributions to Kannada literary criticism feminism and gender studies. Ashadevi is currently Professor of Kannada at Maharani Cluster University in Bangalore. Some of her notable works include streematavanu uttarisalaru, Belakiginta Bellage, Naduve Suliva Atma and also published numerous research papers, and articles in various reviewed journals.

Santhosh Naik: He is an Associate Professor at the Department of Studies and Research in Sociology at Karnataka State Open University (KSOU) in Mysuru. He has been a part of the faculty since 2012 and has a strong academic background with degrees in Philosophy, Sociology, and a Ph.D. from Gulbarga University. Dr. Naik specializes in Rural and Urban Sociology, Majority and Minority Relations Work, Family, and Gender, and Social Justice. He has also been involved in various research projects, including a study on urbanization and alcoholism in Mysuru city. Additionally, Dr. Naik has contributed to documentary films and has been involved in content creation for documentaries depicting the social and economic impacts of COVID-19 on various communities.

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πΡ Γε < έβ Γε ö ΠΚΕ v ö β □ Ψ Γε ö δ Γε < έ Σ Ψ ώβ □ Ν Γά ϟ I || Π Π Ψ δ^a δ Γ I Π I + η ρ ά Γ I Ψ ε Γ
π Ψ Γε ΙΙ I ±ε Ψσγ Ω Γ I άβ □ Ψ Γε ±ε Ψσγ Π Γε □ Ν Γά ϟ I ρ^a ε Ψ δ Γ TMOCK Π Ψ □ Ψ Γ
ρ^a ε Γε ωζ άε Γε ώβ Ω ηεά ε Γ η ρ □ Ψ Γε Ω ηεά ε φ άε ά Γ Ε β i η Ψ ↑ ά- I η I I ó δ η ρ η I ά-Ψ Ω I
ó η δ άε v ΠΚΕ Ω i Γ I Γε πσΔσ % b v □ Ν Γά β Γε Δ I ↑ ά σ ά- I ±ε Ψσγ η η i ; ó η δ άε β-
Γ η Ω ε π Ψ Γε I ρ ά Ψ I I Ω ηεά ε δ σ Γ η Γε ΠΚε Ψ β-Λ Γ Ε Ω Ψ Γε % b Γ Λ Γ Ε π Ψ Γε I • ε Ζ ά δ - Λ I
δ δ Γ η πΡ άπ ΓΕη Γ η ά.

·) «έι ΔΟΗ !!ά ≡ Ψε - Π Π Γ Ε δ □ Ψ Γ Ε - Π Π Γ Ε η ρ □ Ψ Γ Ε - Π Π Γ Ε Ψ ε Ψ □ Ψ Γ Ε ü i δ Γ Ε
+ η ρ ά Γ Λ Γ π Ψ Γε ΠΚΕ Δε ϟ ↑ ά- I «έι ΔΟΗ !!ά ≡ Ψε δ ↑ ά η η ρ σ Γ Η I ώ β Ψ I Π Ε « Γ Ε δ i δ Γ Ε
Π ρ Γ Ε δ Γ Ε, η η i v, Ψ ε Ψ Γ Ε π Ψ Γε ΠΚΕ « η ε Ψ I ε ΙΙ Δ Γ η ε-Ν Γ Ε !!ά ≡ Ψε π I β-ί,
Δ i @ Ö Ψ β-ί π κε Η Α Γ η I † η π κε Η Α Γ η π I β-ί, Δ i @ Ö Ψ β-ί Π Ω I Δ φ ά, ö μ Ö !!ά ≡ Ψε,
Δ i Δ Ο Η β-ΠΚΕ i δ Γ Ε η I Ö ~ σ ε π δ Ι I • I η η ε Γ η I α ά ν έ ξ δ Γ Ε, η η i v, Ψ ε Ψ Γ Ε Η I ώ β-ί π I β-ί,
Δ i @ Ö Ψ β-ί • I η η ε Γ Ε Π Ω I Δ φ ά, TMOCK Δ i Δ Ο Η • i ε Ψ β-ΠΚΕ π I η Δ « Γ Ε Γ Ε^a δ Ι Ψ Δ φ ά,
Δ i Δ Ο Η • i ε Ψ β-ΠΚΕ Ω Γ Ε η I « Γ Ε Γ Ε δ v έ - Π ρ π η η ε τ ώ β ↑ ά δ ϟ π I, Δ i @ Ö Ψ β-ί Ψ Ω I ó Γ η η
• ε δ Γ η ε- I η η I ö δ Γ Ε Ψ δ ö i δ Γ Ε Ν ά γρ ↑ ά η ά η Δ- Γ η ü ; Ν η^a « Γ Λ ε ± Ά π κρ ω ε δ Ι I «έι ΔΟΗ
!!ά ≡ Ψε δ i j η η ρ ά I - ά ν έ δ Γ ε α ά ϟ Ö Ç - ά ν έ δ Γ e a ά ϟ Ö Ö ; I ü ΠΚΕ / έ δ Γ Ε = Γ Ε Ψ δ t α ά ϟ Ö Ç
ö μ ↑ ά Δ i Ψ ε Ψ Σ • σ Γ Ε Ψ I σ Γ Ε + η ρ ά Γ Λ Γ ε δ ≡ Ψ Ψ TMOCK ó f Ράσ + η ρ ά Γ Λ Γ ε Δ I ö Δ Ψ Ράσ ≥ I I δ
Δ σ Ράσ β-ί^a δ Π σ δ i η I π ω β-ί^a δ Π σ β Γ Ε έ δ Γ Ε η I ≥ η η β-ί^a δ Π σ β Γ Ε έ δ Γ Ε η I Γ Ε Ψ ö I ö i Ψ «
α ά ϟ Ö Ç ±ε Ψσγ β- Ωε i • Νόγρ ü i δ ϟ η Γ Ε ö δ σ ö ζ ά ε Ψ I η η δ ζ ά ε Π Γ Θ ά γ I † Π Ε
δ ζ ά η β- TMOCK I ö ά β Γ ε + η ρ ά Γ β-ΠΚΕ Γ η Γ Θ ά ε β- , Δ i Ψ ε Ψ Σ • σ, Ψ I σ η η η I Δ Γ η ε- I N ó β Ψ Λ
ö Δ I

·) ö Γ Ψ Ψ, ö Π Γ Ψ Ψ i j η η β-ί - Π ρ^a δ Γ Η Δ i^a A Γ η δ ü ; I i j η η β- ; ε I - • Γ η ↑ ά β ώ,
ö || Γ I δ Γ ε Ψ Γ η I ≥ δ ζ ά η I i j η η β- I I ó Γ Ψ Ψ Ω Ψ Γ Ε Π Γ Ψ Ψ v i ε β Ι I ö Γ Ψ Ψ ü i δ ϟ Δ σ Ρά Ψ
η Γ Ε Ω π Ράσ Π Γ Ε Γ Ε Ω Ψ Γ Ε Π Γ Ψ Ψ ü i δ ϟ Δ σ Ρά Ψ η Γ Ε Ω π Ράσ Π Γ Ε δ ü ΠΚΕ / ö μ Ö ö Δ I
ö Ψ σ • α ά Ö • δ η η I ά ν Ψ δ ; δ η η v έ « Ι I β- I Γ Γ ρ Γ ε - Γ η φ άε Γ Ψ Ω I Δ Ψ Γ Θ ά γ I • i ± Γ η ε A - Γ Θ ά γ I

ó Úē ; CEΠάΓΓ-έΔω̂ · í-Γ̂V̂e-Ψ̂Γ̂Π̂Ω̂ί̂α̂ό̂Γ̂Π̂ ό̂ί̂-Γ̂Π̂b̂Ĉ ΔΩ̂Θ̂ά̂ε̂ β̂-Γ̂Π̂êÊĴŶL̂D̂í̂ ■Îü̂P̂t̂ó̂l̂
ΔΩ̂Θ̂ά̂ε̂ β̂-←̂ε̂ρ̂ ά̂Γ̂ί̂ Ω̂ŶĈẐά̂τ̂ĥ δ̂-Γ̂ĥr̂êŶΓ̂β̂-Γ̂Γ̂Ê·̂cê±̂ ϕ̂-Ψ̂ê-í̂N̂ ό̂β̂ŶL̂ĥN̂Γ̂ί̂ ά̂-Δ̂I

ΠάΓΓ/έ̂ Γ̂ĥN̂;̂ -í̂ŶV̂B̂-í̂ Ω̂ŶĈẐ Γ̂r̂í̂^a σ̂«̂β̂-í̂ ·̂Ŷ ό̂;̂ Δ̂I^a δ̂CÊΓ̂τ̂ ώ̂β̂↑̂ά̂-í̂←̂ε̂ρ̂ ά̂Γ̂ί̂←̂ε̂ί̂ Δ̂ÔΓ̂í̂
↑̂ά̂Δ̂q̂/β̂-Ψ̂Î δ̂-↑̂ά̂-í̂«̂CÊÊb̂CÊΔ̂Î ←̂ε̂ρ̂ ά̂Γ̂ί̂ ΠάΓΓ/έ̂ŶÔΔ̂D̂ά̂-í̂Δ̂φ̂ ά̂ δ̂ π̂ĥΓ̂í̂ δ̂í̂ ■ÎR̂ó̂ê Ó̂
π̂N̂Ô||̂Δ̂Ĉé̂||̂ÎÎ^a δ̂Ψ̂Ĥó̂ δ̂CÊ=̂Î ω̂Ŷ·̂↑̂ά̂-δ̂CÊΔ̂φ̂ ά̂√̂Γ̂Êσ̂cêΓ̂Δ̂ĈΨ̂ÎΔ̂«̂ Γ̂ĥ Δ̂φ̂ ό̂±̂CÊĥCÊΔ̂Î
δ̂ Θ̂ά̂«̂σ̂Ĥ·̂α̂ά̂Ô·̂δ̂Ψ̂Îí̂ ά̂Γ̂ί̂Ψ̂Îβ̂, π̂L̂Δ̂σ̂ Ω̂ŶĈẐΩ̂Ô^a Ψ̂Î||̂b̂Ĉ ←̂ε̂ρ̂ ά̂Γ̂ί̂ Ω̂ŶĈẐά̂τ̂ĥ
-í̂ŶV̂B̂-Γ̂Γ̂Êĝ δ̂Î ←̂ε̂||̂ŶÎÎδ̂;̂cê, π̂L̂Δ̂σ̂, ·̂-Γ̂í̂ĝ ÎL̂ Γ̂ĥN̂Π̂ δ̂-Γ̂ĥr̂êŶΓ̂β̂-Γ̂Γ̂ÊΓ̂Π̂δ̂,
^a CÊ·̂ÔĈΨ̂Îδ̂;̂cê, Δ̂σ̂-Γ̂Γ̂P̂^a δ̂CÊΓ̂σ̂cê|̂β̂Ψ̂Îδ̂;̂cêπ̂ĥ^a «̂Θ̂ά̂-Δ̂I

·α̂ά̂Ô·̂δ̂Ψ̂Î ΠάΓΓ/Γ̂Ê δ̂ẑά̂||̂Δ̂Ĉ, σ̂cê|̂í̂ δ̂Ψ̂ê-Δ̂Ĉ Ω̂ŶĈ π̂k̂-έ̂σ̂ φ̂ό̂±̂Ĉ Γ̂D̂ά̂Γ̂β̂-Γ̂Γ̂Ê
Γ̂ĥN̂||̂Δ̂ĈΨ̂ÎΔ̂φ̂ ά̂ Γ̂N̂ά̂Γ̂β̂-í̂ π̂Ẑό̂ê ·̂δ̂ε̂N̂Γ̂Γ̂Ê√̂||̂Δ̂Ĉϕ̂Îϕ̂N̂↑̂ά̂-í̂^a δ̂P̂t̂ó̂β̂CÊĥĈ ←̂ε̂ρ̂ ά̂Γ̂ί̂-
!!̂ά̂≡̂ĥê, Ŷí̂N̂ά̂Γ̂β̂ π̂L̂Δ̂σ̂δ̂Ψ̂Î ←̂ε̂ρ̂ ά̂Γ̂ί̂ ΠάΓΓ/έ̂ό̂Σ̂ĥê Γ̂ĥN̂é̂√̂ÊB̂-í̂ Ω̂ŶĈẐΔΩ̂Θ̂ά̂ε̂ β̂-í̂
ŶΩ̂ÎΓ̂Êẑά̂é̂ δ̂-í̂√̂ Ω̂ŶĈẐ←̂ε̂ρ̂ ά̂Γ̂ί̂←̂ε̂ί̂ Δ̂ÔΓ̂í̂ σ̂cêδ̂ά̂Ŷσ̂β̂-Γ̂Γ̂Êό̂μ̂Ôφ̂ ά̂Γ̂ĥr̂ê-í̂N̂ Γ̂D̂ά̂Γ̂β̂-Γ̂Γ̂Ê
·̂í̂±̂CÊĥê-í̂N̂é̂Δ̂I

Δσ̂ά̂í̂ ḡ̂ Ó̂ δ̂-Γ̂ĥr̂êŶΓ̂V̂é̂ ό̂ί̂-Γ̂Π̂b̂Ĉ ΔΩ̂Θ̂ά̂ε̂ β̂- δ̂-Γ̂ĥr̂êŶΓ̂β̂-Γ̂Γ̂Ê Ω̂CÊ||̂ÊĈ Ω̂cêĵ ·̂
π̂F̂;̂↑̂ά̂δ̂, ©̂ŶĥÔ ΠάΓΓ/σ̂TM̂V̂B̂-Γ̂Γ̂ÊΔ̂↑̂ά̂CÊφ̂ό̂±̂CÊΔ̂Î ·α̂ά̂Ô·̂δ̂Ψ̂ŶTM̂-√̂Ψ̂ĥê CÊσ̂ά̂k̂ ḡ̂
ΠάΓΓ-έ̂Δ̂ω̂-Γ̂Γ̂Ê π̂||̂ĤΔ̂Ĉ Ω̂cêĵ ·̂Ω̂ŶĈẐπ̂_̂ά̂Ôê ό̂τ̂í̂ά̂Δ̂ Ω̂ŶĈĝ||̂D̂ Δ̂í̂π̂Θ̂ά̂ε̂ β̂-Γ̂Γ̂Ê
π̂ĥδ̂ά̂||̂Δ̂Ĉ Ω̂cêĵ ·̂ΠάΓΓ/Γ̂ÊΩ̂σ̂CÊά̂Êά̂Γ̂Δ̂;̂CÊĥê Γ̂ĥN̂Îó̂Δ̂ŶL̂ĥN̂ΠάΓΓ/δ̂ẑά̂ε̂V̂ê Ψ̂Î=̂ĥN̂ά̂||̂Î
δ̂-Γ̂ĥr̂êŶΓ̂β̂-í̂ δ̂í̂ ĥêΓ̂í̂-Γ̂Î, π̂ε̂Ôπ̂D̂ά̂Γ̂ΠάΓΓ-έ̂Δ̂ω̂- Γ̂D̂ά̂Γ̂β̂-Γ̂Γ̂Êπ̂||̂ĤΔ̂Ĉϕ̂Î

δ̂Σ̂Ĉĥí̂■̂ĥê Δ̂í̂δ̂°̂ÔΨ̂Î δ̂í̂-Ŷ̂ τ̂ά̂±̂CÊ·̂Γ̂Ê ΠάΓΓ-έ̂Δ̂ω̂ ↑̂ά̂Γ̂ĥê π̂ĥê Γ̂Êδ̂Γ̂ÊCÊ
Δ̂í̂≡̂ḡ̂Ôĥê||̂Δ̂Ĉϕ̂Î ΠάΓΓ/δ̂ẑά̂ε̂V̂ê Ψ̂Îí̂ ώ̂β̂-Γ̂í̂ τ̂ά̂±̂ά̂-í̂δ̂í̂-Ŷ̂ π̂ĥN̂||̂b̂Ĉ δ̂ά̂F̂;̂N̂é̂Δ̂D̂ĥê
τ̂ά̂±̂β̂-í̂ Ω̂ŶĈẐΔ̂í̂π̂Θ̂ά̂ε̂ β̂-Γ̂Γ̂Ê Γ̂ĥΔ̂ĈĥÎ τ̂ά̂±̂β̂- Γ̂ÊĈÊÎ†̂-í̂ĥê-β̂-Γ̂Γ̂ÊΔ̂-Γ̂ĥN̂Î ↑̂ά̂ĥêŶ
τ̂ά̂±̂ĥê ΠάΓΓ/ü̂í̂δ̂D̂ó̂δ̂CÊΔ̂ÎΔ̂Ôπ̂ω̂L̂p̂ω̂Ŷü̂í̂^a τ̂ά̂V̂ê Γ̂ÊΔ̂-Γ̂P̂t̂ó̂-Δ̂Î·̂Γ̂Êδ̂π̂σ̂í̂π̂ĥêCÊ
·̂Γ̂ÊV̂δ̂ΔΩ̂Θ̂ά̂ε̂ β̂-í̂ŶΩ̂ÎΔ̂Ŷδ̂δ̂Γ̂ĥN̂Π̂δ̂-Γ̂ĥr̂êŶΓ̂, π̂L̂Δ̂σ̂ ΠάΓΓ/ΔΩ̂Θ̂ά̂ε̂ π̂ĥN̂Î←̂ε̂||̂ŶL̂·̂ÔÎ
©̂ĥêδ̂P̂t̂ó̂√̂ÊB̂-Ω̂cêĵ ·̂←̂ε̂Γ̂ĥêω̂Ĉ≈̂Ôβ̂-||̂ÊΩ̂í̂Ŷπ̂σ̂í̂π̂ĥê Γ̂ÊĴĥêí̂||̂D̂CÊ·̂Γ̂Êτ̂ά̂á̂V̂;̂æ̂δ̂
©̂ŶF̂;̂√̂í̂Ŷ↑̂ά̂-í̂ĴĥêĥN̂||̂b̂Ĉ ■̂ĥê Γ̂ÊΔ̂L̂Δ̂Ŷé̂Δ̂Î·̂Γ̂ÊΨ̂Îβ̂-Γ̂ĥN̂ü̂P̂t̂ó̂l̂ΠάΓΓ-έ̂±̂β̂-í̂;̂Γ̂ĥN̂ĥR̂ó̂δ̂
Ω̂ŶĈẐ·̂Γ̂Êδ̂Ψ̂ÎêŶ^a δ̂CÊΓ̂ΠάΓΓ/←̂ε̂±̂β̂-í̂ ■̂ĥê ■̂ĥR̂ó̂δ̂ ό̂β̂ŶL̂ĥN̂δ̂δ̂σ̂ Ω̂cêĵ ·̂·̂Γ̂Êδ̂Ω̂·̂ÊĥÎ
δ̂ Δ̂êĥB̂, -í̂ŶV̂Ω̂ŶĈẐĥêΔ̂ó̂=̂Î■̂ĥê Γ̂ÊΔ̂-Γ̂Δ̂Ĉó̂π̂ĥά̂ê Ó̂ĥÎó̂Δ̂I

·α̂ά̂Ô·̂δ̂Δ̂í̂δ̂°̂ÔΨ̂Î Γ̂ĥÊΣ̂←̂ε̂ρ̂ ά̂Γ̂ί̂←̂ε̂ί̂ Δ̂ÔΓ̂í̂ ΔΩ̂Θ̂ά̂ε̂ β̂-ό̂í̂δ̂Ô^a CÊ·̂ÔCÊí̂ά̂Γ̂Π̂δ̂, δ̂Ψ̂Ŷ
Ω̂ŶĈẐά̂τ̂ĥê ḡ̂ π̂ĥN̂Ŷβ̂Ψ̂Îδ̂ Γ̂ĥΔ̂Π̂ĥêí̂±̂||̂ÊΩ̂í̂Ŷ Ω̂ŶĈẐÎΓ̂Σ̂Ω̂æ̂ ΠάΓΓ/Δ̂í̂π̂Θ̂ά̂ε̂ β̂-Γ̂Γ̂Ê
ẑά̂τ̂ĥ■̂ĥê Γ̂ÊΩ̂■̂ĥêĈ Ω̂cêĵ ·̂·̂Γ̂ÊΔ̂φ̂ ά̂δ̂||̂Î||̂Π̂Γ̂ĥN̂Ψ̂ĥê Γ̂Êó̂-Γ̂ÔΓ̂ĥêí̂Ẑά̂β̂δ̂í̂||̂Π̂
ΔΩ̂ĴB̂Ψ̂ĥÎ Ω̂ŶĈẐΩ̂CÊ||̂Π̂^a δ̂CÊĥÎΘ̂ά̂ĥê Γ̂ÊΔ̂ε̂-Ψ̂ĥêĥĥĥê-Ŷ̂CÊ←̂ε̂Σ̂ĥά̂β̂CÊΔ̂Î||̂ĥÎΩ̂CÊ||̂Π̂
||̂Γ̂β̂Ψ̂ĥÎĥR̂ó̂δ̂Δ̂φ̂ά̂Γ̂ĥê, ΔΩ̂-δ̂ÊΔ̂φ̂ ά̂√̂Γ̂Êσ̂-Δ̂;̂CÊ-ε̂Σ̂Î-Δ̂I

·Γ̂Ê ΠάΓΓ/π̂σ̂í̂π̂ĥê
Ẑá̂ü̂ü̂ŷ π̂ĥé̂σ̂
π̂ĥB̂Ψ̂ĥÎδ̂ Ŷσ̂β̂-í̂

·Γ̂Ê ΠάΓΓ/π̂σ̂í̂π̂ĥêí̂ά̂ĥÎδ̂ÔΓ̂Ê
δ̂Ŷσ̂: ·Γ̂Ê ΠάΓΓ/π̂σ̂í̂π̂ĥêü̂í̂^a π̂L̂Δ̂σ̂/√̂ŶĈẐĥê±̂=̂Γ̂P̂CÊτ̂ά̂ĥÎ π̂L̂Δ̂σ̂δ̂ό̂Π̂ĥê R̂ó̂ω̂≥̂R̂ó̂ĜÎ
·Γ̂Ê ΠάΓΓ/π̂σ̂í̂π̂ĥêü̂í̂δ̂CÊτ̂ά̂ĥÎÔΓ̂í̂δ̂Ψ̂Îó̂=̂ŶĥN̂||̂b̂Ĉó̂π̂ĥêσ̂τ̂ά̂±̂β̂- Γ̂ĥê±̂CÊĥê Γ̂Ê
%̂±̂↑̂ά̂-Γ̂í̂ẑά̂β̂CÊΔ̂Î ·α̂ά̂Ôδ̂ŶCÊí̂, Γ̂ĥê±̂√̂, Γ̂ĥêσ̂β̂, ĴĥêŶL̂B̂, Ĵĥê, ĵí̂σ̂ά̂Î ■̂ĥÎΓ̂ÊΓ̂ÊÎ
Γ̂ĥêí̂·-í̂ «̂√̂Ê Ω̂ŶĈẐó̂Ôφ̂ά̂L̂β̂-Ω̂σ̂CÊτ̂ά̂±̂β̂-Ψ̂ĥê Γ̂ĥÎ√̂ĥêó̂=̂ŶĥN̂/Γ̂Ê

Session-4

Imagining Swaraj in the 21st century -- *some Knowledge issues*

*Working Group: B V Rama Prasad (Convener), G. Sivaramakrishnan, Sunil Sahasrabudhey,
Rajeev Sangal*

Summary

All societies are sufficiently rich and complex, and possess the imagination and knowledge to understand and address problems as they arise. It is when expert knowledge claims for itself the right to unconditionally judge and teach others that problems become intractable and multiply. Today, people are considered ignorant, who need to be guided by those who know better. Contemporary political ideologies, whether of the right or the left, reinforce this illusion even while claiming to speak on behalf of the people.

It is in this background that a new political imagination has become a critical need. This can come about through a dialogue that solicits ideas and questions which do not find a place in the debates in the media or circulate in learned journals. Such a dialogue works by putting trust in the knowledge of people and their movements. In its mature state, the dialogue can potentially enable people to believe that they have the power to shape their own destinies, which is what we call as Swaraj.

It is not simply a matter of discussing Swaraj in abstract terms or without empirical grounding; rather, considering the current state of our society, culture, and economy, Swaraj may indeed represent the only viable alternative. Not only does data from the 18th century corroborate this view, but recent studies also lend robust support to this conclusion.

In recent years, the idea of nation-state seems to be under serious stress, national sovereignty is no longer guaranteed, and global finance capital dictates terms to even super powers. In this background, the session on Swaraj as a new political imagination will indeed be incomplete without a serious consideration of what it means in the twenty first century. This would help address skepticism regarding dialogues on Swaraj.

Societies are sufficiently rich and complex. They possess the imagination and knowledge to understand and address the problems as they arise. Problems become intractable and multiply when expert knowledge claims for itself the right to unconditionally judge and teach others. People are considered ignorant, who need to be guided and manipulated by those who know better. Today's political ideologies whether on the right or the left reinforce this illusion even while they claim to speak on behalf of the people. We need a new political imagination. This can come about through dialogues which bring into discussion ideas and questions which do not find a place in the debates in the media or that circulate in learned journals. This dialogue works by putting trust in the people in their knowledge, in their movements.

Who are the people? People are whom we meet in homes, in the streets, in the markets, at work, and in our travel. They are all people. Farmers, factory workers, laborers, artisans, retailers, hawkers, housewives, students, teachers, jobseekers, jobholders, old people, young people, - are all people. There are some people whom we never meet; we can never meet. They meet us when they think we need to be chastised or guided. These people have power, but all people have knowledge; the knowledge to understand problems of society and the knowledge to make and remake societies in ways that make life worth living. It is not as if there are no structures of power and authority among people, it is just that these are distributed in society. If something goes down, something else takes over. When people have the power to shape their own destinies, we call that Swaraj.

Viewed another way, Swaraj is the manifestation of what is innate in every human being. This innateness is rooted in caring for others and love for all. As a person realizes this innateness, his behavior and actions follow accordingly. It leads to a society that naturally is Swaraj, where people build family and community based 'natural' structures. This is in contrast to 'artificial' society being built today whose stated goal is to build efficiency but has no place for family or human relations, where people are powerless and life is not worth living.

How do we promote dialogues on knowledge in society for a new political imagination? This question presupposes that knowledge in society provides a sufficient basis for a new political imagination, namely Swaraj. This is the world of knowledge which houses Swadeshi Darshan and therefore a constructive dialogue here can be a robust departure for a concrete, contemporary concept of Swaraj.

As was demonstrated by Dharampal in his work on 18th century Indian society, village communities across India seem to have managed their affairs without the influence of kingship or other centralized governance. Each village or a group of villages tailored their management to their specific conditions and characteristics, leading to a varied but not necessarily asymmetrical government structures. However, the colonial administration uniformly categorized these local governance mechanisms as panchayats, deeming them unsuitable for their purpose. Therefore, they began to introduce modern state institutions within the villages initiating a progression of reforms in panchayats that persist even to this day. Despite this, traditional governance mechanisms continue to operate albeit hampered by the newly imposed structures of state institutions.

There are numerous examples where the administrative, judicial and political frameworks of state institutions prove inadequate to handle village affairs, while traditional communities, adeptly manage them outside these institutional structures. These communities autonomously resolve conflicts, oversee family and community issues, manage temples and their associated festivals, maintain community and traditional Mathas, Chatras, teach and learn traditional and local performing arts, practice traditional medicine and manage agriculture and allied activities. Importantly, the manner in which these activities are conducted varies from village to another, indicating that Swaraj remains alive in them though in a rather altered form. Contemporary accounts of villages, derived from colonial accounts and framework tend to misrepresent these as non-existent or corrupt and regressive. This mis-characterization underscores the need to reevaluate these indigenous models of governance and explore the true essence of Swaraj.

This session on the idea of Swaraj for a new political imagination will be incomplete without a serious consideration of what Swaraj means in the twenty first century as we are already in the second quarter when nation-states seem to have come under serious stress and national sovereignty is no longer guaranteed nor sacred, and when global finance capital is dictating terms to even super powers. Therefore, there is bound to be skepticism about any dialogue on Swaraj. The session will therefore have to address what Swaraj could possibly mean today.

The Session Program

Moderator/ Chairman : Krishna Gandhi, Ph.D.

Presentations:

1. JS Sadananda, Ph.D., Professor of Political Science (Retd), Kuvempu University and MS Chaitra , Ph.D., Director, Centre for the Comparative Study of Cultures , Chanakya University.
2. KV Akshara , Director of NINASAM, Heggodu. Cultural critic .

Panel discussion:

1. Sunil Sahasrabudhey, Vidya Ashram, Varanasi.
2. Rajiv Sangal, Ph.D., IIT Hyderabad
3. Shanmukha A, Ph.D., Prof of Political Science , Kuvempu University, Shivamogga
4. Praveen TL , Ph.D., Associate Prof of Political Science , Davangere University , Davangere
5. Sumanas Koulagi, Ph.D., Melkote

Papers/Abstracts Presented in Session-4

I. Understanding Grama

Prof. JS Sadananda & Prof. MS Chaitra

Villages in India are currently experiencing significant transformations, and there has been a notable decrease in their numbers due to the expansion of urban areas. Despite this urban growth, approximately 70 percent of the Indian population continues to reside in villages. Projections indicate that by the year 2050, urban dwellers may comprise 50 percent of India's population. Even then, a substantial portion of the population will remain in rural areas, presenting considerable challenges from both social-scientific and policy perspectives. One of the foremost challenges lies in understanding these evolving villages. Numerous studies within the field of social sciences have revealed that villages possess distinct characteristics that set them apart from urban localities. As individuals migrate from rural to urban regions, village traditions are often replicated within these new urban settings, albeit transformed in the process. Grasping the unique attributes that differentiate rural from urban areas is crucial for informing policy decisions related to health, food security, employment, sanitation, and agriculture—all integral components of the rural ecosystem. The government is tasked with developing a comprehensive model of development that accommodates the needs and dynamics of both urban and rural India. To facilitate effective policy interventions, a robust understanding grounded in social-scientific research is essential.

Academically, numerous studies have been conducted since the colonial era to delve into the life of rural India, encompassing aspects such as community life, nature and role of communities, conflicts, and cooperation. Over the past century, understanding the dynamics of Indian villages has remained a central focus within the fields of sociology and anthropology. From the 1940s to the early 1990s, village studies were not only a critical component of sociology but evolved into a distinct academic subfield. Sources informing these social scientific inquiries include materials from pre-social scientific explorations of Indian villages. Notably, European administrators — predominantly the British beginning with the East India Company era in the 1760s — sought to understand Indian villages for administrative purposes. This curiosity spurred the compilation of a substantial body of literature on Indian villages from the 18th century to the early 20th century, crafted mainly by British administrators and travelers. Subsequent sociological and anthropological studies, such as those by M.N. Srinivas and Louis Dumont, drew upon these earlier works.

European attempts to comprehend Indian village life were often filtered through a European conceptual lens, particularly within the framework of modern State. For instance, searching for bureaucratic structures resembling those in the courts of European kings, they were puzzled by their absence in the administrative setups of Indian villages. Unable to locate similar systems, they resorted to romanticized perceptions of villages, branding them as autonomous republics—a notion reminiscent of the village ideal in Britain, which vanished post-industrialization.

This description ultimately contributed to a unique, if skewed, understanding of Indian villages, primarily reflecting a European experiential understanding. Faced with the challenge of integrating these communities into a broader administrative framework, colonial authorities introduced concepts such as bureaucracy and taxation, which were alien to Indian villagers.

Moreover, the colonial administration diligently sought traditional Indian institutions within villages that could be adapted and incorporated into their governance structures. They discovered the panchayat system, a local dispute resolution mechanism, and assumed that it was a remnant of a possibly ancient structure that had been distorted during Muslim rule. In presidencies like Bengal, Madras, and Bombay, the British were convinced of the juridical nature of panchayats and believed these institutions possessed the necessary authority to function effectively.

In their pursuit of modifying these structures to fit colonial administrative needs, the British initiated the creation of new institutions between 1800 and 1850—an experiment that largely failed to generate functional institutions within the villages. The ineffective juridical institutions began transitioning into political institutions in 1882, marking a period of significant legal intervention aimed at promoting self-governance and decentralization within the British Empire. Thus, the legacy of nearly two centuries of engagement with Indian village governance persists. The notion of self-governance, cultivated during the colonial period, continued post-independence, influencing the establishment of the Panchayat Raj system in India.

The conceptualization of the Indian village that has been inherited from colonial administration exerts a significant influence on our understanding of Indian villages, as well as on the effectiveness of institutions purportedly 'Indian' in nature. Any well-informed scholar of Indian sociology is aware that village studies have largely been unsuccessful. This failure is further exemplified by the experiments conducted with Panchayat Raj institutions, which show a noticeable lack of active engagement from villagers. Moreover, there is a consistent grievance regarding low levels of public participation. Despite various efforts to enhance the effectiveness of these institutions, they fall short of even minimal expectations. Given this backdrop, the

importance of considering Dharmpal's portrayal of the panchayat becomes quite evident. He presents extensive data that illuminate our inadequacies in comprehensively understanding Indian villages, elucidating both the distinctive characteristics of these villages and the reasons behind the failure of modern Panchayat Raj institutions. Consequently, Dharmpal's detailed account compels a thoughtful reassessment of our perceptions of Indian villages.

An examination of Dharmpal's work and supplemental archival data reveals a significant discrepancy between our conceptual understanding of Indian villages and their actual historical and social realities, despite over two centuries of scholarly engagement. The uncritical superimposition of European interpretations on Indian rural structures, treated as if they were scientific truths, has significantly hindered efforts to accurately understand the nature and functions of Indian villages.

Consider the example of the Panchayat institutions. Both Gandhian supporters and Ambedkarites recognize these as typically Indian institutions, though they diverge on their perceptions of the institutions' inherent characteristics. Despite various reformative measures such as reservations, these institutions have largely failed to deliver their intended outcomes. On the rare occasions where they have succeeded, it can typically be attributed to the extraordinary efforts and ingenuity of specific individuals, indicating that these successes are unique and not scalable. State institutions are generally ill-equipped to handle projects that cannot be systematically replicated or scaled.

Dharmpal provides further insightful analysis into how these institutions have evolved. A widespread discussion points to corruption as a major flaw of the modern administrative system in India, with many arguing that the advent of the Panchayat Raj has extended corruption into rural areas. Yet, there remains a lack of compelling explanations for the prevalence of widespread corruption across the nation. Dharmpal's exploration of the Panchayat system's evolution within the Madras presidency illustrates how corruption can become an intrinsic component following the imposition of modern institutions like the Panchayat.

Moreover, Dharmpal delineates a clear distinction between traditional ('Sampradayak') Panchayats and government-implemented ('Sarkari') Panchayats, highlighting how community engagement differs markedly between these types of institutions. This distinction is crucial for understanding the varied impacts and effectiveness of these governance models and their structures in rural India. In short, Dharmpal's account sheds critical light on the complexities of implementing modern governance mechanisms in traditional settings and underscores the nuanced differences in institutional engagements and outcomes.

Villages in India confront a myriad of challenges including migration from rural areas, agriculture instability, unemployment and underemployment, education deficiencies, and health care inadequacies. Successfully addressing these concerns hinges on an accurate and comprehensive understanding of the intricate nature of these villages. While individuals associated with various ideological frameworks such as conservatism, progressivism, and liberalism may differ in their approaches to resolving these issues, a fundamental prerequisite is consistent across all perspectives: the necessity to overcome cognitive limitations in comprehending the dynamics of village life. Each ideological group, regardless of its distinct philosophy, must dedicate efforts towards enhancing our collective insight into rural environments to foster effective solutions.

II. Towards A New and contemporary Political Imagination

Sunil Sahasrabudhey
Vidya Ashram, Sarnath, Varanasi

Political ways of thinking largely meaningful in the 20th century no more appear to apply to the new world being created by the new Information Technology, in particular the internet. We shall attempt to come to grips with the new situation in continuity with what has been happening up till the 20th century. Given below are the points which may serve as points of departure for a new political imagination in this country.

1. **Bahujan** means the non-elite. It is in this sense that Shaky Muni Buddha used it frequently. Today too it is used mainly in this sense, that is to refer to ordinary people. They always happen to be a majority, but that is not part of the meaning of this word '*bahujan*'. As politics has expanded to include ordinary people as citizens and not just as subjects, '*bahujan*' has got mixed with non-elite castes which have become a major explicit factor in politics. However, we shall prefer to use this word *bahujan* to refer to ordinary people.

2. **Swadeshi samaj** refers to contemporary non-capitalist social formations which have far too many similarities with their pre-capitalist avatars. Farmers, artisans, adivasis, the small retailers. Women constitute the main stay of their domestic organization, economic activity and preservation of social/moral values.

3. **Bahishkrit samaj** is made up of people who have no place in the modern structure of opportunities, people who have no place in modern institutions like government, big industry, institutionalized services like education, health, police, military etc. It is seen as distinct from *pashchimikrit* (Westernised) *samaj*. It is also seen as Bharat as distinct from India.

4. **Lokavidya samaj** refers to people who possess *lokavidya*, a form of knowledge that resides in society and not in (organized) institutions. *Lokavidya* is living knowledge based on tradition and enriched by the later experiences.

These are all more or less the same people, the ordinary people, *Bahujan*. Ordinary life is life without a condition, it assumes no religion, no technology. Ordinary language is language without a condition, it assumes no grammar. Ordinary experience is experience without a condition, it assumes no theory, no conceptual pre-condition, it includes *nirvikalpa pratyaksha*. So *Bahujan* has a thoughtful and active mind, a genius of its own pervaded by thought but with no canonical (ideological) binding. When this *Bahujan* comes up with a new political imagination, the elite shall not understand it, for it will not be reducible to any of their imagination.

The following may constitute some points of departure for such an imagination.

i. **Ordinary life** is the life of the *Bahujan-Samaj*.

ii. **Lokavidya** is the knowledge of the *Bahujan-Samaj*.

iii. **Swaraj** is the idea and practice of governance of the *Bahujan-Samaj*.

iv. **Sant-parampara** expresses the values of the *Bahujan-Samaj*.

v. **Swadeshi darshan** bench-marked by neighborhood and proximity is the philosophy of *Bahujan-Samaj*.

vi. Women constitute the main stay of the domestic organization, economic activity and preservation of social relations and moral values in *Bahujan-Samaj*.

vii. Panchayat is central to the social and economic organization and regulation (enforcement of a code of conduct) in society. It is popular in *Bahujan-Samaj*.

viii. Traditions of Public Finance and fiscal systems are rhizome like, similar to the power distribution in *Bahujan-samaj*.

ix. Traditions of Indian agriculture are traditions of the *Bahujan-samaj*. Food sovereignty has been central in their thought and practice.

x. Indian industrial products constituted more than one-third share of the industrial production of the world up till less than 200 years ago. *Bahujan-Samaj* had the required skills, knowledge, controls of the means of production and social control for such production.

xi. Brahmanic thought and ritual robbed the *Bahujan-Samaj* of its independent and equal status.

xii. Moghuls took away the say and participation of the *Bahujan-Samaj* in the governance of the society.

xiii. The British robbed the *Bahujan-Samaj* of its land and control on the means of industrial production. They created conditions such that *Bahujan-Samaj* could not use its knowledge for the betterment of society.

xiv. The Independence Movement resurrected the idea of swaraj and mobilized the ordinary people.

xv. In independent India the relations between different segments of the Indian society remained more or less the same as in British India. *Bahujan-Samaj* was caught in the process of *sanskritization* guided by the professional classes. For a few decades now, they have their own political leadership. The challenge, however, remains to substantially undo what the Brahmins, the Moghuls and the British did them in past. A resurgence to connect India back to its soul demands a new political imagination in the leadership of the *Bahujan Samaj*.

xvi. The new political imagination is to be born through a *lokavidya* knowledge movement of the *Bahujan-Samaj* which explicitly entails for the *Bahujan-Samaj* social equality, political participation and leadership, control on means of production, distribution and communication and equal status for *lokavidya* in the world of knowledge.

xvii. Swaraj has a long tradition in the Indian society. It still provides the pivot for a new and contemporary political imagination. Re-emergence of *swadeshi darshan* is a broad requirement. A beginning was made by Mahatma Gandhi. As can be traced back to him, *lokavidya* knowledge movement is the bridge between *swadeshi darshan* and *swaraj* in today's world.

xviii. Mahatma Gandhi's path of reconstruction and building afresh is expressed in the phrase 'based in our tradition and enriched by the later experiences'. Attempts of this kind were made in some countries of South America. Early this century, Bolivia and Ecuador went through large mobilizations asserting that they need to rebuild their nations taking lessons from their knowledge (cultural) roots. The key ideas that came out were Rights of Mother Earth and Rights of Nature. They adopted new constitutions and called themselves Plurinational States which, briefly said, recognize multiple politico-social formations and autonomy of the same within a nation/state. This is in stark contrast to the concept of the State born in Europe and spread all over the world through colonialism and imperialism and now in the name of 'Democracy'. It is

also a complete opposite of the very recent concept of civilizational state born in the wake of the neo-conservative developments in many countries across the world.

xix. Two major outcomes of the internet in the shape of the World Wide Web may be noted: one, the unprecedented expansion of communication and dialogue and two, the Artificial Intelligence. Whereas the former distributes and spreads knowledge and intelligence almost without limit, the latter mops up the intellectual resources available on the internet at one place with lightening speed. The first inaugurates a new epoch of knowledge dialogue, briefly called **The Age of Dialogue** and the other concentrates all knowledge for profiteering by a few.

xx. The **new political imagination or a contemporary conception of swaraj** depends on how well we understand this new Age of Dialogue and how effectively we construct a *Bahujan* knowledge dialogue in this new world.

III. The Models of Swaraj: Nature of Indian Villages and Nyayapanchayats

Dr. Shanmukha A and Dr.Santosha E

The village communities across India seem to have managed their affairs without the influence of kingship or other centralized governance. Each village or a group of villages tailored their management to their specific conditions and characteristics, leading to varied but not necessarily asymmetrical government structures. However, the colonial administration uniformly categorized these local governance mechanisms as panchayats, deeming them unsuitable for their purpose. Therefore, they began to introduce modern state institutions within the villages initiating a progression of reforms in panchayats that persist even to this day. Despite this, traditional governance mechanisms continue to operate albeit hampered by the newly imposed structures of state institutions.

Nature of Indian Villages:

Our understanding of a village transcends the mere geographical and demographic aspects it encompasses a living, breathing entity that encapsulates the life cycle of human existence: birth, growth, decay, and rebirth. Just as each individual has a unique identity shaped by experiences and interactions, each village has its own distinct nature defined by its history, culture, and the interplay of its inhabitants.

Take, for example, the dynamics within a village that maintains a composition of various castes, social interactions, and cultural exchanges. These elements are not static; they evolve as new families settle and others depart, reflecting a vibrant tableau of social harmony and adaptation. When a new group integrates into a village, it doesn't merely coexist; it becomes an intrinsic part of the village's evolving identity, absorbing and contributing to the local customs and traditions. In villages, inclusivity and community participation are core to their operations, almost as if each village behaves as a single organic entity.

As we consider these rural communities, we must also recognize the practical implications of these dynamics in the context of Swaraj or self-governance. The concept is deeply rooted in the idea that local communities have the autonomy to manage their affairs, from resolving disputes to managing local resources and cultural events. This autonomy is essential not only for efficiency of governance but also for preserving the unique cultural identity of each village.

In practice, this means encouraging and facilitating villages to harness their local knowledge what we can call *kriya jnana* or functional knowledge. This encompasses the wisdom and practices developed over generations, tailored to the specific needs and peculiarities of the community. By embracing *Swaraj* or self-governance models which empower these communities to apply this intimate knowledge to govern themselves in a manner that is socially, culturally, and ecologically sustainable. One such models is ‘traditional *nyayapanchayats*’.

Traditional Nyaya Panchayats as a model of Swaraj:

There are numerous examples where the administrative, judicial and political frameworks of state institutions prove inadequate to handle village affairs, while traditional communities, and adeptly manage them outside these institutional structures. These communities autonomously resolve conflicts, oversee family and community issues, manage temples and their associated festivals, maintain community and traditional *Mathas*, *Chatras*, teach and learn traditional and local performing arts, practice traditional medicine and manage agriculture and allied activities. Importantly, the manner in which these activities are conducted varies from village to another, indicating that *Swaraj* remains alive in them though in a rather altered form.

For example, various forms of *Nyaya Panchayats* can be observed in all the villages. The empirical study conducted on *Nyaya Panchayats* across Karnataka reveals that traditional *Nyaya Panchayats* continue to exist in various forms, including *Community Panchayati*, *Halli Panchayati*, *Katte Panchayati*, *Jati Panchayati*, *Hatti Panchayati*, among others. Additionally, apart from *Nyaya Panchayats* in villages, there are several conventional *Mathas* such as *Sirigere*, *Gavisiddeshwara*, and temples like *Dharmastala* (referred to as *Hoylu Panchayati*), as well as *Daiva* or *Kola Panchayati* (found in coastal Karnataka) and *Nayakanahatti temple Panchayati* in central Karnataka. These conventional places of *pachayatis* are prevalent across the state and handle higher disputes or issues that could not be resolved in the village traditional *Panchayats*.

These *Panchayats* in villages and traditional institutions adhere to ancestral wisdom and conventional structures for conflict resolution to reach solutions to disputes and issues. Data indicates that even today, approximately 85% of conflicts and cases are resolved through these traditional *Panchayats*, with only 15% of disputes in villages goes to modern courts. Moreover, those cases that proceed to modern courts often experience significant challenges and sufferings, leading many to revert to traditional *Panchayats* to resolve their conflicts amicably. This persistence highlights the enduring relevance of the *Swaraj* models that have existed throughout India's history and continue to function effectively even today whatever the distorted form possible.

Contemporary accounts of villages, derived from colonial accounts and framework tend to misrepresent these as non-existent or corrupt and regressive. This mischaracterization underscores the need to re-evaluate these indigenous models of governance and explore the true essence of *Swaraj*.

Moreover, the principle of *Swaraj* extends beyond mere self-governance. It is evident in the models like traditional *nyayapanchayats*. They foster a sense of belonging and accountability among the residents. When people have a say in the affairs of their community, their engagement and investment in outcomes increase profoundly. This is crucial in a country as diverse as India, where each village can sometimes seem like a microcosm of the nation itself. The essence of *Swaraj* lies in recognizing and nurturing the intrinsic nature of each village, understanding its unique identity and dynamics, and empowering it to govern itself.

IV. Revisiting Swaraj: Native Models of Sustainable Living

Dr. Praveena T. L

Indian notion of nature is very distinctive comparing to west. It highly influenced by the concept of *Panchabootas*. The modern western notion of nature has historically been utilitarian, viewing natural resources as commodities for economic growth and technological advancement. It has driven large-scale industrialization, deforestation, and resource exploitation. This approach influenced a lot on property rights, agricultural structures, and taxation etc. It emphasis on scientific and technological control, such as genetic modification and artificial ecosystems, has aimed at maximizing productivity but frequently disregards long-term environmental consequences. The West has a history of misusing and overexploiting natural resources, evident in activities like fossil fuel extraction, deforestation, overfishing, and unsustainable farming. These practices directly impact the climate, leading to issues such as ocean acidification, land degradation, and water shortages.

In recent years, there has been a shift toward sustainability and conservation. Movements like deep ecology, climate activism, and renewable energy initiatives reflect a growing awareness of environmental limits. Despite these efforts, ecological sustainability remains a persistent challenge.

In this context, Swaraj is an important alternative model for protecting nature and its resources by the indigenous communities. *Swaraj* emphasizes local governance and indigenous knowledge for ecological stewardship. Indigenous communities in India protect nature through practices like sacred groves conservation; sustainable agricultural techniques; etc. **Concept of Sacred Groves:** Many indigenous communities in India maintain sacred groves—patches of forest dedicated to deities or ancestral spirits. These groves are strictly protected and often serve as reservoirs of biodiversity. For instance, Nagarabana, Bhootarayana Bana in Malenadu and Karavali region of Karnataka. Such practices have been crucial in conserving various plant and animal species. **Traditional Agricultural Practices:** Indigenous agricultural methods emphasize harmony with nature. Traditional farmers manage pests and diseases using indigenous practices, avoiding synthetic chemicals and maintaining ecological balance.

One can see plenty of practices related to the nature in India. These practices embody *Swaraj*, where locals assume responsibility for preserving ecosystems. Recognizing and integrating such indigenous wisdom fosters sustainable development. This approach ensures ecological balance while honoring India's cultural heritage.

The concept of *Panchabootas* is very central to these kinds of indigenous practices. This ancient spiritual framework sees the universe as composed of five fundamental elements – Earth (Prithvi), Water (Jala), Fire (Agni), Air (Vayu), and Space (Akasha). Each of these elements is believed to represent specific qualities and energies, and their harmonious balance is considered essential for the well-being of individuals and the cosmos. The *Panchabhoota* concept underscores the inseparable connection between humans and nature. It encourages a holistic perspective, recognizing that individuals are not separate from the environment but an integral part of it.

Indigenous communities have long been custodians of India's diverse ecosystems, with their traditional practices embodying principles of sustainability, respect for biodiversity, and harmonious living with nature. Their knowledge systems offer valuable insights for contemporary efforts to protect the environment where modern state system is failed miserably in doing such responsibilities.

Session-5

Knowledge in Development Discourse, and Peoples Movements

*Working Group : Umashankari Narendranath (Convener), O Ramasubramanian (Co-Convener),
Rajeev Sangal, Rahul Goswami, Sunil Sahasrabudhey, Veena Joshi*

Abstract

The “Knowledge in Development & People’s Movement” Session examines three critical intersections: the emergence of neo-localism as a response to globalization's failures, the epistemological tensions in agricultural systems where traditional knowledge confronts modern paradigms, and the inherent violence in development processes that marginalize indigenous wisdom. Through these lenses, the convention questions contemporary development narratives while exploring how knowledge hierarchies impact communities. The discussions shaped by experienced and leading public intellectuals, activists and academics, aim to reimagine development frameworks that honor local knowledge systems while addressing the challenges of epistemic injustice in our rapidly changing world.

The Session on Knowledge in Discourse & People’s Knowledge interrogates the intersectionality of epistemic hierarchies, development paradigms, and indigenous knowledge systems through three critical discursive frameworks. First, it examines the emergence of neo-localism as a counter-narrative to the hegemonic globalization discourse of the 1990s, positioning it within the context of three decades of economic reforms that have exacerbated structural inequities. This dialectic between the local and global raises fundamental questions about the commons' knowledge and its reclamation in contemporary socio-economic structures.

The second framework delves into the epistemological violence inherent in modern agricultural systems, where cultural knowledge systems are subordinated to mechanistic, capital-driven paradigms of food production and food security. This session problematizes the binary between traditional farming knowledge and contemporary agricultural discourse, examining how multilateral organizations' definitions of food security systematically marginalize the livelihoods of farmers and the cultural dimensions and indigenous agricultural wisdom.

The final framework critically examines development as a vector of violence. By examining the intersection of gender, food systems, and epistemic violence in defining gender, this session deconstructs the embedded power structures within development discourse while questioning the potential for transformative change within existing paradigms.

Together, the session aims to construct a critical examination of knowledge systems in relation to development, challenging conventional narratives while proposing alternative epistemological approaches that center marginalized voices and indigenous knowledge/wisdom; thereby shaping a crucial intervention in contemporary debates about development, sustainability, and democratization.

The Session Programme

This session is designed as a combination of presentations and panel discussions. Following is the tentative schedule.

Presentations: Emergence of the Neo-Local?

The concept of the ‘neo-local’ is a phenomenon that is emerging in the world today, as against the globalization that was seen as a panacea for economic progress in the 90s. After three decades

of economic reforms, India has witnessed organized extraction, exploitation and furthering of the pre-existent inequities and inequalities even more acutely. Epistemic injustice is the hidden truth in plain sight during the period of globalization. Can this emerging local movement provide an opportunity to reclaim the place for the commons knowledge?

- **Loka Vidya- Peoples Knowledge Movement and Local economy - Chitra Sahasrabudhey**
- **Towards a new imagination of 'Development' - Baskar Manimegalai**
- **Radical Ecological Democracy, Rights of Nature -Shrishtee Bajpai**

Dialogue: Farming, Food, and the Knowledge question

The area with the highest impact of the knowledge injustice committed today is in the domain of farming and food systems. Farmers' economic and social status, his/her knowledge and culture have become an afterthought in the definition of food production and food security. Reports of multi-lateral organizations such as FAO and other international organizations on farming is necessarily censored through the lens of speed, mechanization and global capital interest. What has been and can be the place for farmers' knowledge in discourses of food, and farming in the future?

- **GM crops, vanishing agri-bio-diversity and the need for preservation of indigenous knowledge in agriculture - Kavitha Kuruganti**
- **History as a Present Continuous – Knowledge questions behind the Farmers' Movement - Girish Sahasrabudhey**

Reflective Talks: Violence in (& as) Development

Development as a process has aggravated prevailing injustices in society, it has also created new ones. Understanding the role of knowledge holders, their current challenges and how do they see the future is essential today, even as "sustainability" drives a new discourse. Will this be even more violent than the previous phase?

- **Food Systems, Women, and the Knowledge question – D U Saraswathi**
- **Redefining gender in the Knowledge discourse – Tashi Choedup**
- **Epistemic violence in Development discourse and the space for ahimsa- Rajni Bakshi**
- **Interaction with the entire panel of presentations**

Brief Profile of the Contributors to the Session (in alphabetic order) with their language of choice

Baskar Manimegalai (Tamil): Baskar Manimegalai is Director of the Nammalvar Multiversity. He is an intellectual and educator in Tamil Nadu, known for making his insights accessible to a broad audience, including teachers, academics, students, and parents.

Chitra Sahasrabuddhey (Hindi): Chitra Sahasrabudhey turned to lifelong social activism after receiving her Ph.D. in Chemistry. She has worked primarily to organize women and artisans with focus on lokavidya as their source of strength. She is the National Convener of Lokavidya Jan Andolan and Coordinator of Vidya Ashram, and lives at Vidya Ashram in Varanasi.

Girish Sahasrabudhe (English): He is a member of the Executive Committee of Vidya Ashram,

Sarnath, Varanasi and an activist of Lokavidya Jan Andolan. He was active in the Farmers' Movement led by the Shetkari Sanghatana in Maharashtra in 1980's and later. He has been a student of the Shetkari Andolan all along. During student days he was an active member of the group of activists around the Hindi language periodical Mazdoor Kisan Niti.

Kavitha Kuruganti is the Convener of ASHA (Alliance for Sustainable and Holistic Agriculture)- - Kisan Swaraj, member of Coalition for GM free India. She is a lead campaigner against GM food crops, and promoter of organic agriculture, indigenous genetic resources, and has played a critical role in the Farmers' Movements in the recent years.

Rajni Bakshi (English): Rajni Bakshi is a Mumbai-based freelance journalist and author. She writes about social and political movements in contemporary India. Rajni is the founder and curator of Ahimsa Conversations, an online platform for exploring the possibilities of nonviolence. She was formerly the Gandhi Peace Fellow at Gateway House: Indian Council on Global Relations.

Saraswathi (Kannada): Dalit women and workers rights activist, researcher, creative writer (poetry, short stories, plays as well as articles) theater artist. got my Ph.D. degree in 2019 for "community under siege: socio-cultural study of safai karmacharies in Karnataka from feminist perspective". My poems, short stories and one act play has been part of the syllabus in schools, colleges.

Shristee Bajpayee (English): Shrishtee is is a member of Kalpavriksh, an environmental action group in India. She helps in coordinating the Vikalp Sangam (Alternatives Confluence). She is a researcher, writer, and activist working at the intersections of environmental justice, social justice, more-than-human governance, worldviews, and systemic transformations.

Tashi Choedup (English): Tashi (They/She) is a trans feminine person working in human rights, and social justice movement spaces for 15 plus years and a Buddhist monastic in Tibetan tradition for over 7 years. Tashi is a founding member of Telangana Hijra Intersex Transgender Samiti, and Queer Swabhimana Yatra. Their were also a member of the Telangana State Government's Welfare Board for Transgender Persons.

Usha Soolapani (English): Usha Soolapani is the Director of the Thanal AgroEcological Producer Company. She Researches, documents and writing about issues related to agroecology, climate change, biodiversity, wilderness, politics of food and health, community wisdom and exploring peaceful co-existence.

Papers/Abstracts Presented in Session-5

I. Loka Vidya- Peoples Knowledge Movement and Local economy

Chitra Sahasrabudhey

(English Translation of the original in Hindi)

(Lokavidya (लोकविद्या) may be roughly rendered as 'Knowledge in Society' in English)

The industrial age which dominated the lives of the people for last 100-200 years has come to a close. From the beginning of the 21st century, with the arrival of the Information Age, new claims of building a new man and a world have been staked. It is a claim of building a

knowledge-based world. Rulers of many countries in the world including India are working towards fulfilling these claims. New domains of knowledge are opening and these countries are investing more and more in management and Converging Technologies (nano, bio, information and cognitive). Globalization has increased the competition in expanding the markets and building new ones. This has led to greater violence, war, injustice, oppression, hatred, disparity and displacement (eviction). Which further leads to destroying ordinary life by displacing moral values, human sensibility and constructive human disposition out of life as such. Now Artificial Intelligence and Robotics are giving further push to this phenomenon. Traditional aristocracy, democracy and socialist states all are equally pushing this trend forward. So, the question arises as to what is the nature of this knowledge which is leading to development causing the systematic destruction of nature and humanity. It has so transpired that man's activity in political, economic, social, philosophical etc. spheres is considered fulfilling only when it is emptied of human activity? How can one conceive of knowledge without sensitivity. These states of affairs are creating a historic opportunity for heralding a new epistemology which may contain criteria of legitimacy for people-oriented knowledge. This is an integral aspect of the work of social reconstruction based on truth, equity and brotherhood. It is here that Lokavidya Jan Andolan sees its role. Under following heads is discussed Lokavidya Jan Andolan.

- **Lokavidya Philosophy:**

What is Lokavidya? It may be understood as knowledge with the people, knowledge in society, knowledge spread outside the institutions of organized formal knowledge. Every human being is knowledgeable. All knowledge starts from lokavidya and returns to lokavidya. The knowledge that does not return to lokavidya turns against nature and humanity.

- **Claims of Lokavidya Jan Andolan:**

Different types, locations and streams of knowledge are always present in the world of knowledge. Hierarchy among these produces hierarchy in society. Lokavidya and ordinary life embody ideas and imagination to be able to act against such hierarchy and produce fraternal relation and equality between various types of knowledge, unorganised, organized, all. In every village, at every ghat, in every forest and basti, In every fair, in every market, at every river bank, On every road, at every step in the world, there are knowledgeable people. And from here is to be decided where lies knowledge and who is knowledgeable. Let the masters of lokavidya speak and stake their claims on knowledge.

- **Ideas and programs of Lokavidya Jan Andolan(LJA):**

The first convention of Lokavidya Jan Andolan was held in the year 2011 on the premises of Vidya Ashram at Sarnath in Varanasi with about 300 participants. In the last fourteen years, people from many parts of the country have participated in this knowledge movement. One of the main assertions of LJA is that it is the birth right of every person to earn his/her livelihood based on lokavidya. And that incomes of households living by lokavidya should be equal to the incomes of government employees. This shall be the effective way for emerging out of the persistent crises of inequality, unemployment and environmental degradation.

Inspired by the aspirations and movements of farmers, artisans, labourers, tribals, women and ordinary people, LJA promoted concepts of 'lokavidya' and 'ordinary life'. These were seen as the main sources of thought and action to illumine, organise and establish the strengths of the samaaj. These efforts are discussed in this paper. The ideas and programs merge into one, but they are dealt with separately for the sake of effective communication.

(a) **Ideas : Bauddhik Satyagraha, Gyan Panchayat, Lokavidya Satsang**

(b) **Programme: Bhaichara Vidyalaya, Lokavidya (local) Bazaar, Darshan Akhara,**

Kala Sadhna, Publications

These find extensive treatment in the paper. These will be expanded upon in the talk at the Convention.

II. Towards a new imagination of 'Development'

Baskar Manimegalai

Tamil:வடிவமைப்பு பெருமிதத்துவ மட்டும் ஒரு நாடோ மாநிலமோ செழுமையடையாது, அதன் உள்கட்டமைப்பு எல்லாருக்கும் பாகுபாடில்லாம கடைகோடி மனிதனாக இருப்பவன் கிடைக்க வேண்டும், விண்ணுயர்ந்த கட்டிடம், வானம் முழுக்க விமானம், தரை முழுக்க தண்டவாளம், மாளிகை எங்கும் கண்ணாடி ஒரு பக்கம், ஊருக்கு எப்போ பஸ் வரும், வீட்டுக்கு எப்போ தண்ணீர் வரும்னு மணிக்கணக்கா காத்திருக்கும் மக்கள் இன்னொரு பக்கம்.

மக்களுக்கான நல்லாட்சி என்பது Gini Coefficient பூஜ்ஜியம் இருக்கனும் ஆனா இங்க 100 நோக்கி நகந்துகிட்டு இருக்கு.

வளர்ச்சிக்கும் வீக்கத்துக்கும் வித்யாசம் தெரியாமல் வடிவமைப்பு பெருமிதத்தில் (architectural ego) மட்டும் கவனம் செலுத்தும் ஆட்சியர்கள் கல்வி நிலையங்களுக்கு மத்தியில் மண் நலம் மக்கள் நலம் மீது அக்கறை கொண்ட சிந்தனைகள் செயற்பாடுகளுக்கு ஊக்கமளிக்கும் கல்வி நிலையங்கள், ஆசான்கள் தான் இன்றைய தேவை.

English:A country or a state can not take pride only on its architectural ego, its inner structure has to reach the last man without discrimination or prejudice. On the one side we have tall skyscrapers, airplanes filling up the sky, trains running all over the country, and mansions with glass windows and doors; on the other hand, we have people waiting for hours for the bus to come to the village, waiting for hours for the water supply to the house. The Gini Coefficient must be zero if we have to have good governance, but it is going up to 100 in our country. In the midst of politicians and educational institutions who know no difference between healthy growth and inflamed swelling, we need teachers who are concerned about the health of the soil and welfare of the people.

III. GM crops, vanishing agri-bio-diversity and the need for preservation of indigenous knowledge in agriculture

Kavitha Kuruganti

Genetically Modified (GM) crops, with their accompanying political economy, are established to impact biodiversity in numerous ways. Within the commercially cultivated GM crops, the most widely adopted trait is that of herbicide-tolerance (HT). HT GM crops have a more direct bearing on the erosion of biodiversity in general, and agro-diversity in particular. While GM crops are an apparent logical next step for global agri-input industry,

which consolidates its control over agriculture through an intensive agriculture paradigm, the vanishing agro-diversity from farmers' fields is a direct deathknell on associated knowledge systems too. The informal seed systems which sustain agricultural livelihoods and food security in India, and also maintain agro-diversity to an extent, are mainly the direct result of indigenous knowledge. In the age of climate change, such diversity and associated knowledge are potential contributors to resilience in farm livelihoods. This talk will focus on GM crops' impact on biodiversity in general and agro-diversity in particular, will touch upon the importance of agrodiversity and seed sovereignty from a livelihoods perspective and will share information on current efforts underway in resisting the GM technology onslaught and revival of agro-diversity and associated indigenous knowledge.

IV. History as a Present Continuous – Knowledge questions behind the Farmers' Movement

Girish Sahasrabudhey

A vast majority of ordinary people live by their own knowledge. This knowledge they acquire from their family and their community through their social interactions in their everyday lives. It is a part and parcel of *lokavidya*, or Knowledge in Society. People's movements are largely movements of these people, the *lokavidya samaj*. Today they reflect the primary reality of their condition - that the work they do does not give them a position in the larger society and a return, that would ensure a life even of a sustained primary existence, let alone one of contentment, honour, and promise for their children. Compared to the return guaranteed for work based on modern knowledge acquired through formal education, return on their knowledge-work is not just meager and irregular, but also precarious and subject to large fluctuations and uncertainties. This immediately raises the following knowledge question: Why should this be so?

This is a knowledge question because it forces one to raise questions about the knowledge criteria that justify this state of affairs, support such hierarchy in the contemporary knowledge world, and perpetuate the starkest forms of injustice in human society. People's movements indirectly raise questions of knowledge criteria. At times they do so directly too.

The Kisan Andolan, or the Farmers' Movement, is a movement of the largest section of the *lokavidya samaj*. The Movement began with questioning official wisdom on causes of poverty. It declared that poverty is unnatural and perpetuated by subjecting their produce to grossly unequal terms of trade fostered by state policies. It exposed

development as a neo-colonial practice funded by value-extraction. The demand for equal exchange for farm produce has remained with the movement. Central to the Movement, and to the unity forged by it over intervals of its relative strength during its journey, is its non-political creed. The “political” clashes with its ideas of governance and representation and signifies locations of ultimate loss of initiative and autonomy of the samaj. The novel and entirely peaceful methods of mobilization, organization, assembly, protest and satyagraha and of autonomous decision making created by the Movement all along its long journey show this awareness. All this is once again in evidence today. After three decades of globalization, as the Movement rose again it characterized the moves on agriculture by the state as attempts ‘to confine food to coffers’ and ‘to trade in hunger’ and warned that this will be the end of fraternal sentiments (*bhaichara*) in the samaj. Its demand for legal guarantee of minimum support price with a minimum wage for agricultural labour should be seen as a demand for right to life and livelihood by one’s own knowledge.

Movements of adivasis, collectively known as the Jal-Jangal-Jameen Movement, assert ownership of local natural resources. The Movement has questioned development and exposed the environmental devastation it has caused. It emphasizes the role of community knowledge, local wisdom and local control over natural resources for their sustainable and just management. Movements of weavers, fishermen, and artisans of various crafts point to how application of technological and financial wisdom in modern knowledge systems has mercilessly deprived them of the very means and markets which enable them to sustainably continue their knowledge-work. The movement for environmental justice holds modern lifestyles responsible for destruction of the environment. Without global finance and markets backed by modern S&T, ICT-AI and the State these lifestyles are neither possible, nor sustainable even for a small part of humanity. Women and youth have always played dominant and, at times, leadership roles in all these movements. They are the biggest victims of destruction of families and loss of lokavidya-work which has led to displacement, migrations and unemployment.

People’s movements then clearly show an increasing insistence on facts of the condition of their people. That amounts to an implicit rejection of future imagination of development and questioning of its knowledge-basis. This suggests that a knowledge dimension must be added in any meaningful debate about a just and equal future society. The implicit demand of people’s movements is one of a future imagination on a new knowledge basis. A clear message is that lokavidya, the knowledge basis of their life and the primary source of their strength, must enjoy status of equal merit and honour with other streams and systems of knowledge in all matters of social, economic, political governance. The message has far-reaching implications for the discourse on future imagination. The ideas put forward by practices of people’s movements over their journey – equal exchange, right to life by one’s own knowledge, autonomy of social

formations, strength and capacities of local wisdom and initiative, local control on natural resources, equal distribution of national resources, life in synergy with nature, social values of *nyaya*, *tyaga* and *bhaichara* all gain fresh and contemporary meanings as central ideas in the knowledge basis for reconstruction of a just and equal society.

V. Food Systems, Women, and the Knowledge question

D U Saraswathi

The whole convention, 'Convention on Dialogues in Knowledge in Society,' attempts to examine three critical intersections: neo-localism as a response to globalization's failures, epistemological tensions in agricultural systems, and the inherent violence in development processes that marginalize indigenous wisdom. Through these intersections, contemporary development narratives are questioned with the aim of reimagining development frameworks that honor local knowledge systems. With this background, my paper focuses on food system as a knowledge system and women who are closely connected with food system as knowledge producers. I have been part of the women's movement since 1982. We called our movement a non-hierarchical, autonomous, democratic collective. Personal is political was our statement. We believed in sisterhood. We came together and got united because we were exploited, oppressed. We fought for our rights as human beings. Our slogan was, 'Women's rights are human rights'. We demanded respect and dignity as human beings and for our labour and contributions. In-depth studies were done on women's labour. The amount and hours of work women did and what they got in return were analyzed. We discovered that women's labour, work is unseen, never valued and thankless, but it was very much essential to our families and society. As essential as the food we eat.

My academic journey with the food system began with doing field work on food preservation in Karnataka for a convention organized by PPST and IIT Bombay, way back in the 90's. Since then, food has become my permanent interest. I am connected closely with the municipal workers which includes sweepers and manual scavengers. Without their labour, the food cycle can never be complete. Because the food we eat becomes shit, and shit becomes manure for the food we eat!

My journey as an editor of the volume on food system of Karnataka, named 'Ahara Samputa' for Karnataka State Akkamahadevi Women's University, led to explore a step beyond preservation. The knowledge, skill, creativity, art, aesthetics, philosophy, and diversity involved in food system was amazing! Mind blowing!

Knowledge about nutrition, seasons, botany, zoology, chemistry, preservation, measurements; tools used in cooking, the skill and head and hand co-ordination, artistic and aesthetic excellence involved in preparing and preserving food that women have and the labour that goes into cooking all 365 days has been sidelined, not recognized, not valued therefore never becomes part of the history. But the occasional involvement of men makes it excellent art and part of 'his'tory. Cooking is considered as one among 64 art forms for men to excel! The written history on food is 1500 years old. Chalukya king Somaeshwara's 'Manasollasa' in 1130, 'Supashastra' by king Mangarasa in 1516, and the 8th chapter of 'Linga Purana' by Gurulinga Desika in 1594, 'Lokopakara' by poet Chavundaraya are the texts written by men which speaks about different recipes and their preparations. The need to study food system for me was to write 'her'story along with 'his'story so that we can create our story of human food system.

Knowledge of nutrition includes what should be fed in different seasons for different age groups, right from toothless infants to toothless old people and sick people; pregnant women, women who have delivered; for different occasions like festivals and fairs.

Knowledge of preservation involves techniques to preserve food in different seasons in a organic way using lime, ash, mud, turmeric, salt, medicinal plants, and drying in the sun light.

Aesthetics of creating varieties of food with different tastes, different shapes, sizes, colours, designs

Creativity is shown in all the proverbs, stories, songs women have developed in the process of doing the work involved in preparation of food

Philosophy: Every human culture considers food as god. Disrespecting food is a crime. Every culture believes in sharing food and feeding the hungry. Mud on which food grains are grown is called mother earth!

Food as a knowledge system has evolved through women's emotional, intellectual, physical, creative, philosophical energy. It is neither recognized nor acknowledged nor duly credited.

Masanaba Fukovoka says food is a medicine to maintain health. Food is essential for our strength to work, stamina to confront diseases and keep us healthy both mentally and physically. Food in the present day has become a huge business in the globalized Market. Junk and packed food using chemicals are spoiling the whole digestive system. Serious health issues like obesity and gastro-intestinal problems have created major health issues.

Valuing the knowledge of women in food system, and adopting it practically in our day-to-day life itself is reclaiming that knowledge, which in turn becomes our strength to resist, confront violence and inequalities embedded in the name of development.

VI. Redefining Gender in the Knowledge Discourse

Tashi Choedup

As human beings, we navigate a world that is constantly changing and we also willingly or unwillingly participate in the process of that change. As cliché as it may sound 'change is the constant' and it won't be unrealistic to say that any of us are unfamiliar with this constant in our lives. In life, we are born into various social, political, economic, and cultural circumstances which the privileged try to maintain or strengthen more, and the marginalized folks aspire and try to change against many odds. Along with these outer circumstances we all are also born into many identities such as caste, race, class, ethnicity, and so on, and these identities are always presented as inherent to our existence, some more so than others. These outer circumstances and the supposed inherent identities are in constant interaction with each other, often with a great deal of friction and tension. This interaction in so many ways is the basis of struggles and our aspirations for a world that is free of such struggles.

One such interaction is between the identity called 'gender' and the rest of the world we inhabit. When we talk about gender it is often imagined in relation to the existence of cis-gender women and in the framework of feminist thinking. Even in 2025 when gender gets invoked it becomes the question of cis-women as if men are genderless and as if all 8 billion humans can be neatly categorised into these boxes of gendered cis-women and 'genderless men'. Of course, I am not implying that gender discourse has remained unchanged, in spite of all the changes, many pockets of the feminist world have resistance to fully unpacking gender and connecting with queer-trans movements.

As a non-academic, non-scholarly transgender person who spent all my adult life in

social justice movement spaces my engagement with 'identity politics' is personal and intimate, and at this knowledge convention I will share snippets of that journey and how I understand and perceive the connections and distances between feminist and queer movements and also how the identity of gender is undergoing a transformation in the personal and political.

VII. Epistemic violence in Development discourse and the space for ahimsa

Rajni Bakshi

In the ancient world 'ahimsa parmo dharam' was a radical idea and it arose from India -- where life was never seen as being fundamentally "short nasty and brutish". Indic cultures struggled with and then acquired a refined understanding of the dynamic between violence and nonviolence.

We have known for millennia that himsa and ahimsa are not a binary divide, its a spectrum.

This is why Gandhi said with absolute confidence that nonviolence is as old as the hills.

Lets explore just what ahimsa parmo dharam means -- why it is indeed possible but difficult.

How and why this awareness informs people's struggles for justice and dignity -- often resulting in painful challenges as well as opening pathways to creativity.

Why this is true not just for activists in India but across the world.

Nonviolence is not merely a "belief" or a tactic.

It is potentially an epistemic framework for a finer understanding of the human condition. When we do this then 'development', as it has been defined for the last 80 odd years, begins to unravel.

Then space grows for the ideal of Sarvodaya.

Just what does that mean today? Why is the ideal of nonviolence now under attack in India? Is there indeed a distinction between "dharmic violence" and "adharmic violence"? How we answer this question will shape our future.

Session-6

Artificial Intelligence and the Knowledge question

*Working Group: Rajeev Sangal (Convener), Avinash Jha, J K Suresh, Sunil Sahasrabudhey,
M Sasikumar, Shatrunjay Rawat , Nachiket Udupa*

AI or Artificial Intelligence is much talked about these days. There are predictions that it will enter into all aspects of our lives - from production to education and health, from distribution of products to information and entertainment, from social affairs and justice to politics and societal decision making.

There are fears of centralization of power, disempowerment of users, bias (unintended as well as planned), breach of privacy, loss of personal data, malevolent uses, malfunction of technology, and finally going all the way to takeover of human kind. Justifications for technology come from benevolent uses of technology - producing better health, mitigating disasters, performing of hazardous tasks by machines, to providing comfort, and indeed life without any work!

What about AI and Knowledge? What knowledge do AI systems possess today? Is it explicit or tacit (including intuition)? If it includes both types of knowledge can the machine reason with it transparently? Are systems explainable? Can they carry out a dialogue? Or the systems are completely opaque? If so, what are the implications - what new problems does this raise?

How do we deal with bias that might come into AI due to machine learning based on data? Who takes responsibility, if an AI system has bias?

Existing data reflects inequities and injustices of the past. Would AI systems, which use the same data for machine learning, end up propagating and promoting these? Human society has been evolving, at least yearning for equity and justice, non-violence, truth, etc. Valiant attempts have been made in history to build better societies. Would AI mean the end of evolution of society, leading to staying stagnant in status quo?

AI technology, like any other technology, would get used by the powerful and the privileged first. Would it lead to greater, even unprecedented, centralization of power?

Today, the big technology companies already possess private data on hundreds of millions of users, which they use to manipulate them. This manipulation is not limited to their buying habits and showing of directed advertisements, but is moving towards control over their thoughts. Control is exercised on circulation of certain types of messages, especially containing negative opinions and emotions. AI embedded in algorithms, is already playing a role. With the future developments of AI, such manipulative power would get deployed with even greater "ferocity", but quietly.

AI promises comforts, and a life without any work. In this scenario, the human beings become totally dependent on machines. It raises the ultimate question about what is the human "purpose"? Life with food, clothing and shelter, including play and entertainment, but bereft of emotions and relationships and without any meaning - would it lead to happy human beings and a life worth living?

The discussion on the theme “ AI and the Knowledge question” in the Convention will be in

the form of a Panel , and would seek to touch upon all these issues and offer insights into them.

The Program

Round 1: Presentation by Panelists

Avinash Jha - AI touching lives of ordinary people

Avinash Jha has been a librarian at Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi. He has been concerned with philosophical aspects of human affairs, and how they interact with society. His PhD is in Exact Humanities at IIIT Hyderabad.

Sasikumar M. - Explicit coding of knowledge to opacity now

Sasikumar has spent three decades in CDAC, Mumbai (earlier called NCST), as a young thinker and doer to leading the organization. He has been concerned with issues of technology and how it affects society.

Shatrunjay Rawat - Bias in AI systems and the problem it creates

Shatrunjay Rawat has been teaching at IIIT Hyderabad for the past 15 years. Before that he was a computer networking expert and manager at CMC Hyderabad (later renamed TCS). Besides networking, he has also been teaching AI and Ethics, and Human Values courses among others. He has played an important role in guiding students in running the mess, discipline, and other aspects of student life. He has been interested in traditional Indian knowledge in scriptures and other aspects.

Nachiket Udapa - Who takes accountability for AI systems?

Nachiket as a young thinker has been a keen observer of technology and how it shapes

Suresh J K - AI technology and Centralisation of power

JK Suresh has served in HAL and Infosys at Bengaluru for more than four decades. Ever since his students days at IIT Kanpur in late seventies, he has been dabbling in readings, thoughts and analysis of the befuddling relationship between politics, technology, science, society, language, philosophy and the like. He has been working towards popularising hand-made products in India as an alternative to large scale automated production of goods and services to provide dignity and livelihood to its people.

Rajeev Sangal - Summary and Human purpose and AI

Rajeev Sangal was the first regular Director of Indian Institute of Technology (BHU), Varanasi (2013-18), and the founding Director of IIIT Hyderabad (2002-13). Earlier, he was a faculty member at IIT Kanpur where he headed the Department of Computer Science and Engineering. He is the Chairman of the Executive Committee and the designer of Bhashini, the national Mission on language translation of Meity, Govt. of India. Besides working on NLP/AI for four decades, he has also worked on Universal Human Values and Student Induction Program and its national convenor over the last two decades.

Round 2: Cross questions among panelists

Round 3: Questions/observations from audience (Time permitting)

Papers/Abstracts Presented in Session-6

I. AI touching lives of ordinary people

Avinash Jha

Brief Summary:

Artificial Intelligence is based on representation of knowledge that obtains in ordinary life. The idea is to reduce the need for human intervention in knowledge processes. I will briefly discuss philosophical underpinnings of AI and some dimensions of how it is going to affect the dynamics of knowledge in society.

Abstract:

Human beings are knowledgeable beings. Knowledge for them is sahaj - meaning easy, spontaneous, natural. This capacity to know is not constructed by humans but is a part of life. In Contrast, artificial intelligence is a human construction. Its knowledge is the polar opposite of sahaj. It seeks to imitate the sahaj.

AI is based on simulation of human capacity of knowledge. It seeks a particular type of understanding of human cognitive capacities which can be simulated in a technology to create a non-human intelligence. In the process a new idea of knowledge is emergent.

We are going to approach AI from the perspective of knowledge in society. Knowledge is central to AI as it seeks to create non-human intelligence. This non-human intelligence in the form of technologically created knowledgeable agents will perform increasing number of cognitive tasks that are currently performed by humans. The idea is to reduce the need for human intervention in knowledge processes in industry, governance, and daily life. Knowledge processes are where data are gathered, interpreted, reasoned with, and decisions are made.

With increasing urbanisation and technologisation of life, the knowledge that was required to conduct our ordinary lives is slowly being replaced by 'information'. Information handling is the new knowledge that is crucial for the conduct of life. This knowledge of 'information handling' is also knowledge in society.

We will ask the question regarding who, and in what manner, is excluded and included in these developments. What is the kind of political imagination that is needed in order to intervene in matters related to development of AI and other ascending technologies?

II. A World without Grandmothers: AI and Society in the 21st Century

Dr. J.K. Suresh

“When the looms spin by themselves, we'll have no need for slaves.”

~*Aristotle*

“I speak and speak, Marco says, but the listener retains only the words he is expecting...It is not the voice that commands the story: it is the ear.”

~*Italo
Calvino*

Abstract

Popular imagination has for long held Knowledge as being agnostic to the affairs of the World. However, a close analysis of the relationship between Knowledge and Power in the modern age provides necessary clues to establish the nexus between the State, Capital and Power that in recent centuries seek to establish complete control over the lives of people.

The gains of mercantilism and colonialism since the 1600's, together with rapid advances in Natural Sciences and technologies, enabled the West to develop huge capital and labor intensive productive capabilities by the turn of the 19th Century. Such large changes led to the need for a radical restructuring of society in which Knowledge of various types started playing a central role. In turn, this resulted in a strong dialectic connection between the State, Capital, Power and Knowledge whose effects began to manifest themselves in a big way in the 1900's in the form of widespread disillusionment across societies about the nature and quality of the lives of the majority.

More recently, in the 35 years following the widespread adoption across the world of ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) in all walks of life, their nexus has significantly strengthened their hold over societal processes. Recent developments in AI (Artificial Intelligence) indicate that the world is likely to witness another round of large transformations that are likely to fundamentally alter current ideas about society, life, work, livelihood, equity, justice and freedom.

In summary, it is only by recognizing the new dynamics of Knowledge in the modern era that we may comprehend its evolving alignments, connections and relationships with societal processes; in turn, this will enable us to interrogate its nature and effects on the world today. This paper attempts to lay the foundations for such an exploration with special emphasis on recent developments in AI.

A. The New Role of Knowledge

Popular imagination for centuries has held Knowledge as a unique human trait that is somewhat untainted by the affairs of the World, except as a benign aid to progress and development. At first glance, it therefore appears unusual to treat Knowledge as being implicated, other than as a tool, in the machinations of State, Capital and Power that seek to control and drive the socio-economic and cultural processes of a society. It might appear for example that although the West in the modern era began to place faith in the Baconian dictum that Knowledge is Power, their connection was neither unambiguous nor well defined for long? In fact, a consideration of the work of scientists such as Newton, Laplace, Maxwell, Einstein, etc. or of philosophers such as Descartes, Locke, Hume, Kant, Marx, Wittgenstein etc. might even bear out the relative independence of the pursuit of Knowledge from affairs of society or considerations of the State! Or, as in the case of Galileo, demonstrate how the State could be inimical to the pursuit of Knowledge?

Rich ideas about Knowledge seem to have been pervasive on the other side of the world, in India, as well. We do know that the country's non-oral traditions have for long considered Knowledge as a thing of value to the extent it pertains to *Paravidya*. On the other hand, its oral traditions do not seem to have had great theories of Knowledge at all, although a modern analyses give an appearance that they do!

However, it is in recent centuries that the relationship between Knowledge and Society has undergone a remarkable transformation. To provide context, an exploration of the evolving relationship between Knowledge and Power in the modern age is provided below.

For three hundred years starting from the 16th Century, guns, steel and finance played an important part in the colonization of the new World as well as the East. This phenomenon may be considered the first successful attempt to set up a large global supply chain of raw materials and labor as well as of some finished and semi-finished goods that readied Europe for its next step. In subsequent years, the consolidation of the gains of mercantilism and colonialism of earlier times, along with the ongoing advancement of Natural Sciences and technologies, resulted in great changes that enabled the West to develop large Capital and labor intensive productive capabilities. Together with the Knowledge developed in various disciplines, they created a base for an intensive restructuring of society to accommodate emerging ideas of time, space, life, leisure and culture that came to rule it.

Over time, a strong dialectic connection between the State, Capital, Power and Knowledge developed to a point in the early 1900's where the purpose of Knowledge came to be increasingly seen as utilitarian and not merely as a search for truth, beauty or certitude that is to be detachedly pursued. This period introduced a greater degree of inter-connection and complexity in all societal processes involved in the control of raw materials, production and distribution of goods and services and the manipulation of tastes, preferences and choices of consumers. In cadence with it, the combine of State, Capital, Power and Knowledge seem to have become isomorphic: hierarchical, closed, secretive, propagandist, open to inspection yet difficult to comprehend, etc. This is usually justified by concerns of national interest and security, social and economic well-being, free trade and commerce, common good of society, protection of intellectual property rights etc.

To summarize, it is only by recognizing the new dynamics of Knowledge in this period that we may understand its evolving alignments, connections and relationships with societal processes; in turn, this will enable us to investigate assumptions of its independent status and interrogate its nature and effects on the world today. This note attempts to lay the foundations for such an exploration by seeking to provide a broad framework for understanding the current status and future prospects of 21st Century society with a particular emphasis on the status of the majority of its ordinary people.

B. AI and Society

It is important to note that AI is not a development out of the blue. Visions of machines that think, speak and act like humans have been on the margins of Western thought for millennia, at least since the time of the Greeks. However, it is in the second half of the 20th Century that they acquired momentum following the development of the digital computer. After an initial phase of euphoria engendered by small successes, AI went relatively dormant for a few decades. Its rejuvenation around ten or fifteen years ago was predicated on the convergence of several factors: extraordinary increases in computing power, social networks, knowledge of human behavior,

business oligarchies, political power, commerce and the technologies of surveillance and war that are enabled by ICT (Information and Communication Technologies).

This paper argues that AI must not be considered a mere development in the area of knowledge whose effects are solely determined by societal dynamics. It involves a deep dialectic between knowledge and power that cannot be represented by a one dimensional preoccupation with either one of them alone.

The author believes that the true effects of AI remain to be grasped in the years to come. What we see now is a situation that is developing and whose future forms and actions are not readily deducible at this point in time. However, it is important, especially from the standpoint of countries like India, to continuously monitor the developments in the broad areas of AI development, deployment, control and dispersion in order to evaluate its effect on Indian society and measures to increase public awareness about its consequences.

C. Questions that need Discussion

In this context, some questions that become relevant for any discussion on AI are the following:

- 1. Implications of the huge resources being pumped into its development:** It appears that in addition to the huge investments made in AI over the last 10 years, a half trillion USD will be spent on it in the next few years. This raises concerns about aspects of its ownership, control, areas of deployment and consequences to ordinary people across the world.
- 2. AI and its challenge to the foundations of S&T (Science and Technology):** Are concepts such as verifiability, repeatability, reliability and traceability applicable to AI? What place do socially mediated cognitive functions such as recognition of truth and fact have in the world of AI? Will AI lead to a new understanding of language, cognition, knowledge and intelligence? Are challenges such as the Turing Test (or TTT), the Chinese room no longer relevant?
- 3. AI and Human Society:** The frontline players of the AI industry have today forgotten their previous acknowledgements of significant threats to humanity from AI and are now in a competitive frenzy to develop associated technologies at breath taking speed. How do we address job losses because of AI in India? How do we ensure the safety, welfare and freedom of ordinary people in this situation? When regulatory authorities across the world appear bemused about containing the possible ill-effects of AI, what can India possibly do?
- 4. Consequences of Knowledge as Power in the AI era:** Knowledge and Power are today in perfect alignment more than ever before in history; in earlier times, enlightened segments of society that had the intellectual capacity to intercede between the laity and the State would often lend their support to the poor and the oppressed through dissent, opposition and discourse. Spaces for dissent, opposition and discourse by the oppressed have drastically shrunk with the rise of Techno-Capitalism across the world. In this context, what is the meaning of Equity and Justice in a world where Knowledge, Capital, Power and control vests with less than a tenth of a percent of humanity? What are the

possible sources of opposition to this phenomenon?

D. Conclusion

To conclude, in reflecting upon the various possibilities engendered by AI, it may be useful to recall an evolutionary oddity that characterizes three species on earth – the whales (not all, though!), the chimps and humans - the only ones where the female undergoes a menopause.

Not co-incidentally, these are the only species where nurturing children is both intensive and of long duration. With age, post-menopausal females of these species (not just the humans) are observed to become increasingly interested and helpful in rearing their “grandchildren”.

Menopause allows extension of maternal nurturing well beyond the usual in the animal kingdom, and because grandmothers play such an important a role in caring for offspring that are already born, it is possible to hypothesize that it may have evolved to benefit the social group.

In the age of AI, what would be the position of grandparents? Are they irrelevant to society? How would the immanent logic of the development of AI affect our ideas and practice of all that has been taken as self-evident truths about the world, human society, child development, wisdom of the elders, care for the old and life itself?

Session-7

Art and the Knowledge Question

*Working Group: Sushruthi Santhanam (Convener), A Sashikanth (Co-convener), Avinash Jha,
Sunil Sahasrabudhey, Udayan Bajpayee, Rajeev Sangal*

This session is to interrogate the territory of knowledge beyond the usual discourses of science, technology and social sciences, which have been left unexplored in the mainstream institutionalised academic spaces. Knowledge conceived of in the image of Science has an impervious boundary guarded by an epistemology that claims to be more and more universal. In this, universe knowledge is separated from aesthetics, ethics and any meaningful social experience. Whereas art seems to build bridges between mundane reality and intangible worlds of ideas, between many the perceptions of reality.

Within a larger deliberation on Knowledge, the panel *Art and the Knowledge Question* can simply serve one very important purpose, which is to turn our attention back to knowledge as a human potential to create experiences. For it is only in the domain of the arts (besides religion) that society has seen a persistent reinstatement of the *human experience* as the foremost purpose of human endeavour.

What is being explored here through the medium of art, is a conception of knowledge that can capture the paradigm of social life of ordinary human beings beyond production and consumption. As truth and meanings, collective visioning of life, reflection and contemplations of common people have all been better expressed through artistic intelligence.

In India there still exist several instances of such continuous social traditions in kalā (her used to refer to all creative work in kala and karigari). Historically this society made grand temples and complex lyrical compositions, iron and exquisite cloth as part of its engaged seeking of a sāmājik drsti. Now we critically examine these practices to help us work towards a more encompassing theory of knowledge that better represents human effort and the human condition.

No critical enquiry into a domain of practice can be undertaken without fully understanding its epistemic evolution. This panel sets of the enquiry approaching the epistemic space of kala neither by looking at it through lens of traditions nor as product genius and singular creativity. It attempts it through an essentially Indian understanding of Kala as a deliberate and legitimate social engagement whose primary purpose is to create collective experience. This is achieved in some cases through systematised knowledge of how to evoke (emotional state) *rasa anūbhuti* and even deeper states of consciousness and in a majority of cases its grammar and repertoire are simply embedded in social custom and ritual.

In these presentations and discussions you may find insights on culture, creativity, consciousness, historicity, truth, agency, discipline, practice, faith, subjectivity, grammar, freedom or tradition. But there is no such critical agenda here only an invitation to experience some practitioners and engaged minds speak of the mechanics of artistry, of the extraordinary discipline and adherence to codes and technical frameworks that open out subjective experiences; modes of knowing which are more vested in the body of the artists and the community of listeners, beholders, knowers of art, rather than in the texts; modes of work (technique), play (samvāda) and negotiation (consensus) creating the space for the samāja to exercise a collective ownership of the practice and performance of art.

Two papers presented at the very beginning by Banatanwi Dasamahapatra and S. Jayachandran illuminate very contemporary concerns, one of the role of aesthetic knowledge and sensitivity in creating institutional spaces and the other of creating a universal pedagogy for traditional knowledge. Udayan Vajpeyi and Sashikanth Ananthachari through their expositions on folk art

and theatre bring to fore the extraordinary element of artistic resilience deeply embedded in the memory and bodies of communities which form the prime response to the eternal challenge of vulnerability in the face of change and loss of context.

Shri. Dakshinamoorthy Sthapathi as the practitioner voice of shilpa shastra and the Ustad Bahauddin Dagar as the performer who speaks of the embodiment of tradition and play in the practice of the ancient tradition of Dhrupad, close the session.

If these deliberations could lead us closer to a view of art as a process that gently enables society towards realising Beauty - beheld as what is real, what is true, what is just and what is universal then we can hope that it would also illuminate, for the group here, an approach to work towards creative sovereignty and an imagination to push forward even towards an idea of *swaraj*.

The Program

4.00 -5.15 pm - Tribute to Late Prof. Navjyoti Singh

The first few talks and a sharing by his students and collaborators in the audience is designed to be a special tribute to Late Professor Navjyoti Singh whose seminal contribution in the field of aesthetics and philosophy informs some of the serious work that has happened in the area of Art, Knowledge and Society. Navjyoti Singh was primarily a philosopher, self-trained in the Vaisheshik philosophy. What is important was perhaps he was the only thinker who embarked upon developing a theory on the ontology of arts.

1. Banatanwi Dasmahapatra - *The Role of Design and Aesthetics in the Creative Growth of an Educational Institution - Impact and Relevance in Society*

Banatanwi was trained in Fine arts at Visva Bharati, Santiniketan, and earned a PhD from the Centre for Exact Humanities, IIT Hyderabad. She has also taught at IIT Hyderabad and was a visiting scholar at College of Fine Arts, Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, PA, USA; Research Associate at Outreach Programme, NID, Ahmedabad; Project Designer, National Centre for Jute Diversification (NCJD), Kolkata. Her current focus is on understanding the social and design vicissitudes of *colour*. At present, Banatanwi Dasmahapatra is an associate professor and H.O.D at the Department of Textile Design, Kala Bhavana, Visva-Bharati University, Santiniketan. Besides teaching, Banatanwi's professional career includes various exhibitions, seminars, workshops and projects.

2. S. Jayachandran - *Universal Dance Fundamentals and Their Regional Expressions: A Study of Indian Traditions*

S. Jayachandran is a practitioner of dance who works on formal nature of Art. He is a Lecturer at Center for Exact Humanities, IIT, Hyderabad. Jayachandran did Diploma in Saiva Siddhanta, B.A. History, M.A. History, M.A Philosophy and M.A. Bharatanatyam. He has researched significantly on the Temples of Tiruvarur and Chidambaram. As part of his research, the pedagogical tool he designed for teaching Universal Dance Fundamentals was granted a patent.

5.15 -5.45 pm -

3. Udayan Vajpeyi - *From Music to Painting : The Strange yet not so strange Tales of*

Pradhaans.

Udayan Vajpeyi is an acclaimed award winning writer, poet and translator. His numerous works include volumes of poetry, a short story collection, a book of essays, a book of recreated folktales and an account of an extended conversation with filmmaker Mani Kaul. He has translated into Hindi works of internationally acclaimed writers like Octavio Paz, Borges, Chekhov, Brodsky, Jaccottet, Tadeus Rozewicz. works include He is an interlocutor of folk traditions in storytelling and arts. Udayan Vajpeyi just retired from teaching Physiology at the Gandhi Medical College, Bhopal.

5.45 - 6.15 pm -

4. Dakshinamoorthy Sthapati - *Visual Expressions and Experiences in the Sculptural Heritage of India -Introduction.*

Dakshinamoorthy Sthapati comes in a long lineage of traditional sculptors and builders (Sthapati). Besides heading the firm Vedic Architects and Sculptors, he is an author of many books and articles, a teacher, a public speaker on the subject of traditional architectural heritage and is part of committees on Heritage Arts Conservation for the Government of Tamilnadu.

15 MINUTE BREAK

Expositions : The following two are screening and performance based talks

6.30 pm - 7.20 pm

5. Sashikant Ananthachari - Villi Bharatham- *Performance traditions in Mahabharata from Tamilnadu* (Film Screening and talk)

A graduate of Cinema from FTII, Pune, Sashikanth worked for many decades as a cinematographer. He has made over 300 documentaries and six feature films in his career and many of them have gone on to win both National and International recognition. He has been an interim Professor of Cinematography at the premier Satyajit Ray Film and Television of India, Kolkata, a Creative Consultant for an alternate Television channel, New Generation [Puthiya Thalaimurai in Tamil], and more recently he has completed designing a 2 part course for the Humanities and Sociology Department of IIT, Madras and NPTEL on 'Performance Traditions of the Mahabharata in Tamil Nadu'. He is currently working on the completion of a trilogy of films "Kelai Draupadai" [Listen Draupadi], "Ninaivin Nagaram" [Landscape and Memory] and 'Kalpavaasi" [Textures of Time] and two manuscripts 'Mahabharata of the Mind' on the aesthetic reception of the festival and 'Kaleidoscope- The Idea of Four' both of which are currently being revised for publication.

7.30 pm DINNER

8.30 -10.00 pm

6. Ustad Bahauddin Dagar - *On embodied learning and playing with tradition - A talk and a performance of Dhrupad on the Rudraveena.*

A Sangeet Natak Akademi Awardee, Bahauddin Dagar comes in the hoary lineage going back to 20 generations of Dhrupad Sangeet. The son of the inimitable Ustad Zia Moinuddin Dagar and later the disciple of his uncle the doyen, Ustad Fariduddin Dagar, Bahauddin, besides keeping alive the performative dimension of playing Dhrupad on the Rudraveena, has also made the conversation with an ancient tradition of music engaging and demanding at the same time.

Papers/Abstracts and Presentations made in Session-7

1. Banatanwi Dasamahapatra

The Role of Design and Aesthetics in the Creative Growth of an Educational Institution: Its Importance, Impact and Relevance in the Society

The idea is to analyze and examine the role of design and aesthetics in the foundation of an educational institution. Any creative action essentially requires a free mind. A mind can only be free when it's embraced with the phenomenon of aesthetic experience and aesthetic judgment. An aesthetic vision awakens our will power to re-create the horizons of existential, experiential and imaginary realities by re-visiting their intimate, immediate and distant spaces in the discreteness of reality. It brings clarity to our existential being in relation to experience and imagination. Design plays an important role to articulate the phenomenon of transformation from aesthetic experience to aesthetic judgment with the clarity of having meaningful celebration of life and composes the creative dimension of a society. I would reflect on and bring out certain fundamental areas as well as a specific site based on design thinking and aesthetic sensibilities in the institutional frameworks envisioned in Santiniketan School which became Visva-Bharati University later on and Centre for Exact Humanities (CEH).

2. S. Jayachandran

Universal Dance Fundamentals and Their Regional Expressions: A Study of Indian Traditions

Dance is a universal art of human expression that transcends cultural and geographical boundaries. While dance forms vary across regions, certain fundamental principles remain consistent. This paper explores the universal, form-neutral, and style-neutral fundamentals of dance such as Postures, Transitory movements across Postures and the rhythm in Transitory movements and examines how these principles manifest uniquely in the regional dance traditions of India. By analyzing both the shared foundations and distinct characteristics, this study provides insights into the dynamic interplay between global dance principles and localized

artistic expressions. While Indian dance forms are deeply rooted in cultural narratives, religious symbolism, and historical continuity, they remain aligned with the fundamental aspects that define dance as an art form. By understanding the intersection of fundamentals of dance, dancers, choreographers, and researchers can gain a more comprehensive perspective on the ways in which movement transcends borders while embracing its uniqueness.

3. Udayan Vajpeyi

From Music to Painting: The Strange Yet not-so-strange Tales of Pardhaans

All transformations give materiality to the otherwise immaterial thing called time. This time lives in tales. Perhaps we may claim that the point of all tales is to underline one or other kind of transformation.

The one I am going to talk about is no different. It is about an extremely strange transformation that took place not long ago. It is about Pardhaans, a sub-community of the Gonds, one of the largest 'tribes' of central India, and one that has ruled portions of that region for centuries, both before and after Mughal rule. I must express my reservations about the use of the word 'tribal' in the Indian context, because I feel those who are called tribal in the modern discourses about India are in fact various castes; their complementarity to each other, like that of castes in various localities, is one of the reasons why this is so. I believe that they were conceptually and practically segregated from other communities living in India, to serve the purposes of colonial rule - even though their lifestyles were in continuity with those of other communities. But that is

a different story, which will have to wait for some more time if it wants to be told in greater detail and with authenticity. So then, I keep my reservation with me and tell you the story of the Pardhaans. Let me begin by quoting two of their folk tales.

The first tale is about birth of the mahua tree. The wine made from its flowers is used in almost all rituals of almost all tribes of Central India

4. Dakshinamoorthy Sthapati

Visual Expressions and Experiences in the Sculptural Heritage of India -Introduction.

The cultural history of India is built on a strong artistic foundation that extends across the nation. The traditions and practices of this heritage remain vibrant today, serving as significant sources of beauty and breathing life into our artistic legacy.

The extensive tapestry of India's vibrant artistic heritage includes five branches: Literature, Music, Dance, Sculpture, and Architecture. Although distinct, they are interconnected through a shared logic behind their experiences and expressions.

The core theme of every artistic creation lies in the artist's experience, who envisions and derives enjoyment from expressing their ideas, ultimately aiming to share that enjoyment with others. This experience and expression can be understood as envisioning and manifesting or cause and effect in every creative work. Maha Kavi Kalidasa highlights this concept through the Upanishadic phrase "Raso vai saha Rasikaha," which translates to "the creator becomes the essence of enjoyment when they find joy in the act of creation." This idea applies to all five

branches of art forms.

The Shilpa heritage represents an important aspect of Indian culture that deserves more discussion to help people understand and appreciate this art form. As previously mentioned, the experience and enjoyment of art are similar across various Indian traditional forms. It is also important to highlight that "sculpture is visual music, and music is audible sculpture," which allows for a deeper understanding of both.

To grasp the sculptor's vision, one must recognize how the universe's principles are applied through technology. The sculptor takes this same technology and skillfully transforms it into visible art for the public to enjoy. Our ancestors spent many years studying the process of envisioning and its manifestation through sculpture, documented in ancient texts known as the Shastras, which is explained in the forthcoming session of Dr Sthapati K. Dakshinamoorthy.

5. Shashikant ANANTHACHARI

'PERFORMANCE TRADITIONS OF THE MAHABHARATA IN TAMIL NADU

Every year in over 300 villages in North and South Arcot districts of TN, the Mahabharata is celebrated as a festival at the Dharmaraja/Draupadi Amman temples. For over 20 days, the Mahabharata is recited as a story, performed as a ritual and enacted as theatre. An icon of Draupadi is taken to wherever the performance takes place, and it is believed that the Mahabharata is performed for Draupadi to hear her own story. Draupadi here is doubled, she is both the primary audience and a representative of all the people unjustly affected by war. Though there are designated performance spaces, at some point or other the entire village becomes the performance space. It is an immersive festival and the audience/participants get to relive the Mahabharata in their own lives. The villages, for the duration of the festival don multiple identities from the Panchala kingdom, Indraprastha, to the forests where the Pandavas live in Vanavaasam culminating in its final identity as Kurukshetra, or in Tamil, Padugalam. The festival seems to be strongly anti-war in nature as it is performed to create Samarasam or peace and harmony in the festival villages and the Mahabharata itself is seen as an anti-war text. After the ritual killing of Duryodhana and on the performance of his funeral rites by the villagers themselves these festivals conclude with the coronation of Dharmaraja, the just King.

Full Papers presented

I. From Music to Painting: The Strange Yet not-so-strange Tales of Pardhaans

UDAYAN VAJPEYI

1. All transformations give materiality to the otherwise immaterial thing called time. This time lives in tales. Perhaps we may claim that the point of all tales is to underline one or other kind of transformation.

The one I am going to talk about is no different. It is about an extremely strange transformation that took place not long ago. It is about Pardhaans, a sub-community of the Gonds, one of the

largest 'tribes' of central India, and one that has ruled portions of that region for centuries, both before and after Mughal rule. I must express my reservations about the use of the word 'tribal' in the Indian context, because I feel those who are called tribal in the modern discourses about India are in fact various castes; their complementarity to each other, like that of castes in various localities, is one of the reasons why this is so. I believe that they were conceptually and practically segregated from other communities living in India, to serve the purposes of colonial rule - even though their lifestyles were in continuity with those of other communities. But that is a different story, which will have to wait for some more time if it wants to be told in greater detail and with authenticity.

So then, I keep my reservation with me and tell you the story of the Pardhaans. Let me begin by quoting two of their folk tales.

The first tale is about birth of the mahua tree. The wine made from its flowers is used in almost all rituals of almost all tribes of Central India.

The Wine of Mahua Flowers

One day, Shiva the god thought about us, human beings. He wondered how we would offer wine to the gods and goddesses, after having made sacrifices of goats and chickens to them. Without mahua trees, how would the ceremony of offering wine be performed?

He called over the parrot, the tiger and the boar, and said to them, "Become mahua trees". "Very well. We shall become mahua trees", the three said. In the month of Chait (around March), flowers blossomed in the mahua trees. Flocks of tiny birds came to the three trees. They pecked at the flowers and ate them. After eating no more than two or three flowers, they began calling out loudly, "Cheep chirp cheep, cheep chirp cheep cheep..." They raised a din.

People thought, "There definitely is some intoxicant in these flowers, or else the birds wouldn't make this noise after eating them". The people now began making wine from the same flowers, and they began using the brew in all festivals and ceremonies.

If a man drinks a tiny quantity of mahua wine, he becomes like a parrot and says the same thing over and over again. If he drinks a little more, he becomes like a lion. He doesn't speak, he roars. And if he drinks still more, he becomes a boar. He lolls on the ground.

The other is a long tale about the dog, the fox and their daughter. I will quote only a segment:

Dog Father, Fox Mother

When a girl was born to the fox and the dog, the dog thought, "The two of us get by with scraps of food foraged here and there, but this human daughter born to us, how will we feed (her)?"

The dog was the girl's father, after all. His worries were understandable. He went into the basti (settlement), stole into a house left open by the owners who were away, and grabbed a roti. He gave it to the girl. For years together he fed the girl thus, with food grabbed from homes in the basti. The girl grew.

The growing girl made the dog worried again. "We are born dogs and foxes, after all, what have we to do with clothes? But this girl of human form has to have clothes. How can she be without them?" An idea came to him. He said to the fox, "Powder my tail with ash". She did so.

Powdered thus, he went to the bazaar and sneaked into a shop selling clothes, and ornaments of gold and silver. The dog wagged his tail furiously. Ash spread all over the shop. Ash went into the shopkeeper's eyes too, blinding him. This was his chance: the dog grabbed a heap of clothes and all the ornaments he could, and ran back into the jungle. He gave the clothes and ornaments to the girl and asked her to wear them.

The girl grew still bigger. The dog fell into worry again. "Where am I to give this girl in marriage?"

Where do we go to settle an alliance for her, we that are born dog and fox?" One day the dog wandered away from the jungle. Fields stretched far and wide. Many people were at work in the fields. He looked carefully at the men farming the fields, studied them and their ways. And so the tale continues.

It is evident is that in both tales the transformations take place and are dramatized with equal ease. It is as if these shifts of imagination are naturally embedded in the awareness of the people who exchange such tales. And perhaps that's why when a major change was demanded from their own lives, they faced it with patience and understanding they negotiated that literal transformation with the customary attitude they maintained towards the symbolic transformations present in their tales, in their music.

2. Paridhaans are the musicians, genealogists and storytellers of the Gonds. This story about their origin appears in Sheikh Gulab's *The Gond*:

The Gonds were seven brothers. They sowed jute in the fields. In a few days, the jute began to grow. One day they saw a handsome young man galloping on his horse right through their field. The hooves were trampling the jute saplings. They pounced on the young man with their paitharis (spears). The youngest brother was so scared that his stomach got upset. He went to the nearby nullah (ditch) to relieve himself. The other six brothers chased the horseman. The field was quite big. At the edge of it was a saja tree. Seeing the Gond brothers chasing him, the horseman rode up to the saja tree and disappeared into it along with his horse. The Gonds saw him vanish into the tree. They instantly understood... "This is our Bada Dev (Big Lord) who came riding through our field on his white horse. How unfortunate we are that we could not recognise him... Now he is angry with us. He has disappeared into the saja tree. How should we placate him?"

Together they began to reflect on this. They erected a platform under the saja tree. They offered rar lentils. Sacrificed a white rooster. Sprinkled wine made from mahua. Folded their hands in prayer. Went on pleading... But Bada Dev was angry. He did not come out of the saja tree... At this point the youngest brother turned up from the direction of the nullah. He found out what had happened... He said. "I'll find a way, it might please Bada Dev..." He went and felled a bough from a khirsani tree. He made a one stringed instrument from the wood and playing on it, began to sing. The notes began to resound in the woods. In the song he started to sing praises of the glory of Bada Dev. Listening to the song, Bada Dev was pleased. He made an appearance in the trunk of the saja tree. He blessed the youngest brother by placing his hand on his head.

"Whenever you sing my song playing this instrument, I'll make an appearance. This instrument of yours will be called bana". Bada Dev accepted everybody's offerings and once again vanished into the saja tree....

Pardbaans used to go to the house of their yajimaan every third year and sing stories about their deity Bada Dev, about the valour of great Gond kings, and many other stories. Their songs were and are accompanied by the music played on the bana. There is also an extremely interesting story about playing the bana. When the Pardhaan made the bana from the wood of the khirsan/ tree, he had no idea about how to play it. He kept thinking, but could not imagine the way to play it. After some time he found himself looking at a kasanger bird in the sky. She would rise like an arrow but would descend in the rhythm of waves. This was her style of flying.

The Pardhaan immediately understood that this was how he should move his bow on the string of the bana.

At the yajmaan's house, the Pardhaan would also perform other rituals, particularly those relating to death. The spirit of those Gonds who have died in the yajmaan's house after the last visit of the Pardhaan are supposed to wait for his arrival so that he can merge them into the spirit of Bada Dev. Something very similar to the Hindu practice of going to Gaya after the death of their kin, an act they believe unites the departed spirits with Brahman, the absolute reality. Each Pardhaan singer normally had 50-60 yajmaans. He would go there every third year in the brighter half of the month of Vaisakha (April-May). He received his grain, oil, clothes, utensils, etc., from his yajmaan. Pardhaans were not supposed to earn their living through farming. They lived amongst farmers, but were seen as performers and were supposed to sing and narrate, and evoke the collective memory of their people. In fact, if someone died at the yajmaan's house half of his or her belongings, including jewellery, etc., were given to the genealogist Pardhaan. And rightly so: after all, he was the one who would enable the dead person's spirit to be subsumed into that of Bada Dev. He was, as stated in the Guru Granth Sahib:

... one who merges each singular light with the Universal Light ...

3. I am writing about Pardhaan singers who 'were', i.e., in the past tense. This may cause some confusion. It is a fact that the position that the Pardhaans had a century or two ago is no longer existent, but in a lot of Gond-Pardhaan villages, we can still find pardhaans evoking Bada Dev or praising the valour of past Gond kings, accompanying themselves on the bana. This can still be witnessed in number of villages of Dindori or Mandala districts of Central India. But the social texture that gave resonance and spiritual authenticity to the Pardhaans' performances has weakened. The centuries have played their different roles in contributing to this decline. The complex mechanism of social patronage is today fragmented. Pardhaans might still be going to their yajmaan's houses, but yajmaans are no longer able to support their genealogist-musicians. As a result, Pardhaans are forced to do farming or manual labour in their own villages or in small towns or cities nearby. The inherited and nurtured self-image of being valued performers lies buried within, awaiting the chance to materialise. The sad situation that the Pardhaans are in is evidence of the way a social support system had taken care of artistic activities in India, and how its erosion led to the difficulties that the artists now have to suffer.

As is true for many other pagan traditions, the Gond-Pardhaan society also lives with a number of gods and goddesses. They are everywhere. In fact, these gods and goddesses mediate all possible relations between man and nature. Sensed as somewhere between the two, they bequeath a divine aura to nature, and bestow upon man a sense of being a part of divinity. Members of the community experience this connection at almost every moment of their lives, whether they are going to the forest or crossing the border of their village or cooking meals or putting a child into the cradle. Here the deities are not yet distilled into an abstract idea; through them, the sensuous and the spiritual manifest together.

4. Jangarh Singh Shyam was a Pardhaan boy from the village of Patangarh of Dindori district of Madhya Pradesh. He, like his ancestors, loved music; but unlike them, had almost no possibility of carrying on the tradition of music and storytelling. He was born when the system of social patronage had become ineffective. From his childhood onwards he was forced to do manual labour to support his extremely poor family. Only at night, when he was alone, he would play his flute as if to console the Pardhaan musical tradition flowing silently within him, as if to tell

himself that he though he was not in a position to perform for the Gond yajmaans, he could at least keep the music alive for himself.

It so happened that at that time a major art centre was being built in Bhopal. The person in charge of the subject area of plastic arts was the well-known modern painter and thinker Jagdish Swaminathan. He wanted to create a gallery of contemporary art in which both urban and rural, so-called 'modern', folk and tribal arts were to be displayed. He was very clear about the notion of the 'contemporary' in the arts; he thought societies that were technologically backward need not be artistically feeble, and did not live in bygone times. For Swaminathan, all forms of social organizations that existed in a particular time, whatever their technological status, were 'contemporary'. He sent groups of young artists to many villages of central India to collect folk and tribal paintings, sculpture, etc.

In a particular village, one such group found some interesting paintings on the wall of a house. There was not a single painting anywhere else in the village. They asked for the painter, and found that the work was by a boy called Jangarh Singh Shyam. They requested him to come with them to Bhopal. He obliged. Swaminathan provided painting materials to the boy and asked him to create whatever he felt like. The restless musician waiting in the folds of Jangarh's mind saw a new possibility and means to express himself: painting.

5. The 5th century Sanskrit text Vishnudharmottarpuran narrates a revealing dialogue between King Vajra and the venerable sage Muni Markandeya. The account is known as the Chitrasutra. The king wanted to build a temple and install an icon within it. He asked Markandeya how the icon was to be sculpted. The sage replied that one who did not know about chitra (painting) would not be able to sculpt. The king asked him as to how a painting is rendered. The sage replied that one who did not know about dance couldn't make a painting. The king asked about dance, and the sage replied that one who did not know instrumental music could not possibly understand dance. The king asked about instrumental music. The sage asserted that for understanding instrumental music, it was necessary to understand singing. The king asked about singing. The sage replied that one who did not understand the way a poem is written or read (geetashastra) could not possibly understand singing. The king asked about geetashastra. The sage instructed him with regard to the nature of language and poetry; and then told him about singing, then about instrumental music, dance, painting, and finally how an icon could be sculpted.

6. The opportunity to paint and, to an extent sculpt, led to a strange transformation in Jangarh Singh Shyam: he started painting feverishly. Painting most wonderfully. Painting in a style which was uniquely his own and yet seemed to be rooted in tradition, a tradition not of painting but of his own tradition of music. In a way, his skills catalysed the metamorphosis of music into painting. Or, transposing Muni Markandey's astute logic from the Vishnudharmottarpuran, the painting which was inherent in the Pardhaan's music was given a chance to unfold itself directly on paper and canvas..

Something miraculous has happened. And yet the possibility of such a happening was already foretold in the conversation of King Vajra and Muni Markandeya...

Bada Dev, Mahrilin Devi and numerous other gods and goddesses, strange birds, flying snakes, animals, beautiful trees and several other entities who inhabited the songs of the Pardhaans, who had existed as notes of music, started manifesting on the canvas in various colours, and in a unique, distinctive style. It was the first time that the Gond pantheon was being actualised in images. Mostly orally transmitted, Gond iconography was now taking a visual form. These icons

were extremely alluring versions of those gods and goddesses embedded in Pardhaan narratives. Within a few years of Jangarh's endeavour, many Pardhaans began painting in that distinct style which Jangarh discovered. More and more Pardhaans would come to Bhopal to participate in this newly found mode of creative self-actualisation. Many of them very happily turned away from their farming to take up painting. This new genre provided a livelihood to Pardhaan women as well as men. It was as if the flow of creativity which had been obstructed for many historical reasons found a new release. And this aesthetic/symbolic shift came very naturally to most Pardhaans. The moment they were offered and accepted the possibility, they immersed in it with as much ease as their immersion in their music.

7. I will not go into greater details of the Pardhaan painting style, but will only say that it is highly musical in its composition, in the interrelationship of its elements. It is also musical in the way it treats narrative and the various configurations of temporalities. I only wish to emphasise that when such an event took place in the lives of Pardhaans, they accepted it with open hands and hearts. The Jangarh phenomenon happened less than three decades ago, and already more than a few hundred Pardhaans have started painting, in a broad and recognisable style with its own distinct visual vocabulary. They were all painting in the same manner, and yet each painter individuated in a particular way. This style of painting has been called by various names: Jangarh Kalam, Pardhaan painting, Gond painting, etc. I prefer Jangarh Kalam, where 'Kalam' means 'style'.

It is true that Jangarh Kalam is the art of a community, an art practiced by artists still strongly rooted to their community, who are not spiritually alienated from their communal lives. But since this style was first created by that boy who came from the little village of Patangarh, it is named Jangarh Kalam. A number of Jangarh Kalam painters now live in Bhopal, as well as in Gond-Pardhaan villages. They have yet another common denominator: they are giving visual form to their deities, but at the same time, through this act they are trying to protect them from the very real danger of oblivion. Their new life in cities is also making the Pardhaan painters' task of symbolic retrieval a little more urgent. These are works of great excitement because their creators have found a new genre for self- and community expression; but they are simultaneously works of great longing, as the artists are becoming increasingly alienated in space and time from their home...

The Hindi word for 'longing/yearning' is 'utkanthaa'; literally, 'raising one's neck in order to see'. Perhaps this is the situation the Pardhaan painters find themselves in: one of anticipation and expectation, but a constant recollection of the deities and the landscapes of the village.

8. This newly found creative genre of the Pardhaans is already under threat. The artists are living in stressful conditions in cities, but do not want to return to their villages because of the almost complete absence of patronage, and an equal lack of work opportunities, even as manual labourers. They also do not wish to leave because the cities have bred hope in them: hope in some distant or not-so-distant future. This is how almost all modern cities function as the breeding grounds of hope, because they exist in more or less purely linear time, their trajectory always pointing towards a kind of betterment. Purely at the notional level, the figure of 'a brighter tomorrow' has a much better chance of surviving in cities than in villages. Most Pardhaan painters in cities also experience pressures on their creativity. Earlier, when their ancestors were practicing and performing music in their villages, no yajmaan would put any pressure on them to sing any so-called 'new' themes. The themes were made new, if at all, by the singers themselves, and not under any external coercion. They were primarily evoking the

intimate world of their audience; their form was not representative but evocative. But in cities, the rootless middle class is pressurising the Pardhaans to paint themes that have nothing to do with these painters' lives or memories. The populist forces are attempting to displace the folk world from folk paintings. They are attempting to hollow out the style of Jangarh, i.e., Jangarh Kalam. More and more, the once ingrained sense of community is becoming remote for Pardhaans. This is the challenge they now face. Only the future can tell which will prevail - fidelity to collective consciousness, or the stranglehold of economic survival. Or do we already know the result? Perhaps not. Who knows how many transformations are waiting to manifest in the Pardhaan's lives, as in their narratives...

Notes

1. I heard these tales, along with many others, from Pardhaan men and women in their native language, Chhattisgarhi-a dialect, so to speak, of Hindi I rewrote these tales in Hindi without altering a single detail For this essay I have used Delhi-based writer Raji Narasimhar's English translation of my Hindi version.
2. The term used by Pardhaans for the person in whose house the singing and storytelling is performed. This word comes from the terminology of Vedic rituals where yajmaan refers to the person who regularly does the yajna (broadly translated as 'sacrifice), and also the one who invites the purohit (in general translated as 'priest'; here, the one who performs the ritual) for the yajna. The reach of this word yajmaan, extends far beyond the Vedic rituals. It has a defined place and similar connotation in the sociological setup of India. For instance, a barber calls his client, whose house he regularly visits as a servitor for the work of cutting hair, his yajmaan. In earlier times, and even today, the yajmaan would not pay for each visit/service, but support the barber through his entire livelihood. The same relationship exists between the clients of potters, carpenters, etc., and these artisans. This system and its terminology suggest that according to this traditional logic, society is seen as a continuous, yajna performing body. Coincidentally, Pardhaans call themselves the purohits of the Gonds. Another genealogist community, the Charans, also call themselves purohits of the Rajput community, of whom they are the genealogists and family-poets.
3. Chitra translates as 'painting', and sutra as 'aphorism'. Therefore chitrasutra would essentially translate as 'axioms on painting. But here the word chitra (painting) is used metonymically for all arts.
4. Pardhaans are genealogists and storytellers. They narrate through singing, which in any case has come into being through recitation. Therefore many genealogists of various castes and locations in India are musicians: the Charans of Rajasthan and Gujarat, Bhaats of Rajasthan, Patiyas of Bundelkhand, etc. The word "Charan" derives etymologically from the Hindi word ucchaaran, lit. 'enunciation'.
5. One of the four goddesses who protect the borders of the Gond village.
6. "Jangarh Kalam" was coined by my painter friend Akhilesh, in the long obituary of Jangarh he wrote a few years ago. Jangarh died tragically young in Japan, in suspicious circumstances. He was painting for a gallery of traditional Indian arts. It is said that he was under enormous pressure there to paint more. He wanted to come back home but was unable to do so. He found a strange way of escaping that alleged pressure: he committed suicide. "Kalam" is used traditionally to name a style of painting, such as Bundeli Kalam for a style of painting that originates in Bundelkhand.
7. Those living in villages also have to come to cities to sell their works. There are no

yajmaans in their present situation.

8. Folk' would translate as lok in Sanskrit a term suggesting a terrain/domain/environment that includes plants and animals as well as humans.

9. This of a sense of community and the parallel birth of an alienated individual is most useful for the modern nation state (and now for the market). Without fragmenting communities into individuals, the nation state cannot present itself as a repository of collective wisdom and ethics, a function conventionally attributed to the community, its leaders, its legends, etc

II. PERFORMANCE TRADITIONS OF THE MAHABHARATA IN TAMIL NADU : A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE MAHABHARATA FESTIVALS OF TAMILNADU

Sashikanth. A

“In a world surrounded by water, to stand along with the four Vedas, the fifth Veda, the Mahabharata was narrated by the Rishi of unfading power of austerities, We bow in respect and love to Vinayaka who transcribed the text with Mount Meru as the slate and his tusk as the writing tool”

Villibharatham

In over 300 villages in Tamilnadu and southern Andhra Pradesh, the Mahabharata is celebrated as a unique festival. The festival is variously called Agniotsava Vasantha Bharatha Thiruvizha, [The Spring Mahabharata Festival] Dharmaraja Draupadi Amman Mahabharata Koothu Vizha, Draupadi Amman Theemidhi Vizha [The Firewalk Festival], or sometimes simply as 'Padugalam'[The Battlefield] referring to the penultimate days spectacular event.

During the heydays of the Pallava rule in these regions there seems to have been state patronage for these festivals. There are copper plate inscriptions mentioning both land and money being allocated for the reading of 'Bharatham' or the Mahabharata as it is known in Tamil. Currently each family in these villages contributes money for the celebration of the festival and the total revenue generated in each village can vary between 30 lakhs to one and a half crore of rupees, depending on the affluence of each village. This festival is unique because it is probably the longest running, independently funded theatre festival in the world being performed for well over a thousand years.

Na Muthuswamy first drew my attention to the intricate structure of this festival and its design. He said cryptically “The Mahabharata plays a huge part in Indian and Tamil cultures specifically. It helps one to understand as to what life is; it helps in the development of one's own personality, it also helps one to understand one's own behavioural patterns. You will understand it when you see the ten day Koothu festival. The festival is not about some plays being enacted which people just watch; there is a design and an excess of meaning here.” The structure and design of the festival will be one element explored in this book.

The first question which arises is that when returns from agriculture have been declining for the

past few decades why do the farmers spend such huge sum of money to conduct these festivals? The answer given unanimously was deceptively simple- to promote 'Samarasam' or peace and harmony in the villages. The Mahabharata, at its core, is a narrative of a fratricidal war fought between cousins over Kingship in which there are finally no real winners. This narrative of the calamitous war becoming a vehicle to promote peace and harmony begs one to ask as to how the Epic was seen in these villages. A storyteller, Muthuganesan gave the pithiest description of the Epic. He said it speaks about the repercussions of "Man Aasai, Penn Aasai, Pon Aasai" meaning that all conflicts at the core hinge on three kinds of desire- the desire for land, or women or gold.

Conflict resolution also seems to be one core of the festival and in every festival you can see old resentments flaring up, conflicts between communities and sometimes conflicts amongst the organisers themselves. A lot of these conflicts are resolved during the course of the festival itself, while some are deferred to raise their head again, in the next festival

These festivals can be celebrated for about ten days to hundred and twenty days with the Vellore Mahabharata festival being the longest such festival which is celebrated for four months. All the festivals culminate with the crowning of Dharmaraja/Yudhisthira , the eldest of the five Pandavas as the King, but paradoxically enough Dharmaraja, in most villages is never taken out of the temple; only Draupadi and the idols of the other four Pandavas are taken out in procession every day of the festival.

The storyteller Kanchipuram Muthuganesan There are a lot of details in these Mahabharata festivals, generally they will not bring Dharmaraja's idol out of the temple.

Because Dharmaraja not wanting to see the Adharma of the new Yuga, the Kali Yuga, had crowned Arjuna's grandson as the King and departed to the heavens. Respecting his wish of not wanting to see Kali Yuga, they will not bring him out of the temple. This is in 99% of the villages, but in 1 % of these villages they will bring Dharumar's idol out in procession! When you ask them why they bring him out of the temple they say that if that noble soul's gaze fell on all the atrocities happening in Kali Yuga, maybe things will be better!

There are basically two texts used to narrate the story of the Epic. The first is a 14th Century text called 'Villibharatham' or the Bharatham written by a poet from Villiputthur and an 18th century text written by Nallapillai called Nallapillai Bharatham. Nallapillai Bharatham is a portmanteaux text incorporating all available renderings of the Mahabharata in Tamil, including Villibharatham. Professional Singer/storytellers and professional Koothu troupes are hired by the villages to sing the Bharatham and to enact the theatre, but the rituals are performed by the villages themselves.

A pair of singer/storyteller would inaugurate the festival. The singer would sing a song from the text which will be in a Tamil unknown to contemporary Tamil speakers. The storyteller will explain the song and ground it in the values of contemporary times.

MD Muthukumaraswam-There will be two people involved in this. Sometimes they are mistakenly named as Villupattu singers, but they have no connection to the form called Villu Paattu and are basically storytellers. They will read from the Villi Bharatham and there will be two people, one the storyteller and the other the singer with a harmonium. The storyteller has freedom and all kinds of liberties in his performance. It is essential that he knows both the Mahabharata and Villi Bharatham thoroughly. While he will extemporise freely, his accompanist will not deviate from the written text. The storyteller would narrate in a free form and stop at a juncture. For example if they were performing the Virata Parva episode of the Epic, the storyteller will give a general introduction to the story and connect it to everyday lived reality of the villages. The singer will sing some important verses from the text. The singer can take no liberties but be absolutely faithful to the text and the rules of how it should be sung. It is essential that the storyteller has to be a highly educated person and be a fountain of knowledge. It is not just enough that he knows the Mahabharata; he also has to know literature, Cinema and have a deep understanding of contemporary village life. It is only when knows all this will he be able to narrate the Epic.

*"When she heard of it, Kunti, the daughter of hills, got angry
and called for the killing of Bakasuran.*

The daughter of just lineage commanded her son Bhima.

*With the virility and power granted by the great Hanuman
clash with the demon,*

and pulling out his entrails and brains destroy the demons body!"

For the first few days of the festival, the Epic would only be sung and narrated as a story in the afternoon. This performance would be of four hours each day. Only when the singer/storyteller reaches the point of Draupadi's marriage with Arjuna will the theatre cycle start. In most villages 'Vil Valaippu' or the play about Arjuna winning Draupadi's hand in marriage will be the first Koothu enacted.

After Arjuna wins Draupadi's hand in marriage, the festival would be celebrated for 20 hours each day, with the village rituals in the morning, followed by the storytelling sessions while the Koothu would be enacted right through the night. While the storytelling and theatrical enactments would be performed by hired professionals, the village rituals would be performed by the villagers themselves. It is by the act of performing these rituals themselves; the villagers inscribe themselves into the Mahabharata. Though there is a designated space for theatre in these festivals, theatre is performed all around the village and every space in the village at one point or the other becomes performance space and everything from the storytelling sessions to the rituals being performed is also theatre. It is an immersive experience which does not seem to permit the notion of an outside. For the entire duration of the festival all the people in the village become characters from the Epic and to perform this transformation, the village rituals play an important part.

To give an example;

the shift of tenor in the festival happens with the ritual of the 'Burning of the Lacquer Palace' performed by the villagers. As the storyteller is narrating the episode of the burning of the Lacquer Palace, the villagers would erect a hut like structure between the storytelling space and the theatrical enactments space.

In the Epic, when Dharmaraja/Yudhisthira asks for their rightful share of the kingdom from their fraternal cousin Duryodhana, he deceitfully promises to apportion the kingdom and asks the five Pandavas with their mother Kunti to stay in a palace he has built for them. Duryodhana has built the palace with combustible materials and intends to burn his cousins to death while they are asleep. To ensure their death, Duryodhana has also sent 6 assassins to complete the job. Bhima comes to know of the plot through Vidura and escapes carrying his four brothers and mother on his shoulders, leaving the 6 assassins to die in the fire.

In the village, 6 dolls representing the assassins sent by Duryodhana would be placed in the hut like structure and the villagers would set fire to it. An idol of Bhima would be carried around this burning structure and the nature and duration of the enactments change dramatically from this point onwards.

Every day the storytelling sessions would begin with an invocation to Vinayaka, the scribe of Veda Vyasa. This opening song also invokes the idea of Pralaya, or the Great Deluge.

*"In a world surrounded by water, to stand along with the four Vedas
the fifth Veda, the Mahabharata was narrated
by the Rishi of unfading power of austerities,
We bow in respect and love to Vinayaka
who transcribed the text
with Mount Meru as the slate and his tusk as the writing tool."*

In Ramayana, Kamban described the world as 'Aazhisoozhulagam', meaning the world surrounded by water, in Villibharatham, he says 'Needazhiulagam' Aazhi means the Oceans.

Eternal recurrence is an idea embedded in different systems of thought in Indian traditions, both of the theist and atheistic schools. The world is reborn afresh from deluge into the Satya Yuga, the time when everyone leads virtuous lives; this is followed by Treta Yuga where Adharma makes its presence felt; Dwapara Yuga when the Great War was fought where the values of the previous two Yugas start disappearing followed by the Kali Yuga in which we live where there is an almost near eclipse of Dharma.

Every time the world recovers from a deluge, another Vyasa will be born to organize all the knowledge of the worlds and compile the four Vedas, Brahma would again ask him to compose the Mahabharata, and the Great War would be fought again.

A popular saying in these festivals is that the Mahabharata is re-enacted so that Draupadi can hear her story again. Draupadi is seen as the representative of all the people unjustly affected

by war. Draupadi is 'doubled'- she is both the Queen of the Pandavas and the primary audience for this spectacle. No performance can begin without her presence. In all the storytelling sessions, the village rituals and the theatre enactments idols of Draupadi and four Pandavas will be given pride of place; only then can the performance begin. Dharmaraja/Yudhisthira in most villages never leaves the temple and as already stated there is a strong reason why.

In one Koothu where Draupadi has to be abused in vile language, the Kattiyakaaran or the Sutradhar will draw a circle around the actor playing Draupadi and say

"Mother! We are just poor actors enacting your story so that you can listen to it again.

Oh! Mother Panchali, I place my trust only in you, the noble born.

You are the Goddess of this earth! Mother!

Mother of all the Worlds, who was the wife of the five Pandavas, the beautiful Panchali!

For the sake of sustaining this perishable body and for our living, we are enacting this play as it was enacted by our ancestors. In this play we have to abuse you in ugly language. Please forgive us for this and all our errors"

Only after this invocation will the actor step back into his role and abuse Draupadi in the filthiest of languages.

Draupadi becomes the site for a double invocation; while she is the 'wronged' Queen of the Epic, she also invokes all the wars that the people of this region were subject. This second memory, which again will be elaborated later, is not a lament or a dirge, but is an affirmation of the will to live of the people- even through calamitous times.

In the Epic, the Pandavas spend 3 periods of their lives in the forest, in Vanavaasam; they are born in the forest, return to the city to claim their patrimony and are cheated by their cousin to again escape to the forest. They return again only to lose their kingdom to their devious cousins to begin their longest stay in the forests. In their 3 Vanavasams, or life in the forests, they listen to stories of other people that mirror their own predicament. In the festival villages, due to the duration of the performances, the entire village virtually lives in Vanavaasam, in the performances spaces spread across the village, and listen to the stories the Pandavas heard in their life in the forests.

The beginning of the theatre cycle happens in the Dharmaraja/Draupadi Amman temple-the storytelling space, with the Koothu actors singing an invocation song to Draupadi and walking towards the performance space singing this song. In between the actors will circumambulate the ritual space where Duryodhana will be finally killed before they begin their performance. Everyday another ritual will be performed between the storytelling space and the performance space and the actors would circumambulate each new ritual space before beginning their performance.

This circumambulation of the middle space linking the storytelling and performance space serves to underline their importance. This is one way the village inscribes itself into the Epic and the Mahabharata as it is celebrated achieves its duality. It is both the Sanskrit Epic while also

being a memory of the village itself.

On stage, the actors would sing six invocation songs of which five will be to Rajagopal [Krishna as a King], Saraswati, Durga, Murugan and Shiva while the sixth song will be to the guardian deity of whichever village they are performing- this again serves to underline the importance of the festival village and is another way where the village inscribes itself into the Epic and its performance.

The invocation song to Draupadi is important in its own way as it addresses a Draupadi reborn in Senji. No one, currently among the audience could recount this story and the few storytellers who spoke about the second birth of Draupadi claimed that it was found in a book called 'Draupadi Mahathmiyam' [The Greatness of Draupadi], a book which none of the storytellers themselves had seen. But the narrative survives in a song sung everyday by the Koothu performers before each night's performance. So why was Draupadi born in Senji and how did that become a memory of a region?

The popularity of the Mahabharata festivals seems to be increasing each year and newer Dharmaraja/Draupadi Amman temples are being built each year. It is a belief that the new temple, to be authentic, had to have a little bit of land from the temple tank at Melaccheri in Senji making the temple tank almost devoid of any sand.

When we went to interview the priest at the temple in Melaccheri, he was ready to throw us out as he thought that we were people trying to steal sand from the temple tank! The camera in our hands saved the day, and we did a long interview with him which will be a part of a later session dealing with Senji

<https://youtu.be/Ld2E3xS1jts?si=0MHvKn7eQ7hejAMO>

What is worth noting in these festivals is its intricate structure. The festival does not alone create a space for its audience/participants to relive the Mahabharata, but creates a space to remember more than a thousand years of cultural and social memory. The Mahabharata in these festivals is framed against the Ramayana, Thirukural, the Bhakthi poetry of Arunagirinathar, the Azhwars, Silappadhigaaram and numerous other works which constitute cultural memory.

THE FESTIVALS AS 'TOTAL THEATRE'

"One sees from this that pratyabhijnā (recognition, scrutiny) is a careful inspection of and continuous reflection upon an object although that object is already [in some sense] known. This is what is meant by pratyabhijnā and not the mere recognition that consists in noting that "this is the same thing I saw before."

Abhinavagupta

The filmmaker Mani Kaul, while introducing the films of Ritwik Gahatak spoke about the distinctive nature of the 'Epic Form' as opposed to the 'Dramatic Narrative'.

The dramatic narrative, he says, typically converges to a climax with the triumph of good over evil; while “the epic form is just the opposite, which means that the narrative is usually very thin, very spread out and at every stage that it develops, it tries to have wider perspectives. Not just concerning the characters but also about nature, history or ideas. These are not just a description of society, but visions of epochs that have gone by. So it cannot be just a simple movement, a narrative moving forward, but as the story is narrated, it must also embrace and spread out.” Mani Kaul’s interview by Tasreen Munni Kabir

In every festival, there would be contestations between the various performers and the audience as to what was the ‘original’ Mahabharata. For instance, there is a huge difference between the story of Karna as narrated by the storytellers and as enacted by the Koothu performers. In Koothu, Karna before going to war on the fateful 17th day of the battle would request a traditional warrior’s farewell from his estranged wife Ponnuruvi or Ponmala. This scene which has tremendous emotional resonances for the audiences would invariably not be present in the storytelling sessions where they rigorously follow the text. The audiences would be angry at this glaring omission by the storyteller and in one festival, the storyteller went to great lengths to convince the audience that the story of Ponnuruvi/Ponmala was not a part of any ‘authentic’ text and was just purely the imagination of the Koothu writers. Karnan did not have good relations with his wife Ponnuruvi.

The Mahabharata festivals of Tamil Nadu and Southern Andhra Pradesh are intricately structured, incorporating multiple orders of expressions and memories within itself. To participate in the festival of this nature, immediately becomes an act of ‘remembering’. The epic, due to the way the festival is structured, becomes a trigger, to an entire series of memories, from the individual to the collective. The Mahabharata is also not performed in its entirety, and the responsibility of re-constructing the whole again, is the responsibility of each individual member of the audience.

Each member of the audience would have seen over the years, different renditions of the same episodes of the epic, and what would be remembered finally, would be a cumulative memory of all that each had witnessed. This cumulative memory would naturally include the memory of oneself witnessing a particular rendition, and by a curious process, by remembering the epic, one also tends to remember oneself, reflect on oneself. By this ritual of hearing, viewing and participating in the same story over and over again, the quality of ‘attentiveness’ of each member of the audience seems to get intensified. The internal process the viewer/listener goes through can only be described as ‘Dhyana’.

The filmmaker Mani Kaul, while speaking to his students had this to say on ‘Dhyana’ which has generally been loosely translated as ‘meditation’, he said-

“I’ll tell you something, if you dont mind. This word “meditation”, which is mystified in the West, has no meaning in India. There is simply a question of attention, a quality of attention. The word ‘Dhyana’ literally means attention. There is a dichotomy between Being and this

quality of attention. Being cannot free itself from certain sorrows; it cannot free itself from its problems and unhappiness, because Being is full of them. The idea of transcending them and reaching a state where there's no sorrow is all a dream. You can talk about it, but until the end of your life, your sorrows will pursue you.

However, "attention" can be free. A great teacher transforms that quality of attention- of listening, of talking, of seeing, of touching – until there is no sorrow, no fear, no anger, no pain; In music, and perhaps in some of my films, one has this quality of "attention"

'Attentiveness', both of oneself and of one's interaction to the world, is seen as the highest value in these traditions and all performances are designed to promote this quality of 'attentiveness'. Repetition becomes a key element to provoke this 'self-introspective attentiveness'.

Crucial episodes from the Epic are presented thrice in these festivals, as it has already been stressed, as ritual, narrative and theatre. And each time the same episode might be rendered differently leading to contestations as to who is presenting the 'original' Mahabharata.

The theatre people would often take dramatic license with the narrative and hence come into direct confrontation with the storytellers who rigorously follow the text. These daily contestations are also a vital part of the theatrical experience of the festival itself. The Epic resists closure in these performance traditions and the quest for the 'truth' becomes the onus of each individual member of the audience. Over the years, as one's own experience of the world deepens, participating in these festivals leads to a more nuanced engagement with both the text, and by extension to one's own life. This happens in various degrees within each member of the audience

Natarajan- It seems people outside are angry that I have omitted to mention Karna taking leave of his wife Ponnuruvi before entering the battlefield. That is the difference between the play and the Mahabharata [sarcastically] The play has been written by 'illiterate' people, while the Mahabharata has been written by 'scholars', poets. You can check with any classical version of the Mahabharata, you won't find this leave taking scene. I have been telling the Mahabharata for 20 years, but nobody seems to have listened properly. In the play they also so that Karna had only one son and that too born 'accidentally'! Isn't it what they say in Koothu? They say accidentally a child was born to them as the husband and wife never spoke to each other. In Mahabharata they have four sons. Can a man and woman lived together without talking to each other?

Commentary-These contestations between the storytellers, the Koothu actors and the audiences are a vital part of the 'theatre' in these festivals. These contestations and the multiple interpretations of basically the same text give each festival a unique character; no two festivals can ever be alike and in every festival the mindful audience would be presented with a different aspect to ponder upon. This probably might be one of the reasons why the festivals have being performed for over a thousand years. The onus is finally on each member of the discerning

audience to discover where the 'Truth' rests.

There are three layers of performance in these festivals. The epic is performed as village rituals in the morning, narrated as a story in the afternoons and performed right through the night in a traditional masked theatre form called the 'Koothu'. Repetition, as A K Ramanujan says, is a key component of Indian performance traditions. For as he says- "If a thing is only mentioned once, it is as though it were not said at all!" This is the reason for some key episodes of the epic being performed thrice in the festival, once as ritual, second its narration as a story and third its elaboration as a theatrical experience. Theatre is not just performed in the designated theatrical space, but is performed all around the village and every space in the village becomes a performing space sometime or the other. This prompted Na Mutthuswamy a noted playwright/director of modern Tamil theatre to describe these festivals as 'Total Theatre'.

The ritual, 'The Killing of Bakasura' is an important emotional marker of time in these festival villages, evoking multiple memories. Again the killing of Bakasura is performed as a ritual, narrated as a story and enacted as theatre. The killing of Bakasura evokes the idea of the 'doubled' Draupadi effectively. In the Mahabharata, the Pandavas get married to Draupadi after this killing of Bakasura. In the 'doubled' Mahabharata of this region, Draupadi is reborn at Senji to kill Rochakan or Asulamasuran, a later day demon who was the great, great, grand descendent of the demon Bakasura who was killed by the Pandava warrior, Bhima. In the Epic narrative, Bakasura is terrorizing a village in which the Pandavas find asylum after escaping from the assassins of Duryodhana.

Bhima gets angry when he hears that the village has been forced to provide a cartload of food, two oxen and a human sacrifice to the glutton, Bakasura, every day. As the only son of the family which had granted them asylum was the designated human sacrifice that day, Bhima offers to go instead. In the festival village, for this episode, each family cooks food for Bhima to carry to Bakasura.

Koothu actors dressed as Bhima and Bakasura travel through the village, collecting food from each household. By the act of cooking food for the ritual, each household inscribes themselves in the epic and each person becomes 'doubled'; they are both members of the festival village as well as characters of Bakasura's village.

M D Muthukumaraswamy- Now here which is the ritual, the theatre or which is real life? This travel between the three is the experience of these Bharatham festivals. The ritual will cross its boundaries to become a part of real life and real life through ritual will transform into theatre. There will be only a thin line separating the three, while the people themselves will flow naturally from one into the other. Only outsiders like us will separate these three as ritual, theatre or real life, while in the village itself all three belong to one continuum

The ritual of the killing of Bakasura is an important juncture in these festivals where the entire village become characters from the Epic themselves. The ritual is the pivot on which the festival revolves. The Mahabharata now is both an internal memory and an external text. The festival,

as Na Muthuswamy says, becomes 'Total Theatre' from this point onwards with the entire village having been drawn into the Epic.

The theatre cycle would begin with this ritual and every day's performances from this moment on would be for about 20 hours a day. The entire village would literally live now, in the various performance spaces in the village. Most storytellers in these festivals speak of the necessity of periodically abandoning the comfort of one's hearth and home and choosing to live in the forests; here one has to kill the demons both inside and outside of oneself. Only then, they say, is a true return to oneself possible.

In the Mahabharata, the Pandavas endure three periods of Vanavaasam; they are born in the forests and return to their paternal kingdom on the death of their father to live with their fraternal cousins the Kauravas. Again they are forced to return to the forest where they kill the demons both within and outside. They return dramatically enriched by their second sojourn in the forests. This return just happens to be temporary and they are again compelled to live in the forests for their longest period of time -thirteen years, after which they are, equipped both mentally and physically to wrest their kingdom back from their cousins.

In fact, the Pandavas spend the largest portions of their lives in the forests- in Vanavaasam. In the festival villages, for the duration of the festival, most villagers live in the performance spaces spread across the villages, in Vanavaasam, or in 'the forests of their own mind'

During this period of self-imposed Vanavaasam, the villagers listen to the stories the Pandavas had listened to in their own Vanavaasam. The other great Epic, the Ramayana is also narrated to the Pandavas in their life in the forests. Draupadi, in this festival is constantly addressed as being the sister of Rama.

Even in the same village, different storytellers and Koothu actors would be hired each year each with their own style or 'Bani', specific to their tradition; some storytellers would be hired for their musical abilities, others for the quality of their storytelling. Some Koothu troupes would be hired for the energy of their performance while other group might be hired for the element of tragedy they get into their performance. This again ensures that the emotional register of each festival even in the same village would be different each year. People still remember details of a performance which

The Mahabharata festivals as they are celebrated/performed in Tamil Nadu have evolved and transformed from its origin in the Pallava times. Perunthevanaar Bharatham which was commissioned in the Pallava times is now a lost text with only 339 verses of the original 12,000 verses currently available.

The festival as it is performed right now is structured around a 14th Century text called 'Villibharatham'. An 18th century text in simpler prose called the 'Nallapillai Bharatham' is used by a lot of contemporary storytellers. While the songs they sing would be from Villibharatham, Nallapillai Bharatham would be referred to for the narrative elaboration of these songs. There is

a strong anti-war core to these festivals which will be elaborated in the next session, and Draupadi is seen as the representative of all the people unjustly affected by war. This narrative will be continued in the next chapter where the anti-war nature of the festival and its Pallava origins are explored further. The anti-war core of the festival, its Pallava origins and birth of Draupadi at Senji will be explored in the next session.

Session-8

India as a Voice from the Global South: *The Knowledge Dimension*

*Working Group: A V Balasubramanian (Convener), Amit Basole, Sunil Sahasrabudhey,
Srishtee Bajpai, Chetan Singai*

The Background:

The larger historical context for a discussion on this topic has to start with the recognition that in the pre Columbus era for well over twenty centuries or more, India has had rich and extensive links with her Eastern and Southern neighbors in Asia and also perhaps across the Western waters and lands with parts of Africa and Middle East. The exchanges were over vast and varied domains of knowledge and culture including (but not limited to) – language, grammar, literature, medicine, agriculture, natural resources, astronomy, mathematics, material science, navigation and ship building. Such links and exchanges seem to have continued through religious exchanges and pilgrimages of Buddhist Scholars- this has continued through centuries and institutions from Kanchipuram in the South to Nalanda bear ample testimony to these links. Trade and interaction through the seas are also recorded extensively and may have reached its peak around the 11th century during the period of Rajendra Chola.

One often encounters a response to this interaction which is a mixture of wonder and a sense of admiration which has survived in some form even into the modern era. The Chinese diplomat, scholar and philosopher Hu Shih (1891-1962) is quoted as having stated-“*India conquered and dominated China culturally for 20 centuries without ever having to send a single soldier across her border*”.

The dawn of India’s Asian- African Internationalism of the modern era can perhaps be traced to the –“Asian Relations Conference” which was convened in New Delhi between 23rd March and 17th April 1947. It was the eve of Indian Independence – an era of declining colonial empires and emerging independent States across the South. The Conference was attended by representatives from 28 Asian and other countries and had observers from six other regions. The major topics for discussion were naturally those of immediate concern such as – transition from colonial to national economy, agriculture reconstruction and industrial development, national movements for freedom, etc. Even at that time ,the conference raised concerns from the West of a possible –“Asian Block” and Jawaharlal Nehru had to affirm that –“.....the Conference would not be opposed in any way to America or the Soviet Union or any other power or group of powers”.

Right from the early days of Indian independence ,developments in India were watched with keen interest by the Asian and African neighbours .It was as if we were under a lens, as a “ Test case” , for the World at large to figure out if this whole experiment of decolonization would “ work” . Immediately after freedom in 1947, India faced severe food shortages and the memories of the 1943 famine were still fresh. India not only averted a famine but also managed to avoid mass hunger

(though with several ups and downs). The General Elections of 1952 were held peacefully in what was recognized as “The Worlds Largest Democratic Experiment” with one sixth of the World’s population casting their votes! The next year Sudan invited the Chief Election Commissioner of India Sukumar Sen to conduct their first general election in 1953 . It was expected that India would be a strong voice of the South for several reasons, including her economic and military strength , vast capabilities in many sectors of modern science , technology and Industry .

For many of India’s African and Asian neighbours , India continues to be a land that they look up to -- while the reasons may be many, the following are among the few that find repeated mention:

1. India is a “ robust democracy” – our elections are held regularly, the transfer of power

after elections have always been smooth and peaceful and our armed forces have never interfered with our political process

2. The way we are managing our tremendous and complex diversity – religious, linguistic, ethnic etc.-- as a modern nation state is keenly watched. While it is still a –“work in progress”, it is believed to have implications and lessons not only for our Southern neighbours but also for the rest of the World
3. We have made tremendous progress in various sectors of our economy, built extensive infrastructure and moved towards self sufficiency in Food, Agriculture and other key sectors; while concerns of equity are still very serious ,the progress is indeed significant
4. India is acknowledged as a friend who can be counted upon to share what she has with her Southern neighbours. To cite an example ,India has been hailed as the “World’s Pharmacy”. Our pharmaceutical sector is a major source of Life Saving drugs at low prices to countries that need this the most -- a role that we have continued to play right up to the era of the COVID pandemic While there is a lot more that can be and ought to be done , there is no doubt that there is a very favorable disposition towards India.

In terms of our links to the Global South what have we achieved since 1947 ? Can we hold a mirror to reflect upon what have we achieved , how has this fared in comparison with the expectations, our own and those of our Southern neighbours?

Some of the specific questions to be reflected upon by the Panel would include –

1. What is the current shape and status of exchange of knowledge, traditions and experiences between the Nations of the South- could we look into some specific domains such as Health and Medicine, governance and justice, natural resources management, etc.
2. Today much of what India knows/believes/experiences about the South is heavily colored and dominated by scholarship from the West and received through Western media, news agencies and in English and European languages. How can we move towards better communication and deeper mutual understanding ?..
3. Besides academic research and scholarship in areas like Science and Technology there also need to understand the implications and impact of our knowledge and traditions including music, dance, arts, crafts and cultural traditions ,food, yoga and so on in our relationship with the South .
4. There are also emerging voices in India and the South that are involved in a deeper examination and understanding of ideas of state , governance , knowledge Systems etc.; drawing from their own experiences and values which are significantly different from the thinking from the North (both mainstream and alternative !!). Some of these are from outside the formal institutions and academia and their content and implications need to be reflected upon.
5. How does one provide support and strength and be more effective as a “ Voice of the South” without acquiring a “big brother” attitude? It appears that suspicions of Indian or Chinese Hegemony held by other Nations (and mutually between India and China) are serious and cannot be lightly wished away. We also need to move away from an approach that sees the South solely as a market for various emerging goods, services and technologies from India.

6. Even after Independence right down to the recent times it is seen that ideas from the Indian Freedom Movement rooted in Gandhian thinking -- Swaraj and Non-violent approaches to political actions -- have continued to inspire people from different parts of the world including Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela and more recently the Arab Spring. A strong articulation and a development of these ideas in today's context can surely be a valuable contribution from India.

The Program Structure-

1. Introduction to the theme: background and an overview - Convener
2. Presentation by Panel members
 - a. Mahatma Gandhi and Knowledge in Society are the two pillars on which India's Voice may be constructed -- Sunil Sahasrabudhey
 - b. A just 21st century can only be imagined via alternative Knowledge Paradigms -- Amit Basole
 - c. Welcoming Diverse and Pluriversal World views - Shrishtee Bajpai
 - d. International Relations as an academic discipline in the global south: *Beyond the paradigm of Eurocentrism* -- Chetan Singai
3. Discussion on the presentations
4. Concluding remarks from the Convener

About the Panelists

1. **A. V. Balasubramanian** is a Biologist by training .Since 1982 he has been involved in work relating to various aspects of Traditional Indian Sciences and Technologies and trying to explore their current relevance and potential. In1995 he founded the Centre for Indian Knowledge Systems, (CIKS) an institution devoted toexploring the contemporary relevance and applications of Indian Knowledge Systems, particularly in the area of sustainable agriculture.Currently he is the Director of the Centre for Indian Knowledge Systems and based in Chennai.

2. **Sunil Sahasrabudhey** is founder president of Vidya Ashram. He has done studies in the philosophy of knowledge and politics with the Gandhian perspective and has been active in New Farmers' Movement in India since 1970s. A founder participant of the Lokavidya Movement, he lives at Vidya Ashram in Varanasi.

3. **Amit Basole** holds Ph.D. degrees in Neuroscience as well as Economics. He is a Professor of

Economics at Azim Premji University, Bengaluru and works on economic policy and employment. He has explored artisanal economics from a lokavidya knowledge standpoint. A close associate of Vidya Ashram, he lives in Bengaluru.

4. Shrishtee Bajpai is a researcher, writer, and activist working at the intersections of environmental justice, social justice, more-than human governance, indigenous worldviews, and systemic transformations. She is a member of Kalpavriksh, an environmental action group in India and coordinates Vikalp Sangam (Alternatives Confluence) network that researches, documents, networks around systemic alternatives. She is one of the founder-members and part of the core team of Global Tapestry of Alternatives. She also serves on the executive committee of Global Alliance for the Rights of Nature. She is also part of some fraternal networks and groups such as Liminality Network and Inner Climate Academy.

5. Chetan Singai Professor and Dean, School of Law, Governance and Public Policy, Chanakya University, Bengaluru. He obtained his doctoral degree (PhD) from the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Indian Institute of Science Campus, Bengaluru, India. He received his master's in Political Science and M.Phil. from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. He has received Erasmus Mundus scholarship. Formerly, Faculty at the National Law School of India University, Bengaluru. He has been at DAAD visiting-faculty Julius-Maximilian-University, Germany from 2014 to 2017. He is a recipient of the Social Justice Medal awarded by the Hon'ble Chief Justice of India. Nominated as Chief Consultant to the Committee to Draft the National Education Policy-2017-2019 (chaired by Padma Vibhushan Dr K. Kasturirangan), Ministry of Education, Government of India, New Delhi. He has published two books and more than 25 national and international articles in peer-reviewed journals on higher education, geopolitics, space policy and human rights issues.

Papers/Abstracts Presented in Session-8

I. Mahatma Gandhi and Knowledge in Society are the two pillars on which India's Voice may be constructed

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1. India, the nation, may not be thought of only in terms of the Indian State, its institutions and professional classes. The vast majority is outside these locations. These people with their knowledge ought to be an important factor in new formulations on INDIA AS A VOICE FROM THE GLOBAL SOUTH. To do this, we may underline the change that has taken place in the last five-six decades in reference to the growing recognition of 'knowledge in society', often as traditional, local, indigenous, peoples' knowledge etc. The need of the times is to erect a political/philosophical dialogue from this

'growing recognition'. Recognition of such knowledge as a primary enabler for the ordinary people has given rise to a new language in the public domain. Greater and often formal use of terms like Rights of Nature, Rights of Mother Earth, Food Sovereignty, Jal-Jangal-Zameen Rights and possibly many more in different languages in many parts of the Global South, are indicative of such radical development of thinking which owes little to the Global North in the epistemic domain. A robust reference to 'Knowledge in Society' should enable us to make a substantial departure, from the earlier and much of the present thinking, and give new points of departure for erecting a new dialogue on the Global stage.

2. India as a nation is known for the great diversity it has, of which we can have a rather concrete view through the variety of languages spoken in this land. Every language embodies certain knowledge traditions and world-view. When these knowledge traditions interact with one-another, without being mediated by a language of the Global North, a large nation like India is created which has overarching traditions of justice, equality, brotherhood etc. (vide Mahatma Gandhi's new constitution for the Indian National Congress in 1920 based on linguistic regions) When this process is taken beyond national boundaries, we have the concept of the erstwhile Third World or the present Global South.
3. Two major outcomes of the internet in the shape of the World Wide Web may be noted: one, the unprecedented expansion of communication and dialogue and two, the Artificial Intelligence. Whereas the former distributes and spreads knowledge and intelligence almost without limit, the latter mops up all the intellectual resources available on the internet at one place with lightening speed. The first inaugurates a new epoch of knowledge dialogue, briefly called The Age of Dialogue and the other concentrates all knowledge for profiteering by a few. India's voice as a voice from the Global South can only be of the great spread of knowledge in this Age of Dialogue.
4. Mahatma Gandhi's path of reconstruction and building afresh is expressed in the phrase 'based in our tradition and enriched by the later experiences'. Attempts of this kind were made in some countries of South America. Early this century, Bolivia and Ecuador went through large mobilizations asserting that they need to rebuild their nations taking lessons from their knowledge (cultural) roots. The key ideas that came out were Rights of Mother Earth and Rights of Nature. They adopted new constitutions and called

themselves Plurinational States which, briefly said, recognize multiple politico-social formations and autonomy of the same within a nation/state. This is in stark contrast to the concept of the State born in Europe and spread all over the world through colonialism and imperialism. It is also a complete opposite of the very recent concept of civilizational state born in the wake of the neo-conservative developments in many countries across the world.

5. Mahatma Gandhi is central to this conception. In the name of Mahatma Gandhi a lot has gone to the world, to both the North and the South. The idea of non-violence and non-violent struggle have played important roles in the movements for peace, autonomy and liberation in many countries. For example, movement by the Catholics of Northern Ireland (1970s) for independence from UK , movement of Blacks in South Africa against Apartheid (Nelson Mandela), movement of Blacks in America for equal rights (Martin Luther King), movement of the Zapatista in Mexico. What has not happened with it is taking to the global stage also the knowledge aspect of his thought which appreciates knowledge in society (as also not separable from the moral fiber of society and also as the knowledge basis of swaraj). The present Age of Dialogue on Knowledge creates opportunities to do this.
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II. A just 21st century can only be imagined via alternative knowledge paradigms

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One defining feature of the 21st century thus far is the serious unsettling of the 20th century post-WW2 global economic order. Both the "Keyensian consensus" of the 1950s-70s and the "Neoliberal consensus" of the 1980s to the early 2000s are in question today. This century has seen a dramatic increase in the economic, political and military power of China, along with the reassertion of Russia trying to re-establish her own sphere of influence and return of trade protectionism in the advanced capitalist countries as a result of a popular backlash against globalisation. There are two large perspectives to be found against the rise of new nationalisms and populisms across the world - the old left seeking a return to the Keynesian consensus and the new liberals seeking a return to the neoliberal consensus. But neither return seems likely. The question facing countries such as India is, how to imagine a just future for their own people with the 20th century paradigms exhausted and conflict between large powers once again becoming a fact of life even as the climate crisis deepens. To make the challenge even more complex, the next 20 years will also see a demographic shift in the Global South such that China and India will become

ageing societies (China much faster than India) while sub-Saharan Africa remains relatively young.

The Lokavidya Jan Andolan (LJA) has maintained the position since some time that existing varieties of development paradigms do not offer a road to a just society. LJA has also pointed to the space created by unsettling of old knowledge hierarchies by the coming of the Knowledge Age. Thus far, this space has been effectively used by large social media companies to create an era of "post-truth" where unsettling of the "rule of experts" has been put in the service of new anti-people forces. Unless a new imagination is produced by peoples' movements going beyond the confines of 20th century visions of democracy, secularism, socialism etc. the road to a just society appears blocked.

In my talk I will take stock of these developments of the past 10 or 15 years and offer some tentative suggestions on where the knowledge movement can go from here.

III. Welcoming Diverse and Pluriversal Worldviews

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1. Can India alone be the voice of the Global South? I would like to highlight a more bioregional thinking around this, especially being guided by the rest of nature when thinking about nation-states and boundaries.
 2. Expanding on how we need to welcome diverse and pluriversal worldviews to challenge the hegemony of certain strands of western thinking: that humans alone are possessed of rights and that other species exist for human use. Communities in India as well as in many parts of the world have respected rivers, mountains, forests, lands, seas, plants and animals, believing that they have agency of their own. They have grounded themselves in intuitive and embodied knowledge of the territories they inhabit, living in accordance with natural rhythms and rules, aware of consequences if these are broken. Hence, in their ways challenged the core concepts of western modernity by articulating and living their own visions of 'good life'.
 3. Building on the above point, I would like to highlight the elements of Earthy Governance and how we can begin to reimagine different ways of being by learning from the embodied knowledge of adivasis and other local communities.
 4. Finally, what kind of systemic transformations are called for in these times.
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IV. International Relations as an academic discipline in the global south:

Beyond the paradigm of Eurocentrism

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International Relations (IR) as a discipline has long been shaped by a Eurocentric theoretical framework, which has privileged Western historical experiences, paradigms, methodologies, and intellectual traditions while marginalizing non-Western knowledge from the Global South. This study addresses this critical gap by tracing the historical origins, suppression, and resurgence of alternative knowledge systems in IR. Drawing on Amitav Acharya and Barry Buzan's critique of IR's Western-centric foundations, it examines how pre-colonial societies developed sophisticated mechanisms of statecraft, diplomacy, and conflict resolution—systems that were systematically undermined during the colonial and imperial eras. The study engages with Acharya's concept of "Global IR," which calls for the recognition of diverse intellectual traditions and the agency of the Global South in shaping global order. Additionally, it draws on Buzan's analysis of the historical evolution of international systems beyond the Eurocentric model, demonstrating that non-Western perspectives are essential in gaining a comprehensive understanding of global politics.

The paper also investigates the ongoing struggle for intellectual decolonization in the post-colonial world, highlighting contemporary scholarship and policy innovations emerging from the Global South. These contributions provide valuable insights into pressing global issues such as development, security, environmental sustainability, and global governance, challenging dominant Western paradigms and offering alternatives from the Global South for a more just and equitable world order. This paper calls for a fundamental re-evaluation of what constitutes legitimate knowledge in IR and advocates for a more inclusive and globally relevant discipline. Only through such epistemic rebalancing can IR move beyond its historical biases and foster a truly comprehensive understanding of international relations.

Popular Lectures

Traditional Indian Mathematics and Astronomy

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Abstract

In this lecture, we present an overview of the development of mathematics and astronomy in India.

It is well known that the decimal place value system and the concept of zero have their origins in India. Thanks to these concepts, arithmetic was formulated well in India, and Indians were very good in arithmetic, able to handle operations involving large numbers, with some ease (unlike Greeks, for instance). Algebra had its roots in India. Indians had their own way of doing geometry, beginning with the śulba sutras (8 th century BC onwards), and trigonometry. In fact, the modern trigonometry is the Indian version of it. Later the calculus concepts developed, including basic ideas of derivatives, and infinite series for π , and sine and cosine functions.

There are astronomical concepts in the Vedic literature regarding the Sun, Moon, Stars and the Earth. The Vedānga Jyotiṣa of Lagadha (around 1200 BC) is a short text in the sutra format. Here, we have a systematic calendar relating the days, months and the year, and rules related to the motions of the Sun, and the Moon. In the siddhānta texts, beginning with Āryabhaṭīya of Āryabhaṭa (499 CE), we have full-fledged scientific astronomy in India, with the use of trigonometry. Brāhmasphuṭasiddhānta of Brahmagupta (7th century), Siddhāntaśiromaṇi of Bhāskara-II (12th century), Tantrasaṅgraha of Nīlakaṇṭha Somayājī (1500 CE) are only some examples of later siddhanta texts, where there was advancement, and significant new ideas were added. In Tantrasaṅgraha, we have a quasi-heliocentric model for planetary motion, with the planets orbiting around the Sun, which itself orbits around the Earth.

Developments in mathematics and astronomy went hand in hand, mostly. Most of the ācāryas in this tradition were astronomer-mathematicians. It is also significant that there are many works in mathematics/ astronomy in regional, spoken languages of India (mostly after 16 th century).

Artificial Intelligence – an Introduction

Dr. M Sasikumar

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Abstract

Artificial intelligence, AI for short, is the most heard buzzword these days, in all corridors of life. But many have a very skewed view of the field.

In this talk, we will take a walk down the memory lane of AI from the origin of the term to the current times. The discussion will be mostly non-technical, sketching the challenges of building intelligence – often attributed to just humans – into a pure machine, that is, a computer.

We will look at how the massive growth in computing power, and memory space over the intervening 5-6 decades have helped the resurgence of the current version of AI. However, in the excitement, we often forget to evaluate the field critically and identify the negatives – we will take a look at problems of bias, hallucinations, trust, and security in this context.

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Note: Numbers indicate the Session in the Convention, as given at the end of the list.

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Rahamat Tarikere, Kannada University, Hampi. **3**
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Rajeev Sangal, Ph.D., IIIT Hyderabad. **4, 6**
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Sashikanth A, Independent Film Maker, Chennai. **7**
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Srishtee Bajpai, Kalpavriksh & Vikalp Sangam, Pune. **8**
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Sunil Sahasrabudhey, Vidya Ashram, Varanasi. **1, 4, 8**
Suresh J K, Ph.D., Formerly with HAL and Infosys (Retd), Bengaluru. **3, 6**
Sushruti Santhanam, Ph.D., Carnatic Vocalist, Pune. **7**
Tashi Choedup, Q T Centre , Hyderabad. **5**
Udayan Vajpeyi, Gandhi Medical College, Bhopal. **7**
Umashankari Narendranath, Ph.D., Farmer and Activist, Hyderabad. **5**
Vasavi A R , Ph.D., NIAS (Retd), Bengaluru.
Veena Joshi, Ph.D., Embassy of Switzerland (Retd), Pune. **2**

Session numbers

1. Knowledge in Society – the Foundation for an Equitable and Just Society.
2. Poverty and the Knowledge question – Role of Traditional/Indigenous Knowledge.
3. Kannada Knowledge Traditions. (Mostly in Kannada language.).
4. Imagining Swaraj in the 21st Century – some Knowledge issues.
5. Knowledge in Development Discourse and Peoples' Movements.
6. Artificial Intelligence and the Knowledge Question.
7. Art and the Knowledge Question.
8. [India as a voice from the Global South – the Knowledge Dimension.](#)

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and

Prof. Prof. Sudha Shenoy, Physics Dept, Kuvempu University, Shivamogga

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Dr. T Avinash, Sahyadri Commerce and Management College, Shivamogga

Transport

Dr. B N Prakash, Sahyadri Commerce and Management College, Shivamogga

Public Relations

Dr. M R Satyaprakash, Dept. of Journalism and Mass Communications, Kuvempu University, Shivamogga

Registration, Invitation and Stage

Prof. Meti Mallikarjuna, Sahyadri Arts College, Shivamogga.