REDISCOVERING INDIC SCHOLARSHIP: USING THE WIDE CANVAS TO EMBED WESTERN THEORIES

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Abstract

This paper aims to direct inquiry and scholarship into indigenous knowledge systems, whose wisdom can inspire and enrich the vast spectrum of contemporary knowledge disciplines. Without going into the merits or demerits of the alleged "digestion" (Malhotra, 2013) of Indic ideas into Western scholarship, this study proposes something new for a more transparent exchange that will do justice to both Indian and Western sources of knowledge. Given the vast scope, breadth and width of Indic knowledge systems, it introduces the idea of Embedment to foster a more holistic conversation between the West and the East. It may be possible for Indic knowledge systems to provide a wide integral canvas to enrich social sciences scholarship currently being developed in India and elsewhere. This will have a significant impact in achieving synthesis that peoples, societies and nations are looking for in this fissured world. Today the whole of humanity is seeking means to achieve sustainability, eliminate poverty and inequities, and generate a more holistic scholarship that would solve global problems. In such a context, existing knowledge systems should be supplemented with inspiration and wisdom from the past, which can be adapted for the future

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In a book that has by now become somewhat influential at least in the Indian subcontinent, Malhotra (2011) proposed that Western knowledge systems have been borrowing ideas from India without acknowledging their original sources. He further alleges that such knowledge isassimilated into Western knowledge structures in a manner that the original is not recognizable at all. He calls this process "digestion" to convey, according to him, the deliberate attempt to erase the traces of the roots of the scholarship so as to appear either original or borrowed from the West's own past knowledge traditions. The issue has fostered adebate on the veracity of this claim. For instance, see Larson (2012) according to whom Malhotra commits a self-referential error.

Without going into the merits or demerits of Malhotra's position, this paper proposes Embedment as a way to synthesize Indic and Western scholarship. Scholars well-versed in both strands of knowledge systems are best suited to undertake this task. Given the vast scope, breadth and width of Indic literature, this paper introduces a unique idea to foster a more well-balanced conversation so that things Indian are not viewed as inimical to things Western and vice versa. The thrust here is not to establish superiority of one over the other, but to ensure that knowledge available in one place is also made available in another part ofthe world as something not entirely alien.

This paper shows how it is possible for Indic knowledge systems to provide a wide integralcanvas to absorb scholarship developed in other parts of the world. This will have a huge impact on scholarship in India and elsewhere. Humanity needs strong synthesizing voices when it is being challenged by questions of sustainability, poverty and inequities.

Interconnectedness demands that social sciences and their means of inquiry be more alive tolocal conditions. Using the idea of the paradigm, this paper shows how variegated Indian philosophical positions and knowledge traditions are. It argues that the idea of Embedment would not only prevent digestion but also show the universality of Indic knowledge systems.This may perhaps have resonance for other traditional cultures too; Embedment as a methodological tool could demonstrate the power of indigenous wisdom systems, especially their holistic, flexible and empathetic applicability.

The paper discusses what a paradigm means and points towards the panoramic expanse of Indic knowledge systems. Four defining aspects of a paradigm help create a comparative understanding of the similarities and dissimi-

larities between the West and the Indic. As a casein point, the paper also shows how the Indic idea of *pancakośas* can be used in conceptualizing and integrating different levels of disciplinary enterprise. A narrative that points to the unity of different approaches independently developed in different geographies is perhaps what the world needs to solve intractable problems that it faces. Synthesis can holdhumanity together.

Need for a Dynamic and Autonomous Scholarship Orientation

It may be recalled that in the second half of the 19th century, following the influence of European enlightenment, efforts were taken by a section of the Indian intelligentsia, which included Rajaram Mohan Roy and Keshab Chandra Sen among others, to rid India of the "socio-cultural evils" and sanitize the Hindu religion. This was gently, but effectively, opposed by Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa. Sri Ramakrishna asked his followers to reconsider, at depth, Indic thoughts and practices that superficially may have seemed irrational, or even bizarre. He urged his followers to go back and discover the depth of the *vijñāna* form of Vedānta (Maharaj, 2018). The impact of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa onthose who influenced Indian independence, such as Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo,

Mahatma Gandhi and others is well recorded. He promoted a different kind of freedom and abandon that found political expression in the leaders of the Indian independence movement, a spirit that permeated the Indian freedom movement leading up to India's independence from colonial yoke several decades later.

Thinkers who emerged at that time such as Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo, and later Indic thinkers, held the view that India was hardly reaping the benefits of its true intellectual potential. This injunction covers all aspects of human inquiry. Many barometers "measure" how vigorous intellectual pursuits and higher order inquiry are in any chosen field(McClelland, 1961). Irrespective of whichever field of study we may consider, we hardly find any influence of Indic knowledge traditions in what is taught in the Indian universities, professional settings or skill development exercises within the country. This neglect is particularly evident when we consider the strong cultural and organic expressions of day-to-day living that reveal roots in local traditions and value systems. Bhargava (2013) calls this chasm, epistemic injustice.

Cultural practices and maintenance of value systems require constant revisits, reinterpretations and on-going validations by fresh inquiry. The logic goes that the greater thedepth of the inquiry, the greater the quality of thinking and actions created through such inquiry. Here too, there is nothing to report on contemporary Indic scholarship except perhaps a plunge into ancient literature to find solace! What can the Indian academia contribute then to scholarship that will not only broaden its level of scholarship in India but also contribute to other traditional cultures? What is required is more than passive dwelling in the scriptures of the past. It calls for a vigorous inquiry and reinterpretation of what was assiduously cultivated and developed in the past (Dharampal, 2017, Malhotra, 2011).

Those who delve into Indic philosophy, psychology and cultural studies point out how intellectual talent lies deeply underutilized in India. Refer, for instance, to Elst (2007).

Indians will reap the full benefit of their intellectual power only if they unleash the abilitiesthat reside deep down and not simply follow the footsteps of the West. Let us examine howIndian scholarship influences research in a practical area such as Management. Three observations are in order.

First, the use of stories from the *itihāsas*--the Ramayana and the Mahabharata--which reveal qualities of leadership, virtues of the heroes and citizenry, etc. The stories of Rama, Krishna and many others no doubt trigger in readers memories of amazing heroes who not only overcame adversities but also converted them into virtuous results. They work evocatively at the individual level. However, the stories themselves may not hold the same power for adults as it does for children. It may be noted that the majorly oral story-telling traditions of *itihāsas* and *purāṇas* were equally applicable to adults and children. However, over time, with professionalization of education and use of technology, adults required rational argumentation (Scanlon, 2011) and thus the use of stories to alter adult consciousnessbecame limited. Hence came case studies in professional areas such as medicine, law and management; cases, in the strictest sense, have to be rooted in reality. Many educators invarious professions admit only real-life cases for teaching.

This is a key difference between andragogy (teaching adults) and pedagogy (teaching children). Invariably, the highly rational adult mind is bound to ask, "So what?" Even if thestories are powerful, they need to be infused with a deep-

ly reflective meaning to generate evocative connotations within the reader/ hearer. That the power of fantastic stories rests onleaps of imagination makes it more suited to innocent children than "practical and realistic"adults. A certain innocence is required for stories of bravery and honesty to seize the recipient's heart and soul without cynicism and immediate practicality. In other words, harking back to *itihās* may have limited impact on influencing adult behaviour and practice.The above observation does not undermine the usefulness of *itihās* in early education.

Second, the use of ancient texts which offer instructions (as opposed to *itihās* with stories)on statecraft or leadership. Some of the texts that fall in this category, and often quoted,

include Kautilya's *Chānakyanīti*, *Nītisāra* by Kmandaka, *Thirukkural* by Thiruvalluvar, and*Hitopadeśa* by Narayana. These great pieces of wisdom convey truth, not facts. When such sublime works are invoked in instrumental ways, they seem to lose their power to inspire oract as guides. When quoted in such a manner, these works provide little scope for deeper reflection and counter-intuitive insights. The truisms that follow cannot be subjected to the falsifiability principle (Popper, 1959). Also, with a strong, irrefutable and self-righteous prescriptive tenor, the espoused ideals may merely appear to pay lip service. Truisms are tautological and do not add to any purposive action. A certain suspension of judgment and uncertainty is essential to learning after the initial formative didactic education has ended, and when it is time for the application of knowledge in a practical sense; methods used to instruct and inspire children cannot be directly used with adults who, in all likelihood, are typically more critical and, perhaps, unfortunately, even cynical (Halton, 2006).

The third form of scholarship under the rubric of "Indic Management" compares the resultsof empirical studies between Western and Indian populations (of course, represented by samples). These studies usually start with literature reviews and theoretical models developed in the West. Consequently, we are likely to see studies such as examining the relationship between "individual autonomy" as the independent variable with "performance" as the dependent variable, along with several sophisticated statistical means to isolate the cause-effect attributions "precisely and accurately." In many such studies there may be much tautology in choosing the variables and theories in a manner that privileges the West.

Empirical validations, so necessary, should be moored to locally-developed theoretical foundations. Indic scholarship should be seen as a wide canvas that can germinate multiple strands of intellectual possibilities, which provide a rich tapestry of alternatives that selectively fit the context. Action then becomes rooted in the context. Indic thinking and action are essentially discursive and go beyond clearly demarcated boundaries of objects and subjects, thought and deed, theory and action, unity and multiplicity, etc., which modern Western psychology has just begun to acknowledge [see for instance, Winfield (2015)].

There can also be no one-to-one correspondence between theory and action. Discursiveness and subtlety are woven into the idea of *dharma* (Das, 2010). Actions and argumentation may even seem unscientific and irrational. Here let us take a hypothetical example from the field of Management. A good decision may require a buy-in from the organizational players who are convinced that the timing of, say, opening a factory has accounted for a good time (*muhūrtam)* astrologically. Would a collective sense of sacredness of time impact collective performance? Perhaps. But, certainly, such a line of inquiry would be antithetical to acceptable research methodology traditions for two reasons: One, such a line of inquiry is too unscientific. To talk of *muhūrtam* is simply too unscientific. Two, "beliefs" such as these are far too beyond empirical and instrumental inquiries; sacredness cannot be measured, it can only be felt. Indian researchers are likely to reject an inquiry into *muhūrtam* on account of the former. But there will be no takers for the latter argument -- identical to the Western view, which shows no sensitivity to collective beliefs. The idea here is not to undermine the usefulness of being scientific or of empiricism. It is only to suggest that empirical studies have to be preceded by strong theoretical understanding, and a part of this understanding is also realizing that not everything is measurable and some things are best left unsaid and unmeasured. Poetic innuendos and nuanced cause-effect attributions have to be handled gently.

Even a cursory look at Indic philosophy shows that it is as variegated as it can get. There is no one paradigm that is accepted entirely by all. The diverse views come from Vedāntins, the Buddhist thinkers, followers of Jainism, the Sāṅkhya philosophers, the Mīmāṃsā followers with different hues such as Kumarila Bhatta's Pūrva Mīmāṃsā or Prabhākara's school of Mīmāṃsā, Viśiṣiṣṭa Advaita proponents, Cārvākas, Nyāya proponents, Yoga proponents. etc. The list is endless with so many hues. All have their biases and characteristics. The

idea is to sharpen the mind, whichever "truth" one may subscribe to. The theoretical position or underlying paradigm on which actions hang together do not create rigidities. There is no hurry to come to conclusions contingently. Agreed, in fields such as engineering and technology, there is a need for predictability. But humans and societies are not machines. TheIndian position with respect to social sciences requires an educated mind that looks at complexities from multiple angles. And it would not lead to indecision, the Indian would argue. Such a decisive action requires the mind to dwell simultaneously on multiple strands of perspectives and philosophies, and this is best exemplified by the Bhagavad Gita. There is a place for unequivocal decisions only in stressful times. *Dharma* of action is decisive, but the *dharma* of thought is discursive and variegated.

All this seems to suggest that the mind is too vast to be reined in by mechanistic models. Not all actions can be justified on the basis of intellectual clarity (cockiness?). This is the message of *The Argumentative Indian* (Sen, 2005). If this is indeed the spirit and strength ofIndic intellectual ethos, the legitimate question arises: "What do we make of Western scholarship and how can Indic Knowledge Systems play a positive role?"

Embedment as a Way to Reclaim the Past

To be effective and be truly global, Indian scholars have to question the fundamental paradigms on which Western social sciences theories are founded. The need of the hour is synthesis, not scientific dissection to the point of destruction. The spirit of Embedment overcomes dissection and narrow reductionism. It does not view anything from the West as antithetical to Indic thinking; on the other hand, it tries to see how close it is to any of the ideas within the vast array of diverse thoughts and philosophies in India. This would be a way to pre-empt what Malhotra (2011) has observed as "digestion" of Indic ideas by the West. Embedment would also a) familiarize Indian scholars who write in English with their ancientscholarly traditions b) contribute to global scholarship and c) interpret ancient ideas for current times and have a more dynamic relationship between local wisdom traditions and global applicability. The sense of binary contradiction and exclusivity, which is the hallmarkof Western scholarship, can and has to be modulated (and even avoided depending on the situation) with Embedment.

From the point of view of overall global scholarship, such an approach would reveal not only the contextual relevance of the dominant social science theories but also their limitations. The current dominant theories and principles,

coming as they do from the West, are never wrong; they are only contextually relevant or irrelevant. Each of them is useful for certain time-space circumstances. Again, let us take the example from Management. Considercompetitive strategy, which has garnered followers ever since Porter (1980) came up with his famous five-force analysis. There is also an equally strong opposition to it. For instance, Kim and Mauborgne (2004) came up with the idea of blue ocean strategy to oppose Porter's red ocean strategy. Which is relevant depends on the context. Where the market can be expanded,the latter becomes relevant. However, in stagnant markets, the idea of competitive strategy will operate in full measure. Notwithstanding contextual relevance, there seems to be only partisan groupings; those who subscribe to competitive strategy and those who do not. The idea of both being right or both being wrong seems strange and unacceptable to the "normal"Western educated person.

Embedment would force the validation of the generality of theories for diverse scenarios. Awider canvas of possibilities would be available. The specific theories in question will be accepted, rejected or partially accepted-rejected based on the context. When critical questioning and Embedment work in tandem, it would engender the emergence of new practical scholarship. One need not reject something to accept another. The logic of contradiction is not an inevitability if we are able to move from dialectics to other forms of logic (Ford & Ford, 1994). There are many instances where paradigmatic changes proposed in the West are seen as novel ideas, but they have been discussed and debated much earlier inIndic literature. Let us look at a few examples.

Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) came up with the idea of positive psychology as a subfield of psychology. This initiative has come into its own and is considered life affirmingrather than life depleting. Any educated Indian with a modicum of understanding of Indic thinking would have, on reflection, found this in sync with the idea of mind being primary tobody, an idea that he or she thinks is axiomatically true. All yoga, irrespective of the actual means, has the potential to create heaven on earth purely with the mind (Aurobindo, 1972). This entire science aims to rein in the mind to reach out higher for union with God (or some higher principles for the atheist).

Similarly, if we take interpretivism as a departure from Western positivism, it is about theadmission of experiential reality as opposed to rationally mediated, reductionist reality. All traditional cultures including India's had already ac-

knowledged that authenticity of occurrence of an event need not necessarily be predicated on an objective reality but can be based on what was genuinely experienced by the subject as real. Subjective reality is admissible as truth. There is no one non-pathological man, a neutral tabula rasa, ready to be copied and erased at will. The interpretivist view is in opposition to the rational objectivity that the West has upheld for centuries. This idea is as old as the cultures themselves. See for instance, Manatunga and Amaratunga (2019). They discuss the Buddhist perspective of interpretivism as a philosophical base for social science research. Even if the idea of interpretivism existed in the Indian collective psyche, it had to be pointed out and made part of global scholarship by the West.

Take yet another example, abductive logic. Abductive logic is really about going beyond the given through an inferential process. Even with incomplete knowledge, certain conclusions could be tentatively arrived at. Abductive logic was certainly approved in the Indic logic. Inference or *anumāna* (in Sanskrit), which when combined with analogical reasoning (for instance, microcosm and macrocosm had similar, if not identical, characteristics) provide a whole lot of potential leads for further abductive inquiry. Talking of *anumāna* in the Vedānta epistemology, Satprakashananda (1965) states how "Man alone is capable of this (receiving knowledge through *anumāna* or inference). Based on sensible facts,it goes beyond the reach of the senses. It explores the unseen. Perception acquaints us with the particulars of a thing, or *viśeshādhārana-pradhāna*, and inference with its general nature or *sāmānyādhārana-pradhāna*)" (p:36). In a similar vein, Sahota (2018) shows the correspondence between early Buddhist Nyaya logic and the correspondence with Peirce's (1997) formulation of abductive logic.

There are many such examples where traditional scholarship in Indic thinking and philosophy, by its very nature, pre-empt the new schools of thought that emerge in the West as novel insights and discoveries. To cite a couple of other examples: earlier, in the West, theidea of analogical reasoning was squarely rejected by science. No longer so. Sustainability issues plaguing the world have made the idea of "analogy" respectable, as evidenced by acceptance of scientists of ideas like biomimicry, respectability of recursion and fractal behaviour. Similarly, the idea of intuition as a valid mode of knowledge was an absolute no- no in positivistic science in the early part of the 20th century, but it is now being accepted as ameans of knowing [see for instance, Slavin (1984)].

The shift towards positive psychology, interpretivism and abductive logic, the acceptanceof analogical reasoning and intuition as a valid means of acquiring knowledge, and the acceptability of recursion and any number of other instances of the "shift" in Western science, are viewed by the educated Indian with a shrug, "I always thought so." Vajpeyi (2017), in the opening tribute to Shri Dharampal on the latter's work, calls this a symptom of the silent schizophrenic ailment of the Western educated, English speaking Indians. Malhotra (2011) attributes the problem not just to educated Indians, but to the West too. According to him, Western thinkers and intellectuals deliberately "digest" without acknowledging ideas taken from the East. These observations do not undermine Western advances in social sciencetheory, but point out to a "super set" of ideas in scholarship that exists in the repertoire of Indic knowledge. Traditional Indic scholarship can subsume many of the current principles insocial sciences and, equally with ease, also their opposites. This wide canvas that India presents is its strength as well as its weakness. There is a huge potential to redeem Indic scholarship. However, unless a certain higher-order, practical, vigorous attitude is adopted,the gap between practice and aspiration may engender fatalism and cynicism.

This paper's approach has the potential to question, "What is at once unique and all- encompassing in Indic Knowledge Systems?" Further, "Are the research activities that are carried out here superficial or touch the core of the issues involved in a contextually relevantmanner?"

Indic Worldview and Contribution to Global Knowledge

A certain lassitude prevails in Indian researchers to critically evaluate existing theories thatcome from the West and deal with them with a healthy dose of skepticism and a spirit of positive contribution. This paper is a self-critical inquiry, a call for a critical and willing disposition to examine the ideas coming from the West from the point of view of the wide canvas and Embedment alluded to earlier. This would generate the right kind of scholarship that would be useful not just for India but for the entire world. This is the promise of Embedment.

One of the ways is to formally examine the wide canvas, or the paradigm, from which theories originate in the Indic context. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985 & 2013), the four defining aspects of a paradigm are epistemology, ontology, methodology, and axiology.

Epistemology: Epistemology refers to "how we know what we know" and lays the foundation of the methodology for research. In the Western tradition, epistemology is keenly linked to the philosophy of science and the validity of knowledge about things external to man. It is not only about generating the right categories of the means through which knowledge is acquired but is also concerned about the relationship of the object being studiedand the subject that studies it. In the strictest Western modern scientific form, there is complete separation of the object and the subject, wherein the observation of the object by thesubject is a rational, unemotional process of clear observation, documentation and proper representation of the reality observed "out there." In the Indic tradition, epistemology, even ifpartly concerned about knowledge of things external, is more emphatically concerned about the cognizing human instrument, or the self, that is the observer. It is therefore largely concerned about the purity of the subject or self. In this sense, epistemology in the Indic tradition is significantly about "cleaning" up the observer through various means, such as yoga. It is a constant process that forever attempts to hone the cognizing self to "sense" theessence of reality. The privileged Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gita is able to see "*Viśwarūpa*,"the cosmic form of the God, who is otherwise only a charioteer to him.

Both the Western and the Indic epistemological inquires deal with issues such as the validity of methods of knowing through logical knowledge (deductive), empirical knowledge (inductive) and abductive knowledge (inferential and "now admissible" intuitive in the West).It deals with what is acceptable proof for generalizations in theory building and valid inquiry.It must be said that epistemology also gives rise to action theory. In the Indic tradition there isa certain indifference to intellectual "closure" before action is achieved. A clear one-to-one correspondence between thought and action is not expected to be achieved. The entire intellectual discourse is less utility-based in the Indic tradition. The exercise of mental discipline through various forms of yogic and meditative practices is only expected to sharpen the intellectual, vital and mental (roughly cognitive, conative and affective) faculties.The Indic position is that the actual situation on the ground is too complex to be circumscribed by intellectually elegant "Standard Operating Procedures."

While the Western ideas of empiricism, inference, etc., have their equivalences in Indic traditions with corresponding ideas such as *pratyakṣa* and

anumāna, etc., there are areas of differences also. It is interesting to note that in some of the systems of Indic epistemology, what is not perceived becomes as important as what is. This accounts for the idea of non- apprehension (*anupalabdhi*) as a valid form of *pramāṇa* or means of knowledge, something accepted by Vedāntins and Bhatta Mīmāṃsā logicians (and equally significantly, rejected bysome other Indic philosophies such as Buddhist epistemology or Mīmāṃsā of Prabhakara). Using non-apprehension as a form of *pramāṇa,* points to acknowledging what is not apprehended by the senses. In terms of the language of contemporary Research Methodology,"non-apprehension" is treated as a variable in itself rather than a value that the variable takes.

The idea of non-apprehension as a valid way towards knowledge has its own merit. It fosters a certain openness towards what is not admitted by the five senses and the mind. For the true seeker, this directs his or her attention to not just what is cognized but also what is (atpresent) unknown. It is interesting to note that in the Vedānta literature, *anupalabdhi* is further divided into four major types (Madhavananda, 1942). The discussion here proves the care taken to develop the ability to see what is otherwise not grossly sensed with the raw human faculties or cognized by the finer mind.

Another idea where Indic logic can help explore uncharted territory is *catuṣkoṭi* (later adopted into Latin tetralemma). While more research is required to tease out the benefits of some of these ancient ideas, we can safely state that these logical expositions point towards the importance of what is not known and what is known. This is not an objective issue for allof humanity where reality can be paraded openly for all to see. Such a position has implications for the subject who has a peek into reality through creativity and out-of-the-boxvantage points (Raina, 2016) to see the causes and solutions to vexatious human problems.

Ontology: Ontology is that area of human inquiry that deals with different aspects of reality. What constitutes reality? What does it mean to establish the contours of the limits of reality? Where does reality end and unreality begin? These are aspects that are answered by ontology.Here the question as to which comes first, body or mind, is also addressed. The question of what reality precedes "current" reality is a question that necessarily gets asked. Ever since Rene Descartes' division of mind and matter as different irreconcilable domains--assigning the mind to the church and material matters to science--Western ratio-

nal inquiries have allocated primacy to the material. Exclusivity of the scientific temper assigned by the cartesian preference to the material is absent in the Indic sensibility. In Indic ontological inquiries, mind is primary to the material. Not only primacy of which comes first (mind or matter), but also in terms of greater permanency across time. Mind stuff, or better still, *ādhyātmika* stuff (roughly translatable as spirit or transcendental stuff) lasts longer than the materiality of things. The more fundamental and causative, the more unseen and subtle, sothe Indic logic goes. Subtlety moves across time and space more freely and faces less resistance across disciplinary boundaries.

In the Indic dispensation, reality is not one scalar variable moving from the gross to the subtle. On the other hand, reality is a vector that exists differently at different layers. A *vyāvaharika* (transactional) level is different from the *ādhyātmika* (transcendental) level. Infact, these are polar ends with gradations in between. This kind of thinking gives rise to *pancakośas*, which represent five layers of gross-subtle gradations. Such a multi-layered reality, with some level of overlaps and intermingling, typical of Indic ontology, transformsheaven and hell into something that human beings can behold right here on earth itself.

Along with the mental abilities or mental dispositions, different levels of sensory abilities are also ascribed to perceive the world differently at different levels. This corresponds to the idea of *pancendriyas* (roughly, the five higher senses that are mind-equivalent stuff available to generate the five external sensory physical instruments of eyes, ears, etc.) that interpret andpresent the world differently for different people. Interestingly, the implication is that we see the world as we "choose" to do. Indic traditions, therefore, conflate epistemology with ontology. How we choose to know would impact the reality we behold. In other words, we see reality (ontology) depending on which lens of epistemology we choose to wear. Indic approach, therefore, sees no clear demarcation between epistemology and ontology as in the West. Ontology is a flexible concept based on the philosophy the beholder holds and the levelof mental clarity that has been attained by him or her. It is a matter of individual choice.

This also impacts the extent to which empirical facts are held valid. In a way, the post-truth world we see today is an outcome that was anticipated by the Indic sensibility. Limits of empiricism are there for us to see. Also, by implication, there is a greater role for a certain inner logic arising from experience that the subject would apply. Here the deductive logic andthe inductive logic work

in tandem to develop, introspect on and alter one's own view. It alsoexamines other sources such as verbal testimony (*āgama*). The refrain here would be "use empiricism as examples, or to show light at the end of the tunnel to see the bigger transcendental reality." By itself external facts do not prove anything except at the grossestlevel.

Such an idea corresponds to the call for abduction (Tavory & Timmermans, 2014), which isan epistemological method, apart from the more well-articulated methods of deduction and induction. Abduction involves the conscious process of generating hypotheses; a stage where judgment is held back and verification is scientifically sought. Every individual's task is to examine the validity of the view that he or she is able to see. Each individual has to negotiate and figure out these things at the personal level through self-knowledge and reflection. Yogic practices that include those of the body and mind provide the tools to see things more clearly without various types of conditioning of the mind that create cobwebs of confusion. This does not mean that the gaze has to be only internal. All of science that tries to see the empirical world clearly is admissible in such an approach.

Methodology: Methodology in the Western positivist sense would largely mean developing a system of hypotheses and examining whether they are objectively correct through experiments or empirical examinations. These are necessarily quantitative studies and have grown in sophistication in Western scholarship mainly around the idea of better multivariate and time series methods, structural equations modelling, and development of computer algorithms and recent developments in data analytics. All these improvements and breakthroughs, by and large, continue to be predicated on one correct answer, best fit and other forms where convergence is the norm.

There are also qualitative studies that could be phenomenological studies, studies based ongrounded theory, hermeneutics, ethnography, autoethnography, etc. Qualitative research hasalso taken various twists and turns. However, developments in qualitative research are evolving towards all manner of "specialized" focus that one wonders where all this will leadto. Over fifteen years ago in *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005), the authors talk proudly of all the variegated types of qualitative research: "indigenous inquiry, decolonizing methodologies, critical ethnography, critical humanism and queer theory, performance ethnography, narrative inquiry, arts-based inquiry,

online ethnography, analytic methodologies, Foucault's methodologies, talk and text, focus groups and criticalpedagogy, relativism, criteria and politics, the poetics of place, cultural and investigative poetics, qualitative evaluation and social policy, social science inquiry in the new millennium, and anthropology of the contemporary."

The reader wonders whether these diverse viewpoints have anything holding them together. What is the truth? Scholars need not conform to uniform ways of thinking, but, surely, something should tie all these views empathetically so that the thinker and the reader comes out more whole and complete. The fissiparous nature of post-modern Western knowledge is most evident here.

The "internal gaze" of the Indic traditions of knowledge seeking provides an empathetic way for sensitive eyes to behold oneself (complete with all its imperfections) before the gazeis projected outwards, thereby creating a less selfish, more peaceful world. Transcendence holds such a world together. When it comes to methodology, no easy comparisons are possible between the Western and Indic knowledge traditions. The paths are too divergent.

Several issues are ripe for further inquiry and can be undertaken by those who have an eyefor the holism that Indic scholarship offers.

Axiology: Axiology is about values, beliefs and what constitutes good conduct and ethical disposition. Western conception of ethics refers mostly to various end results, such as achieving the greatest good for the greatest number, fulfilling duties expected through family,social or group norms, integrity, courage, fairness, justice, equal treatment of all non- violation of social contracts, etc. For the most part it is about the external behaviour or conduct towards other beings, human, or in some instances, non-humans.

In the Indic traditions these aspects of human conduct are certainly held in extremely high esteem. But, fundamentally, ethics is more internally directed. "Internally directed" would necessarily mean the gaze is internal and the effort is now to get the inner logic of *dharma* clear. The correctness or ethicality of one's decision will not be based on Western ideals suchas Kantian categorical imperative, greatest good for the greatest number of Mill and Bentham, consequentialism, duty ethics, virtue ethics, etc. (Frankena, 1973). The logic of internal *dharma* has to be figured out by the individual concerned. The point is that if the individual had been pursuing self-refinement, harmony with nature and seeking truth as a matter of personal choice, he or she would naturally make

the contextually relevant ethical decision. Such a search will authentically and deeply deal with the questions of "why?" In the Indic tradition, this constant search of "why" has to be without guilt and remorse, triumphalism and ownership of the results. This is part of being detached (while being fully engaged in *dharma*). Such internal gazing and never-ending questioning, however, does not impact adversely on the *vyvāharika* (transactional) aspect of life that one has responsibility towards. In such a scheme of things, even a practising butcher would be practising non- violence, provided the act is done with the inner *bhāva* of consecration and genuine aspiration. This would seem preposterous to a Western ethicist. The law of karma states that not only such a person will have no adverse *karmic* imprint but will also be relieved from having to be a butcher all his life. The individual's *dharma* cannot be defined easily by others. It is something the individual himself or herself has to figure out.

Among the several points of departure between the West and the Indic, a singular emphasis on ends with means consigned as secondary is unacceptable to the Indic sensibility. While the end is important, it is not considered to be entirely in one's hands. The Indic idea of interconnectedness would consider cause-effect attributions (that the so-called scientific approach assumes) reductionistic. The Buddhist idea of "dependent origination" is even more emphatic of the unknowability of what causes what. Reality consists of complex loops of events, triggers and surprises. Nature cannot be controlled by humanly developed rules, norms and injunctions. The idea of social systems design in the West is primarily predicated on the idea of prevention of entropy, an idea emanating from physics. Self-criticisms about mechanistic controls prevail in the West, but the fear of disorder and the overriding bias to contain it still exist.

In contrast, the philosophy of the Bhagavad Gita states that any human being has control over only what he or she thinks, speaks and does, but not on outcomes. A person who seeks such self-control could achieve this with yoga, or union with something higher, most often called God. This aspirational idea is a constant reminder for those who follow the Indic ethic.

From a research perspective, the onus of the researcher is to be authentic and not pander to any kind egoistic "establishment of truth." The autonomy of the individual corresponds to Jung's individuation, where the individual not only goes beyond self-absorption but also transcends the need for group affiliations. Driven by one's own conscience towards which one has no clinging rela-

tionship, one transforms ethics into a matter of metaphysics of

internal gaze while performing one's *dharma*, all the while searching for ways to rise aboveself-indulgence.

Discussion

This paper suggested Embedment as a way to synthesize Indic and Western knowledge traditions. It also outlined the differences between Western and Indic paradigms in terms of Lincoln and Guba's (1985 & 2013) four defining aspects of a paradigm, namely, epistemology, ontology, methodology and axiology. What emerges is that Indic systems provide a far more wide-angle lens, among others to 1) accommodate the possibility of the refinement of the subject to see truth more clearly and in a more emergent manner 2) use binary oppositions selectively and discern the shades of gray in between 3) recognize the multi-dimensionality of reality and hold its several layers all at once 4) respect alternative viewpoints without the need for collective closure of ideas 5) provide for greater freedoms toview reality in more individual-specific ways 6) allow transcendence to "hold the centre" despite much "inconvenient disorder"7) consider means over ends as the ethical basis for authentic action while not ignoring ends, and 8) view the relationship between the agency andthe ecosystem in a more nuanced manner in the causal build-up to events and occurrences.

There are serious practical implications if we embrace Indic wisdom, understand its power of synthesis and undertake Embedment. As an example of Embedment, let us take the idea ofthe need for synthesis of disciplines. There is general consensus that there is a need for greater "conversation" between different disciplines that mostly exist as silos in knowledge institutions. For instance, for centuries now, universities have been dividing disciplines and schools into greater specializations. There is also the realization now, more than in any othertime, that there is a need for understanding and co-thinking across disciplinary boundaries tosolve problematic issues of sustainability, poverty, etc. This section shows how Embedment of different levels of disciplinary enterprise (Stember, 1991) into the ancient wisdom of *panckośas* is possible and eminently useful.

Stember points out to five levels of disciplinary enterprise as follows:

1   Intradisciplinary: Individual would be working within a single discipline.

2 Cross disciplinary: Viewing one discipline from another discipline's perspective.

3 Multidisciplinary: The unit shifts to a group, members bringing their own disciplinaryknowledge and working as a team.

4 Interdisciplinary: Integrating knowledge and methods from different disciplines, usinga synthesis of approaches.

5 Transdisciplinary: Unity of frameworks beyond the disciplinary perspectives leadingto ultimate synthesis.

Sophistication of synthesis at higher levels of disciplinary enterprise is possible only whenabstraction is achieved. This is akin to the idea of the movement from data to information toknowledge, and finally wisdom (Sharma, 2008); this is something that Information Systemsexperts are familiar with. Such a movement of conceptualization (from the simple to the complex, from the lower order to the higher order, and from the gross to the subtle), may have been discovered by the Indic wisdom keepers of the past in their theory of *pancakośas*.Notice the correspondence of levels of Stember's (1991) disciplinary enterprise to *pancakośas*.

Pancakośas convey a graded reality of all things, including the human being. It has a wide application in terms of gradations of consciousness, movement from grossness to subtlety, and triggers to understand the fractal nature of the different levels of reality. According to the*pancakośa* theory, there are five sheaths that constitute reality. It is normally easier to discussthe idea with the instance of a human being as a case in point. The following are the five sheaths:

1 *Annamaya Kośa*: Grossest "sheath" at the physical level, which deals with the bodythat is kept alive by externally provided nourishment in solid, liquid and gaseous forms. Here the components and subcomponents of the system interact with one another in fairly mechanical ways. Applied to disciplinary levels, all activities taking place inside a discipline fall within this category. In other words, intra-disciplinary activities are connected to one another in visible and "tangible" ways that are unmistakably obvious.

2 *Prāṇamaya Kośa*: This has to do with prana, through which integration of the organism with its environment takes place. The level of interaction that takes place is more subtle than *Annamaya Kośa*. *Pranamaya Kośa* corresponds with what Sri Aurobindo calls "vital" and has to do with the "emotions and sensitivity" to the environment. This is about going beyond the self and coming to terms with the reality of the "other." The space is shared with the other and there is

energy exchange. Cross-disciplinary understanding and sensitivities correspond to this realm.

3 *Manomaya Kośa*: There is a role for meta-cognition here. Here we start going beyond the physical observable elements of human existence. Higher order abstraction is used to see unity in the disparate that can only be intellectually explained. Higher order emotions that generate compassion and acceptance of the other belong to this category. When it comes to levels of disciplinary enterprise, this level has to do with the higher logic of integration and includes sensing intangible aspects in elements that connect different disciplines. There is a synthesis of disciplines that is explained through higher levels of inquiry by multi-disciplinary teams.

4 *Vijñānamaya Kośa*: Living life itself becomes learning. Wisdom starts connecting self with the other and the environment in ways beyond the mental. Here synthesis is nearly complete to the extent that humans are able to use language to convey a part of the integrative experience. Poems, koans, pithy anecdotes, higher order humour, abstract symbols like *mandalas* and certain abstract mathematics become the vehicles for communication. One is able to see the higher order logic so clearly that what was abstract and "a matter of intellect" now becomes interpenetrating in the "lived sense," and very close to the bones, so to speak. There is a real synthesis. The movement from Stember's (1991) multidisciplinary disposition to interdisciplinary disposition can be readily sensed.

5 *Ānandamaya Kośa*: Here there is pure delight of the unitary experience. There are no divisions and boundaries here. This is really experience beyond experience because all is one and one is all; there is no difference between living and the pure experience that it is. This is the culmination of disciplinary synthesis to Stember's trans disciplinarity.

While *kośas* or sheaths are normally understood in the context of human beings, its applicability to abstract ideas such as levels of disciplinary enterprise is compelling. The unit of analysis needs to shift from human beings to the levels of disciplinary enterprise. It would seem that in pursuing synthesis and unity, the unit of analysis, something that is sacrosanct in Western knowledge systems, becomes flexible and plastic in the Indic system. The concentric nature suggested by *panckośas* is applicable to harmonize not only levels of human experience but also disciplinary extensions. The power of Embedment is quite obvious. A bridge across as diverse a realm as human existential condition and levels of disciplinary enterprise is possible and useful. According to the Indic sensibility, such a synthesis is possible once we let the human mind create hith-

erto unthought-of connections.

The implication is that holding together different disciplines requires unity at the higher levels of abstraction, an insight that comes to light by applying the idea of *pancakośas*. Thereare many deep questions and answers that would emerge with this line of thinking. Do these levels of reality (exemplified by the theory of *pancakośas*) that apply to humans also apply, in a fractal manner, to not only specializations and knowledge systems in the university, but also to the way universities are organized? Are the hidden principles (subscribing to differentlevels of the *pancakośas*) that need to be understood and internalized differ across different hierarchical levels of knowledge collectives, such as universities? If there has to be cooperation between, say, schools within a university, would a more subtle handling of administrative issues be required at higher levels of the university hierarchy? New research questions will have to be addressed if we start to seek knowledge based on Indic wisdom.

If we go beyond the schools and departments within and across universities to the level of the society, this would mean that at the highest echelons, we need leaders who understand and practice subtlety. The qualifications for effective management at higher levels would bethinking that subscribes to level 5 (*anandamaya kośa*) rather than level 1 (*annamaya kośa*). This is quite contrary to current leadership notions that favour hands-on, task-oriented, lead-from-the-front individuals at senior leadership positions in society. Perhaps we need more invisible, less formal, hands-off leaders who let others gobble limelight, but are willing to jump in and face the bullet at times of crises! Such important counterintuitive implications arise from Indic wisdom traditions.

Conclusion

At the outset itself this paper stated that there was a need for a dynamic and autonomous scholarship orientation in India in line with its deepest cultural values and inclinations. It alsopointed out that some of the finest voices that have dug deep down into Indian culture, philosophy and psychology have all indicated how intellectual talent lies deep and underutilized in India. The gap that exists provides much opportunity for innovative and relevant research and inquiry. The paper suggests Embedment as a way to deal with and utilize Western scholarship in social science with sensitivity to Indian ethos. This is a way to create an intellectually vibrant and viscerally buoyant scholarship in India.

Taking management as a case in point, three kinds of studies that pass off

as Indic today were described, which are not quite deep enough and sufficient if we seek something more substantive. Instead, India should dig deep into the knowledge systems, which are part of its history and *itihāsa,* which are more holistic and all-encompassing, and which further seek correspondences or contrasts with Western scholarship. Using the idea of paradigm, this paper showed how variegated Indic philosophical positions and knowledge traditions are.

Pointing to what Malhotra (2011) refers to as digestion, the paper introduced the idea of Embedment, which would not only prevent allegations of digestion but would also display the universality of Indic knowledge systems. It argued that Embedment would show the power of indigenous wisdom systems in terms of their holism and wider, flexible and empathetic applicability.

Using the definition of paradigm provided by Lincoln and Guba (1985, 2013), the paper contrasted the four defining aspects of paradigm between the West and the Indic, the four being epistemology, ontology, methodology, and axiology. The differences between the West and the Indic scholarships were described. It also demonstrated how the idea of the level of disciplinary enterprise graded into five stages could be conceptually mapped to the five levels of *pancakośas.*

It looks as if, to solve the problems of the world, humanity has to seek deep synthesis. Such synthesis needs holding together, more than ever, of the values, triumphs and follies of humanity in the human breast; perhaps an "ecology of the mind," as suggested by Bateson (1972), duly united by the heart. When we dig deep, the Indic system teaches us to find that ecology. As a matter of projection, the inner ecology would also find its fruition outside, where humanity can strike peace with nature and fellow beings. The scientific temper that the West celebrates as its preserve is not exclusive to itself if, by science, we mean the spirit of inquiry. What humanity badly needs is a positive (but not arrogant) projective disposition towards change and human destiny. Indic knowledge must legitimately undertake Embedment, which can have a huge harmonizing and synthesizing influence on today's beleaguered and terribly wounded mother earth and her children.

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