
INDIC KNOWLEDGE THEORY: THE MUTED ACTION-SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

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Abstract

This paper reveals how the categories and causal principles that are held valid in the world today, the methods influencing the fields within which humans operate, the means of the inquiry process, the theories of action, sociality and specialisations, and the entire design of knowledge systems are all driven by Western scholarship. The Indic impulse with its higher-order personal disposition towards action and sociality, therefore, is crowded out, forcing a certain dysfunctional materialist orientation in the name of practicality, action orientation and sociality. Besides, it also limits the range of actions and mutuality that can potentially be achieved by those who possess native Indian sensibilities but are schooled in the Western manner. The intellect thus conditioned restricts, among others, what individuals can expect from themselves, the possibilities of action, and the design of institutions. The paper shows that by seeking a consciousness-based approach to human affairs, much positive energy can be released, where potentialities can be actualized rather than be restricted by the competitive materialist orientation fostered by Western-designed knowledge systems.

Keywords: Indic Knowledge, Indic Knowledge Theory, Indic Knowledge System, Indian Knowledge System, Indic Action Theory

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“Our scientific power has outrun our Spiritual power.

We have guided missiles and misguided men.”

Martin Luther King Jr. (1929-1968)

Today, the world over, scholarship in social sciences is driven overwhelmingly by the “rules of the game,” as defined by Western institutions and Western scholars. The categories developed, the causality principles that hold merit, the means of the inquiry processes, the theories of action and sociality are all parts of dominant Western scholarship. These basic positions and “meta-rules,” however, may not correspond to local wisdom traditions and cultural inclinations in civilisations such as the Indic. It is, therefore, worth exploring the possibility of restoring some of the wisdom traditions through which we may find suitable knowledge solutions to local socio-economic- ecological problems. Indeed, the wisdom traditions may even hold global lessons for a beleaguered earth and a battered humanity.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the “action” and “social” implications of the rich and vast panorama of Indic knowledge traditions. The word tradition essentially refers to the living memories and expressions of the past that hold certain values useful to self and society, which are worthy of preservation. In other words, tradition does not mean a dead thing of the past. A healthy tradition would also accommodate changes in thoughts and behaviour of individuals in a dynamic fashion to suit the psychological (inner) and social (outer) promptings they face. Emphasis on “action” and “social” also needs elaboration in that order. It is generally misunderstood that Indic philosophy or the corpus of knowledge is inadequate with respect to action principles and is insufficient in depth to result in positive social outreach (Malhotra, 2011). As Bhawuk (2011) observes, “Spirituality, as practiced in India, has an action bias over and above cognitive (thinking or thoughts) or value (considering something important) concerns” (p.25). This paper avers that Western misunderstanding—which uses the omnibus term “Indological” for anything Indian—is on account of the inadequate inquiry into the depth of Indic scholarship and thinking (King, 1995; Malhotra, 2011). If we understand how individual conduct in Indic thinking carries with it a certain impulse and an instinct to act and treat the “other” unitively, it comes alive as not just sufficient but more than

capable of achieving *action* and *social* orientations.

This paper is a call to go deeper into this core of action-social implications inherent in the Indic knowledge traditions, to heed their worth and apply those wisdoms to practical issues of understanding and interpreting individual actions, and to build institutions and create public systems. It is generally agreed, including in the West, that Indic thinking is quite sophisticated, especially with respect to spiritual and personal orientations. It is, however, conveniently forgotten, by the Indian intelligentsia too, that this is what gives rise to first action and then sociality of a form, which does not need excessive elaboration. It appears that scriptural knowledge and wisdom producers of the past considered the Indic individual philosophies to automatically give rise to maximally desirable actions and collective results. The formulators of Indic wisdom probably thought that there was no need to over specify the resultant “actions” or “social” implications; perhaps this was also because of the greater emphasis on means rather than the ends.

Today the sophisticated and advanced, yet muted, philosophy “on the ground” with respect to individual conduct and thinking sits uncomfortably with Western allegations of inadequate “action” and “social” detailing. This creates in Indians either a defensive intellectual posture or a certain aggression that is self-defeating (Elst, 2007). Both these extreme reactions can be avoided if only the erstwhile colonised look deeper into their own cultural and spiritual roots more closely, more deeply, and more authentically and discover the action and social implications implicit in the advanced cultural detailing.

In the Indic dispensation, the individual reaches out to the evolutionary impulse of human beings and seeks to make use of the true freedoms that humans desire. In such a philosophy, the need for controlling other human beings—however lofty the social purpose—is considered potentially generative of violence. The negative consequences of the mechanical integration resident in the political philosophy of Western social ideals (Varma, 1960) and their long-term consequences are there for all to see today, despite the material progress the West has made, no matter whether one is looking at the left or the right of the political philosophy. With mechanical integration orientation two undesirable things happen: one, the creeping restrictive inroads made by those in authority into the domain of individual freedoms causing disempowerment of the agents in whose service the promise of freedom was first made; and two, subtle at-

tempts at homogenization which is bound to create a backlash of separative identity assertion snowballing into extreme alienation. We see both these happening in the Western world as well as in other parts of the world that subscribe to the Western ideals, whether of leftist or rightist persuasions. The problem lies not where, on the left-right scale, any society is located, but on the mechanical or material level at which the issue is addressed. Left-right dichotomy remains a narrow unidimensional construct. Indic knowledge theories are multidimensional, with action and sociality encoded in individual behaviour and philosophy. With knowledge orientation permeating the subtle-spiritual action and sociality encoded in a natural evolutionary sense, Indic theories can perhaps deliver succour and solutions effectively.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to cover all the possible strands of Indic knowledge traditions. It only attempts to create a deeper conversation, which will benefit those who are culturally rooted in the Indic ethos. In an extended sense, this paper could also be of use to those who are in a similar post-colonial conundrum. If people and societies within a cultural context desire peace and wish to pursue what they deem good for themselves, thinking and action must be rooted on a sound intellectual base that is congruent with the culture and traditions that they value. The base also has to be kept in mind while formulating public policies and designing institutions. In societies that were once colonised, such a congruence has to be constantly reiterated and reinforced without pernicious dependence on what the erstwhile colonisers dished out as absolute knowledge or truth (Elst, 2007).

One of the pioneers of cognitive psychology stated, “The basic reason for studying cognitive processes has become as clear as the reason for studying anything else: because they are there...” (Neisser, 1967). The starting point of any study is the very existence of the thing, the observed phenomenon, the irregularity, something that is considered worth exploring, understanding, working on and altering. This is true for all cultures. Humans, by their very nature, are curious and seek a deeper understanding, and this is what differentiates them from other life forms. This curiosity is also marked by imagination, which leads human beings to act on themselves, the environment and the prevailing social and cultural circumstances. Science and social sciences are pursuits to *understand* and *make changes*. In the Western knowledge traditions, the “changes” sought have always been dominantly of the external, or the circumstances that

human beings face.

World over, in the last few centuries, this exploratory tendency and effort to change the circumstances have unfortunately been accompanied by the desire to *control and subjugate* both nature and other human beings (Krishnamurti, 1991). This is also reflected in the organisation of Knowledge Domains within social sciences, management and policy studies. Correspondingly, the stock of knowledge available to humans has developed in ways that result in the establishment of certain knowledge structures that lead to certain kinds of actions. These structures have always privileged the West to the neglect of local means to address issues that concern people in other parts of the world. They are so entrenched, well-established and ubiquitous that they are taken for granted and the conflicts and damages they may cause to local psychological, cultural and spiritual ethos go intellectually unnoticed and unchallenged. We need to go deeper and question the knowledge structures that are furthering the existing order of things. The knowledge structures and the ensuing actions mirror the institutional power and control systems that Oliga (1996, p.ix) pointed out over two decades ago:

“...And, of course, there are silent, latent, ideologically institutionalized forms of domination and exploitation between and within societies. The list of manifestations of these sociopathologies of our contemporary societies goes on and on... we have made little progress, if not actually regressed, in areas where we interact in social-political terms as fellow human beings. Today, there are numerous examples of social conflicts and violent fissions, some ethnic, others relating to religion, race, gender, minority, age, the underprivileged, and the disabled, and still others to politico-economic dissensions and confrontations. There are examples of exploitation and discrimination within and between different nations, blocs of nations, and regions.”

Perhaps it is the knowledge structures that can do maximum damage, even if silently. Oliga locates the problems of humanity in furthering the existing ways to control through the retention of power while subscribing to the same old hegemonic ideologies. Through a process of reinforcement, the same tested-and-failed protocols (for a silent majority) are being repeated with greater efficiency. The recipe for failure is resident in the very pursuit of particular types of solutions. This is a systems view which when adopted would reveal the process

of reinforcement through emphasizing feedback as pointed out by Senge (1994), who wrote about the issue around the same time as Oliga. The very manner in which knowledge is organised and institutionalised too may be disincentivising systems thinking. Are we wrongly looking for solutions in man-made institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF rather than in the organically developed heritage of mankind which includes languages, music, dance, literature, art and peace-enhancing rituals?

Inadequacy of Representationism

No matter how the earlier foundations of knowledge were laid in traditional cultures such as India, in the current form, the knowledge structures conceptualised and designed in the Western tradition are evident in areas of specialisation, disciplinary boundaries, schools of thought, accepted methods of knowledge accumulation and dissemination, peer processes, etc. In these “checks and balances,” the strong hold of the Cartesian worldview is easily discernible. Mind and body are considered two separate domains (Descartes, trans Bennett 2017). Such a separation has rendered the domains of knowledge to take on the representationist view (Goodwin, 2015). This essentially means that any action is the result of the mind that creates a representation of the “world out there,” processes the input information, and directs the body (action) to respond in a manner similar to the computational processes of an electronic machine. Even if representationism proper as a methodology postdates Descartes, his idea of “humans... (combining) mechanical body with reasoning mind” (Goodwin, 2015, p.29) was the modern harbinger of representationism. Over a period of time, the ensuing Cartesian paradigm ascribing material to be primary to mind (Cartesian materialism) has culminated in cognitive psychology with its strong materialist and representationist bias. All knowledge is symbolic, so the argument goes. And out goes authenticity and inner urge discussed in the latter half of this paper. Even if we exclude skills from knowledge-action principles, there is an element of representation even in action-skills. We can easily discern how representationism holds such a strong view on every aspect of human life.

The corollary of representationism is the need for an external push for organisms to act. What is out there in terms of change impulse is translated to an equivalent representation in the human brain, and on the basis of that representation, the organism acts; at worst to survive, or at best, to thrive. In any

case, an external trigger is needed to act. So, all action is predicated on an external push, so goes the theory. The end results of such a theory are profound. For instance, taking organisations as the unit of analysis, such a theory engenders feverish activity to make people act or perform. The performative culture creates its own existential angst. Yet another corollary of representationism is the epistemological necessity that generates a binary between the person acting and the lever behind the action or the cause behind the action. The separation between the two is non-negotiable and a sine qua non once we accept representationism as a necessary epistemological tool. The existence of the external as a thing outside of oneself is a requirement for any change. In such a scheme, the inner need for humans to act, evolve and transcend is entirely unacknowledged.

There have been objections to such a view. For instance, Sampson (1981) cautioned how cognitive psychology had developed into an ideology through dog-headed paradigmatic orthodoxy. For Maze (1991), representationism “cannot avoid collapsing into solipsism, cannot distinguish between true and false beliefs... and cannot give any objective ground for inference” (p.163). The biggest problem of representationism is perhaps similar to the Darwinian idea of change having to be initiated from outside. The initiator and the initiated have to be separate in the Cartesian sense. No doubt, there is some awareness of this separative philosophy and, occasionally, we do find caution against representationism in the West. For example, in an edited book by Krogh & Roos (1996), there is an entire section devoted to anti-representationism to provide an alternative through the theoretical lens of the theory of autopoiesis (Maturana & Varela, 1980). Here knowledge gets built-up through a collective epistemological process that is rooted in emergence, sharing, and mutual exchange. Those who advocate such a narrative support the idea of change coming from within, through autopoiesis. But such alternative voices have been muted by the dominant philosophy of the method of science, searching (and acting) merely externally.

We can readily see this as the hegemony of the dominant (Feyerabend, 1975), something germane to the representationist agenda.

An understanding of the process of accumulation or means of knowledge acquisition can throw interesting pointers: among others, on the relevance of the current man-made structures and how they align, or do not align, with psychological and cultural dispositions of the diverse peoples of the world. It is

worth examining whether changes can be wrought for greater effectiveness to positively influence attitudes, behaviours and dispositions of people and the design and conduct of institutions. A periodic review of such a nature is required so that knowledge accumulation and knowledge structures remain relevant for achieving individual excellence and social good.

For the most part, all developments in scholarship in recent times are based on the foundations laid by Western ideals of the means of knowledge acquisition. In the Indian context, the question is “is this scholarship and the manner in which this is organised congruent with the basic Indic ethos?” If not, is it too late to do something? What can be done? If we can answer these questions, we will be in a better position, as a civilisation, to adopt what comes from the West more organically and more effectively and assimilate them without violating local sensibilities. Perhaps the sad truth is that we have not examined the importance of how contemporary knowledge structures are organised and how these conform to Western ideals, based on science, which may be in variance with local psychological dispositions and wisdom traditions. Devisch (2003, p.117-118) points out, “Western science has the tendency to create an image of the other as being inferior or incompetent in order to reinforce its own hegemonic role. Modern Science, with its lack of self-criticism, is often contrasted to the sciences of other civilisations, such as those of China, India, Islam and the Ancient Civilisations of the Americas.”

If scientific knowledge is allegedly partial, what would be the case of social sciences and the inbuilt biases? Oldeman (2003, p.73) captures the uneasiness and suggests a way out:

“Since my early days, Science promised a universal method to explain everything, but university science with its inner contradictions left me bored... The rainforest is a great debunker of arrogant scientists. Its plants and animals are countless, its inner subdivisions are not sharp, timing of events there is imprecise... Our neat science predicts correctly how stars move, but not epidemics or jobless periods, or tree growth. The dilemma of structure (3D) versus becoming (4D) always was central to human thought. It is met by two axioms defining an elastic universe with fractal dimensions.

First, structure is a very slow process and process is a very short-lived structure. Second, due to a short life-span, humans can only perceive infinity if broken down, folded, refolded, etc., a fractal image. These axioms and some rules derived yield a logically coherent image of the universe, inclusive of but broader

than science as taught in schools today.”

Indic seers such as Sri Aurobindo and Swami Vivekananda had long pointed out that what is required in India is recognising, trusting and undertaking practices that correspond to higher-order consciousness (Oldeman’s 4D in the above quote) without violating the material aspirations of its people. This may be the way to achieve peace, prosperity and social good.

Representationism, broken down to solipsism, has led to the confusion of the post-truth world that has difficulty to distinguish truth from facts. Issac Asimov (1982, p.100) had said, “The closer to the truth, the better the lie. The truth itself when it can be used is the best lie.” Two consequences emerged. First, the idea of a “thing in itself” or “truth in itself” has lost meaning and the responsibility for this may lie with representationism. Second, ironically, personal control is now slipping away from most people. On the one hand, representationism brings about a sense of personal control.

After all, “I have to see for myself the truth of the representation” is a comforting thought. This is an error of solipsism. The problem goes even deeper. The dominant paradigm has also surrendered the freedom of interpretation to the “object out there.” The locus of control resides out there, outside of oneself. This is a serious loss of freedom. We just have to scan the social media to conclude that human beings have become humanoids behaving in ways predictable that can only be ascribed to the loss of autonomy and personal freedom.

Theorising Action: The Current Scientific View

As an aid to action, social sciences and humanities in the Western tradition insist on the study of phenomena at various levels of human aggregation: At the level of individuals, family, neighbourhood groups, work-related groups, organisations that are organically developed or designed by humans for a specific purpose, political or freedom movements, event congregations, large groupings of commercial guilds, religious groupings, political groupings, bureaucracy, military forces, geographical groupings such as nations, regions, continents or humanity at large, etc. The above levels of human aggregation correspond to various “Units of Analysis” (Lewis-Beck, 2004). At the level of individuals, the Unit of Analysis is the individual; similarly for other levels such as groups, organisations, society, etc. The Unit of Analysis may be considered the first dimension in the Western inquiry process.

The next dimension includes the different kinds of “human happenings:” experiencing, thinking, feeling, willing, solving problems, exploiting opportunities, behaving, being in action, interacting, communicating, making artifacts, consuming, altering the world around to suit the “human mission,” generating artistic outputs of written material, painting and drawings, music, etc. Let us call this dimension the “Realm of Activity.”

In a broad sense, the entire knowledge enterprise in the Western sense is meant to give better results (defined as leading to desired outcomes) through the Realm of Activity. Besides the two dimensions of “Unit of Analysis” and “Realm of Activity,” a third one exists, which is “Time.” Here comes history. Any topic within the realm of social sciences/ humanities would be a point of intersection among these three dimensions. The collection of intersections can be viewed as a matrix that provides the canvas for the entire range of knowledge in the field of social sciences. The following Table shows a few points on the matrix (or sample intersections) and corresponding Knowledge Domains. All colleges, schools, departments and study groups developed with Western ideals of knowledge can be similarly viewed in terms of the three dimensions creating different Knowledge Domains.

Latour (2013) considers a thought experiment where an anthropologist comes up with the idea of “reconstituting the value system of Western societies.” He speculates, “If the question of where to begin nevertheless strikes her (the chosen anthropologist) as quite complicated, it is because the Moderns present themselves to her in the form of domains, interrelated, to be sure, but nevertheless distinct: Law, Science, Politics, Religion, the Economy, and so on; and these, she is told, must, by no means, be confused with one another. She is strongly advised, moreover, to restrict herself to a single domain “without seeking to take in everything all at once” (p.29). A domain, even if an epistemological construction, has emerged as an ontological reality for the modern human being. The insularity is reflected in the domains of knowledge, examples of which are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 : A Sample List of Intersections of Western Social Sciences Knowledge Matrix

Intersection of the Three Dimensions	Knowledge Domains
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Unit of analysis: Individual 2. Realm of human activity: Thinking 3. Time: Present 	Cognitive Psychology
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Unit of analysis: Children 2. Realm of human activity: Thinking 3. Time: Across the time of childhood 	Developmental Cognitive Psychology
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Unit of analysis: Organisation 2. Realm of human activity: Economic activity 3. Time: Present 	Study of contemporary commercial organisations
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Unit of analysis: The military forces 2. Realm of human activity: Defence of the country 3. Time: Present 	Military Studies

Granted, in any knowledge domain, the environment and context also may come into play while dealing with a specific intersection. For instance, in the case of “Military Studies” mentioned in the last row of Table 1, even if the level of human activity is the “Defence of the country,” the offensive capabilities of the enemies (context) would legitimately be taken into account. Similarly, while studying corporate bodies, it is recognised that it is important to study the pulls and pressures exerted by a firm’s environment; to achieve this, one must have an understanding of the context of the dynamics of the industrial organisation in which the firm is located.

Within each domain, the inquiry may broadly be about what is (descriptive) or what ought to be (prescriptive). The inquiry process and the methodology adopted is one of a) Categorisation, b) Causality discovery, and c) Identification of Reference Variables and due measurement thereof. The three are fundamental to the inquiry process. First is Categorisation, which is the very basis for analysis and allows the beholder to distil the complexity into manageable chunks. The second, Causality Discovery, provides the logic for understanding how changes can be affected. The third, Identification of Reference Variable, provides the reference point for knowing “where one stands” as of today and “where one ought to be” in future. Action ensures the movement from “where

one stands” as of today to the desired “where one ought to be” in future.

In addition to the above, the inquiry would also include how the domain is (or should be) studied, which is about epistemology, methodology, etc. Figure 1 on page 18 represents the above description of how knowledge gets specialised in the Western mode of knowledge development. At the left top corner are the three keys to specialisation of knowledge that have already been discussed: Unit of Analysis, Realm of Activity and Time. They together generate a Knowledge Domain, which gets specified interms of Categories, Cause-Effect attributions and Reference Variables. They roughly encompass all the functions of the “formulation” stage. Next, from the perspective of knowledge leading to action, there is the need to specify which Reference Variable is being addressed (such as maximization of income or enhancement of distributive justice, etc., in the case of economic studies). Finally, there is the need to specify the actual action to be executed with a feedback loop to check for progress. The feedback provides future reference for the next round of action.

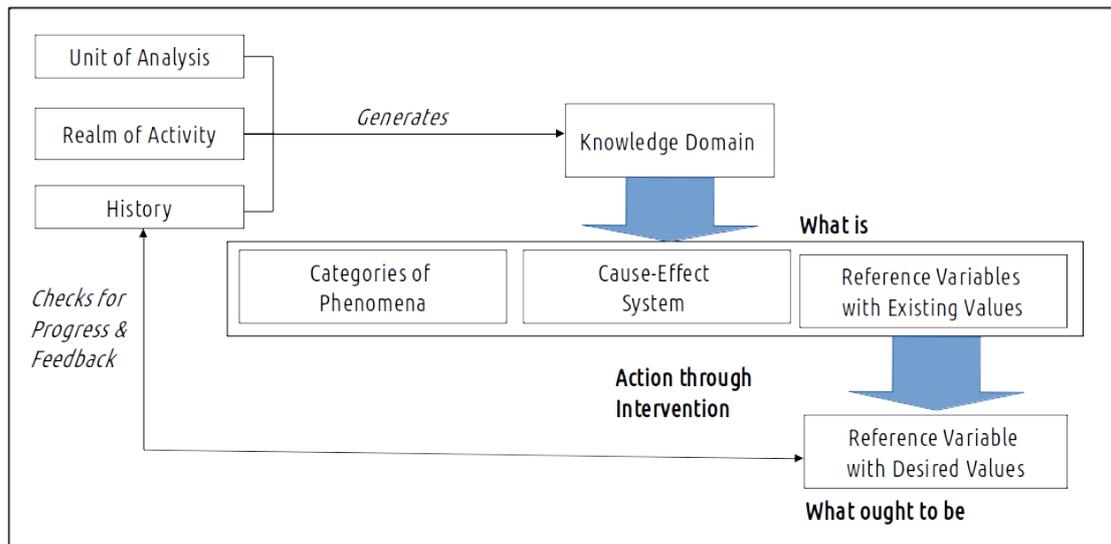


Figure 1 : The Dominant Knowledge-Action System

A short description on the Reference Variables with some examples would be in order. In the case of economic sciences, for instance, the Reference Variable may be economic growth. Similarly in the case of sociology, it may be “community orientation of the citizens.” For psychological science, it could be “individual happiness” or “anxiety,” etc. To arrive at ways to maximize or minimize these variables, systems (economic, social or personal, as in respective cases above)

are studied. Armed with “what is,” it is possible for researchers, analysts and policy specialists to generate “what ought to be.” With this in place the “doer” or the implementing agency is closer to action or implementation. The question that now arises is “To what extent can the Reference Variable to be maximised (in case of something that is desirable, such as wealth of a nation) or minimised (such as poverty or skewness in wealth distribution)?”

The modelling achieved in the first phase of knowledge development (of determining “what is,” categories and cause-effect understanding) helps to find out what the levers of action are, over which decision makers have control (causative variables).

These could also be some additional causative variables that can be generated through engineering the external environment or context (this is not shown in the diagram). As an example, where economic prosperity is the desired outcome, manipulating the external environment may be through military options or with the help of covert intelligence activities. The causality model is thus “expanded,” as are the available levers of causative variables, in order to generate the desired outcomes (measured by the Reference Variables). Whether the causative variables are adequately understood is a moot point. The sparsity of causative factors considered and the linearity of causal relationship assumed have always been known to be problematic. These “imperfections” pass off as acceptable for “practical” considerations.

The above approach is extremely logical and may have been sufficient for the industrial-economic age, where reason alone was sufficient. It has worked well, especially for the economically developed societies that had colonised the rest of the world. This kind of logic was the cornerstone of the so-called European enlightenment.

The direction of scholarship that developed under such circumstances focused outwardly to maximise the returns through economic development and reduce the social negatives such as unemployment, etc. This logic, developed in the West as a panacea, was thrust upon the rest of the world; Rudyard Kipling called it the “white man’s burden.” The main restriction of this entire approach is its sheer logicity and the exclusive use of the mind. The mind also justifies physical violence. All scholarship so designed would eventually have, overtly or covertly, such a logic resident in it. Logic and rationality are held to be the only aspects of learning. Even aesthetic experience got subsumed under the

logic of utility. Resilience, inner courage, sacrifice, surrender, transcendence, embodied learning, etc., got left out. Action had to be purposive in a very overt manner, engendering tensions between opposing forces, between what is now and what ought to be, which resulted in competition for resources and competition between alternative models, such as capitalism, socialism, etc. Conflict and opposition thus got built into the very definitions.

In such a scheme of things, structures of conflict are designed and implemented in social systems so as to ensure that there are no excesses committed by anyone concerned. The dialectic tension ensures that no party acts excessively in their own interest at the cost of ethical obligations. As an example, the boards of directors or governing bodies of public limited companies are designed to account for agency conflict between the CEO and the shareholders. Representatives of the shareholders balance the power that the CEO wields along with the executive team. Similarly in the administration of the state, a “healthy” balance between the triad of legislative, executive and the judicial is sought so that none of the above branches would wield excessive power, nor would they influence the powers wielded by one of the constituents of the triad. The dyads and the triads structurally ensure some form of balance, so goes the argument.

In this thinking-action model, the object would simply remain as a lumpy something, no matter if it is a flesh-and-blood living being. It becomes something that can be “legitimately” exploited and made use of. If we reflect deeply, the consequences are deep. Slavery, colonisation, legitimisation of the idea of “buyer beware” in economic exchanges and a host of other gross “givens” arise from this objectification that has its roots in the legitimisation of the “material” knowledge structure that we describe here. There are other implications from the subject’s side too. While the object becomes a mere “lumpy” thing to be studied, the subject is one uniform observer, impartial, unchanging and feelingless, which could necessarily be considered one homogeneous gross object. Uniformisation and lack of acceptance of diverse ways to view things, intolerance to imagery, likelihood of calling out imagination as unscientific, lack of understanding of what is meant by the Sanskrit word, *bhava*, are all built into such an overall schema. On top of it, it panders to the hegemonic power structure, of which Bourdieu (1990) was keenly aware. He mentions of his realisation of the importance of rituals to traditional societies, a form of serious meaningful collective action, as follows:

“I would never have come to study ritual traditions if the same concern to ‘rehabilitate’ which had first led me to exclude ritual from the universe of legitimate objects and to distrust all the works which made room for it had not persuaded me, from 1958, to try to retrieve it from the false solicitude of primitivism and to challenge the racist contempt which, through the self-contempt it induces in its victims, helps to deny them knowledge and recognition of their own tradition” (p. 3).

Many others too have been aware of the malaise of this collective logical heartlessness. For Naipaul (1967), the irreparable damage is already done: “The empires of our times were short-lived, but they have altered the world forever; their passing away is their least significant feature” (p. 38). Perhaps Naipaul was not able to see the undying inner *bhāva* resident in fellow beings belonging to a culture with which he had a love-hate relationship. For Bhargava (2013) it has adverse impact on both sides:

“...the pernicious impact of epistemic colonisation has deep negative connotations for not just the colonised, but the colonisers themselves who have great difficulty in being “rescued from the pernicious effects of their own imperial imprint”” (p. 413).

Freire (1970) too echoes a similar sentiment in his suggestion that both the oppressor and the oppressed are brutalized by the “pedagogy of the oppressed.” Perhaps the solution is epistemic pluralism, a movement away from hegemony and imperialism, which will benefit the Western half too. Eliot expressed the condition of the modern man as long as a century ago in his “Choruses from the Rock”:

“The endless cycle of idea and action,
Endless invention, endless experiment,
Brings knowledge of motion, but not of stillness; Knowledge of speech, but not of silence; Knowledge of words, and ignorance of the Word.”

Let us see how Indic systems can provide an antidote to the feverish, mindless action that representationism has engendered.

Indic Knowledge Systems

Western knowledge systems are well-defined and the matrix of intersections is clearly and logically defined. Indic knowledge system, however, can be imagined as Indra’s Net, a reference made in the *Atharva Veda*. Indra’s Net is the beau-

tiful cover over mount Meru, the axis mundi of Vedic cosmology, the heavenly abode of Indra, the king of the Vedic Gods. The metaphor conveys the idea of a vast canopy of a net created out of innumerable cords that has an effulgent jewel at each intersection or vertex. The infinitesimal jewels shine by themselves and generate light (*jyoti* or effulgence) while also receiving light from other jewels. In addition, the reflections and re-reflections create an imagery of infinitesimal interconnections.

The origin of the idea of Indra's Net can be traced to the early Pali scriptures of India conveying the idea of *paticcasamuppāda* "which means dependent co-arising or interconnected origination" (Thiele, 2015; p. 17). Nothing exists by itself. This corresponds to the idea of *anicca* , or impermanence or non-essentiality of things, an idea that Nagarjuna, the great exponent of Mahayana Buddhism, propagated. Neither does a thing's origination directly depend on something else nor does it directly give rise to something else. The non-essentiality boils down to *sunyata* or emptiness. The idea of interconnectedness travelled to China and became a part of the philosophically-inclined Hua-yen school of Ch'an Buddhism (or Zen in Japan).

For Malhotra (2014) Indra's Net conveys the philosophical unity and richness behind the different aspects of Hinduism. The coherence can only be explained in supra logical ways. Each of these jewels is self-luminous, with the power to illumine other jewels with a million rays. Along with the power to give (illumine), there is also the power to receive (be illumined). The metaphor conveys mutual support and inter-dependencies. As against the dominant Western well-argued, rational, but reductionistic descriptions of social sciences, Indic knowledge systems and social theory seek to describe the vast panorama in a poetic and sublime manner. Overlaps become a metaphor for flexibility and mutuality, self-effulgence creates an imagery of self-adequacy, and imagination from within fosters appreciation of the outside.

In the Western system, the subject is a fixed entity who is perforce expected to seek knowledge domains in a fashion identical to others, which admittedly is the very nature of objective knowledge. On the other hand, the Indic panorama offers several possibilities.

Subjectivity is natural, a way to enrich one another and a source of strength. It provides both variety and self-transcending possibilities. All the while recognizing the need for uniformity and agreement at the transactional level. The

accommodation of subjective reality acknowledges the subject as capable of higher consciousness, to become, and change as a node on Indra's Net in a new and renewed manner. The ascension of consciousness has been described by a large number of Indic and Western seers, authors, yogis or gurus, belonging to different traditions.

Gradations in human consciousness can be expressed in many ways in the Indic system. For instance, Aurobindo (1972) dealt extensively with different levels of the mind. The Buddhist tradition also gives tremendous importance to the mind. It advocates reigning in it to find happiness, thereby fostering major implications for social dynamics. In most of the discussions on interactions, Western scholarship, at best, divides the realm of interactions into two: transactional and transcendental. The transactional has to do with man-to-man interactions and the transcendental with man to God. These are conceptually opposed to each other, so to speak. The dominant pattern in the Indic tradition is more fractal. One level gets encased in the other. A good example of this is the *pañcakoṣa*-s that represent the five layers of the gross-subtle gradations. As one expands in consciousness, the level of subtlety goes up and becomes more and more instrumental in impacting the grosser. This ties in well with the idea of the sense organs in the Indic traditions, which do not merely consist of the motor organs of eyes, ears, skin, tongue and nose (*karmendriya*-s) but the subtle, inner connections of sensing that include *jñānendriya*-s and *buddhīndriya*-s (Satprakashananda, 1965) connected to the mind.

The idea of *pañcakoṣa*, originally from the *Taittiriya Upanishad* (see translation by Sharvananda Swami, 1921), applies to, among others, to human consciousness.

Pañca and *koṣa* mean "five" and "sheath," respectively. The five *koṣas* are *annamaya koṣa*, *prānamaya koṣa*, *jñanamaya koṣa*, *vijñanamaya koṣa* and *anandamaya koṣa*. These sheaths correspond to roughly, anatomical, physiological, psychological, intellectual and universal existential layers. While the *pañcakoṣa*-s are generalizable to almost anything that straddles the gross-subtle range, they are more easily described when applied to a context. For convenience, we have chosen the gradations of human consciousness.

Muktananda (1974), translating Srimad Jnaneshwar Sant's teachings, describes the correspondence of consciousness to the level of the gross-subtle scale of human existence as follows:

“The lotus of the human form consists of four petals of four kinds, colours and sizes. The first petal represents the gross body, perceived by the senses. Its colour is red. The second stands for the subtle body, in which we experience dreams; it is white in colour and thumb-size. The third signifies the causal body; it is of the size of a fingertip and black in colour. The fourth denotes the supracausal body; it is as tiny as a sesame seed and its colour is blue. It possesses the greatest significance. It is uncommonly brilliant and forms the essence of the path, being the highest inner vision” (p.76).

Sri Aurobindo envisaged gradations of the mind in *Life Divine*, where he provides a gradual ascending unfoldment: the stages are the Higher Mind, the Illuminated Mind, the Intuitive Mind, the Over Mind, and the Super Mind. (Aurobindo, 1972). Even if these states of mind are not directly linked functionally to the *koṣa*-s on a one-on-one basis, there appears to be a compelling level of homologous correspondence in the overall structure. Similar correspondences could be observed in Wilber’s (2001) integral theory of consciousness or Schumacher’s (1977) fields of knowledge.

In a similar vein, acknowledging the source of Vedic wisdom, Barrett (n. d.) provides an interesting extension to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. According to him, the first four Maslowian needs arise from fear with implications for early maladaptive schema (Young et al, 2006) that “strongly influence the levels of consciousness we operate from during our adult years; they keep us focused on our deficiency needs, not allowing us to explore our growth needs.” The correspondence between Barrett’s seven stages of ascending consciousness and the five stages of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs is shown in the Table 2 on the next page.

Table 2: Mapping of Barrett’s Level of Consciousness and Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs

Level	Barrett’s Consciousness Stage	Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs	Motivation to Act
1	Survival	Physiological	Underlying anxieties about not being safe or secure and not having enough.
		Safety	
2	Relationship	Belongingness	Underlying anxieties about not being accepted and not being loved.

3	Self-esteem	Self-esteem	Underlying anxieties about not being respected and not being enough.
4	Transformation	--	Becoming more of who you really are by uncovering your authentic self and aligning yourself with your soul.
5	Cohesion	Self-actualization	Finding meaning in your life by aligning with your passion or purpose and creating a vision for your future.
6	Making a difference		Actualizing your sense of purpose by cooperating with others for mutual benefit and fulfillment.
7	Service		Devoting your life to selfless service in pursuit of your passion or purpose and your vision.

The first three levels of consciousness in the above formulation are based respectively on anxieties of scarcity, loneliness and non-recognition. They are marked by the fear of denial of survival, being left alone and alienation, and loss of standing within the group, community or society to which the individual belongs. Once fear is overcome, a “change in phase” becomes evident, when fear, arising as it does from the sense of the separative consciousness, is replaced by the sense of the unitive. Until now the world out there is something predominantly physical with all its raw animosity and limitations, something to be fought against. With the change in phase, as Barrett calls it, the task is not to perceive the outside in separative consciousness and, in return, exert physically in a wanton manner, but to try to transcend physical circumstances. The job now involves not fighting the physical circumstances, but being in tune with the circumstances in a participative manner, without losing the explorative human dynamism in any way.

At the higher consciousness, there is a movement from fear to a higher-order consciousness. Here self-actualization manifests, according to Barrett, as a) internal cohesion, b) making a difference to others, and c) internalization of service as a higher order calling. If we map this to the three stages in the Indic action principle, they may correspond to *Iccā śakti*, *Jñāna śakti*, and *Kṛyā śakti*, respectively. Such a formulation allows for the individual to exert a great deal of self-mediated action (or autonomy), which is lacking in the representationist orientation bound by invariant physicality.

Objectivity itself gets questioned in such a scheme of things. While the West always celebrates individual autonomy as symbolized by the protagonists of Ayn Rand’s novels such as *Atlas Shrugged* and *Fountainhead*, the problems of objectivity is being discovered in current Western philosophical discourse with solutions like intersubjectivity [see for instance, Gillespie & Cornish (2010) or Scheff (2016)] and social relatedness [see for instance, Schweitzer (2003)]. Indic thinking suggests the cultivation of the internal unitive experience through transcendence, independent or inter-dependent of the material world.

When it comes to measurements, it is clear that positivistic measurement orientation would admit only the first three fear-based elements that can be observed externally and therefore are amenable to traditional subject-object treatment, as in, for instance, behaviourism (Skinner, 2012). Today, Western psychology is reaching out to higher motivations beyond the “external observ-

able” through sophisticated development in qualitative research such as auto-ethnography or internal cellular level correlates and measurements in the human brain with probes, simulations, etc. If we were to go by the above observations, we can conclude that, until very recently, objectivity doggedly followed by Western knowledge traditions has excluded almost all knowledge work that transcends the zone of fear. The spectrum of true freedoms and higher human potential have thereby been excluded. Krishnamurti had pointed out on many occasions [see for instance, Krishnamurti (1969)] the ubiquity of fear-based human disposition and their overarching negative influence on humanly-designed institutions. The Indic viewpoint provides strong insights to transcend the positivism-induced boundaries that are deeply self-limiting.

Discussion

This paper has already demonstrated that Western knowledge systems emerged as a compound of three factors, viz., Unit of Analysis, Realm of Human Activity and Time. These emerged as specialisations in academia over time. As they got determined by academia, specialisations, schools and departments emerged. While some may argue that there are advantages to such “planned” growth of scholarship, over a period of time they also emerged as hegemonic supra structures with no room for individual sensibilities and aspirations. Schoolman (2001) attributes the horrors of the world war to this kind of loss of individuality, or what he calls aesthetic individuality:

“The destruction of the Jews was the consequence of the destruction of the aesthetic features of what the Western philosophical tradition since John Stuart Mill more narrowly understood as “individuality.” “Aesthetic individuality,” as I will call it, disappeared with the triumph of a form of rationality whose progress led inevitably to the Holocaust... In *Twilight of the Idols* Friedrich Nietzsche captures the relationship between reason and horror that must have prevailed at that moment in 1944 when Horkheimer and Adorno (authors of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*) first wrote of the “indefatigable self-destructiveness of enlightenment,” of the path not to a truly human condition but rather to “a new kind of barbarism” on which the process of enlightenment seemed to have launched humankind” [Schoolman (2001), p.1].

The aesthetic pursuit that Schoolman talks of is quite congruent with the highly individualized spiritual pursuit envisaged in the true Indic tradition. If

an ecology of freedom (Bookchin, 1982) were to exist in the Indic geography and individuals were free to pursue that which provides aesthetic release without hindrances, such a pursuit would possibly be not art or aesthetics as defined in the West, but something that could be defined as spiritual-aesthetic¹. If we follow the Indic impulse as described in this paper, there would be no boundaries in the Indic knowledge systems set up and practiced by the organised institutional hegemony through an elaborate system of licenses, permissions and regulations. Discipline, regimentation, and strict learning of meta-models may be the hallmark of early education in traditional India, but when it comes to higher scholarship, what is studied and how it is studied are decided by the concerned individuals seeking freedoms. Knowledge is corollary to the pursuit of freedom. This then is *Jñāna Yoga*. Pursuing freedom through knowledge becomes the hallmark of the knowledge seeker.

The Indic system goes beyond the material into the realm of the unknown through a process of ascendance, which is as real as it can get for the “authentic” practitioner. This ascendance is uncertain and the process of seeking is the reward unto itself. In Indic methods of knowing or *pramāṇa*, such as *Vedānta* and certain schools of *Mīmāṃsā* such as of *Kumārila*, knowledge of the unknown is achieved through *anupalabdhi*, or non-apprehension. The door is wide open for bringing under knowledge what is currently unknown. There is complete break with the past, which is allowed. Representationism and material causality insisted by Western theories of knowledge no longer restrict the seeker. Satprakashananda (1965) states that the understanding of the absence of something is achieved “not by the perception of (its) non-existence there, but by the non-apprehension of (its) presence there” [Satprakashananda (1965), p. 163]. The humility inherent in the seeking of knowledge shines out in such a statement. Even if early education in the Indic world appears strict (essentially meant to drill down meta-models), at higher levels of knowledge seeking, freedoms are clearly available. The implications for moving away from restrictive reductionistic knowledge development, acknowledging the limitations of what humans have achieved so far and allowing for “greater penetration of light” are clearly apparent.

What comes to mind is the great poem “In Broken Images” by Robert Graves.

“He is quick, thinking in clear images; I am slow, thinking in broken images.

He becomes dull, trusting to his clear images; I become sharp, mistrusting my broken images. Trusting his images, he assumes their relevance; Mistrusting my images, I question their relevance. Assuming their relevance, he assumes the fact; Questioning their relevance, I question the fact.

When the fact fails him, he questions his senses; When the fact fails me, I approve my senses. He continues quick and dull in his clear images; I continue slow and sharp in my broken images. He in a new confusion of his understanding; I in a new understanding of my confusion.”

Such a view of knowledge generates action not through fear or negative external inducements, but through internally referenced meaning-laden action (*Niṣkāma Karma*). The higher the level of consciousness, the higher the service orientation. The higher the service orientation, the higher the impact on others. It is readily apparent how nobility is inherent in such a formulation. We can also see that the criticism against the Indic system as not addressing action and sociality is inaccurate. The idea is dynamic in the sense of consciousness ascendance giving rise to nobler actions with more favourable impact on others. Is objectivity (based on not trusting experience or reified description of what “ought” to be experienced) a better way to judge the truth of action or a higher-order action itself based on self-referential ascendance?

Earlier it was stated that it is important to note that any theory of action and sociality should ideally give pointers to the design and conduct of social systems. Table 3 shows the implications of Indic Knowledge Theory on social systems design.

Table 3: Premises and Implications of Indic Knowledge Theory

Premises of Indic Knowledge Theory	Major Implications for Design of Social Systems
Extremely high levels of individual responsibility through the path of seeking of individual dharma and ascension of consciousness without superficial binary oppositions.	Responsibility needs to be socially “marketed” to individuals within societies without political bias and divisive binaries.
Authenticity of the individual.	Important to create an ecology of listening where authenticity would be practised. No view need be rejected. Reversely, statesmanship is important.

Genuine individual freedoms without society imposing its will trivially in the name of “the ethics of consequentialism.”	What is collectively good cannot be easily figured out by experts. It is better to leave it to local smaller units, the smallest being the individual.
Personal freedom to choose one’s belief system including choice of God(s) and the importance of authenticity.	Authentic pursuit is important and there is a need to create an ecology where individualistic pursuits are not looked down upon.
Mutuality among individuals that is antithetical to runaway idea of competition.	Excellence need not be based on aggressive competition. Cooperation and competition are nuanced ideas.
Multiple Indic ways of seeing things or darśana-s. Nine major darśana-s were mentioned earlier, all equally valid depending upon what is most suitable. The system allows for flexibility to discover, debate and introduce more darśana-s.	What one believes is not important. What is important is whether one has interpreted what one is exposed to (through education and life experience, etc.) in the spirit of experimentation for advancing one’s own consciousness and supporting others to develop their own consciousness.
Desirable social outcomes through an emergent process.	Too much planning is counterproductive. Optimization on limited factors to the detrimental of the weak or dis-empowered spokesperson is not acceptable. Compassion or karuna is the basis for actions that impact a large number of people.
More organic, social and educational institutions.	While there should be procedural fairness through institutions, organically developed devices are more permanent. Power needs to be used sparingly.

In Indic theory of knowledge, the individual, in seeking higher consciousness, is in essence seeking to be responsible to the self and other beings on the earth. It is antithetical to the narrow view of science applied (or misapplied) to social sciences and humanities in the post-renaissance period of the Western world. This has extremely significant implications: The true freedoms that humans would wish to pursue in a very deep sense will be acknowledged and promoted by the Indic view and the individual’s authentic pursuit of freedoms would create both purposive action and benefits to society through an emergent process reminiscent of Adam Smith’s invisible hand (not to pursue narrow personal material benefits but something higher and liberatory). It is time we conceptualized man-made social (and particularly those that deal with higher education) institutions and the entire knowledge enterprise in line with the metaphor of Indra’s Net to release the “non-fear energy” that will no doubt get unleashed from the non-fear spectrum that such a view provides.

Given the background of colonial and post-independent India—the elaborate institutional regulatory systems that have emerged to oversee knowledge production and dissemination, the lack of encouragement for independent thinking, the lack of incentive towards any wide-spread and deep engagement with its past, the timidity to make new interpretations of classical Indian texts, etc.—the thesis advanced here may seem both preposterous and impossible and naively optimistic. But, as the cliché goes, nothing ventured, nothing gained. There are many tasks on hand. One of them is to free the usual association of spiritual writings with the “anti-scientific,” which is the hallmark of the intellectual discourse elsewhere in the last several centuries. Much unlearning needs to be done.

One side of the Indian intelligentsia (usually with a leftist persuasion), schooled in Western traditions, is sold to the idea of always viewing the scientific and the sacred in conflictual terms. There is another section of Indic enthusiasts for whom what is written in the Indic classical texts are concretely and verbatim true and worthy of blind belief. One is rigidly scientific and the other naively textual. Both positions are problematic.

For the first group, both Western and Indic paradigms need to be treated alike with due distance maintained between spirituality and science. But this need not be so. Many Indic sacred texts can be approached with a logical mind to discover and clarify higher-order rationality. As Ram-Prasad (2001) wrote,

“The Indian thinkers themselves took such knowledge to be acquired through analysis of fundamental concepts, even if those concepts were held to be grounded in the reports, teachings and injunctions of their *sacred* (italics mine) texts. I hope to show, by looking at what they took to be the content of liberating knowledge, that the Indian philosophical procedure was not merely an exercise in apologetics. The thinkers of all the schools here did not take knowledge to lie solely in the sacred texts. And where they did locate the texts as the source, they had distinctly analytic ways of treating and extracting the content of those texts. This latter fact is sometimes not appreciated by modern writers who emphasize the role of texts in classical Indian thought” (p.1).

The other extreme of unthinkingly conflating the two (science and Indic wisdoms) is even more dangerous. *Itihāsa* and history will become one. *Puṣpaka vimāna* then gets concretized and leads to naive declarations such as the Wright brothers were not the inventors of the airplane! Facts and imagination

have to be marshalled carefully in a non-egoistic, non-sectarian universal manner for arriving at truth. Language plays an important role here to convey the Indic spirit as pointed out by Mahatma Gandhi (Suhrod, 2012). There is a need to restore a unitive mindset, a sense of commitment to truth beyond external facts and a sense of adventure towards self-discovery. This paper is a call for such a scholarship, which will delve into Indic thinking and imputing in order to discover social and action orientations resident in its philosophy.

Further Research

Kotler and Wheal (2017) show how high-performance teams work in unison without a central hierarchical agent telling the team members what to do when. They make a reference to “dynamic subordination,” where leaders and followers are not predetermined but emerge as the situation demands. This corresponds to the hands-off servant leadership practiced by moral agents of change such as Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela. Extremely high autonomy is combined with the achievement of a certain “mystic” flow, plasticity and seamlessness (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Such ideas have triggered advanced leadership training that teaches how to form the ecology for spontaneous emergence. But this has yet to be adopted by main stream academia. What is required is a poetic orchestration of activities, whether of individuals, groups or institutions. The group ecology gives room for emergent outcomes that organically generate superior overall effectiveness.

In an appreciative study of the overarching influence of *bhakti* in the Vijayanagara empire of Hampi, Jackson (2004) shows how the genuine freedoms enjoyed by writers, musicians and artists in the Vijayanagara empire generated a highly superior artistic fluidity common across different artistic forms, which can only be explained in spiritual terms. Expressions of artistry and superior skills were not for the market but for self-transcendence. Self-transcendence, self-order and creativity are all synonymous. Bhawuk (2010) explains how creativity and spirituality are related to each other in societies that value spirituality. Creativity is also related to innovation, flexibility and adaptation. Danielou (1975) writes of the potential for improvisation and abandon in classical Hindustani music:

“Probably due to the establishing of the patterns and limitations of musical notation and to the complex, calculated nature of harmonic relations, it seems

that we in the western world have virtually lost the ability to improvise, to create freely and spontaneously a coherent musical utterance with a meaning, with a precise emotional connotation. We can observe in modern occidentals a certain difficulty in understanding the workings of improvised music, the most highly evolved and developed form of which at the present time appears to be the music of North India.” (p. 16)

When the social ethos is one of competitive fear-based behaviour, the resultant flow of anxiety-ridden thoughts will automatically find expression in destructive actions. In a dysfunctional setting, where opportunistic behaviour is aided and abetted by power systems, processes become procedures, designing becomes rigid structuring, calls for innovation and creativity become calls for repeating what may have been innovative in the past. When the tenor of behaviour of an entire civilisation sinks into such a condition, the result is likely to be violence, inequity and despondence.

The Indic knowledge-action theory needs to be debated and furthered. The Indian intelligentsia has to stop thinking that our great sages have said all that needs to be said. The search may be over but re-search has to be undertaken at all points on the time-scale of both the individual and the civilisation. If it is not done, what is etched in stone gets eroded and one is left with nothing. There has to be an alternative voice to the current malaise, which has its roots in the separation of man from man and needless competition. It is interesting to listen to Eisenstein (2007), who talks of the restorative economy where he envisages the limits of destructive competition:

“In such a system, each niche is self-limiting. Success lies not in taking as much as possible for “me,” but in fulfilling one’s role in the maintenance of the whole, a mission that calls forth the unique gifts of each participant. It defines each person not by what they can keep and possess, but by what they can give, ending the age-old contradiction between service and selfishness, greed and giving. Yes, there will always be competition, just as there is in the jungle; however, it will not be the destructive competition that seeks to enclose the commonwealth and fleece the chumps, but rather a constructive competition to excel in a given niche, to be a greater contributor to the common good.” (Chap: 7).

This resonates with the Indic theory of knowledge, action and sociality. This study should hopefully further scholarship related to social and action consequences of Indic Knowledge systems in a manner that is authentic, open, spiri-

tually subtle and evolutionary.

There are major implications in the way we organise knowledge in society. While much work needs to be done, as an example here, we can think of reorganising knowledge domains in terms of what students desire, based on their personality and basic nature. Sri Aurobindo (1999) points out to the relevance of the Indic meta-model of *Caturvyūha*, according to which:

“... in the soul-force in man this Godhead in Nature represents itself as a fourfold effective Power, *caturvyūha*, a Power for knowledge, a Power for strength, a Power for mutuality and active and productive relation and interchange, a Power for works and labour and service, and its presence casts all human life into a nexus and inner and outer operation of these four things. The ancient thought of India conscious of this fourfold type of active human personality and nature, built out of it the four types of the Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Sudra, each with its spiritual turn, ethical ideal, suitable upbringing, fixed function in society and place in the evolutionary scale of the spirit” (Sri Aurobindo, 1999, p. 742).

Let us take the case of higher education as an example. If such a view of human disposition as discussed in the paper is adopted, the meta-modelling (structuring, setting up of systems, etc.) of higher education would be entirely different. What would emerge is reorganisation of knowledge to aid pursuit of the following:

Pursuit of Knowledge

Knowledge is of two types: scientific and individual growth towards experience of union (yoga) with the absolute. Such a pursuit may involve furthering scholarship in the following areas:

- a) Mathematics, computational science, scientific understanding of matter, etc.
- b) Literature, languages
- c) Psychology, happiness, yoga, meditation, etc.
- d) Knowledge of life forms
- e) Knowledge development, education

Pursuit of Social Order

Pursuit of knowledge may be in the following domains:

- a) Social studies, international studies
- b) Legal studies

- c) Public leadership
- d) National identity and international peace

Pursuit of Efficiency

Here the dominant topics for learning may be as follows:

- a) Economics
- b) Management
- c) Accounting

Pursuit of Skills Including Professional Competencies

- a) Farming and allied skills
- b) Artistic skills
- c) Inter-personal skills
- d) Physically oriented skills

As indicated by Sri Aurobindo himself, these dispositions are not water-tight compartments. To live a life of personal fulfilment, social contribution and divine consecration, the student would have to discover what combination of knowledge he or she should imbibe and in what depth. Here we can talk of professions such as medicine, law, accounting, etc. The entire education can be framed as finding the ideal combination from the basket of “knowledge and skills,” as discussed earlier. What emerges is a cross section of the two dimensions, as shown in table 4 on the next page.

Table 4: Professional Education: A New Conceptualization

Dimension 1: Knowledge & Skills	Dimension 2: Professional Practices Specialisation		
	Medicine	Accounting	Law
Pursuits of Knowledge			
Mathematics			
Computational Science			
Literature and Languages			
Psychology			
Yoga			
Meditation			
Theory of Inquiry			
Research Methodology			
Pursuit of Social Order			
Social Studies			
International Studies			

Legal Studies			
Public Leadership			
Culture, Nations, Peace			
Pursuit of Efficiency			
Economics			
Management			
Accounting			
Pursuit of Skills Including Professional Competencies			
Home and Family Skills			
Social Skills			
Artistic Skills			
Mental Skills			
Inter-personal skills			
Physically oriented skills			
Home and Family Skills			
Profession-based skills			

The empty cells in the Table above will have to be filled by the university or professional bodies, based on individual institutional vision and mission that they seek and the design of their programmes.

Knowledge and skills appropriate for the Professional Practices Specialisation can be chosen by the educators, taking students' interest in mind. New "horizontals" could be added where there is a need.

The purpose of the university would be to create individuals who would increasingly seek the four broad pursuits at a level higher than what is offered by strict knowledge divisions that is in practice today. There would be gradual, mindful and holistic ascendance in consciousness for the students. The terms of ascendance of consciousness could be viewed in terms of the *triguṇa*-s, viz., *sāttvika*, *rājasika* and *tāmasika* as shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Application of *Triguna*-s in Higher Education

	Pursuit of			
	Knowledge	Social Order	Efficiency	Skills or Perfection
Satwik (unconditionally seeks self-order through awareness)	Being in a state of knowing towards personal and collective liberation. Unconditional awareness	Unconditional intent (with consistent words/ actions to impact others' behaviour towards social harmony)	Unconditional action to achieve less costs and/ or more output for material comforts	Unconditional disposition towards self-transcendence through meaning in being/ social situation/ work
Rajasic (seeks order through external means)	Pursuit of knowledge to reduce cognitive dissonance (disorder)	Pursuit of social order through external means	Pursuit of physical resources and means of efficient deployment	Pursuit of efficient resource utilization and achievement of results
Tamasic (seeks status quo, inertia)	Least effort. Prefers to maintain status quo	Reaction to situations. Would wish to maintain status quo	Unmindful of waste and waste efforts	Sloppy work and no pride in one's work

While a great deal of dialogue and discussions have to take place, this paper demonstrates that it is useful to reconceptualize knowledge and knowledge domains in terms of Indic meta-models. Such a conceptualization is likely to usher in a new consciousness in social sciences research in the context of traditional cultures, which have been unrecognised until now.

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End Note

¹ A. L. Kroeber, long ago, in 1944, showed in "Configurations of Culture Growth" how the Indian culture uniquely has an unbroken history of innovations in spirituality and spiritual pursuits.