

Review of: "A Survey: Looking for the best possible way of modern engagement with Traditional Indian knowledge"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

To begin I would like to extend my thanks to the author for addressing a fascinating issue that is increasingly coming to the fore in transdisciplinary scholarship and epistemological mediation: The question of how to logistically advance engagements between Western science and Traditional/Indigenous epistemologies in ways that bring both knowledge systems into meaningful and ethical partnership.

With this submission the author has outlined some of the important complexities this challenges faces, and the methods his project has undertaken toward the development of a productive assessment of the “*epistemic status*” (Gangopadhyay, 2023, 1, original emphasis) of Traditional knowledge in relation to present day scientific understandings. To summarize this effort, the author has shared a series of multiple-choice questions designed with the intention to develop a set of comparative norms that might assist toward building a coalition between Traditional Indian knowledge and Western science.

As the author notes, the pursuit of a meaningful synthesis between East and West has been long-standing and fraught by “*inexact norms of comparison*” (Gangopadhyay, 2023, 3), epistemic violence and marginalization. One of the immediate problems one encounters in this endeavour is the logistical question of how to design an evaluation process that can *ethically* encompass multiple ontological and epistemological understandings. Historically, Western scientific knowledge has been bound up in colonisation and the attempted erasure of other cultures and peoples. As such, I would caution that the effort identified here to define or “retell” Traditional knowledge in ways that accord with modern empirical understandings could risk furthering Western doctrines of objectivity and absolutism that have caused harms upon Traditional peoples and cultures.

This challenge additionally carries wider implication when considering the power relations around partnerships with Traditional knowledges in regard to the collective research effort and “... where the power to realise them is located ... [and] which futures are considered desirable or even ... plausible” (Fritz & Binder, 2020, 17).

While I am unable to comment upon these issues from an Indian perspective, I can offer some of my thoughts based on my experience with Traditional/Indigenous knowledge from an Antipodean position. Recently, I was privileged to have an opportunity to do some work as a Research Fellow at a Research Centre of Excellence within an Australian university. Key to my remit was the organisation of four transdisciplinary workshops that would run with the intention of producing a set of research questions and/or methods for a transdisciplinary project that could be undertaken in the following year. These workshops would not only span the array of disciplinary representation from participants in programs active across

the Centre but would additionally include Indigenous and industry stakeholders in the engagement process. Key to this project was a move away from the pursuit for consensus and integration. Instead, our efforts were directed toward productively leveraging the disciplinary, epistemological, and ontological *differences* in the group. This form of collaboration was approached as working upon a shared line of enquiry in *dynamic* partnership, rather than attempting to achieve an integrated set of knowledge norms and values. The application of this method revealed that cultural and epistemic parity is critical to performance and productivity, and that this is not necessarily achieved through the reconciliation of tensions. Leveraging extant differences within the group equally offers new ways to question, understand, and progress knowledge.

While the author and I obviously approach these challenges from very different positions, his efforts offer compelling insights and I look forward to reading more on his work in this area of scholarship.