

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

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The article assumes that there are some civilizations that developed completely autonomously and independently (such as Indian) and only in Modern times did they meet each other during the so-called Age of Discovery, which marked the beginning of European colonization of various regions. In particular, it was the start of the colonization of India by the Ost-Indian companies. This idea of exceptionalism of civilizations is expressed well in Toynbee's *theory of local civilizations*. In its most extreme form, this idea was voiced by Spengler as the decline of Europe. Subsequently, the concept of the end of history even emerged. This concept is clearly in tune with the author of the article. He sees some limits in Hilbert's programme as well as in quantum mechanics and that Indian traditional culture can help here. However, the very idea of local civilizations and the end of history is highly flawed. A new paradigm, Wallerstein's *world-systems analysis*, is now accentuated in history. For example, the article states: "Of course, the West reached India much earlier at around the 16th century; but it was only during the British colonial phase the reception got a kind of far-reaching social relevance". The West first reached India by the Achaemenid dynasty around 518 BC during the conquest of the Indus Valley (Gandhāra). This was only the time when the very first Indo-Aryan kingdoms emerged from chiefdoms. Aramaic became the official language of Northwest India at this time. Then Alexander the Great from 327 to 325 BC carries out a successful military and political campaign to conquer North-West countries of India. From then on, Greek became the official language in North India, and this was the case until the 2nd century AD. It was the official language of vast empires reaching as far as Varanasi and Mathura. It was only Kaniṣka the Great who replaced this language as an official with Bactrian by his decree issued around 127 AD. Before the fall of all the ancient Iranian dynasties in India (Western Kṣātrapas, Kuṣāṇas and others) around 400 AD, there were tremendous trade and cultural connections between India and Egypt. Prakrit scriptures are found in Upper Egypt and a statue of the Buddha in marble has recently been discovered. India has been in constant cultural and commercial contact with the West since the emergence of the first Indo-Aryan states. And the world-systems analysis reflects this well.

Nor can one agree with the author's assertion that traditional culture (ways of thought) in India was 'marginalized' during the colonial and post-colonial period: "The preexisting styles of thought, as well as the knowledge dynamics nurtured within the framework of traditional thought processes, were getting gradually marginalized." Some of the earliest printed books in Sanskrit appeared in Calcutta from 1800 thanks to the *Serampore Mission Press*, founded by two Baptists, William Carey (1761--1834) and William Ward (1769--1823). They started to print first the New Testament, of course. But then they printed books of Indian authors in both Sanskrit and Bengali (as well as in other Indo-Aryan languages). In fact, they very much contributed to the development of Bengali literature. The publishing house operated from 1800 to 1837. In

the 19th century, various scientific disciplines developed in Europe to study Indian culture: Indian history, Indian archaeology, Sanskrit philology, etc. Founders of Indology such as Friedrich Max Müller (1823--1900) laid the foundation for the study of Indian philosophical heritage in the West. This also greatly influenced Indian scholars and philosophers and enabled them to enter into world science through dialogue and joint study of Indian cultural phenomena. Now there is still a huge interest all over the world both in Indian philosophy and in Indian religious movements.

Finally, the author's claim that there is not yet even a framework for dialogue between Western scholarship and Indian traditional scholarship does not stand up to scrutiny either. The author writes: "We don't even have yet a common linguistic framework to communicate meaningfully, let alone any possibility to explore ways to extend traditional understandings to accommodate within the scope of new scientific understanding." But Indian philosophy has enough methodological frameworks consonant with Western philosophy, such as Nyāya. For example, there is the notion of the source of true knowledge in this school:

*pratyakṣānumānopamānaśabdāḥ pramāṇāni* (Nyāyasūtra I: 1, 3).

"The sources of true knowledge (*pramāṇa*) are as follows: perception (*pratyakṣa*), inference (*anumāna*), comparison (*upamāna*), and authoritative word (*śabda*)."

As we see, these are the same frameworks of European philosophy: empirical knowledge, logically deduced knowledge, conclusions by analogy, authority.

Indian culture has a huge heritage, which is actively studied by both Indian and non-Indian scholars. There are many points of intersection between Indian and Western culture, which have been developing for many centuries since the time of the Achaemenids.