

*Selfless social service

Niskāma Sevā*

in

Different Schools of Indic Thought: Alternate Models for Mainstream Social Work

Proceedings Report

Submitted to

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Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur

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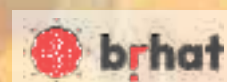
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Preface

With great pleasure and anticipation, we present this compilation of proceedings from the National seminar on “Nişkāma sevā (selfless social service) in Different Schools of Indic Thought: Alternate Models for Mainstream Social Work.” Held on the 2nd and 3rd of March, this seminar brought together scholars, practitioners, and students from diverse backgrounds to explore the intersection of spirituality and social work practice within the context of various Indic schools of thought.

The seminar aimed to address a crucial gap in contemporary social work education and practice—integrating spirituality within the bio-psycho-social framework. Despite long-standing recognition of spirituality’s centrality in social work literature, the practical application of this understanding has often proved challenging. Through a deep dive into the rich spiritual heritage of Bhārata, encompassing traditions such as Sanātana dharma, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism, the seminar sought to illuminate alternate models of selfless social service that transcend conventional boundaries.

The proceedings contained within this volume capture the essence of the seminar’s deliberations, offering a comprehensive exploration of spirituality in social work practice and its resonance with diverse Indic philosophical traditions. From defining spirituality within the context of social work to examining the evolutionary journey towards altruism, each contribution reflects the depth and breadth of insights shared by participants.

Furthermore, this volume underscores the seminar’s broader impact on social work education, policy, and practice. By aligning with the objectives outlined in the National Education Policy of 2020, which emphasizes the integration of India’s cultural heritage into educational curricula, the seminar contributes towards fortifying theoretical frameworks, enriching psycho-spiritual literature, and advancing a pluralistic model of welfare.

ABOUT (*Pr̥ṣṭhabhūmiḥ*)



From the beginning of the 20th century, scholars have emphasized on the need for an expansion of the current 'bio-psycho-social framework' used in social work education to include spiritual aspects of human existence. Further, the academic literature shows analytical unanimity on the centrality of 'spirituality' in social work, yet it has been a challenge for social workers to integrate the same into a coherent bio-psycho-social-spiritual framework. In social work, 'spirituality' is gradually being visualized as a classical intervention (particularly in transpersonal domains) as well as in lending an epistemic base to the values and ethics of the profession. The underlying assumption being that the spiritual Self of the individual needs to be addressed and all other aspects of existence converge into, or diverge from, that spiritual Self.

Aim of the seminar

The seminar is aimed at lending and advancing knowledge in mainstream social work through deliberations based on the holistic, Indic model of selfless social service.

Broad research questions to be addressed through the seminar

- How do practicing mainstream social workers define spirituality?
- What are the psychic processes in the evolution of an individual through micro-oriented spiritual enculturation to its macro-oriented altruistic demonstrations (*niṣkāma sevā*) in various Indic schools of thought?
- What variables can be used to predict the social workers' belief that spirituality is a fundamental aspect of being human?
- What could be the pathways for Indic model/s of *niṣkāma sevā* to serve as alternative/s to mainstream social work?

Niṣkāma sevā (selfless social service) in Different Schools of Indic Thought: Alternate Models for Mainstream Social Work is being proposed as a two-day National seminar, on the 2nd and 3rd of March, to fortify the more recently social work conceptualizations of the whole person that includes 'spirituality' – which reflects in the social work literature with a broadened focus to embrace it. The seminar would **deep dive into the centrality of the "individual self-making and Self-actualization" to acts of altruism' that cuts across the rich spiritual legacy of Bhārata** encompassing *Sanātana dharma* (with its sub traditions *sampradāya*), Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism.

Expected contributions

- Furtherance of NEP 2020, which emphasizes on the inclusion of the 'rich heritage of ancient eternal knowledge' of the Indian civilisation to be the guiding light for various programs and policies.
- Fortify existing theoretical frameworks on social service.
- Contribute to the existing psycho-spiritual literature on social work.
- Towards an emerging model of welfare pluralism.
- Publish an edited book volume with a prominent social sciences publisher, which will primarily cater to the students and faculty in Social Sciences and related disciplines.

Funded Research Projects

This seminar *Niṣkāma sevā (selfless social service) in Different Schools of Indic Thought: Alternate Models for Mainstream Social Work* will serve as a pivotal contribution to the forthcoming two projects titled -

A Yoga-Vedānta Theoretical Framework of Consciousness & Cognition (and niṣkāma sevā): Phenomenological (first person) Accounts of sādḥaks from Different Indic Schools of Thought | Supported by & Grants-in-aid: Indian Knowledge Systems Division of Ministry of Education (IKS Division of MoE)

Period: October 2023 - October 2025

PI: Dr. Richa Chopra, CoE-IKS, IIT Kharagpur

Co PI 1: Dr. Ravindra P N, Centre of Consciousness Studies, NIMHANS

Co PI 2: Pravrajika Divyanandaprana, Sri Ramakrishna Sarada Math

Co PI 3: Dr. Sima Dey, Dept. of Anthropology, University of Calcutta

Abstract

In Bhārata, the accounts of ‘sanātana dharma’ extend from centuries. Within sanātana dharma, there are many spiritual sub-traditions, generally called “sampradāya”. Seeking to emphasize their fidelity to vedas, darśana (as yoga-vedānta), upaniṣads, bhagavadgītā, these sub-traditions differ in ideology, **sādhanā, rituals, forms of worship, yet with a commonality – the centrality of ‘individual self-making and ‘Self-actualization’** to acts of altruism. The underlying assumption being that the spiritual Self of the individual needs to be addressed, and all other aspects of existence (encompassing social) converge into, or diverge from, that spiritual Self. The current research aims to explore the psychic processes (mental, emotional & spiritual) in the evolution of an individual through micro-oriented spiritual enculturation (as meditation, mantrā chanting, kīrtans and other practices) and its macro-oriented altruistic

demonstrations (niṣkāma karma) – based on first person accounts (phenomenological) of renunciate sādḥaks from the Ramakrishna order (advaitavedānta), Baul tradition (vaiṣṇava saḥajiyā) and ISKCON (gaudīya vaiṣṇavism). Insights into Consciousness and Cognition along with its manifestation as niṣkāma karma - critical to the field of positive psychology as well as spiritually inclined social work interventions, by virtue of a grounded theory is envisioned. Further, this groundwork is conscious of the call for future research on developing better understanding of the nature of subjective experiences’ and that ‘sophisticated measures are needed’. yoga-vedānta can contribute to authentic ‘First-Person Research Methodologies’ based on their logical superstructures. Outlining scientific research directions for a ‘yoga-vedānta First Person Research Methodology framework’ will also be undertaken.

Research aims

- Fortify existing psycho-spiritual literature on Consciousness and Cognition through a yoga-vedānta Theoretical Framework based on the Phenomenological (firstperson) Accounts of sādḥaks through a scientifically posited investigation of their psychic processes (micro-oriented spiritual enculturation and its macro- oriented altruistic demonstrations)
- Advance introspective sciences by outlining scientific research directions for a ‘First Person Research Methodology framework’ - under the epistemological framework of yoga-vedānta | Emerging trends and directions

Expected outcomes

- A yoga-vedānta Theoretical Framework of Consciousness & Cognition (and niṣkāma karma) based on the first-person accounts of sādḥaks.
- Outlining of scientific directions for a ‘yoga-vedānta based First Person Research Methodology framework.
- Postulates based on yoga-vedānta, in a practical manner and for larger humanity as a ‘do it by yourself science’ for holistic wellbeing.

Emerging inter-disciplinary models based on the study of niṣkāma sevā in different Indic schools of thought | Supported by & Grants-in-aid: Faculty Start-up Research Grants, Sponsored Research and Industrial Consultancy (FSRG, SRIC, IIT Kharagpur)

Period: October 2023 - October 2026

PI: Dr. Richa Chopra, CoE-IKS, IIT Kharagpur

CoPI 1: Dr. Sima Dey, Sports Authority of India

CoPI 2: Pravrajika Divyanandaprana, Sri Sarada Math & Ramakrishna Sarada Mission

CoPI 3: Dr. Ravindra P N, Centre for Consciousness Studies, National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences

Abstract

In social work, spirituality is gradually visualized as a classical intervention (particularly in transpersonal domains) as well as in lending epistemic base to values and ethics of the profession. In bhārata, the accounts of ‘sanātana dharma’ extend from centuries. Within sanātana dharma, there are many spiritual sub-traditions, generally called “sampradaya”. Seeking to emphasize their fidelity to vedas, darśana (as yoga-vedānta, āyurveda), upaniṣads, bhagavadgītā, these

sub-traditions differ in ideology, sādhanā, rituals, forms of worship, yet with a commonality – the centrality of ‘individual self-making and ‘Self-actualization’ to acts of altruism. This plays a critical role in configuring the nature of the public sphere. The underlying assumption being that spiritual Self of the individual needs to be addressed and all other aspects of existence converge into, or diverge from, that spiritual Self.

Research aims

- Explore the psychic processes in the evolution of an individual through micro-oriented spiritual enculturation and its macro-oriented altruistic demonstrations (niṣkāma sevā) – based on phenomenological accounts of renunciate sādhas from Ramakrishna order (advaita vedānta), Bauls (vaiṣṇava saḥajiyā), ISKCON (gaudīya vaiṣṇavism) and the Art of Living (AOL; yoga-vedānta, āyurveda). An Indic model of niṣkāma sevā- critical to spiritually inclined social work interventions is envisioned.
- Evolve the ‘Art of Living’ as a ‘science of living’ module / theory by identification of common factors that help participants transform themselves and
- Outline scientific research directions for a ‘yoga-vedānta ‘ First Person Research Methodology framework’.

Expected outcomes

- Gaps addressed in the existing bio-psycho-social models of social work by virtue of the emerged Indic model of niṣkāma sevā
- The Indic ‘science of living’ posited.
- An expected epistemological and theoretical yoga-vedānta framework that would shed light on the current challenges of First-person Inquiry.
- First-person accounts of renunciate sādhas (raw data) for futuristic research endeavours to carry out inter and trans disciplinary experiments especially relevant to the fast-emerging fields as neuro- phenomenology, cognitive psychology, positive psychology.
- First-person accounts of renunciate sādhas (raw data) for futuristic research endeavours to carry out inter and trans disciplinary experiments especially relevant to the fast-emerging fields as neuro- phenomenology, cognitive psychology, positive psychology.
- Establishment and augmentation the scope of yoga-vedānta, in a practical manner and for larger humanity as a ‘do it by yourself science’ for inner & outer wellbeing.

Speakers (*Vaktārah*)



Prof. Anil Sahasrabudhe
Chairman
National Educational Technology
Forum, Delhi



Prof. Dhananjay Singh
Member Secretary
Indian Council of Social Science
Research, Delhi



**Prof. Geshe Ngawang
Samten Ia**
Vice-chancellor
The Central Institute for Higher
Tibetan Studies, Varanasi



Prof. Jagbir Singh
Chancellor
Central University of Punjab,
Bathinda



Prof. K. Ramasubramanian
Chair Professor
Cell for Indian Science and Technology in Sanskrit
(CISTS), Department of Humanities and Social
Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay



Prof. Kalpana Sarathy
Dean
School of Social Work, Tata
Institute of Social Sciences,
Guwahati



Prof. Kamal Lochan Panigrahi
Chairperson
Centre of Excellence for Indian
Knowledge Systems, Indian
Institute of Technology, Kharagpur



Prof. Kapil Kapoor
Chairperson
Formerly - Indian Institute
of Advanced Study, Shimla



**Shri. Lila Purushottam Das
(Prof. Laxmidhar Behera)**
Director
Indian Institute of Technology,
Mandi



Prof. Pamela Singla

Professor and Former Head
Dept. of Social Work, University of Delhi



Smt. Parvathy Baul

Practitioner Performer and Teacher
Baul Sampradaya



Shri. Raghava Krishna

Founder and CEO
Brhat Culture Creative LLP



Prof. Richa Chopra

Core Faculty
Centre of Excellence for Indian
Knowledge Systems, Indian Institute
of Technology, Kharagpur



Prof. Santosh Kumar Shukla

Professor,
School of Sanskrit and Indic
Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru
University, New Delhi



Shri Shrivatsa Goswami

Acharya,
Radha Raman Temple,
Vrindavan



Swami Shastrajnananda

Secretary
Ramakrishna Mission
Ashrama, Narendrapur



Prof. Virendra Kumar Tewari

Director
Indian Institute of Technology,
Kharagpur

Programmatic agenda (*Anusūcī*)

Day 1

Time	Sub theme <i>upaviṣaya</i>	Speaker <i>vaktā</i>	
8:15 - 9:20 Hours	Registration <i>Paṃjīkaraṇa</i>		
9:25 - 10:00 Hours	Welcome address <i>Svāgata bhāṣaṇa</i>	Prof. Kamal Lochan Panigrahi	
	Blessing <i>aśīrvacana</i>	Smt. Parvathy Baul Prof. Santosh Shukla	
	Lamp Lighting and Prayer (<i>dīpa prajvalan evaṃ stuti</i>)	Invited Speakers and Dignitaries; Pranamya Bhat (stuti)	
	Inauguration address (<i>udghāṭana bhāṣaṇa</i>)	Prof. Virendra Kumar Tewari Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur	
	Launch of the CoE-IKS 2024 Calendar: चरन् वै मधु विन्दति by Honourable Director, IIT Kharagpur	Prof. Mahesh K Prof. Dipesh V Katira Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur	
10:05 - 10:35 Hours	Project context - Emerging interdisciplinary models based on the study of <i>niṣkāma sevā</i> (selfless social service) in different Indic schools of thought	Prof. Richa Chopra Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur	
10:40 - 11:10 Hours	<i>niṣkāma sevā</i> (selfless social service) in Different Schools of Indic Thought: Alternate Models for Mainstream Social Work	Prof. Dhananjay Singh Indian Council of Social Science Research, Delhi	Key note address
Spirituality and social work: Global trends			
11:15 - 11:45 Hours	#1: The need for spirituality in social work: From academia to case studies	Padmabhushan Prof. Kapil Kapoor Formerly -Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla	Special address

TEA BREAK (11:50 - 12:10 Hours)

12:15 - 13:25 Hours	#2: Spirituality in mainstream social work: understanding	Shri Shrivatsa Goswami Acharya, Radha Raman Temple, Vrindavan	Panel discussion
		Prof. Pamela Singla Dept. of Social Work, University of Delhi	
		Shri. Raghava Krishna (Moderator) Founder and CEO Brhat Culture Creative LLP	

LUNCH 13:30 -14:55 Hours Lunch & guided tour to *Bhārata tirtha*, CoE - IKS (for speakers) CoE-IKS visit (for speakers) - Facilitated by Prof. Dipesh Vinod Katira

Indic conceptualizations of spirituality: Micro- oriented spiritual enculturation to macro-oriented altruistic demonstrations

15:00 - 15:30 Hours	# 3: Micro- oriented spiritual enculturation advaita vedānta	Swami Shastrajnananda Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Narendrapur	Featured talk
15:35 - 16:05 Hours	# 4: Macro- oriented altruistic demonstrations gaudīya vaiṣṇavism	Dr Lila Purushottam Das (Prof. Laxmidhar Behera) Indian Institute of Technology, Mandi	

TEA BREAK & POSTER PRESENTATION *sphoraka - patrāya prastutikā* 16:10 - 17:10 Hours

17:30 : 19:00 Hours	Indian classical music	Mrs. Deepali Sandeep Kulkarni Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur
	Tabla sangat	Prof. Dipesh Vinod Katira Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur
	nṛtya sevā	Mr. Sunil Sunkara Founder, NataRavi Dance Academic Head, World Forum For Art and Culture

**Subject to last minute change.*

***The alignment of the sessions to “Viṣaya evaṃ Upaviṣaya” is broad-based & for the purpose of an overall structure.*

Day 2

Time	Sub theme <i>upaviṣaya</i>	Speaker <i>vaktā</i>
6:30 - 7:15 Hours	<i>yoga sādhana</i>	<i>RS Deepak Khurana</i> <i>Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur</i>
9:00 - 9:30 Hours	Registration <i>paṃjīkaraṇa</i>	

Postulates of niṣkāma sevā from various Indic schools of thoughts: Sanātana dharma, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism

9:30 - 10:00 Hours	<i>#5 niṣkāma sevā: śāstric worldview</i>	Prof. K. Ramasubramanian Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay	Featured talk
10:05 - 10:35 Hours	<i>#6 sanātana dharma (sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavism)</i>	Smt. Parvathy Baul Baul Sampradāya	

TEA BREAK 10:40 - 11:00 Hours

11:05 - 11:35 Hours	# 7 Buddhism	Prof. Geshe Ngawang Samten la The Central Institute for Higher Tibetan Studies, Varanasi	Featured talk
11:40 - 12:10 Hours	# 8: Jainism	Prof. Santosh Kumar Shukla School of Sanskrit and Indic Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi	
12:15 - 12:45 Hours	# 9: Sikhism	Prof. Jagbir Singh Central University of Punjab, Bathinda	

Lunch & CoE-IKS Visit (for delegates) 12:50 - 14:10 Hours CoE-IKS Visit (for delegates) by Prof. Jayashree Gajjam

14:45 - 15:15 Hours	<i>niṣkāma sevā</i> in contemporary times	Prof. Anil Sahasrabudhe National Educational Technology Forum, Delhi	Special session
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Elements from various Indic schools of thoughts to reconstruct models of spiritually inclined social work interventions

15:20 - 16:45 Hours	# 10: Elements from various Indic schools of thought to reconstruct models of spiritually inclined social work interventions	Prof. Kapil Kapoor Formerly - Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla	Panel discussion
		Prof. Geshe Ngawang Samten la The Central Institute for Higher Tibetan Studies, Varanasi	
		Prof. K. Ramasubramanian Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay	
		Prof. Kalpana Sarathy Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Guwahati	
		Sh. Raghava Krishna (Moderator) Founder and CEO Brhat Culture Creative LLP	

TEA BREAK 16:45 - 17:05 Hours

Relevance and future research directions

17:10 - 18:00 Hours	# 11: Towards a new curriculum; Spiritual foundation of social work education: The way forward	Prof. K. Ramasubramanian Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay	Panel discussion
		Prof. Pamela Singla Dept. of Social Work, University of Delhi	
		Prof. Anil Sahasrabudhe National Educational Technology Forum, Delhi	
		Prof. Richa Chopra (Moderator) Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur	
18:05 - 18:30 Hours	Valedictory ceremony & best posters awards	Prof. Virendra Kumar Tewari (Valedictory address) Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur	
18:35 - 18:40 Hours	Vote of thanks	Prof. Richa Chopra Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur	

**Subject to last minute change.*

***The alignment of the sessions to “Viśaya evaṃ Upaviśaya” is broad-based & for the purpose of an overall structure.*

DAY 1 (March 2nd, 2024)

The seminar was an initiative by the Centre of Excellence for Indian Knowledge Systems (CoE-IKS), sponsored by the Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur (IIT Kharagpur) and the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), Ministry of Education. Knowledge partners supported it, including the Ministry of Education, the Government of India, the Indian Knowledge System (Ministry of Education), and Brhat Culture Creative LLP.

In the seminar's opening, the sūtradhārah (Deepak Khurana and Neha Shekhawat) provided an overview, setting the

academic framework for the discussions on “Niṣkāma Sevā in Different Schools of Indic Thought: Alternate Models for Mainstream Social Work.” Their introductory remarks aimed to align the participants with the seminar's objectives, focusing on exploring selfless service within the context of Indic traditions and its applicability to modern social work. This formal beginning marked the start of an extensive discourse on integrating spirituality with social service practices



Welcome of all guests with tilak and opening of the seminar with sūtradhārah



Welcome Address (*Svāgata bhāṣaṇa*)

Speaker (vaktā)

Prof. Kamal Lochan Panigrahi, Chairperson, CoE-IKS, IIT Kharagpur

In his *Svāgata bhāṣaṇa*, Prof. Kamal Lochan Panigrahi, Chairperson, CoE-IKS emphasized “*Kāmana rahit*” *sevā*, highlighting the concept of selfless service deeply ingrained in the traditions of *Bhārata Bhūmi*. He outlined the seminar’s focus on two days filled with discussions on spiritual practices that have long served as guiding principles for societal welfare, all converging towards the paramount concept of *Sevā* for the greater good.

The seminar commenced with a warm welcome of Prof Virendra Tewari, Director of IIT Kharagpur, Prof Panigrahi, Chairperson, CoE-IKS and Prof Dhananjay Singh, member secretary of ICSSR, greeted by professors from CoE- IKS. Signifying the start of the session, all dignitaries and speakers participated in the *dīpa prajvalan evaṃ stuti*. The inauguration was further graced by Pranamya Bhat’s ode to *Devi Sharada*, invoking the goddess’s compassion to bless attendees with the bliss of knowledge and eternal happiness, beautifully encapsulating the essence of seeking divine guidance and wisdom for the journey ahead.



*Welcome Address (*Svāgata bhāṣaṇa*) by
Chairperson of CoE-IKS*



*Welcome of Honourable Director, IIT Kharagpur
by Prof. Richa Chopra, Seminar convener and
Core faculty, CoE-IKS, IIT Kharagpur*



Dīpa prajvalan evaṃ stuti (Lamp lighting ceremony by esteemed speakers of the seminar)



Following the inauguration, Smt. Parvathy Baul (Practitioner, performer and Teacher of Baul Sampradaya) delivered aśīrvacana, invoking spiritual reminiscences and blessings she continued with Brija Bhushan's musical tribute to Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, celebrating his life and teachings.

Prof. Santosh Kumar Shukla (Professor, School of Sanskrit and Indic Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi) concluded with the Shanti Mantra, calling for peace and blessings from the universe and Vedic deities, encapsulating a harmonious start to the seminar.

Launch of the CoE-IKS 2024 Calendar: **चरन् वै मधु विन्दति**

After the Ashirvachan ceremony, the seminar showcased the launch of the CoE-IKS 2024 Calendar titled “चरन् वै मधु विन्दति.” The calendar was unveiled by the esteemed Director of IIT Kharagpur and highlights the universality of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS). Prof. Mahesh K and Prof. Dipesh Kataria, both core faculty members at the CoE- IKS, played instrumental roles in the calendar's creation.

This calendar ingeniously merges the Bharatiya Panchanga's ancient calendrical computations with modern calendar functionalities, serving as a bridge between the temporal and the timeless. It highlights the Upanishadic concepts of time and timelessness, offering not just a method to track days but also an opportunity to reflect on the enduring wisdom of India.



Launch of the CoE-IKS 2024 Calendar:
चरन् वै मधु विन्दति



Inaugural Address (*udghāṭana bhāṣaṇa*)

Speaker (*vaktā*)

Prof. Virendra Kumar Tewari, Director, IIT Kharagpur

Prof. Virendra Kumar Tewari, Director of IIT Kharagpur, emphasized the transformative power of sacred chants and criticized colonial impositions on Indian concepts of time and space. He advocated for a deeper understanding of true Itihasa and highlighted the role of CoE IKS at IIT Kharagpur in revitalizing Indian Knowledge Systems.

He called to transcend myths and embrace authentic Itihasa, stressing critical examination for historical accuracy in understanding the past's implications for the present and future.

The CoE IKS at IIT Kharagpur aims to rejuvenate Indian Knowledge Systems, fostering a positive environment for learning ancient wisdom. The narrative also discussed ancient Indian scientific achievements like shipbuilding suppressed during colonialism, and the rising interest in Sanskrit and Bharatiya sciences in European universities.

Emphasizing Bharatiya Upanishads' contributions to ancient physics and their influence on European science, IIT Kharagpur is developing courses to integrate Sanskrit texts with modern science, tracing the origins of fundamental sciences.

Additionally, Niškāma Sevā, selfless service as advocated in the Bhagavad Gita, addresses broader concerns like student mental health, promoting a purposeful life beyond material pursuits.



Inaugural Address (udghāṭana bhāṣaṇa) by Prof. Virendra Kumar Tewari, Director, IIT Kharagpur

Context of the seminar

Speaker (*vaktā*)

Prof. Richa Chopra, Seminar Convener & Core Faculty, CoE-IKS, IIT Kharagpur

In her context setting, Prof. Richa Chopra (Seminar convener & Core faculty, CoE-IKS) delves into the narrative of Raja Janak's enlightening dream, as elucidated by Ashtavakra, to highlight the principles of Niškāma Sevā and the philosophical exploration of reality. She points out the irony in superficial judgments based on appearances and underscores Ashtavakra's teachings on the transient nature of the physical world versus the constant, observing self. This anecdote beautifully encapsulates the quest to understand reality's true nature and the essence of selfless service.

In her conclusion, Prof. Richa focuses on the essence of selfless service, exemplified by Bhai Kanhaiya Ji, as a path to realizing the true self, detached from the impermanent. She elaborates on the transformation from the transient (*anitya*) to the eternal (*nitya*), highlighting the purification of the mind and the journey towards self-realization. By discussing spiritual practices' common grounds.

In spiritual practice, three common grounds emerge as foundational pillars: the pursuit of personal growth and well-being, the emphasis on benevolence towards others, and the shift from Moving from micro inculturation and macro manifestation of altruism

These principles not only foster individual transformation but also cultivate a collective ethos of compassion and selflessness, underscoring the interconnectedness of personal development and societal welfare.

She also pointed to personal growth, altruism, and the understanding of consciousness beyond Western comprehension, through the states of Jagrut, Sushupti, and Turiya, emphasizing the importance of centring on truth (Sat) for selflessness.



Prof. Richa Chopra setting the context of the seminar theme

Keynote Address

Speaker (vaktā)

Prof. Dhananjay Singh, Member Secretary, ICSSR

The keynote address highlights the unification of social sciences and Indian knowledge systems, addressing the impact of AI on consciousness and the profound spirituality of 'sevā'. It explores selfless service through the teachings of Swami Vivekananda, Ramakrishna Paramahansa, and ancient texts, emphasizing actions without expectations. The discourse ties in Vedantic and Samkhya philosophies, illustrating selfless service as the highest virtue through stories from Indian tradition, advocating for integrating this wisdom into contemporary knowledge frameworks and emphasizing the need for revaluing India's intellectual heritage.

In this keynote address, the speaker extends heartfelt thanks to all attendees and underscores the ICSSR's efforts to unify social sciences, highlighting the convergence of Indian knowledge with global disciplines. The discussion turns to the implications of AI on human consciousness, emphasizing the depth and spirituality of 'sevā' beyond its English interpretation. Through examples of Swami Vivekananda and Ramakrishna Paramahansa, the essence of true service

is explored. The concept of 'shabda' as both empirical and absolute is discussed, resonating deeply with those devoted to selfless service, and Schrödinger's exploration of Brahman illustrates the timeless link between spirituality and science.

The address connects 'sevā' and 'Bhava' in Natya Shastra, enhancing mental health understanding. 'Nişkāma sevā', related to the 'Sattvik Bhava' of Natya Shastra, embodies action without expectation, echoing the Upanishadic principle of 'Nişkāma Karma'. Exploring attachment and aversion within actions leads to Vedanta, Samkhya philosophies, and Descartes' empirical mind, offering diverse perspectives on the 'Self'. The discourse anchors in the 'Shanti Parva' dialogue from the Mahabharata, affirming selfless service as the highest virtue.

The address emphasized that stories like those of Satyakam, Buddha, Jatayu, and Karna are not merely tales but epistemological tools for constructing knowledge. They advocate for reevaluating methodologies through an Eastern and particularly Indian perspective, aiming to localize and indigenize intellectual traditions. It critiques postcolonial studies for undermining authentic Indian traditions, suggesting a need for correction. The narrative concludes by

emphasizing the importance of utilizing traditional stories as epistemological tools to reframe knowledge construction through an Indian lens. It advocates for the localization of intellectual traditions and criticizes postcolonial narratives for distorting the authentic essence of Indian wisdom. The

call to action stresses the need for a resurgence of indigenous insights, highlighting the critical importance of revaluing and revitalizing India's rich intellectual heritage in contemporary discourse.



Keynote address by Prof. Dhananjay Singh, Member Secretary, ICSSR

Featured Talk

Theme (Viṣaya)

Spirituality and Social Work: Global Trends

Sub-theme (Upaviṣaya)

The need for spirituality in social work: From academia to case studies

Speaker (vaktā)

Padma Bhushan Prof. Kapil Kapoor, Formerly - Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla

Padma Bhushan Prof Kapil Kapoor's talk on "Spirituality and Social Work: Global Trends" advocates for selfless social work grounded in spirituality. He classifies suffering into physical, divine, and mental categories, urging a holistic approach to alleviate it. Using Indian traditions and teachings from the Mahabharata, he emphasizes the importance of genuine service without ulterior motives, transcending human-centric approaches to embrace all beings. Kapoor champions self-negation and the welfare of others as the

essence of true service, drawing from examples across Dharmic traditions and contemporary acts of kindness.

In his talk on "Spirituality and Social Work: Global Trends," Padma Bhushan Prof. Kapil Kapoor emphasizes that social work transcends personal gain, aiming to alleviate suffering through selfless action. He categorizes suffering into physical (Bhautik), divine (Adidaivik), and mental (Adhyatamik), illustrating the depth of social work. Using Yudhisthira's

dilemma in the Mahabharata, he highlights the complex moral landscape of social work and advocates for a spiritual foundation to navigate it.

He urges aiding those afflicted by life's calamities, expanding care to all beings, and highlights Indian traditions of Bhutadaya and sacred groves (Devavans and Devrai). He critiques motivations behind social work, warning against its misuse for personal gain or ulterior motives, and underscores genuine efforts aimed at alleviating spiritual suffering.

Kapoor discusses dharmic sevā, performed with the spirit of 'Idam-na-mama'—'this is not for me'—which elevates spiritual social work to where self and others merge. Adi

Shankara's teachings on liberation through oneness, and the principle of Abhedā, underscore true selflessness in service. Narratives like King Shibi's sacrifice, the Bodhisattva's compassion for a hungry tigress, and Guru Nanak's emphasis on sevā exemplify selflessness central to Dharmic traditions. They teach that true service lies in self-negation and the welfare of others, inspiring universal altruism and empathy.

Kapoor highlights Niškāma Sevā through everyday acts of kindness: offering water to birds in Gujarat, caring for others during illness or crisis, and philanthropic efforts by figures like Ratan Tata. These actions reflect a commitment to serving others without expecting rewards, embodying the spirit of selfless service and compassion.

Panel Discussion

Theme (Viṣaya)

Spirituality and Social Work: Global Trends

Sub-theme (Upaviṣaya)

Spirituality in Mainstream Social Work Understanding

Speaker (vaktā)

Swami Shrivatsa Goswami, Acharya, Radha Raman Temple, Vrindavan

Prof Pamela Singla, Professor and Former Head, Dept. of Social Work, University of Delhi

Shri Raghava Krishna (Moderator) Founder and CEO Brhat Culture Creative LLP

The discussion traverses the essence of niškāma sevā in Indic traditions, highlighting its foundation in selflessness and universal empathy. Exploring the teachings of Swami Vivekananda, Ramakrishna Paramahansa, and the philosophical insights from ancient scriptures, it emphasizes sevā as a path to spiritual enlightenment and societal well-being. Through diverse examples, the narrative underscores the transformative power of sevā in fostering a collective ethos of altruism, integrating spiritual wisdom with social work practices, thereby advocating for a harmonious and compassionate global society.

Shri. Raghava Krishna, Founder and CEO of Brhat Culture Creative, opened with the idea of "Prapta" and the right to earn, contrasting it with metaphysical perspectives. He emphasized Niškāma sevā's crucial role in shaping spiritual and cultural ethos, exploring its origins and societal impact,

and advocating selfless service for national and spiritual development.

Swami Shrivatsa Goswami ji (Acharya, Radha Raman Temple, Vrindavan) discussed sevā, transitioning from desire (kamana) to desirelessness (Niškāma). He highlighted that understanding sevā through scripture (Shashtra) reveals its vital role in sustaining relationships and life's fabric. He proposed 2024 as a significant year for recognizing these relationships and emphasized Dharma's core values: truth (Satya) and non-violence (Ahimsa).

Swami Shrivatsa Goswami ji stated that true sevā transcends selfish motives, aligning with the highest values of Dharma. When performed selflessly, sevā embodies love (prem) and becomes Niškāma sevā. He differentiated between knowledge systems and knowing systems, stressing

engagement with discourses that connect individuals to the cosmic essence.

Madan Mohan Malviya's words for BHU graduates encapsulate selfless service: a Niškāma Karmayogi desires not kingdoms, heaven, or rebirth, but to alleviate others' suffering. This sentiment guides service beyond self, focusing on the welfare of all beings. The discourse also highlighted the Gopikas' dedication to Krishna, emphasizing safeguarding intentions from selfish desires and advocating disciplined practice and devotion (bhakti) for genuine selfless service.

Shri Raghava ji critically examined the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), suggesting a more integrated approach reflective of spiritual values for true global progress. Prof. Pamela Singla emphasized social work's deep connection with spiritual practices, contrasting Indian perspectives with Western notions and advocating for integrating spiritual insights for impactful social justice outcomes.

She discussed the history of social work, noting its spiritual roots in the UK, US, and India. In India, giving (Dana) laid the foundation, evolving into formal education with institutions like TISS and YWCA. The curriculum integrates spirituality and ethics, emphasizing social empathy.

The principles of social work are influenced by Mahatma Gandhi, Nanaji Deshmukh, and Swami Vivekananda, who established systems to uplift vulnerable sections of society. Prof. Singla highlighted case studies like PRADAN's initiative in MP Kesla, empowering women through poultry farming, and GOONJ's recycling efforts, impacting infrastructure and development in villages and slums.

The Soft Skill Development in J&K Police exemplifies integrating human values into law enforcement, promoting community-friendly policing and holistic development.



Panel Discussion on subtheme - Spirituality in Mainstream Social Work Understanding

Featured Talk

Theme (Viṣaya)

Indic Conceptualizations of Spirituality: Micro-oriented Spiritual enculturation to macro-oriented altruistic demonstrations.

Sub-theme (Upaviṣaya)

Micro - oriented spiritual enculturation advaita vedānta

Speaker (vaktā)

Swami Shastrajnananda, Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Narendrapur

Swami Shastrajnananda's talk explores the spiritual underpinnings of Indian civilization through Advaita Vedanta, emphasizing the diverse interpretations of Maya and the illusionary nature of the physical world. He highlights the pursuit of understanding Atman and Brahman, obscured by ignorance, and outlines four paths—Raja, Karma, Bhakti, and Gyan Yoga—for transcending this ignorance. The discourse also revisits the contributions of Paramhansa Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, and Sister

Nivedita to Karma Yoga, underscoring selfless action and sacrifice as essential to spiritual elevation and the embodiment of true service.

In his talk on "Micro-oriented spiritual enculturation & Advaita Vedanta," Swami Shastrajnananda highlights the profound spiritual foundation of Indian civilization, emphasizing its inclusiveness and diversity. He discusses how various spiritual traditions interpret Maya and the

physical world as reflections of Brahman, offering insights into existence's essence. This perspective underscores the philosophical depth of Indian thought and its impact on spiritual seekers.

Swami Shastrajnanda explains that understanding Atman and Brahman as the ultimate reality, obscured by Avidya (ignorance), is a significant spiritual challenge. The Upanishads describe this as a delusion, with liberation achievable through four paths: Raja Yoga (mind control), Karma Yoga (action without attachment), Bhakti Yoga (devotion), and Gyan Yoga (knowledge). Each path provides a distinct approach to transcendence and self-realization.

He cites the 19th-century Spiritual Master Paramhansa Ramakrishna and his disciple Vivekananda, who transformed Karma Yoga by teaching that work performed as worship is itself worship. This concept highlights sacrifice and service as vital, with self-sacrifice over self-assertion as the highest virtue.

Sister Nivedita emphasized the foundational truths of the Vedas and Upanishads, particularly in Karma Yoga, which focuses on selfless action for spiritual elevation and liberation (moksha). The concept of Yadnya, or sacrifice as worship, reinforces the significance of sacrifice in spiritual growth.

The Bhagavad Gita illustrates Karma Yoga's impact through figures like Janaka. The evolution of Karma Yoga, influenced by Samkhya, Jain, and Buddhist philosophies, led to significant spiritual and social shifts. Shankaracharya and subsequent philosophers highlighted Nivritti Marga (detachment), while Swami Vivekananda distinguished between Pravritti (worldly engagement) and Nivritti (spiritual withdrawal), advocating for selfless action (Nişkāma Karma) as divine service. The Ramakrishna Mission exemplifies this through its humanitarian efforts as a form of worship.



Featured talk by Swami Shastrajnanda, Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Narendrapur on theme - Micro- oriented spiritual enculturation advaita vedānta



Featured Talk

Theme (Viṣaya)

Indic Conceptualizations of Spirituality: Micro-oriented Spiritual enculturation to macro-oriented altruistic demonstrations.

Sub-theme (Upaviṣaya)

Macro-Oriented Altruistic Demonstrations Gaudīya vaiṣṇavism

Speaker (vaktā)

Dr Lila Purushottam Das (Prof LaxmiDhar Behera), Director, IIT Mandi

Dr. Lila Purushottam Das's session on Gaudiya Vaishnavism at the Niṣkāma sevā Conference explored the transformative teachings of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, emphasizing joy and service beyond societal boundaries. He discussed ISKCON's global impact, including extensive prasadam distribution, educational initiatives, and integration of Indian knowledge with mental health practices. Through personal stories and historical insights, Dr Das showcased the profound influence of Vaishnavism on spirituality and social service, highlighting ISKCON's contributions to spiritual education, sustainable living, and mental health research.

In Dr. Lila Purushottam Das's session at the niṣkāma sevā Selfless Service seminar, he deepened the understanding of Gaudiya Vaishnavism, focusing on its practice and the profound impact of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's teachings on service and joy. He narrated personal and historical anecdotes to illustrate the inclusive and transformative nature of these teachings, which transcended societal divisions. The session also highlighted the global influence of ISKCON, its contributions to food distribution, the preservation of ancient manuscripts, and the establishment of educational and sustainable living models.

Further, Dr. Das discussed the integration of Indian knowledge systems into contemporary mental health practices, showcasing a comprehensive approach to spirituality and social service.

Further, Dr. Lila Purushottam Das's session illustrated the spiritual and altruistic journey through Gaudiya Vaishnavism, enriched by Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's teachings. He traced the lineage from Swami Vivekananda's influence to Bhaktivinod Thakur's prolific writings on Sri Chaitanya, leading to the establishment of ISKCON, which now boasts over 800 centres worldwide.

The discussion highlighted ISKCON's significant contributions, such as distributing 550 crore plates of prasadam and initiatives like food distribution in Dehradun and manuscript conservation. Educational endeavors like Bhaktivedanta University in Vrindavan and sustainable practices were showcased, alongside IKSHMA at IIT Mandi, blending Indian knowledge systems with mental health studies, illustrating a global commitment to service, education, and spiritual growth.



Featured talk by Dr Lila Purushottam Das (Prof LaxmiDhar Behera), Director, IIT Mandi on theme - Macro-Oriented Altruistic Demonstrations Gaudīya vaiṣṇavism

DAY 2 (3rd March, 2024)

Featured Talk

Theme (Viṣaya)

Postulates of Niṣkāma sevā from various schools of thoughts Sanatana Dharma, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism.

Sub-theme (Upaviṣaya)

Niṣkāma sevā: Sastric Worldview

Speaker (vaktā)

Prof K Ramasubramanian, Chair Professor, Cell for Indian Science and Technology in Sanskrit (CISTS), Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay

In Prof. K. Ramasubramanian's session on Niṣkāma sevā, he delved into the Shastra perspective of selfless service, defining it as an action devoid of personal desire. Through categories like Bhajanam, Aradhanama, and Upabhogam, he explored the depth of selfless action across various human desires, from basic needs to intellectual and spiritual pursuits. He emphasized the importance of the company one keeps in shaping one's values and desires, classifying people based on their approach to serving others. The session concluded with a call to live a life of selfless service, inspired by the teachings of Mahamana Madan Mohan Malaviya, emphasizing actions that alleviate the suffering of others without any expectation of reward.

In Prof. K. Ramasubramanian's session, he explored niṣkāma sevā from a Shastra perspective, defining it as service devoid of personal desire (kama). He examined its significance through Bhajanam (worship), Aradhanam (pleasing), and Upabhogam (enjoying), emphasizing its role in fostering selfless action.

Desires were categorized into basic needs, pursuit of possessions, high status, personal achievements, and social desires. They extend to intellectual pursuits, spiritual quests, and altruistic productivity. Shakuntala's narrative illustrated the selfless desire to nurture the environment before personal needs, differentiating between instant gratification and long-term vision.



Featured talk by Prof K Ramasubramanian, Chair Professor, Cell for Indian Science and Technology in Sanskrit (CISTS), Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay on the theme - Postulates of Niṣkāma sevā Sastric Worldview

Prof. Ramasubramanian discussed the thought process shaping desires, highlighting the influence of deeply held values, often instilled by parents and friends. Brhahatri emphasized the importance of one's company, comparing it to how a water droplet's fate varies based on where it lands, underscoring the impact of social environment on values.

Commonplace desires often focus on immediate pleasure or material gains. He classified people into four types based on their actions: Satpuruṣa (do utmost good), Sāmānyaḥ (share surplus), Manuṣyarākṣasa (harm others for gain), and those who enjoy others' suffering. True altruists (Satpuruṣas) are rare.

Compassion (Karūṇyam) involves alleviating others' suffering without personal gain, exemplified by Karna's story in "Karnabhara." Niṣkāma sevā, selfless service, avoids harm to self or others and involves desires creating happiness, removing sorrow, causing pain, or alleviating others' pain.

In conclusion, invoking Mahamana Madan Mohan Malaviya's teachings, the spirit of selfless service and dedication to the greater good was emphasized: "न त्वहम् कामये राज्यम् न स्वर्गम् न पुनर्भवम्। कामये दुःखतप्तानम् प्राणिनामार्तिनाशनम्" "I do not desire a kingdom, heaven, or eternal liberation, but only to ameliorate the pains of others."

Featured Talk

Theme (Viṣaya)

Postulates of Niṣkāma sevā from various schools of thoughts Sanatana Dharma, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism

Sub-theme (Upaviṣaya)

Sanatan Dharma Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavism

Speaker (vaktā)

Smt. Parvathy Baul, Practitioner Performer and Teacher, Baul Sampradaya

Smt. Parvathy Baul's session illuminated the spiritual intricacies of Baul tradition within Sanatan Dharma and Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavism, emphasizing oral learning and the transformational journey from musical expression to meditative practice. She explored Baul sadhakas' extraordinary abilities, showcasing their deep connection with the cosmos through disciplined practice. Highlighting the essential roles of unlearning, selfless service (sevā), and the guru-disciple relationship, her talk underscored the integration of all life elements into spiritual practice and the critical importance of preserving these traditions for future scholarly and spiritual exploration.

In her session, Smt. Parvathy Baul explored the intricacies of Sanatan Dharma and Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavism, with a focus on the Baul tradition. She began by paying respect to gurus, embodying timeless wisdom. Highlighting the ektara, she described it as a conduit to cosmic knowledge, facilitating the transmission of Shabda Brahman from guru to disciple,

emphasizing the Baul tradition's oral learning and spiritual bond.

Baul sadhakas possess the ability to perform extraordinary feats, such as igniting a fire in water and solidifying mercury, demonstrating mastery over the Chandra and Surya Nadis. Their awareness transcends conventional consciousness states—waking, dreaming, and deep sleep—and extends to breath control. This heightened perception, far from being detached, integrates the essence of all 25 tattvas (elements) into their spiritual practice.

Reflecting on her 30-year journey, Smt. Parvathy Baul noted the evolution of Baul from a musical genre to a profound meditative tradition. She emphasized that oral traditions require rigorous practice and discipline to embody their teachings fully. This transition highlights Baul practices' transformative potential within the spiritual landscape.

Smt. Parvathy Baul shared insights on unlearning established perceptions under the guidance of experienced masters. Her first guru introduced her to seeking alms, teaching that requesting help from the least fortunate instills a genuine spirit of sevā. Coupled with chanting Harinam, this leads to selflessness and alignment with the path of Krishna, embodying true service by prioritizing the broader cause over individual desires.

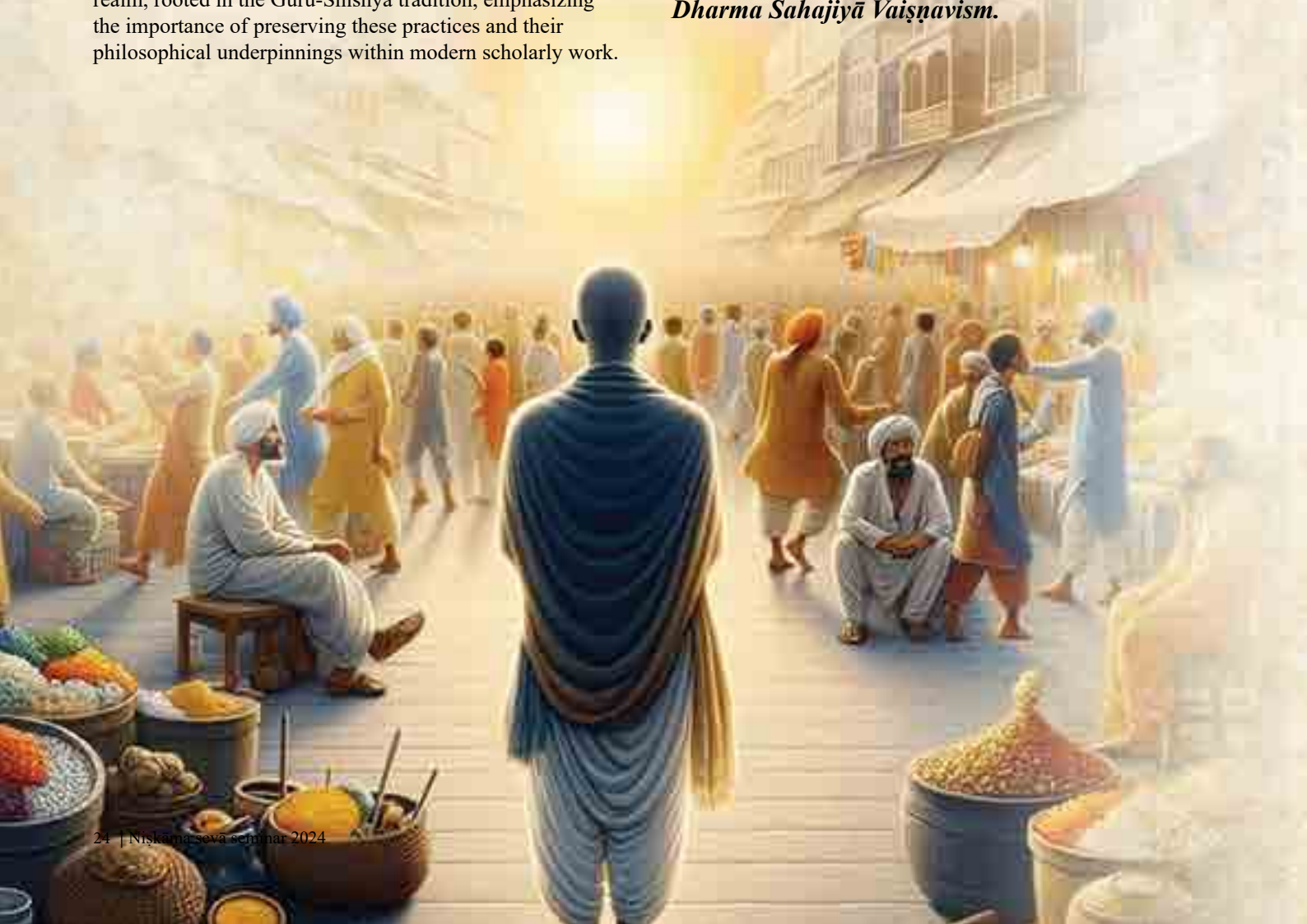
She highlighted the three pillars of cardinal sevā: medicine, education, and food, emphasizing Anna Dan (food donation) as a profound act of service. This act, seen as Nara Narayan sevā, equates feeding people to offering food to Narayan (God), transforming giving into divine service and reinforcing the notion that serving humanity is serving the divine.

Smt. Parvathy Ma likened the guru's role to that of a healer of spiritual ailments, using a metaphorical song where the chanting of Harinam is mixed like medicine in water, with Bhakti representing the water. This blending of devotion with the holy name is consumed with bliss, embodying the essence of Sankirtan, fostering a profound spiritual connection and healing.

She concluded by stressing the need for academic scholars to recognize the deep connections between oral traditions and Sanatana Dharma. She highlighted the role of Sanatana Siddhashram as an institution operating within the spiritual realm, rooted in the Guru-Shishya tradition, emphasizing the importance of preserving these practices and their philosophical underpinnings within modern scholarly work.



Featured talk by Smt. Parvathy Baul, Practitioner Performer and Teacher, Baul Sampradaya on the theme - Postulates of Niṣkāma sevā Sanatana Dharma Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavism.



Featured Talk

Theme (Viṣaya)

Postulates of Niṣkāma sevā from various schools of thoughts Sanatana Dharma, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism.

Sub-theme (Upaviṣaya)

Postulates of Niṣkāma sevā in Buddhism

Speaker (vaktā)

Prof. Geshe Ngawang Samten la, Vice-chancellor, The Central Institute for Higher Tibetan Studies, Varanasi

Prof. Geshe Ngawang Samten la's session delved into the rich dialogues between Astika and Nastika schools, highlighting the diverse and historical philosophical discourses within Indian traditions. He stressed the transition from deep knowledge to information emphasis, underscoring the vital role of verbal transmission and the Guru-Shishya Parampara. Discussing Niṣkāma sevā in Buddhism, he emphasized selfless giving (Dāna pāramitā) and the purity of motives behind actions, advocating for service beyond the scale of impact. He underlined the importance of mental purification and the practice of emptiness, aiming for a balanced spiritual life.

Geshe Nagwang started by highlighting the rich dialogues between Astika and Nastika schools within Indian philosophical traditions. These discussions, integral to the evolution of human philosophical thought, underscore the diverse perspectives and debates that have shaped the philosophical landscape of India, reflecting a long history of intellectual exchange and convergence among various schools of thought.

Further Geshe Ngawang Samten la emphasized the richness of historical Indian philosophical discourses, highlighting their significance within the Indian knowledge systems. He pointed out the shift from a focus on deep knowledge to a current emphasis on information, underscoring the importance of verbal transmission and the Guru-Shishya Parampara for effective dissemination of knowledge. This session on Buddhism and Niṣkāma sevā underscores the value of selfless service within this rich tradition of knowledge exchange.

Niṣkāma sevā 's action or service in Buddhism has to be informed by three things

- Intention before the action
- during the action
- post the action takes place.

Dāna pāramitā, in Buddhism, represents the practice of selfless giving and the perfection of generosity, where one is encouraged to renounce everything for the service of all beings. It's a fundamental concept that underscores the importance of altruism and self-sacrifice in the pursuit of spiritual development and enlightenment.

Motives behind actions, especially in the context of selfless service, should ideally be pure and devoid of selfish intent. The aspiration should be to act for the benefit of others, recognizing the unity of all beings and viewing everyone as part of a broader community. This perspective aligns with the principle of treating all with compassion and seeing oneself in others, fostering a spirit of universal kinship and selfless service.

The essence of Niṣkāma sevā lies in intent and effort to serve, irrespective of the number of beings helped. Emulating the bodhisattva and Buddha's example, achieving Bodhichitta—or the mind of enlightenment—emphasizes serving without attachment to scale. Serving even a single individual is valued, highlighting the importance of quality and sincerity of service over quantity.

The concept emphasizes serving all forms of existence, both sentient (Satalok) and insentient (Bhajan lok), advocating for universal service. It underlines the necessity of purifying the mind, focusing on mental factors (caitasika) chitta samskara that encourage virtuous actions

Chitta Samskaras, in the context of caitasikas, refer to the mental impressions or conditioning that shape one's

mind and behavior. These Samskaras are the deep-seated tendencies or patterns that influence how we think, act, and perceive the world, serving as a bridge between our past actions and future reactions.

excessive material indulgence and highlights the importance of practising emptiness to avoid spiritual pitfalls, emphasizing a balanced approach to life and service.



Featured talk by Prof. Geshe Ngawang Samten la, Vice-chancellor, The Central Institute for Higher Tibetan Studies, Varanasi On the theme - Postulates of Niṣkāma sevā in Buddhism

Featured Talk

Theme (Viṣaya)

Postulates of Niṣkāma sevā from various schools of thoughts Sanatana Dharma, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism.

Sub-theme (Upaviṣaya)

Postulates of Niṣkāma sevā in Jainism

Speaker (vaktā)

Prof Santosh Kumar Shukla, Professor, School of Sanskrit and Indic Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

Prof. Santosh Kumar Shukla explored how Jainism and other traditions emphasize selfless service (sevā) and karma's role in achieving liberation (Moksha), highlighting a shared philosophical foundation across traditions. He discussed the evolution of social work from practical efforts to alleviate urban poverty to incorporating Niṣkāma sevā 's deeper,

philosophical approach, advocating for a holistic blend of practical social work and selfless service principles. The discussion bridged traditional Indian philosophies with modern social work practices, emphasizing selfless action's importance in societal well-being and individual spiritual growth.

Prof. Santosh Kumar Shukla highlighted that all discussed traditions, including Jainism, emphasize sevā (service) and the concept of karma leading to liberation (mukti), with Moksha as a fundamental goal (purushartha). Labeling these traditions as Nastika due to their unique interpretations of Atman and Brahman overlooks their agreement on these core concepts, thus misrepresenting their philosophical depth and shared values.

Social work's emergence within a capitalist framework aimed at aiding the urban poor marks its practical beginnings, yet Nişkāmaa sevā represents a deeper, philosophical approach to service. Bridging these aspects involves recognizing the inherent value of selfless service beyond material or societal gains. "Social Diagnosis," a seminal 19th-century work, initiated exploration into this system, suggesting a blend of practical social work with the philosophical underpinnings of Nişkāmaa sevā can enrich the discipline, fostering a more holistic approach to addressing human needs.

After 1857, social work began to be formally recognized within academic structures, drawing a parallel to the traditional Ashram system where societal responsibilities were divided among various stages of life. The Grihastha Ashram emphasizes the householder's role in supporting the community, while the Vanaprastha stage focuses on serving others. This system aligns with the three fundamental duties: Adhyayanam (Teaching), Danam (Donating and serving), and Yajam (Performing good deeds), embodying a holistic approach to social welfare and personal development.

Vanaprasthas exemplify selfless service in society without expectations, embodying the essence of Nişkāmaa karma. Karma is categorized into Nitya (obligatory), Naimittika (dutiful), and Kamya (desire-driven) actions. Achieving Moksha requires transcending these karmas through selfless deeds aimed at the collective well-being. Sevā, or service,

emerges as a practice of Nişkāmaa karma, deeply considering the social, economic, and historical contexts, highlighting the importance of selfless action in contributing to societal progress and spiritual liberation.



Featured talk by Prof Santosh Kumar Shukla, Professor, School of Sanskrit and Indic Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, on the theme - Postulates of Nişkāmaa sevā in Jainism.



Featured Talk

Theme (Viṣaya)

Postulates of Niṣkāma sevā from various schools of thoughts Sanatana Dharma, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism.

Sub-theme (Upaviṣaya)

Postulates of Niṣkāma sevā in Sikhism

Speaker (vaktā)

Prof. Jagbir Singh, Chancellor, Central University of Punjab, Bathinda

Prof. Jagbir Singh's session highlighted the essence of Niṣkāma sevā across Indic traditions, particularly Sikhism, emphasizing selfless service for societal welfare. The session underscored the adaptability of Sanatana Dharma to incorporate various paths, including Jainism, Buddhism, and Sikhism, showcasing an open and inclusive nature contrasted with the rigidity of Abrahamic traditions. Key Sikh tenets—Naam, Kirtan, and sevā—reflect deep-rooted values of humility, honesty, and charity, aligning with the broader philosophical theme of selflessness transcending religious and cultural boundaries, and fostering a unified and compassionate society.

Professor Jagbir Singh elucidated that Niṣkāma sevā, as depicted in classical literature and Sikhism, aligns with Niṣkāma Karma, where actions are performed without attachment to outcomes. This principle, highlighted in Vishnupurana, suggests that unbound karma leads to liberation. Sikh Gurus advocate for selfless service (sevā) aimed at the welfare of all, embodying ideals like Jana Kalyan or Loka Sangraha, akin to teachings in the Bhagavad

Gita, emphasizing service beyond self for societal harmony and spiritual growth.

In Sikhism, Ardās reflects emphasis on universal welfare, with teachings promoting actions for the greater good. The colonial era led to misinterpretations of Indian texts, diluting their philosophical foundations. Revisiting these texts is crucial to reclaiming their authentic essence.

Sanatana Dharma's inclusivity embraces paths like Jainism, Buddhism, and Sikhism, contrasting with perceived exclusivity in Abrahamic systems, fostering spiritual exploration and acceptance. Sikhism's Guru Parampara integrates seamlessly into Sanatana Dharma's frameworks, enriching teachings with multicultural influences.

Sanatana Dharma and Sikhism share concepts like Sat and Rta, reflecting unity with Brahman and cosmic order. Gurbani emphasizes Naam, Daan, and sevā, exemplified in Guru Nanak's Sacha Sauda, embodying Sikhism's focus on selflessness.



Special Session

Theme (Viṣaya)

Niṣkāma sevā in Contemporary times

Speaker (vaktā)

Prof. Anil Sahasrabudhe, Chairman, National Educational Technology Forum, Delhi

Prof. Anil Sahasrabudhe's session on Niṣkāma sevā in contemporary times explores the essence of selfless service in government and corporate roles, emphasizing duty performed without seeking personal gains. He showcases how government initiatives and CSR efforts exemplify Niṣkāma sevā, enhancing societal well-being. The session underscores the impact of role models and organizations like Tata and RSS in promoting altruism and the motto "Sabka Sath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas, and Sabka Prayas" as a blueprint for collective progress and selfless action.

In Prof. Anil Sahasrabudhe's special session, he presented a unique perspective on Niṣkāma sevā within contemporary roles like government service and political positions. He emphasized that fulfilling one's duties with integrity and without self-interest, whether as a government employee or an elected official working for the public's welfare, exemplifies the essence of Niṣkāma sevā in today's society.

Prof. Sahasrabudhe highlighted that when government operations effectively implement schemes and deliver optimal services to the public, it serves as a model of Niṣkāma sevā. This perspective frames state functions and governance as embodiments of selfless service, striving for the greater good without attachment to personal gains.

He further illustrated practical examples of Niṣkāma sevā through government initiatives like school toilet facilities improving girls' attendance and providing gas connections to rural women, showcasing how small interventions can catalyze significant societal change. Additionally, programs like universal vaccination and Mission Maitri by the Government of India embody the spirit of Niṣkāma sevā, demonstrating a commitment to public welfare and global cooperation without seeking reciprocal benefits.

The presence of role models who lead by example is crucial in embodying Niṣkāma sevā. He emphasized that corporations, through CSR initiatives, play a significant role in building communities and demonstrating Niṣkāma Bhava. When large corporations focus on creating holistic wealth beyond financial gains, they exemplify true service, showcasing how leading by example and contributing to societal well-being are integral to the spirit of selfless service.

The philanthropic efforts of Tata, conducted quietly without seeking publicity, exemplify Niṣkāma sevā. Similarly, organizations like RSS, known for their dedication to serving humanity without expectations, embody the principle of selfless service. The motto "Sabka Sath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas, and Sabka Prayas" further reinforces this ethos, offering a comprehensive framework for societal well-being and collective progress through selfless actions and inclusive development.



Special session by Prof. Anil Sahasrabudhe, Chairman, National Educational Technology Forum, Delhi on the theme - Niṣkāma sevā in Contemporary times

Panel Discussion

Theme (Viṣaya)

Elements from various Indic schools of thought to reconstruct models of spirituality-inclined social work interventions.

Speaker (vaktā)

Prof. Kapil Kapoor, Formerly -Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla

Prof. Geshe Ngawang Samten la, The Central Institute for Higher Tibetan Studies, Varanasi

Prof. K. Ramasubramanian, Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay

Prof. Kalpana Sarathy, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Guwahati

Sh. Raghava Krishna (Moderator), Founder and CEO, Brhat Culture Creative LLP

The panel explored integrating Indic philosophical concepts into modern social work, highlighting the distinctiveness of Indian civilization and the organic fusion of geocultural knowledge. Discussions ranged from Buddhism's interconnectedness of individuals and society, the reevaluation of academic frameworks to incorporate broader values, to the universal concept of sevā extending beyond human-centric service. The session emphasized a shift from Western models to embracing Indian traditions, advocating for a realignment of academic perspectives with foundational values of honest work, remembrance of God, and service to all beings, underlining duties over rights and the importance of self-annihilation for true Niṣkāma sevā.

The panel explored the integration of Indic philosophical concepts into modern social work. Highlighting the distinctiveness of Indian civilization through concepts like karma and punarjanma, the discussion delved into how these ancient teachings have been localised for broader societal understanding, fostering an organic fusion of geocultural knowledge. Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS), emphasizing “Aham Brahmasmi,” were discussed concerning their ontological and epistemological contributions to understanding socio-cultural contexts, offering insights into spirituality-inclined social work interventions.

Prof. Geshe Ngawang Samten la, talked about Buddhist model, derived from Trisiksha—Sheel Siksha (ethical conduct), Samaj Siksha (social education), and sevā (service)—emphasizes the interconnectedness of individuals and society, advocating for compassion as the foundational principle. This approach influences societal structures, suggesting an economic system prioritizing well-being over profit and the application of mindfulness in workplace interactions for improved mental management. These operational models, rooted in Eastern wisdom, aim to enhance societal and individual well-being through a holistic engagement of the mind.

Prof Kalpana Sarthy mentioned that it's acknowledged that while social work is primarily seen as an academic discipline, integrating insights from spiritual models offers a valuable perspective. The anecdote from Mizoram, where students viewed cheating as an act of sharing, prompts a reevaluation of traditional academic and ethical frameworks. This suggests a need to reconceptualize disciplines to incorporate broader, culturally informed values and practices, enhancing the modern social work models with principles derived from diverse traditions, including those from the Northeast.

Prof. Kapil Kapoor expanded sevā to encompass all living beings, emphasizing universal compassion and service across species. Ratan Tata's approach to service prioritizes others' well-being over personal recognition, reflecting deep-rooted altruism. There's a disconnect between these principles and modern university approaches, necessitating a realignment with values like honest work, remembrance of God, and service to all beings, encapsulated in Niškāma sevā. For instance, offering water to animals in hot summers exemplifies this ethos. Indian culture emphasizes sharing and service, rooted in a knowledge-centric civilization and duty-focused society. This orientation prioritizes duties over rights, reflecting societal values that guide communal living. True Niškāma sevā requires self-annihilation, embodying concepts like Arpan (offering) and Samarpan (dedication), shifting from entitlement to acknowledging interconnected debts and service in existence.

Prof. K Ramsubramanian explains that R̥ṇa (debt) is a profound concept in shastras, emphasizing reciprocity

and responsibility. The Bhagavad Gita underscores that failing to give back what one enjoys is akin to theft. Amidst technological advances that prioritize accumulation, the concept of Dev, Bhuta, Pitra, Manushya, and Brahma Yagnya becomes crucial, stressing the interdependence with nature and the debt owed to one's lineage. Teaching children to appreciate and reciprocate parental care fosters gratitude and accountability. Compassion in human relationships (Manushya Rina) and accurate knowledge transmission (Brahma) are integral, facilitated through resonant storytelling to imbibe these values effectively.

In conclusion, while social work was initially shaped by Abrahamic models, there's a need to shift from cognitive awareness to conscious awareness, from sensitivity to others to sensitivity to all living beings. Addressing the absence of soul and mind requires unlearning, embracing humility, and engaging in higher-order thinking. This journey of correction is crucial for cultivating a profound connection with oneself and the world.



Panel Discussion on theme - Elements from various Indic schools of thought to reconstruct models of spirituality-inclined social work interventions.

Panel Discussion

Theme (Viṣaya)

Towards a new Curriculum; Spiritual foundation of social work education: The way forward

Speaker (vaktā)

Prof. K. Ramasubramanian, Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay
Panel discussion

Prof. Pamela Singla, Dept. of Social Work, University of Delhi

Prof. Anil Sahasrabudhe, National Educational Technology Forum, Delhi

Prof. Richa Chopra (Moderator), Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur

The panel discussed integrating spirituality into social work education, highlighting the need for a curriculum that blends academic rigor with spiritual enrichment. They proposed storytelling, collaboration between spiritual organizations and academia, and firsthand engagement with spiritual practices as key methods. The goal is to foster holistic development in social workers, emphasizing selfless service (Niṣkāmaa sevā) through understanding and embodying spiritual principles. The session concluded with the story of Bhṛigu from the Taittiriya Upanishad, illustrating the journey of self-realization and its significance in cultivating a deep-rooted sense of service.

The panel, featuring Prof. K. Ramsbramanian, Prof. Pamela Singh, Prof. Anil Sahasrabudhe, and Prof. Richa Chopra, discussed integrating spirituality into social work education. Prof. Sahasrabudhe emphasized spirituality's universal role, promoting storytelling to weave spiritual traditions into social work for introspection and value internalization. The discussion aimed at a curriculum enriching future social workers both academically and spiritually.

Prof. Pamela Singh stressed blending theory with practice in social work education, advocating for spirituality's inclusion to enhance students' learning. She emphasized collaboration between academia and spiritual organizations to bridge these realms for a holistic approach to education.

Prof. K. Ramsbramanian highlighted storytelling, mantra chanting, and engagement with religious texts as transformative tools to instill virtue-based practices in social

work education. This approach aims for holistic development towards selfless service.

Prof. Richa Chopra discussed researching micro-level spiritual practices within traditions like ISKCON and Ramakrishna Mission, linking individual spiritual growth to macro-level altruism (Nishkama Seva).

Anil Sahasrabudhe advocated for creating educational environments akin to sadhakas' spiritual experiences, integrating vocational and social education with Indic knowledge systems for comprehensive development. The panel concluded with a story from Taittiriya Upanishad illustrating the journey of self-realization and its role in fostering the ethos of service (Seva).



Panel Discussion on theme - Towards a new Curriculum; Spiritual foundation of social work education: The way forward

Poster Presentations

(sphoraka - patrāya prastutikā)

The posters presented in the seminar focused on themes exploring the intersection of spirituality and social work and examining Indic conceptualizations of spirituality from micro to macro levels. It invited discussions on Niškāma sevā across different Indic traditions to understand its implications for social work education.

Following are the poster presentations that were part of the competition.

Title - Postulates of niškāma sevā from various Indic schools of thoughts: Sanātanadharmā, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism

Presenter - Anupam Maurya

He explored Niškāma sevā's role across Sanātana Dharma, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism, emphasizing its significance as an alternative model in mainstream social work. Niškāma sevā, or selfless service, is a core principle in these traditions, promoting action without attachment to outcomes. Each tradition offers a unique perspective on selflessness, stressing the importance of service for spiritual growth and communal harmony.

Title - Institutionalizing a culture of 'Niškāma Sewa' in Educational Institutions and the Corporate World

Presenter - Professor (Dr.) Pankaj Gupta

This poster presentation aimed to elucidate the concept of Niškāma sevā across Indic traditions, exploring its definition, a rarity in the professional realm, and methods to foster its practice. It delves into ancient wisdom, advocating for the institutionalization of selfless service within educational and corporate sectors, highlighting key benefits, the growing importance of spirituality in the workplace, and potential limitations and future directions for integrating Niškāma sevā more deeply into our societal fabric.

Title - Scope of Youth Volunteerism in the decision-making process at Grassroots _ A theme for 'Selfless Social Service

Presenter - Mr Santanu Bhowmick

This study focuses on the significant role of India's youth in addressing societal challenges, inspired by the country's tradition of volunteerism as seen in the teachings of Swami

Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi. It aims to analyze the impact of youth volunteerism on social service and holistic development, exploring leadership, social responsibility, and the barriers to participation. Additionally, it examines the role of local administration in fostering a culture of volunteerism and enabling youth engagement in selfless service at the grassroots level.

Title - Shankha Pratim Bhattacharya, Pulak Mishra: Revisiting Vedantic Body to Heal Cities

Presenter - Krishna Kumar

The poster, titled "Revisiting Vedantic Body to Heal Cities," explores Vedic and Vedantic views on Purusha and the interconnectedness of the universe. It emphasizes nature as the essence of existence and the self as a manifestation of cosmic order, drawing from ancient Vedas and Upanishads. Applying these insights to urban planning, it suggests cities can embody vibrancy, resilience, and harmony, bridging ancient spiritual teachings with modern urban challenges.

Title - Different streams in Niškāma Sevā: A way to discover the vastness of the Self

Presenter - Kabira Sabnam & Aditya Sharma

The poster titled "Different Streams in Niškāma Sevā: A Way to Discover the Vastness of the Self" explores the concept of selfless service across various Indic traditions. It highlights Niškāma Sevā as a universal principle in Bhagavad Gita, Jainism, Buddhism, and Sikhism, each offering a unique perspective on performing duties without attachment to outcomes. This approach fosters cittaśuddhi, leading to spiritual elevation and realization of the Self, encapsulated in the principle 'Ātmano mokṣārtham jagat hitāya ca', emphasizing liberation and universal well-being.

Title - Eternal harmony through spiritual practices in Sanatana Dharma: Nurturing altruism in the realm of society

Presenter - Prof. Rajarshi Roy and Subarna Karmakar

The poster titled “Eternal Harmony Through Spiritual Practices in Sanatana Dharma: Nurturing Altruism in Realm of Society” explores how Sanatana Dharma’s spiritual practices and reverence for all elements of nature foster altruistic behavior. Highlighting the interconnectedness of all beings, it underscores selfless service (sevā) and universal well-being (Lokasangraha) as core principles. The study aims to integrate these values into societal norms, inspired by teachings from the Srimad Bhagavad Gita and the peace-invoking Shanti Mantra from the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, advocating for happiness and harmony among all beings.

Title - Nişkāmaa sevā to nature and the relationship between human and nature in Sanatan Parampara

Presenter - Amit Kumar Mahato and Prof. Rajarshi Roy

The poster titled “Nişkāmaa Sevā: Nature and Human-Nature Relationship in Sanatan Parampara” explores selfless service (sevā) as integral to Dharma in the Sanatan tradition. It highlights Lord Krishna’s teachings in the Bhagavad Gita on the benefits of serving others without personal gain. Emphasizing actions without expectation of reward, the poster illustrates how sevā promotes truth, compassion, and societal welfare. It underscores the tradition of preserving nature through worship and philosophical principles fostering a symbiotic relationship between humanity and the natural world.

Title - Nişkāmaa sevā in Ramakrishna mission

Presenter - Lapsa Murmu & Raju Saren

The poster on Nişkāmaa sevā in the Ramakrishna Mission encapsulates the ethos of work as a sacred, worshipful act, aligning with teachings from the Bhagavad Gita. It highlights the principle that serving humanity equates to serving the divine, embodying Swami Vivekananda’s teachings on viewing the needy as worthy of worship, not pity. This approach to service, viewed as a spiritual discipline, aims for personal salvation and global welfare, demonstrating the transformative impact of selfless service within the Ramakrishna Mission’s philosophy and practices.

Title - Journey from One to Many

Presenter - Krishna Halder & Gokhale Nishant Harihar

The poster on Advaita Vedanta highlights the journey of self-realization through Śravaṇa (hearing), Manana (reflection), and Nididhyāsana (meditation), underscoring the unity of the individual soul with the universal soul. It emphasizes the Advaitic notion that ultimate reality is non-dual (Ekam Eva Advitiyam), leading to selfless service (Nişkāma Karma) as a natural expression of understanding one’s true self as Brahman. Self-realization brings one to a state where multiplicity of the phenomenal universe vanishes and unity prevails. Various spiritual paths lead one’s journey from many to one, from darkness to enlightenment, from bondage to liberation, ultimately leading to a shift from egoism (one) to altruism (many) through acts of selflessness or the attitude of serving the self, that is the pinnacle of macro-oriented altruistic demonstration.

Title - Vishwakarma - the Nişkāmaa sevā as A connection between vastu shastra, individual awakening & social upliftment

Presenter - Priya Ramakrishnan and Shivangi Gadia

The poster presented by Ritambhara explores the Vishwakarmas’ contributions, skilled in various crafts, reflecting their deep spiritual and environmental understanding through Vastu Shilpa Shastra. It emphasizes their work as a selfless service to society, combining aesthetics, mathematical precision, and spirituality. The project aims to document their legacy and inspire future architects and designers to create spaces with similar consciousness and altruism, highlighting the integral role of these creators in cultural and societal development.

Title - Unity Through Action Nişkāmaa sevā in Sanatana Dharma, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism.

Presenter - Dr Prema Seshadri and Dr Shobha Shrivastava

The poster “Unity Through Action: Nişkāmaa sevā in Sanatana Dharma, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism” highlights the concept of selfless service across these traditions, emphasizing its role in promoting altruism, compassion, and unity beyond religious confines. It suggests that Nişkāmaa sevā could foster societal peace, socio-economic upliftment, and harmonious coexistence, advocating for a collective responsibility that aligns with the principle of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, illustrating a path toward a more integrated and compassionate society.

Participants from different parts of the country presented a total of 11 posters, which were evaluated by seminar speakers. On March 3, 2024, the final results were announced and the top two poster presentations received awards for their work [Kabira Sabnam and Aditya Sharma; Priya Ramakrishnan and Shivangi Gadia]. An appreciation award was also given to school students from RKM, Jhargram [Lapsa Murmu and Raju Saren.]

Cultural program

(*Sāṃskṛtika-kāryakramah*)

On the evening of March 2nd, 2024, attendees were treated to a rich cultural experience that highlighted the profound traditions of India's classical arts. This program enhanced the seminar's intellectual depth by offering an immersive journey through India's heritage.

Mrs. Deepali Sandeep Kulkarni, holding an MA in Music from SNDT Women's University in Pune, delivered an exquisite vocal performance. Her renditions displayed the depth and nuances of Hindustani classical music, while Dr. Dipesh Vinod Katira, an Assistant Professor at the CoE-IKS at IIT Kharagpur, impressed with his skilled tabla playing.



Cultural program (Sāṃskṛtika-kāryakramah) - Indian classical music performance by Mrs. Deepali Sandeep Kulkarni, Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur;

Tabla sangat by Prof. Dipesh Vinod Katira, Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur; Harmonium Shri Chandrajit Pradhan.

Adding another dimension to the evening, Mr. Sunil Sunkara, who holds an MA in Kathak, Acharya Parvatikumar Gold Medal from Kavikulaguru Kalidas Sanskrit University, elevated the event further with his nṛtya sevā. His captivating dance brought stories from the Ramayana and Meera Bai's life to life.

Together, these talented performers highlighted the seamless integration of knowledge and art in Indian tradition, leaving a lasting impact on all who attended.



Nṛtya sevā by Mr. Sunil Sunkara, Founder, NataRavi Dance Academic Head, World Forum For Art and Culture



Concluding Note:

The Seminar on Niškāma sevā at IIT Kharagpur, sponsored by the Indian Council of Social Science Research and organized on March 2nd and 3rd, aimed to integrate selfless social service with mainstream social work, drawing from diverse Indic traditions. It gathered scholars, practitioners, and students to explore spirituality's role in addressing gaps within the bio-psycho-social framework of contemporary social work.

The seminar emphasized the potential of Niškāma sevā—selfless service without expectation of reward—as articulated in Sanātana Dharma, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism, to enrich social work practices. Keynotes, delivered by renowned academics and spiritual leaders, highlighted Niškāma sevā's relevance across various social contexts, advocating for its incorporation into social work education and practice. They argued that embracing these spiritual insights could offer deeper, more holistic approaches to tackling human distress and societal challenges.

Panel discussions explored practical applications, advocating for curricular reforms that integrate Indic values into social work education. This approach, they argued, would not only

enhance the professionalism of social workers but also foster a more compassionate and empathetic society.

Cultural programs during the seminar showcased the integration of Indian arts with spiritual practice, reinforcing the connection between culture, spirituality, and social service. These performances underscored the seminar's thematic exploration and served as a reminder of the rich cultural heritage that informs these spiritual teachings.

Poster presentations provided a platform for sharing innovative research and projects applying Niškāma sevā in educational and community settings. They demonstrated the seminar's practical impact and proposed future directions for research and implementation.

In conclusion, the Niškāma sevā seminar at IIT Kharagpur marked a significant step towards redefining social work through Indic spiritual wisdom. It advocated for a paradigm shift towards a more integrated, spiritually grounded approach to social service, aiming to promote compassion and holistic care within society.



Wayforward:

For a deeper engagement with the concepts discussed during the seminar and to build on its foundational insights, the focus on the two mentioned projects will be instrumental in advancing the theoretical and practical understanding of Nişkāma Sevā. Here's an overview of the future directions and initiatives for these projects:

1. A Yoga-Vedānta Theoretical Framework of Consciousness & Cognition and Nişkāma Sevā: Phenomenological Accounts of Sādhaks from Different Indic Schools of Thought

Research aims

- Fortify existing psycho-spiritual literature on Consciousness and Cognition through a yoga-vedānta Theoretical Framework based on the Phenomenological (first person) Accounts of sādhaks through a scientifically posited investigation of their psychic processes (micro-oriented spiritual enculturation and its macro-oriented altruistic demonstrations)
- Advance introspective sciences by outlining scientific research directions for a 'First Person Research Methodology framework' - under the epistemological framework of yoga-vedānta | Emerging trends and directions

Expected outcomes

- A yoga-vedānta Theoretical Framework of Consciousness & Cognition (and nişkāma karma) based on the first-person accounts of sādhaks.
- Outlining of scientific directions for a 'yoga-vedānta based First Person Research Methodology framework'.
- Postulates based on yoga-vedānta, in a practical manner and for larger humanity as a 'do it by yourself science' for holistic wellbeing.

2. Emerging Interdisciplinary Models Based on the Study of Nişkāma Sevā in Different Indic Schools of Thought

Research aims

- Explore the psychic processes in the evolution of an individual through micro-oriented spiritual enculturation and its macro-oriented altruistic demonstrations

(nişkāma sevā) – based on phenomenological accounts of renunciate sādhaks from Ramakrishna order (advaita vedānta), Bauls (vaiṣṇava sahajiyā), ISKCON (gaurīya vaiṣṇavism) and the Art of Living (AOL; yoga-vedānta, āyurveda). An Indic model of nişkāma sevā- critical to spiritually inclined social work interventions is envisioned.

- Evolve the 'Art of Living' as a 'science of living' module / theory by identification of common factors that help participants transform themselves and
- Outline scientific research directions for a 'yoga-vedānta 'First Person Research Methodology framework'.

Expected outcomes

- Gaps addressed in the existing bio-psycho-social models of social work by virtue of the emerged Indic model of nişkāma sevā
- The Indic 'science of living' posited.
- An expected epistemological and theoretical yoga-vedānta framework that would shed light on the current challenges of First-person Inquiry.
- First-person accounts of renunciate sādhaks (raw data) for futuristic research endeavours to carry out inter and trans disciplinary experiments especially relevant to the fast-emerging fields as neuro- phenomenology, cognitive psychology, positive psychology.
- First-person accounts of renunciate sādhaks (raw data) for futuristic research endeavours to carry out inter and trans disciplinary experiments especially relevant to the fast-emerging fields as neuro- phenomenology, cognitive psychology, positive psychology.
- Establishment and augmentation the scope of yoga-vedānta, in a practical manner and for larger humanity as a 'do it by yourself science' for inner & outer wellbeing.

Through these focused research aims and the realization of expected outcomes, this project will significantly contribute to the integration of spirituality in social work and related disciplines, paving the way for more compassionate and effective interventions based on the profound insights of Indic spiritual traditions.

Glimpses of during the session interactions

Day 1





Glimpses of Poster presentations (*sphoraka - patrāya prastutikā*)



Cultural Event

(Sāṃskṛtika-kāryakramah)



Indian Classical Music performance by Mrs. Deepali Sandeep Kulkarni, Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur; Tabla sangat by Prof. Dipesh Vinod Katira, Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur



Nṛtya Sevā by Mr. Sunil Sunkara, Founder, NataRavi Dance Academic Head, World Forum for Art and Culture

Organizing Team

Patron



Prof. Kapil Kapoor
Formerly -Indian Institute
of Advanced Study, Shimla

Patron



Prof. Kamal L. Panigrahi
Chairperson,
CoE-IKS, IIT Kharagpur

Advisor



Prof. Somesh Kumar
Internal advisor,
CoE-IKS, IIT Kharagpur

Curator & Convener



Prof. Richa Chopra
Core faculty,
CoE-IKS, IIT Kharagpur

Co-Conveners



Deepak Khurana
Research Scholar,
CoE-IKS, IIT Kharagpur



Neha Shekhawat
Job Assistant - Project Management,
CoE-IKS, IIT Kharagpur

*Centre of Excellence for Indian Knowledge Systems
Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur, Hijli Shaheed Bhawan,
Kharagpur - 721 302, West Bengal (INDIA)*

Niskāma Sevā Website URL

<https://iitkgpcoeiks.in/NiskamaSeva/>

Niskāma Sevā Seminar Videos URL

<https://iitkgpcoeiks.in/NiskamaSeva/event-videos.php>



*Hijli Detention Camp (now called Shaheed Bhavan, IIT Kharagpur) is a former Detention Camp operated during the period of British colonial rule in India. Located in Hijli, beside Kharagpur, (a part of former Hijli Kingdom) in the district of West Medinipur, West Bengal, India. It played a significant role in the Indian independence movement of the 19th and 20th Centuries.