

# **Indicism - A Theoretical Framework and Three Critical Theories for New Indology**

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## **Abstract**

Indology is an area of research that mainly focuses on studying Indian civilization. The framework presented here calls for examining culture and society via the native lens. This is not proposed as a new framework but something that has always existed, though not effectively utilized for various reasons. The framework is called Indicism, and this new paradigm consists of three critical theories - Unidimensionalism, Negationism, and Prophetism. The study of Indian civilizational phenomena utilizing the native Indicism framework is a path set forth to develop New Indology.

**Keywords:** Critical Theories, Indicism, Indology, New Indology, Negationism, Prophetism, Unidimensionalism

## **Introduction**

Indology is focused on studying Indian culture, arts, languages, sciences, economics, society, religion, spirituality, and civilizational aspects. The main argument presented in this paper is that the Indic paradigm has always existed. However, due to historical reasons, scholars have chosen to rely on non-native perspectives to study Indian society. The native mind has always had its methods for processing and generating knowledge, but historical antecedents such as colonization and domination have prevented the native lens from being utilized.

Certain ideologies influenced colonial scholarship and excluded the native paradigm from consideration. The native self is not found in the academic literature - this is due to repression, suppression, or ignorance. Western society believes they invented ways to study and examine societies, though methods to study, examine, and advance societies predate Western ideas. New Indology is a way to bring back to the surface the ever-present native lens that has been overlooked by academics and other Indian intellectuals. Therefore, Indicism is not a new invention but a projection of what already exists, and this framework will help build up new Indology.

Indology research as it currently exists seems incomplete in its truest sense as most of the well-known Indologists and their scholarship is devoid of the native lens. Indology deserves to be studied and understood through a native lens rather than the lens borrowed from the Western lens. This concept paper proposes a theoretical framework or paradigm called *Indicism*. The term has been previously utilized to mean various incohesive designs, though work still needs to be done to flesh out the concept within the Indology framework.

## **Why Indicism**

The suffix "-ism" often describes a philosophy, system, or even a political movement. Here, the term Indic is proposed as being an -ism. Indicism provides a way for Indians or dharmics to self-examine; this includes assessing and understanding via the process of *sva parikshan*, or self-examination. The idea is to use a self-emanating cultural lens to examine various aspects of culture and civilization and move away from the status quo of utilizing Western concepts that might not apply to studying the Indic civilization academically.

The terms Sanatana Dharma and Indic and the overlap need to be understood to understand where Indicism falls. Sanatana means eternal, something that never ceases to exist. Therefore, Sanatana Dharma can be understood as eternal law(s) that govern life. Truth with a capital "T" is

often understood as being Eternal in Indic culture. "Dhri," the root word, means to hold, carry or sustain. Dharma is not religion as it is often interpreted, but dharma can be understood as the fundamental or natural law. Dharma is often known as the cosmic law or the cosmic Truth (Radhakrishnan, 1957). Indic technically means that which pertains to India, and for our theoretical purposes, Indic means that which is rooted in the dharma - this includes present-day geography which might have been lost to non-dharmic entities as well as those cultures and geography where Indic thought which focuses on self-reflection and self-discovery reign.

Indic also means the ancient thought that originated or continues to persist in the Indian subcontinent irrespective of contemporary international boundaries. Indic means that which is rooted in *Sanatan*, or the Eternal. Indicism also encompasses the sacred geography that encircles the material cultural manifestations and core ritual practices. Indic thought and practices have endured for thousands of years, not due to organization, proselytization, or even dharmic leadership, but precisely due to internal efficacy and utility. The appeal of Indic thought to the Indian mind may be attributed to its spiritual orientation and inherent intuitive nature. The Indic lens or framework depends not on human intellect or deductions but on profound inner experience. Instead of using the intellect - which tends to dissect and divide to build understanding, using the inner lens allows one to see things the way they are without the influence of the limitations of the bounded intellect. Also, since dharmic principles are rooted in natural law, not bound by space or time, and therefore Eternal by default, one can correctly assess using the dharmic or Indic anchor, which is unmoving and unaffected by boundaries. Therein lies the need to use a native paradigm to understand the unique Indic phenomenon.

### **The Indicism Concept**

Though the Indian subcontinent has witnessed barbaric imperialism and colonialism, the essence of the six Darshanas - especially Yoga and Vedanta still practiced as living philosophies, culture, and everyday traditions are rooted in what the ancients spoke about as Universalism via pluralism. These are not two opposing concepts, and as the Vedic thought states, "Truth is one; only it is called by different names." (Sen, 1989). Polytheism, monotheism, Dvaita, and Advaita are not uncommon to the six Darshanas; there is little argument regarding Hindus worshiping many deities, though there is a universal acceptance in contemporary society about the ancient and living belief that despite the inherent pluralism and exercise of choices available to human beings, the Ultimate Reality is One. This Universalism should be distinct from fuzzy semantics equating all religions as equal, one, accurate, nor as they being the same.

The essence of Universalism, often called inclusivism, is unique to Indic thought or the six Darshanas. Inclusion is the inherent criteria present in the six Darshanas, irrespective of whether a practicing Hindu is monotheistic, polytheistic, or even atheistic. The heterogeneous diversity and the philosophies seem divergent but are built upon the idea of the indestructible Truth as the Oneness or Universalism in nature. This is the essence of Indic thought - those in the subcontinent have a vast corpus of literature and guidance regarding living gurus, scriptures, and texts. The deep-set roots of Universalism, which go beyond the dissection aspects of our intellect, form the basis of the Indic paradigm or Indicism.

Let us examine the need for Indicism in academia and beyond. This entails answering the 'so what?' question. Historians and Indologists often study India from a Western lens, and this method is not just limited to universities. It is no secret that the Indian curriculum currently in place also teaches Indian history and civilization from a non-Indic perspective(s), which means that Indians in the subcontinent are learning about their life - history, polity, culture, religion, customs, and beliefs from a non-native or non-Indic lens. The current lens in place is a Western lens; one can call it a colonial lens, post-colonial theory, an imperial lens, a globalization lens, or new colonialism, or put, a Western lens that holds Abrahamic religions as the core of comparative examination. A theoretical framework that allows the subcontinent's people to self-assess, self-criticize, and propose solutions to existing societal problems via *sva - parikshan* does not exist. *Sva* is the root word referring to one's self in Sanskrit, and the term is utilized in Hindu, Jain, Prakrit, Buddhist, and even Hindi, Gujarati, Marathi, etc., about the self. For example, *Svadyaya* means self-study or one's reading or lesson (Yogapedia,2018), whereas *sva* is generally understood as one's self or even the human atman. Another typical example is Svadharma, which denotes one's duty per the Varnashrama (Sivananda, 2020). This method of self-examination, or Svaparikshan, is the basis for developing the concept and establishing critical theories under the Indicism paradigm.

There have been a couple of theories that have emanated from the West, mainly Orientalism and, later, a response to it - Occidentalism, each of which attempts to explain "the style of "thought" based on an ontological and epistemological distinction between the Orient and the Occident" (Koefoed & Haldrup, 2020). The dichotomies focus mainly on how the powerful West views, characterizes, and thereby oppresses the weak East. The Orient and the Occident are in different and separate hemispheres on the planet, opposing concepts given the differences in politics,

economics, and linguistics (Wang, 1977). According to Edward Said, the theorizing of Orientalism is not actually of the "Orient" as it exists in the eyes of some Western people, but of the opposite side - the "Occident" (1977). Neither of these paradigms seems to understand Eastern thought.

The clarifications and justifications of the opposing categories - Orientalism and Occidentalism - might hold for what technically constitutes the Judeo-Christian-Islamic world. However, these concepts must still be completed when examining and understanding dharmic societies. For example, caste's origins, purpose, and contemporary relevance can be rightfully assessed via the Indicism framework, as the Orientalism and Occidentalism paradigms have failed to address this adequately. Therefore, theories need to exist where those interested in Indic perspectives could utilize a lens that prevailed before colonization. Instead of constantly focusing on decolonizing present-day Indic thought, Indicism provides an already existing, pre-colonization way of examining various societal phenomena, including our existence.

Indicism, unlike Orientalism and Occidentalism, is not a new theory per se, and the label or term has yet to be widely used in English. The philosophies originating from the Indian subcontinent - the six Darshanas - are all based on "seeing." A Darshana is more than a philosophy; it is an instrument that allows human beings to discover and understand their true self and realize their true nature (Klostermaier, 2007). Darshanas are also schools of thought that focus on the theoretical exposition of matter and consciousness (2007; Kapoor, 2004) with the ultimate goal of self-realization or freedom from the cycle of birth and death. Indicism is not a Darshana to self-realize, but it is an instrument that allows academics to examine Indic culture via their Darshana of choice. If one is to borrow the Yoga Darshana as an instrument to understand Indicism, directing the senses or the *indriyas* is the first step in understanding the utility and the process of what Indicism provides. This tool is essential as most of us are conditioned to accept the Western view of the world by default. The Indicism lens allows only that which is in our inner experience to guide us as a tool to examine life, academic disciplines, and societal phenomena. There is copious pre-colonial literature and guidance to help see things through the Indicism lens.

### **The Indicism Theoretical Framework and Critical Theories**

Theories are crafted to guide research inquiries and design proposals, collect data, interpret data, and draw causality and conclusions based on the findings. Theories are formulated to explain

constructs, predict and understand observed phenomena, and challenge existing knowledge. Theoretical paradigms or frameworks also provide a way to test and review existing theories and assess relationships between variables or constructs. One essential function of theory is that it provides an evidence-based explanation of the natural world by testing hypotheses and allows scholars to understand and investigate problems and phenomena. The Indicism framework functions utilize the tools available in Indic literature and scriptures to allow researchers to examine, assess, criticize, and even propose solutions to identified problems, all based on svaparikshan.

Stereotyping, standardizing, and putting Indic or dharmic civilizational practices past and present in a box have been common in academia. These same practices have percolated into the Indian educational systems. Indic narratives are often missing in education and literature as well as other modes of cultural expression such as art, film, philosophy, politics, and even economic policies in contemporary times. The inherent limitations, marginalization, bias as well as cultural stereotypes are not just activities of the West; Indians themselves are complicit in dehumanizing their existence, having steered farther away from their roots. There is a need for course correction and putting effort that goes beyond typically blaming the external conquerors and the contemporary West for their lesser-than attitude toward the Indian subcontinent and, instead, devoting time and engaging in self-introspection to all aspects of Indic life to enhance awareness and accurate understanding of Indic society and politics. India achieved political freedom in 1947, but little can be said about the cultural freeing of the minds, which continue to function based on imported thoughts driven by practices and narratives masquerading as modernity. Thus, the Indicism paradigm.

### ***Unidimensionalism***

This critical theory is based on utilizing indigenous truths about Universalism. The theory examines phenomena viewed from one angle or dimension, leading to incorrect studies and faulty conclusions. Thus, unidimensionalism is a myopic way to view society and phenomena. Non-Eastern philosophy is often based on the limited aspects of binaries, and this can be characterized as Unidimensionalism. Policies, circumstances, and cultural and religious phenomena often fall victim to Unidimensionalism, leading to imprecise views and limited and even false narratives.

### ***Negationism***

This critical theory is based on presenting fact-based reality and denying that which are not known facts. Negationism offers truths and critically evaluates the denial or suppression of known or proven facts. Those in power often frame history, and this particular theory offers a way to refute that which has been systematically denied - native Truth - and internalized, primarily due to the influence of factors such as imperialism, colonialism, etc. Negationism is a tool, instrument, and theory that can be applied to examine and assess historical phenomena, case studies, etc., using the social science research methodology.

### ***Prophetism***

This critical theory is based on evaluating monotheistic religions and prophets via psychological examination of the prophets and believers. History serves as the context or the background for critically examining the truths as opposed to untruths and even delusions, which have led to the establishment of dogma that does not usually welcome questioning or criticism. This theory also allows one to use psychological and historical approaches to examine those faiths and personalities that have gone unquestioned and unexamined for centuries.

## **Application of Indicism Framework & Critical Theories**

### **A Case Study in Unidimensionalism - *Feminism***

The primary difference in how the feminine is perceived and treated in society in the East versus the West boils down to viewing the feminine based on Western religious beliefs. The feminine is revered in the East, especially in the Indian subcontinent, where Hindu practices still prevail. In places such as Nepal, India, Sri Lanka, and parts of Bangladesh, the *Devi*, or the feminine, has been worshiped for centuries. This is not true for the West, where the feminine has been systematically obliterated to make room for one masculine god.

Nature has given greater responsibility to the feminine gender - our existence is possible due to our mother's monthly cycle(s). Ancient cultures have understood this importance, but for the past few centuries, certain faiths have created an overemphasis on biological factors related to gender. This unidimensional lens of isolating a woman from society is entirely based on her reproductive organs. Instead of focusing on true equality based on talent or brain power, non-Eastern societies have continued the skewed, one-pointed focus on isolating women in terms of good entirely based on biology. Interestingly, in contemporary times, the feminine is yet again being wiped out

as the biological functions, particularly childbearing, are being outsourced by the medical-industrial lobbies.

In Hindu and Indic societies around the world, the feminine is very much a part of life - She is revered and, in many instances, is considered to be superior to the masculine, as the feminine is the nurturer and the force that sustains us - a force without which nothing would exist. For example, Mother Nature or *Prakriti* is feminine; goddess Annapurna - responsible for food and nurture - is feminine. Shri Vishnu's counterpart - Laxmi, is the sustaining principle worshipped for wealth and well-being. The feminine *Prakriti* is from which creation emanates, and the three *gunas* - *tamasic*, *rajasic*, and *satvik* - which make up existence, including our constituency, are part of *Prakriti*. The *Purusha*, or the masculine, is also important, and the union, Yoga, or joining of *Prakriti* with the *Purusha* brings existence forth. *Prakriti* is given inherent importance in how we exist and what sustains us. These aspects of the feminine are embedded in Yoga and Ayurveda *chikitsa* - the way we are, the way we eat, what we eat, and how we live are all associated with our *Prakriti* or constituency.

The history of the feminine is depressing in the West as the feminine has been erased to promote monotheism in the form of one true masculine deity. The destruction of the feminine is evident in witch trials and massacres of those who worshipped goddesses in ancient cultures. Women fared worse than men as witch-hunting was essentially women-hunting, as most who were identified as a 'witch' happened to be female. Since witchcraft was considered to be a felony in England and the American colonies, women were hanged, and in Scotland, women were executed or strangled to death or burned alive (Riddell, 1931; Johnston, 1974; Levack, 2010; Banks, 2013).

Goddess temples graced European society at one point, only to be razed and heretics burned. The Catholic Church, including the Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Calvinist, and Anglican churches, led the way in identifying heretics, and the Spanish Inquisition persecuted those who were identified as witches (English Heritage, 2023). Witch hunts led to about nine million European women or more being put to death (Heschel, 2003) during the time of persecution, and anyone suspected of witchcraft - including herbalists and midwives was often considered possessed or associated with the Devil (McPhee, 2010; Kay, 2022) and therefore accused of a crime and burned. Comparatively, no such anti-women, anti-witchcraft movements existed in the history of Eastern religious thought.



The history of the Feminist movement began in 1848 in New York when Elizabeth Cady Stanton and then Susan B. Anthony started lobbying for women's voting rights. In the West, particularly in the U.S., the Feminist movement has been heavily dominated by the Marxist ideology (Hartmann, 1979), which has resulted in the "othering" of the feminine gender. This othering is the main issue that works against the potential integration of women into society. In comparison, other than the feminine being worshipped in India, women were given the entire franchise in 1947 when India became free from the British. The Indian independence movement included many female fighters and participants, ranging from rulers, scholars, saints, and even homemakers, willing to donate metal pots and pans to build arms to fight for India's freedom. However, these dynamics changed in the 1970s when India's feminists began to adopt and copy the Western Marxist feminism model and ideology.

This is where one can apply the Indicism framework's Unidimensionalism to examine the factors that led to the inorganic Indian Feminist Movement mimicking the Western movement. Biology, which is most important in bedrooms and bathrooms, is therefore exaggerated into a unidimensional issue - women or the feminine is first isolated from the larger whole. Then, a movement is designed to re-integrate the feminine into the larger society. Thus, the critical theory of Unidimensionalism applies to evaluating the Western Feminist movement, and the main factors that need to be examined are the vast inherent differences between the actual treatment and existence of women, ideas of justice, and equality in the East versus the West.

Indian feminists, post-independence, fell for the patriarchal nature of viewing their society through a non-native lens, most likely stemming from Christian thought, where neither Catholic nor Protestant churches saw women as equal. Women in the West had little choice but to revolt against the established system. In contrast, feminists in India had to invent a non-existing patriarchy to revolt against since the playing field was never as unequal in India as it was in the West for the reasons discussed above. The Indian feminists, therefore, have been falling flat in understanding and advancing gender opportunities as they are trapped in Marxist and Christian ideas that do not fit or apply to the Indian context. The excessive and perverse focus on body parts guise as women's rights are creating a skewed, incomplete, and often toxic narrative and atmosphere for women, especially in India.

As mentioned above, only the Truth is permanent, and concepts that have evolved or regressed over time can be changed in society. For example, the practice of *Sati*, which has no mention in

the Vedas, became an unfortunate practice in society, though no texts sanction such a practice. Visionaries such as Swami Dayanand Saraswati and Raja Ram Mohan Roy led a mission to eradicate this practice to bring true gender equality, including proper educational opportunities for girls in Hindu society. This change has been implemented and adopted and is still sustained as the need for change was based on the social upliftment of the female gender while being faithful to the philosophical Truth.

Utilizing the Unidimensionalism theory, one can critically examine the Feminist Movements worldwide, including India, and argue why India does not fit the Western case and vice versa. Women empowerment in the Indian case is all but nonsensical from the Indicism perspective. A unidimensional view of women is an unfair way to craft any real or perceived isolation and then integration of women into society. The sole focus on biological-reproductive parts sets aside other factors, such as the mental capacity and capabilities of the feminine gender. Isolating over fifty percent of the world's population and only viewing them through their body parts is a significant disservice to human rights in general. Feminism was never under threat in India before foreign invasions, and the secular paradigm prevalent in the West and adopted by Indian academics is, therefore, an ill-fitting instrument to examine the factors and need for gender equality.

#### **A Caste Study in Negationism - Education**

Education is another policy area under Western hegemony and can and should be examined from the Indicism framework and Negationism theoretical perspective. Education from an Indological perspective is holistic - it incorporates content learning and ancient Indian literature and texts, showing that education went beyond the contents of book learning (this will be explored further). Education in India suffers from what is known as Negationism (Elst, 1998), where history is erased from Hindu memory. The English-educated classes have negated India's civilizational history, first attempted by the Islamists, then the British colonizers, and now, the Marxists, who seem to have a stronghold on all policies, especially education. Education in ancient India should be examined without imperial, colonial, or communist bias. Thus, there is a need for a critical theory. In the case of evaluating education policies and trends pre and post-independence, the theory of Negationism can be applied to understand how and why education was coopted and thereby set forth corrective policy measures to do away with the adharmic encroachment of supposed Western education philosophies vs. the ancient Gurukul systems which used to work well.

The *Gurukul* tradition meant that the *Guru* or the teacher took pupils in for a home-school-based education, and the *kul* or *kula*, in Gurukul, means that the teacher extended his home and family to the pupils. Learning, therefore, was fully immersive and not just based on theoretical knowledge but also as a way of the highest goal of Sanatana Dharma, self-realization (Nanavati, 2023). In addition to imparting knowledge from the Vedas and the Upanishads, the students learned a wide range of subjects such as math, economics, astrology, grammar and linguistics, theology, politics, military science, arts, medicine, and, of course, martial arts and yoga (Mookerji, 2016). The four *Purusharthas*, four *varnas*, and the four *ashramas* all worked in an interdependent manner to accomplish the objective of the Gurukulas. For example, training one to pursue *artha*, or wealth via education, is embedded in Sanatana Dharma and is one of the goals of Purusharthas of life. The *Brahmacharya* ashrama is set up so that education remains the primary objective until a person is ready to step into the *Grihastha* or the householder ashrama stage. All the varnas - Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras were part of the Guru's kula, and the main objective of the teachings other than content learning was spiritual growth, social awareness, personality development, character building, Yoga, and ayurveda (Patel, 2021) to name a few.

This unique system of education, also known as the Guru-Shishya *parampara* or the teacher-pupil tradition, has all but wiped out given the imposition of Western thought and systems at all levels of learning - from primary to higher education, including university systems and curriculum. While the ancient Gurukul systems focused on molding the pupils' intellect and personality (2019), modern education needs to be more holistic - it neither focuses on personality development nor the teaching of ancient texts. After Islamic rule came British rule, and ancient educational systems were systematically obliterated, but this time under the pretense of introducing modernity. The eradication of the status quo continued until the colonization of the country when new, Western, or modern education was introduced by the British (Selvamani, 2019). After India gained independence from British rule, there were only 400 schools and 19 universities. Since the Indian education system began to be influenced by British thought, the Rama Krishna Mission and the Theosophical Society of India began to merge Indian schooling with Western ideals (Patel, 2021). The primary unsuspecting change negated the ancient ways and set up a "new" way of learning by introducing textbooks.

Indian political thinkers of the time did not realize that the modern version of the textbook was nothing other than a derivative of the Bible. In Gurukulam, learning was not limited to textbooks,

as the process was open-ended and experiential. However, post-independence India saw a rush to modernize education shaped by British values. The leaders of the time were either oblivious, complicit, or in between the spectrum when it came to implementing the British education system - which was primarily designed to groom brown sahibs - many of whom still dominate the branches of government, education, and other bureaucracies as well as the media. Though India attained economic independence from the British in 1947, the Nehruvians and Marxists have continued with "the establishment" policies of the Islamists and missionary aspects of the British system, especially in education. Therefore, the Hindu history of suffering atrocities is not just negated by this establishment. However, systems are still in place to ensure the continuity of Islamic glorification and cognates of seminary learning.

The post-pandemic era ushers in hope - education as we know it has imploded due to technological advances, virtual learning, and traditional degree plans being replaced with technical courses and apprenticeships, which give students a higher probability of gainful employment. The critical theories under Indicism could help evaluate current failures in education and help craft new policies based on ancient knowledge systems that were effective in building holistic future citizens. The critical theory of Negationism primarily could be utilized to examine various factors of ignored historical accounts and resulting policies that work against the native population. Properly examining and understanding the past is the only way to pave the way forward, and critical evaluation of education policies is the need of the hour, not just in the Indian subcontinent but around the globe.

#### **A Case Study in Prophetism - Yoga**

Yoga is an ancient Indian evidence-based instrument that helps alleviate various physical and mental health problems. Yoga Darshana is one of the six major Darshanas that have arisen from the Indian subcontinent, and the philosophy and the scientific practice allow everyone an opportunity to get in better touch with themselves via various pathways and practices (Kanojia, 2022). Yoga overlaps with Samkhya and Vedanta Darshanas, and though the case study here mainly highlights the differences between Abrahamic Prophetism and the Sanatana Dharma aspects of Yoga, Unidimensionality as a critical theory is also applicable to examine how Yoga has been reduced to a secular, physical, or asana heavy exercise versus a sophisticated tool for enlightenment.

Monotheistic Prophetism has been gaining a stronghold in the Indian subcontinent, and what used to be greater India has experienced the loss of territories based on religious conversions and demands for non-Hindu states. Islamists and Christian missionaries have a known zeal for converting Hindus. Though the Abrahamic religions are clear about their goals, the politically unsophisticated Hindu falls prey to all religions being equal narratives. It thereby perceives Abrahamic monotheism as equivalent to the dharmic concept of (neo) Advaita. This false equating of two non-overlapping phenomena has led to Hindus ending up on the losing side of conversion, especially with debates and narratives concerning Yoga. The artificial equivalence of Eastern and Western religious ideas also often equates prophets with Hindu deities and/or Gurus. One of the main narratives that needs to be examined within the Indicist framework is the equivalence between prophets and yogis. Prophets claim to receive particular information from an "unusual channel," making themselves the middlemen or the spokespersons for that channel (Elst, 1993). Yogis, on the other hand, have first-hand knowledge via turning inward rather than claiming exclusive access to an assumed higher power that is masculine, as is the case of Christianity and Islam. A yogi's discovery of the Truth is experiential and not what a middle-man male interpreter conveys, i.e., a prophet.

Another significant difference between prophets and yogis is that the outward experiences of prophets regarding glorification or martyrdom have no equivalent in Yoga or Sanatana Dharma (1993). Christianity might worship Jesus on the cross, but suffering is never glorified in Yoga. Yoga is the answer to the suffering that human beings experience. Professor Elst discusses the example of Mother Teresa, who claimed that "one should be grateful for suffering as it is Christ's way of kissing you" (Elst, 1993). Yoga recognizes that humans tend to suffer the past or the future - neither of which is playing out in the present and thereby offers various techniques to overcome such suffering. Unlike Abrahamic faiths, Yoga never claims that suffering is a positive attribute bestowed to humans by the divine. In fact, according to the Yoga Darshana, the suffering of humans is a manufactured problem, and therefore, the intervention and solution are also man-made. Nothing in Yoga Darshana is outsourced to a divine or an intermediary who conveys the Divine's do's and don'ts to the masses.

Essentially, the prophet vs. yogi argument boils down to exclusivism vs. inclusivism. In Yoga and other Darshanas, there is no artificial separation of the creation from the creator, while in Western religions, the creator is given a higher status. A priori arguments are based on deduction rather than sense experience. This will not hold for Indicist as the validation of existence has to

be arrived at through the existence of the Brahman and the experience from within. Therefore, according to the Indicist framework and lens, the Western ontological argument, which establishes the existence of God as a necessity, is not taken as a given, nor is the hierarchy of God being a step above humans. According to Yoga Darshana, each of us has the potential to be Divine or God; therefore, there is no need to take any rules and commandments for granted. Rules and commandments are boundaries, and such limitations prevent one from seeking the Infinite, Indestructible, Everlasting Truth.

While a self-proclaimed and perceived prophet claims outward experience of a god or higher power to be an exclusive experience that only he has had, Yoga is open to all, and realized yogis claim that the nature of reality is inclusivism - there is no this and that; there is simply this and this, meaning all life emanates from the same source of energy. This realization and its description in various texts show the inclusive aspects of yoga pathways, purpose, and outcome (Ayyangar, 1938).

Finally, given the in-built exclusivity, prophetism does not allow multiple prophets to exist - this would defeat the purpose of the one channel to one-God narrative and practice. On the other hand, Yoga has no limitations or stipulations about who can practice and who is qualified to attain better health or ultimate awareness. Yoga is inherently set up to allow equal opportunity without focusing on a falsely equal outcome; moksha, or liberation from the cycle of life, is considered one of life's purusharthas or goals (Kanojia, 2022). Prophetic religions are set up where practitioners are all asked to believe in rules and regulations derived from an external source and conveyed by the interpreter-prophet. While Yoga's experiential practice is based on seeking the Truth by oneself, Abrahamic religions are based on beliefs that cannot be questioned, proven, or disproven.

Dharmic practitioners have internalized the false equivalences and a skewed idea of tolerance, which is drastically different from the exclusivism of Abrahamic religions and the inclusivism of beliefs and practices that have arisen from the greater Indian subcontinent. The skewed narratives are not always a result of bad translations or due to the limitations of the English language; concerted efforts have gone into the education system in India to further deracinate Hindus and systematically incorporate tenets of Christianity and Islam purporting prophets being yogis and, therefore, all religions being the same. One fundamental distinction from the Indicist perspective is that while Abrahamic religions are prophetic, Eastern spirituality is mystical.

Thus, the theory of Prophetism, under the Indicism framework, can be utilized to critically examine concepts that have gone unquestioned and unchallenged for centuries.

## **Conclusion**

Given the many issues related to the current state of Indology research, there is an immediate need to raise the native lens to prevail over the existing, borrowed frameworks. Paradigms are views we have of the world, which determine the types of questions we ask. In short, paradigms provide a lens through which knowledge and understanding are organized and advanced. Since cultural forces are linked to psychological processes, self-concept is our image of ourselves and is not independent of environmental situations. Therefore, correctly assessing the idea of the self and related sociopolitical and cultural phenomena becomes imperative for understanding the past and correctly charting the path for civilizational growth. The ever-present native lens is an optimal way to study issues and challenges and propose solutions instead of borrowed frameworks force-fitting that which does not fit the native cultural context. The present-day Indology scholarship needs a paradigm shift; therefore, this paper presents the concept of Indicism as new Indology.

The Indicism framework, which is svaparikshan, will be of utmost importance for research scholars and academics who have lacked the native lens to examine Indian socio-cultural development. There have been many -isms and de- and post-colonial studies and movements, and now it is time to look at that which predates all the -isms and dogma, that which has always been present - that on which cultures and civilizations were built, survived, and thrived. This movement of returning to the native roots to examine the past and the present to shape the future is the purpose of the Indicism paradigm. Indicism holds relevance for social sciences and humanities, and the framework and critical theories could be utilized to study cultural expressions - the arts, architecture, integral wellness - health, traditional medicine, and even science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

Indology requires a shift in attitudes and narratives, and therefore, Indicism provides a window of opportunity into a line of research where the ancient serves as an ever-present guide. This article brings the Indicism framework to the surface. It is up to Indology academics and students to take up the proposed theories and develop new theories if and as needed. Using the native lens can be relevant to any extant culture that wishes to look within.



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