Introduction to Indian Knowledge Systems

a Humanities and Social Sciences elective course
at Indian Institute of Technology Gandhinagar, January-April 2020

Indian Institute of Technology Gandhinagar’s Humanities and Social Sciences discipline is offering the fourth edition of its elective course, Introduction to Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS), from January to April 2020. This course is path-breaking in the following respects:

- It explores India’s intellectual, literary, artistic, scientific and technological knowledge traditions, offering an insider’s perspective on Indian civilization.
- It is taught collectively by eminent scholars, besides a few IIT Gandhinagar faculty members.
- It provides enough time for teacher-student interaction.
- It is open to participation of students from other institutions in Ahmedabad-Gandhinagar (upon registration).
- Its sessions are video-recorded and shared later on the course’s website and on YouTube.

The theme of this fourth edition of the course is The Ancient “Idea of India”. We often hear of the “idea of India”, by which is meant contemporary India, sometimes with the corollary that India did not exist as an identifiable entity before the colonial era and is somehow an “unnatural country”. Yet from early times, integrating mechanisms were at work across this landmass to create — deliberately or not — a diffuse, fluid, multifarious, adaptable, assimilative, but also tangible and distinctive pan-Indian identity. Those mechanisms resulted in shared concepts and practices in fields as diverse as polity and governance, arts and literature, sacred geography and pilgrimage, sacred ecology, religion, sciences and technologies, among other knowledge
systems. The course will explore some of these pan-Indian sub-themes, which contributed to the elaboration of Indian civilization; its outcome will be a deeper understanding of India's underlying cultural integration, which at the same time encouraged endlessly diverse manifestations. As Tagore put it, “The unity of India has been and shall always be a unity in diversity.”

**Instructors (in alphabetical order) and tentative topics:**

Prof. Neelkanth Chhaya (formerly, CEPT University): Concepts and Practices of Architecture across India

Prof. Michel Danino (IIT Gandhinagar): Foreign travellers’ views of India — or of Indias?

Dr. Meenakshi Jain (formerly Delhi University): Pan-Indian traditions of image worship and safeguarding

Prof. Kapil Kapoor (formerly JNU, New Delhi): Pan-Indian intellectual traditions

Prof. Shonaleeka Kaul (Centre for Historical Studies, JNU, New Delhi): Sanskrit Kāvyā as History

Dr. Nanditha Krishna (CPR Institute of Indological Research, Chennai): Traditions of sacred ecology across India

Prof. Srinivas Reddy (Brown University, USA, & IIT Gandhinagar): Pan-Indic concepts and practices of governance, political theory, moral instruction and ethics

Ms. Mana Shah (IIT Gandhinagar): Pan-Indian traditions of pilgrimage

Prof. Amita Sinha (formerly University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign, USA, scholar-in-residence, IIT Gandhinagar): India’s sacred geography: The mandala landscape and the mandala in built form

Dr. M.D. Srinivas (Centre for Policy Studies, Chennai): Pan-Indian traditions of science and technology

**The course is open to anyone** seriously interested in understanding and studying Indian knowledge systems. Anyone can audit it for free after registering with the course coordinators (see below).

**Lectures:** Starting 9 January 2020, on most Wednesdays and Thursdays from 3:30 to 5:00 pm. (The schedule of lectures will be shared shortly on the course’s website.)

**Venue:** Academic Block 1, auditorium 102 at IIT Gandhinagar, Palaj, Gandhinagar, Gujarat.

**Website:** [http://iks.iitgn.ac.in/](http://iks.iitgn.ac.in/) The website will be updated regularly; please consult it frequently to follow our announcements on the next lectures, vacations, etc.

**To register for the course** (if you are not from IIT Gandhinagar): Please visit and our website and register by filling the online registration form.

**Course coordinators:** Michel Danino (micheldanino@iitgn.ac.in) & Mana Shah (mana.shah@iitgn.ac.in).

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