

**Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR, New Delhi) and Indian Institute of Advanced Study
(IIAS, Shimla)**

Re-Examining Indology: *Retrospect and Prospect*

Overview:

Every civilization has an inbuilt mechanism to recollect and interpret its past which is a storehouse of its history and culture. This gives a sense of continuity on the basis of which traditions are built. Long before the emergence of Indology as a colonial discipline in 18th century, India had her own intellectual traditions of self-recollection, self-identification, and self-representation. These traditions were abounding with foundational texts inquiring into everything—from astronomy and grammar to the nature of ultimate reality—and developing appropriate knowledge systems for almost all aspects of human life. These texts were continuously reflected and commented upon by a chain of commentaries in various forms along with history (*Itihāsa*) as recollected, chronicled, and retold through various means not to speak of myth and *kāvya* traditions. Without bearing any formal disciplinary nomenclature such as Indology, this vibrant and living engagement with the past—a realization of its own civilizational-self (*ātma-bodh*)—was derived from an ‘internalist’ perspective of its agency which was an integral part of those living traditions.

Classical Indology was a result of colonial processes, centuries after the purported European ‘discovery’ of the non-European world. In those centuries preceding colonialism, much knowledge was already appropriated from India ranging from calculus to astronomy and navigation. These earlier appropriations did not figure in colonial Indological researches and Indology was reduced to a limited body of knowledge of the ancient civilization of India. This gave an impression that Indian civilization lacked a scientific temper and technological flair. Indology that was developed out of the orientalist, missionary and the colonial interests of European scholarship in India was influenced by the overall European attempt at ‘othering’ the Indian civilization as was done with Amerindians and Africans.

The Eurocentric body of knowledge about Indian civilization in its classical era did exhibit some of the best shining examples of thorough and painstaking scholarship in translating some of the key texts of Indian civilization (e.g. William Jones, Henry Thomas Colebrooke, Max Müller and others) but it was nonetheless overshadowed in terms of its implicit presuppositions such as the division between Occident and Orient, the Aryan invasion theory, and the superiority of European civilization. As subtexts to these assumptions, Indian civilization was portrayed as mythical, esoteric and other-worldly, with no sense of history, devoid of scientific temper, incapable of developing theoretical and practical sciences.

Pertinent Questions:

How should Indian scholars contribute to the generation of a new Indology in partnership with their confreres in the global arena in a manner which is true to the spirit and substance of India's rich, varied and living cultural heritage? What would be the appropriate epistemological underpinning of such a reconstructed *Bhārat-Vidyā* that could serve as a vehicle to understand India's civilizational self?

Focusing on these questions, Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR, New Delhi) and Indian Institute of Advanced Study (IIAS, Shimla) propose to organize an International Seminar to address some of the methodological, archaeological, historical, sociological, and philosophical issues involved in understanding the complexities of Indian society with particular attention to desiderata including the appropriate identification and use of source materials, knowledge systems, as well as methods of translation and interpretation.

Objectives of the Seminar:

- to focus on contemporary value/relevance of Indological research
- to take forward some major debates in Indology
- to stress inter-disciplinary potential of Indology

Issues to be discussed

- Pre-indological appropriation of Indian knowledge
- Contemporary relevance of Indian Gaṇita (Mathematics), Ayurveda (Medicine), Darśansāstra (Philosophy), and Vijñāna (Science).
- Indian concept of State

Date: March, 13,14,15, 2020.

Venue: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, India.