ARTICLE

Beyond Literate Education: Kalās, Vidyās and Śāstra in Ancient India

Kshitij Jain*

Introduction

The modern-day educational system is based more on rigid structures and contours of curriculum, leaving out ideas of proficiency and practical knowledge; something that has been rightly criticized by many. Subsequently, the very idea of 'knowledge' in the western perspective is found to be limited by certain fixated notions. The idea of higher education in ancient India was not a degree-based structure like today, rather it focused on actual proficiency and excellence a person could attain in his niche. It was ensured that the knowledge imparted to an individual was not theoretical bookish one but had applicability in his or her life and works.

Therefore, much of this process of imparting knowledge was done through specialized frameworks often referred to as 'Kalā and 'Vidyā' in ancient literature. These specialized proficiencies ranged from business and martial skills to sophisticate poetics and spiritual sciences. All these Kalās and Vidyās had two important attributes- firstly they had no specific contours and their study was dependent upon the person pursuing education in terms of his work, requirements and usage in life. Secondly, the proficiencies associated with materialistic knowledge were tied up with application; meaning that how they could provide better socio-economic opportunities to a person through their usage. On the other hand, specializations in more knowledge-oriented fields like poetics or grammar led to a superlative degree of control over that field and innovations in the same.

This research paper aims at studying these numerous knowledge based proficiencies on the basis of using primary Sanskrit literary sources. The description of these Kalās and Vidyās will be investigated in Sanskrit and Prakrit sources ranging from Classical Literature to Grammar, from texts based on polity like Arthashastra to the Dharmashastra texts. Philosophical texts like the Upanishadas and Jain and Buddhist cannons will also be studied. The

*   Pursuing MPhil in Classical Indian Religion at the University of Oxford

subsequent analysis and interpretation will be therefore, categorized according to the sources being used to also depict that how the idea of 'education' as well as even that of 'knowledge' had a diverse and multifarious application in ancient India in different spheres of life.

Another very significant idea of ancient Indian education that will be taken into account is the concept of Śāstra, which in reality relates to a particular branch of specialised knowledge that becomes a tradition over a period of time. Constant pursuit of higher knowledge and the journeys taken by keen individuals to learn a particular intellectual concept has led the formation of numerous Śāstras which will be established in this research as the third facet of higher education in ancient India- signifying the nation's remarkable pursuit of knowledge.

Kalās: Investigating Skilled Proficiencies

The word 'kalā' is frequently used in classical Sanskrit literature in broad senses, generally meaning 'sciences' or more literally 'arts'. Even though the word is attested to numerous activities in an arbitrary way to indicate that they require a degree of expertise, the ancient texts have come up with an exhaustive list of activities that can be called a kalā. The most famous of these lists is the one found in the 'Kāmasūtra' of Vātsyāyana mentioning 64 arts. There are similar lists found in other texts with slight variations but the overall content is more or less the same.

An important thing about these kalās (or arts) is that they are related with practical implication. Whether it is the art of playing a flute or the art of measuring a city (town planning), all of them comprise of applying the relevant knowledge to practical actions. In this light, these arts can be considered of two types- I. those related with artistic concerns and not directly related with occupational concerns and II. those directly related with occupations and economic opportunities. Even though all kalās emphasise on proficiency and its application, we will pay a deeper attention to the ones which are directly related with occupational activities in order to relate them with ancient educational system. Apart from the Kāmasūtra, lists mentioned in the Samavāyāṃga Sūtra and Lalitavistāra will be studied. There is another interesting list found in the Kādambinī of Bāṇabhaṭṭā which shall be referred to occasionally.

A large number of arts enlisted in Samavāyāṃga Sūtra are directly related with professional applications and refined activities. Leham (writing), Gaṇitam (calculations), Rūvam (sculpture) and Naṭṭam (dance) are some kalās related to refined activities of common life. There are some other arts that are specifically intended for specific occupations. For example- Gandhajuttim was the art of preparing perfumes, Madhusittham was the art of wax modelling and Ābharaṇavihim was related with the rules of preparing ornaments.

Even testing and verifying the quality of gems (Maṇilakkhaṇam) and jewels (Kāgaṇilakkhaṇam) was included in this list, reflecting the importance of this industry. The text further mentions metallurgical activities in the list such as Hiraṇavādam and Suvarṇavādam i.e. melting, combination and other activities of silver and gold respectively. Dhāupāgam was the melting and other activities of minerals, and must have been a proficiency of dhātuvādin (metallurgist). Architectural and constructional activities were also considered as kalās, such as measurement of camps called Kandhāvāarmāṇam, measurement of cities called Nagarmāṇam, as well as Nagarnivesam i.e. building cities and Vatthunivesam (building houses). Apart from them, military expertise has also been considered as an integral part of the kalās. Dhaṇuvedam as the name suggests, was the science of bow. Fighting in itself has been considered a kalā by the name of Juddham and must have been used in broad senses. (Samavāyāṃga Sūtra)

Interesting to note is that the aforementioned kalās in the Samavāyāṃga Sūtra weren't mere theoretical ideas, they were actually considered important not for an individual's occupation but also for statecraft. Several passages of the Arthaśāstra corroborate to the prevalence of such practical proficiencies and depict that those in state mechanism had to gain a thorough knowledge of the relevant kalās. For example, while talking about examination of precious jewels in 2.11, Kauṭilya prescribes the *adhyakṣa* (department head) to be knowledgeable about the features of an excellent pearl (2.11.5) and blemishes in a gem (2.11.33) that relate with Kāgaṇilakkhaṇam and Maṇilakkhaṇam respectively. Similarly, it is prescribed for an *adhyakṣa* to be know how to check the quality of gold (2.13.3) which relates with Suvarṇavādam. He needs to be knowledgeable about metallurgical activities related to iron and copper (2.13.58), similar to the art of Dhāupāgam and about preparing gold and silver wares which has been covered already. These are only a handful of examples to corroborate the application and importance these kalās had in spheres of economic administration. Undoubtedly the artisans like goldsmiths and metal workers hired by the state as envisioned by the Arthaśāstra would have been proficient in relevant arts.

The list found in Lalitavistāra differs from the former on grounds that it doesn't have too many kalās related to professional applications. But, it does mention refined knowledge like poetry and grammar (Kāvyavyākaranam), painting (Rūpakarma), writing books (Grantharachitam) as well as playing flute (Vīṇa) as various facets of arts. Several other branches of knowledge are enlisted as independent kalās in this list, such as – Nirghaṇṭu i.e. lexicon, Nigam i.e. scriptures, Purāṇam i.e. the Purāṇas and Vyākaraṇam i.e. Grammar. Other branches like the knowledge of Vedas, knowledge of Etymology (Nirukta), knowledge of Phonetics (Śikshā), Metrics (Chhanda) as well as philosophical

schools namely Sāṃkhya, Yoga, Vaiśeṣika, as well as an obscure school Veśikam are mentioned as essential arts one should acquire. (Venkatasubbiah, 1910)

Other forms of dances, ritualistic procedures and poetics too find a space in this comprehensive list containing a total of 86 arts. While the text does contain multiple kalās related with practical application, its remarkable feature is including the ones belonging to specific branches of knowledge. Notably, Bāṇabhattā enlists similar textual disciplines at the top of the list including grammar (Padam), logic (Vākyam), Pūrva Mīmāṃsā (Pramāṇam), law (Dharmaśāstram) and treatises on politics (Rājanīti) which indicates at the growing significance of these subjects and an overall reduction in the importance of skilled professions; albeit a discussion on these lines is beyond the purview of this paper.

Even though the above mentioned two lists are quite detailed, the most popular one is that of Kāmasūtra which has become synonymous with the topic of kalās. An overview of the list with a comparative lens would prove that these 64 kalās enlisted by the author Vātsyāyana were meant for a different audience which comprised of urban men belonging to economically prosperous backgrounds with a vibrant social life. Therefore, it is no wonder that these kalās were more artistic and recreational in nature. But, there also are other sciences that relate with applicability and skilled professions. Takṣaṇam (carpentry), Vāstuvidyā (science of planning and building houses and other buildings), Rūpyaratnaparikṣā (examining precious stones and coins) and Dhātuvāda (metallurgy) are a few of such sciences. Another interesting kalā mentioned is Vṛkṣāyurvedayogā: i.e. medicines and treatments for making plants healthy. A unique kalā found in the list is of making machineries for locomotion, water and war purposes (Yantramātṛkā); something that must have been very significant for a number of purposes. Physical sciences like swimming etc. are also considered as a kalā and is the placed on the last number in the list. (Venkatasubbiah, 1910)

Putting these lists in a comparative analysis, we can find the comprehensive nature of ancient educational system of India. It seems that the authors wanted to bring maximum skills of socio-political and economic significance under one list, even though the actual number must have been naturally higher. While sophisticated subjects like poetics, grammar, lexicon and philosophy were essential parts of the education prevalent in the society, other forms of knowledge that enabled one to gain professional skills weren't looked down upon, and constituted an equally important constituent of what was considered 'higher education'. Sections like scholars, bureaucrats and thinkers must have required a sound knowledge of numerous arts, as seen in the Arthaśāstra where a king is expected to be proficient in multiple branches of knowledge.

Today, when the misbalance between theoretical and practical aspects of knowledge in Indian education has been pointed out frequently and attempts are being made to impart skill-based education in the curriculum, the idea of kalās in ancient texts is indicative of the comprehensive understanding of education. The co-presence of these varieties under the same garb can mean that individuals could pursue a sophisticated subject while being conversant in a professional skill or vice versa; this aspect of versatility is important while discussing the topic of kalās and shall be dealt in greater lengths in the subsequent passages.

Another observation of importance is that all of these lists comprise literacy and the knowledge of letters in some or the other way. Whether it is mentioning it as Leham (Lekhanam) directly or enlisting it as knowledge of lexicons poetry or metres, literacy was an important and basic branch of education. But, we should remember that it was not the only paradigm of education. Knowledge of letters and theoretical subjects were considered important, but other skills which demanded practical know-how weren't discounted from the idea of education. Gaining and applying knowledge-whether it was of a textual subject or of a skill based proficiency, were a part of education. This comprehensiveness of ancient Indian education is a feature which our present pedagogical system needs to grasp in a meaningful manner.

The entire framework of kalās was based on the idea that one should gain proficiency in what is their natural interest as well as inclination. As it is rightly said that everyone has a different aptitude and set of capabilities, education of kalās was based upon individual interest as well as capabilities. A suitable example of this is found in Ādipurāṇa of Jinasena, a celebrated Jain author. While describing how the first Tīrthaṃkara Ṛṣabhadeva educated his children, the author mentions that he taught his daughters the science of letters and numbers respectively, indicating at their foremost importance. Next, he taught his sons various sciences of importance and utility. Even though the author has used the words Vidyā and Śāstra instead of Kalā, the distinction among them is a hazy one and their description brings them proximate to the category of Kalās.

Ṛṣabhadeva taught his eldest son Bharata Arthaśāstra and Nṛtyaśāstra, which although are branches of knowledge have been put into category of Kalā by some authors as seen earlier. Vṛṣabhasena was taught the Gandharvaśāstra that constituted chapters on dance, music etc. He further made Anantavijay proficient in Citrakalā and also taught him all the kalās- the author must have been aware about the presence of listed sciences present in preceding texts. Anantavijay was also taught in the art of Sūtradhāra (dramaturgy) and in the science of constructing houses. Bāhubalī learnt several sciences including the knowledge of Kāma, the science of knowing features of males and females,

Āyurveda, Dhanurveda, the science of knowing the features of elephants and horses, and the science of examining jewels. (Ādipurāṇa, Parva 16, p.357)

The author says that Ṛṣabhadeva instructed his sons in these arts for the purpose of welfare of the society; ultimately every knowledge should contribute to the welfare of society in some or the other way. It is noteworthy that while the princes had an overall proficiency in several arts, they had a specific expertise in one of the many arts. This also emphasises on having a specialization in a particular branch of knowledge. This topic of specialization will be focused substantially in the third section of this paper.

Vidyās: Higher Paradigms of Knowledge

The word Vidyā in itself means knowledge and similar to Kalā, it has also been used in very broad senses. Many a times an overlap between the two is also seen, albeit the general understanding of Vidyā is an in-depth knowledge of a subject related to textual studies. This can be seen in the list of 'Aparā Vidyās' (lower proficiencies) found in Muṇḍakopaniṣad. Upon being asked about what is the ultimate knowledge, Aṃgirā tells Śaunaka that Vidyā is of two types- Parā (higher) and Aparā (lower). This idea of higher and lower knowledge will be discussed later on. In the framework of Aparā Vidyā, he includes the knowledge of four Vedas, Śikshā (phonetics), Kalpa (rules related to rituals and duties of householders etc.), Vyākaraṇam (grammar), Niruktam (etymology), Chhanda (metrics) and Jyotiṣa (astrology). Even though this framework includes only Veda and Vedānga- keeping in centre the Vedic philosophy, it reflects the idea of proficiency in sophisticated branches of knowledge gained through an intensive study of a particular knowledge system. (Muṇḍakopaniṣad, Gita Press, 1992)

Keeping this in view, a number of subjects mentioned earlier in the lists of Lalitavistāra and Kādambarī can be classified as 'Vidyā'- because their knowledge is based on an-depth study of texts and intellectual principles. While Kalā primarily constituted of skilled proficiency, Vidyā meant in-depth knowledge of a subject established and enriched through intellectual progressions. That subject being studied could have been related with abstract topics like philosophy and metaphysics and also with practical topics like economics and governance. Not to forget, the author of Ādipurāṇa also mentions the various arts/sciences taught by Ṛṣabhadeva as Vidyās, majorly because all of them were independent subjects requiring an in-depth study. Surely by the time Jinasena had authored his work, numerous treatises would have been popular on the subjects he has mentioned as Vidyās, prompting him to consider each one of them as not only a skillset but as a separate discipline. On this basis, one can argue that many of the skills earlier referred to as a Kalā developed into subjects/disciplines when they underwent intellectual studies and development

of treatises even though a watertight distinction can never be made because of the synonymous use of the two terms.

Individual specificity that played a central role in the knowledge of Kalās, had a similar importance in the study of Vidyās too. An individual could have gained Vidyā only of the subject he was interested in and also pursued with required vigour. The best example of this can be seen in the Arthaśāstra where the king is supposed to be an expert in four Vidyās namely- Ānvīkṣikī (the science of inquiry i.e. logic), Trayī (the knowledge of the four Vedas), Vārtā (the science of economics) and Daṇḍanīti (the science of governance and legal system). (Arthaśāstra – 1.2.1-1.2.12)

All four of these sciences are subject-specific and can be mastered by a thorough study of the existing treatises. Similarly, in Viśrutacaritaṃ of Daṃḍī, a king is prescribed to pay special attention to Daṇḍanīti that is the science of statecraft without which the state cannot be governed properly. This classification of Vidyās is according to the relevance for a king and bureaucrat who might not need a detailed knowledge of subjects like grammar or poetics but will need to learn various aspects of statecraft in order to perform their duties of governance. (Viśrutacaritaṃ, Daṃḍī)

Quite similarly, someone who is interested in philosophy or logic will need to learn Vidyās related to textual and philosophical study and will not require knowledge of economics or legal system. Subjects like poetics, lexicon, dramaturgy, epistemology and logic to name a few are independent subjects of study themselves, and it would depend upon individual requirement and inclination to pursue and apply one or a few of them. While it was always considered appreciable to master various subjects, their application as experts or scholars of a field would have certainly based on specificity. This individual specificity would have enabled a person to achieve new paradigms in his chosen field of knowledge through an intensive study followed by intellectual rigor. The phenomenon of intellectual rigor and specialized study would have given rise to the concept of Śāstra that we will discuss in the next section.

A significant concept related to the study and knowledge of different Vidyās is the historical tradition of pursuing tutelage of scholars who had an extraordinary proficiency over one particular science or had made special advancements in any of the numerous fields. The story of Muṇḍakopaniṣad serves as a suitable example here too, for Śaunaka who was an ideal householder went to Aṃgirā to learn the all-pervasive science which was ultimate for a human. Aṃgirā in turn taught him the science of spirituality referred to as Parā Vidyā which was concerned with the questions of liberation and spirituality. As the sage mentions sciences related to Veda and Vedānga, there would definitely have been other intellectuals having expertise in those branches but it was Aṃgirā who had the knowledge extraordinaire of spirituality, the one desired by Śaunaka.

Even apart of specific expertise, individuals would have taken similar journeys to different teachers to enrich their knowledge of a Vidyā, or to learn new concepts that were inaccessible to them in their former institutions of education. We come across another popular story in the Upanishadic literature, that of Nachiketā who was given as an offering to Yama (the god of death) by his father. While not going into details of the narrative part, it is important to note that when he succeeded in gaining the favour of Yama, Nachiketā learnt the science of metaphysics from the former comprising topics like self-knowledge, knowledge of the Ātman (soul) and Brahman (ultimate reality). Certainly the knowledge of these sophisticated science wasn't accessible even to the scholars of his time, prompting Nachiketā to learn the same from Yama. This story found in several texts is narrated in a detailed style in the Kaṭhopaniṣada. (Kaṭhopaniṣada, Gita Press, 1997)

This tradition ensured that the enormous wealth of Vidyās did not cease to exist and was passed from one generation to the other with regular improvements and refinements. Without efficient communication and connectivity in ancient times, this practice ensured accessibility and preservation of knowledge being a necessary element of Indian intellectual tradition.

For discussing the last concept in this section of Vidyās, we will again return to the tale of Muṇḍakopaniṣad. The distinction of higher and lower knowledge oft-mentioned in above passages relates to worldly sciences and spiritual science which was considered beyond the material education. While Vidyās related to socio-political and economic progress were necessary, Indian thought did not consider them to be the end of all what needed to be known. This framework of knowledge was considered incomplete without this Parā Vidyā. Ultimately, it was the science of spirituality aiming at liberation that was the highest knowledge to be gained and the proficiency of which would automatically comprise all other subjects and sciences. While the modern western worldview perceives material knowledge as the ultimate objective, Indian philosophy considered spirituality as the science that had to be gained even if one had expertise in all sorts of material sciences.

There was a sound logic behind considering spirituality as a science because it was not a pastime or mere speculative activity wrongly considered by many. It required argumentative capabilities, a deep knowledge of textual tradition and constant intellectual contemplation in order to understand the various nuances of this subject. The crucial element of Parā Vidyā was that it included penance and austerities along with theoretical knowledge; leading to the idea that knowledge is incomplete without conduct.

A similar nuanced classification is found in the Jain philosophy where knowledge is divided into *Āgama* and *Adhyātma*. While Āgama is explained as the all-pervasive knowledge enunciated by the omniscient Jina which is

true and cannot be refuted through which all the substances (tattvas) of this universe are brought into cognizance, Adhyātma is the process of shedding attachments and gaining purity in the self (ātman). The importance of Āgama is in the knowledge without which an individual cannot understand stereological structure of liberation and cannot develop the required understanding of substance and mode but, it is the experiential science of Adhyātma which ultimately sheds all particles of impurity and is instrumental in achieving the end goal of liberation. Very much like the distinction of higher and lower Vidyās (even though Jain philosophy doesn't consider either of Āgama or Adhyātma as higher or lower), an individual cannot succeed in achieving his end goal if he masters himself in theoretical knowledge but is devoid of the experiential process of Adhyātma. Therefore, the framework of Vidyās in Indian intellectual tradition cannot be analysed without keeping in mind its twofold nature- one fold dealing with the sciences of material wellbeing and the second focusing on spiritual progress.

Śāstra as Specialized Tradition of Knowledge

Similar to the two terms discussed in the preceding sections, the term Śāstra is also used in a number of ways and has multiple aspects attached. It can be used both for a text and for the tradition to which that text belongs. The general sentiment behind the word is related to a sacred work or scripture even though in Indian intellectual tradition, Śāstra is understood as a tradition of a particular branch of knowledge which continuously enhances and refines itself through intellectual activities. It is this aspect of particularity and specialization that will be focused in the current discussion. Śāstra is not mere knowledge of a subject, it is a tradition of specialized knowledge of a particular subject that is established through generational contributions and constant enhancements.

It can be said that through specialized focus and an unbroken chain of refinement, any Kalā or Vidyā can be included in partake of Śāstra or can even itself become one for that matter. The various examples of Vidyās discussed above can be reviewed for understanding this. For instance, Vyākaraṇa has been mentioned as one of the Vedāngas, included in the fourteen Vidyās. But in later period, through extensive research resulting in the treatises of Pāṇini, Pataṃjali, Kātyāyana and so many more grammarians to name; this subject developed into a full-fledged branch of knowledge, requiring a thorough command and specialized studies. Even today, it remains one of the most detailed branches of Indian Knowledge System and one who masters it receives special regards due to its arduousness. Similarly, Daṇḍanīti that is described as the science of statecraft would have possibly been one singular subject of study. But through the intellectual achievements of political thinkers of ancient India and large-scale writing of texts on subjects of socio-economic polity, this subject became a very important branch of knowledge because it

directly dealt with governance. Kāvyaśāstra (poetics) is not just a Vidyā about metric poetry and various literary devices, it has become a comprehensive school of thought focusing on literary theory, criticism and the art of refining literature due to centuries of enrichment and enhancement. Even within in this branch, scholars associated themselves with one particular topic or one particular school of thought and contributed in that field through their original pieces, commentaries etc.

From the beginning there is a constant emphasis on the aspect of specialization in Śāstra, so we must also understand what is meant by this emphasis. In terms of education, ancient Indian thought encouraged an individual to be proficient in multiple disciplines and branches so that he could have an all-round development of his intellectual capabilities and could be versatile in nature. But, if a person desired to pursue higher scholarly objectives for contributing his own principles or research in a field of knowledge, it required a specific focus on a particular branch and on a particular subject or area within that branch. This specificity is what is meant by specialization and played a crucial role in development of disciplines into more nuanced and detailed areas of study referred to as a Śāstra. When an individual chose a particular Śāstra of his interest and keenly worked upon a topic within that branch for further research, he explored and established several original concepts related to his study and the end product of his original study was the 'text'- a new treatise comprising original concepts on a specialized topic which was also called the Śāstra. Therefore, the word Śāstra was used for the knowledge tradition which an individual chose for his scholarly pursuits as well as for the new findings he made and condensed in the form of a work-whether a treatise, commentary, digest, manual or a literary work etc.

To properly depict the above mentioned concept, another story will be narrated for help although from the Jain sources this time. Ṣaṭakhaṃḍāgama is an important philosophical text in the Digambar Jain tradition. Although the historical roots of this text have attracted much scholarly criticism, the narrative of how this text was composed will be relevant here. It is said that two monks from South India namely Puṣpadaṃta and Bhūtabalī went to Dharasena in modern day Gujarat to learn from him an important part of the knowledge directly passed on from the lineage of Mahāvīra and wrote the Ṣaṭakhaṃḍāgama on the basis of the concepts taught to them by Dharasena. Sagarmal Jain writes that Ṣaṭakhaṃḍāgama was a part of the canonical tradition of a Śāstra named Mahākarmavipāka Prābhṛta which was further a part of Dṛṣṭivāda- the twelfth Aṃga of Jain canonical literature. Several treatises developed out of Mahākarmavipāka Prābhṛta further becoming Śāstras themselves. (Jain, Sagarmal, 1996)

Therefore, what Dharasena taught to the two monks was a very specific subject that he was a specialist in based upon a particular philosophical-ontological concept but was ultimately part of a bigger tradition. Therefore, the specialization in not only a knowledge branch but also in a minute well-defined topic led to the formation of a new knowledge tradition within a larger tradition producing numerous texts- that could be called as a Śāstras. Therefore, both the Ṣaṭakhaṃḍāgama and the tradition to which it belonged are suitable examples of this aspect of minute specialization.

This idea discussed above is not a redundant concept. The modern day research academia also focuses on specificity and there has been an increasing emphasis on minute specialization in terms of a research project. It is argued that a research project should be minute in its viewpoint so that it can establish new arguments in a particular subject related to a very specific branch of a discipline. This is similar to the conception of specialization present in Śāstras which aimed at bringing sophisticated refinements in their knowledge traditions by taking up a peculiar idea or concept. This feature of the Śāstric tradition can be seen in Darśana (philosophy) where scholars gained expertise not only in a peculiar concept but even in a particular text. Extensive commentaries on texts can be explained as products of this text-specific expertise which enriched the knowledge tradition they belonged to. One can only wonder whether a now-prevalent system of PhD thesis is a modernized version of a Śāstra! Nonetheless, the approach of minute specialization was a crucial methodology used by scholars of various knowledge traditions of ancient India that defined not only that tradition but also the text in focus.

One should also remember that this emphasis on minute specialization was meant for the scholars and not for individuals who wished to enhance their knowledge of various Śāstras through a serious study. The descriptions of numerous scholars can lead to a generalized assumption that they used to be overall proficient in a number of Śāstras, for writing a single text was considered a serious activity and one needed to broaden the intellectual horizon of his arguments as much as possible. But, there were others too- the ones who used to be proficient in various branches of knowledge without actively choosing scholarship as their mode of living. We do not need to go afar to find a suitable example for this discussion. The manager (Sūtradhāra) of the classical Sanskrit play Mudrārākṣasa during the introductory passages of the play; tells his wife that he has learnt the entire Jyotiṣa Śāstra containing sixty-four chapters with a great deal of hard work.

This seemingly negligible detail becomes important if we take into our consideration the versatility possessed by the manager of Sanskrit dramaturgy. Mātṛgupta in his commentary on the Nāṭyaśāstra of Bharat Muni enlists the subjects a manager should be proficient in. He should know various types

of dressings, fine arts, metres as well as applying the concepts of Nāṭya. He should also be knowledgeable of moral-ethical science. The author also expects him to know 'all Śāstras'- roughly meaning that he should have knowledge of diverse branches of knowledge. Keeping the aforementioned example in this perspective, it would certainly mean that a manager had versatility in his perusal of studying Śāstras and this would similarly apply to persons belonging from different walks of life who could gain knowledge of multiple branches of knowledge. Texts on polity like Arthaśāstra prescribe for the king to have proficiency in multiple subjects as we have seen; and this can also be taken up as an example of individualistic versatility in the study of various Śāstras.

Final Remarks

This paper was an attempt to discuss some of the integral elements of ancient Indian education and through this process, tried to investigate what was understood by 'education' as well as 'knowledge' in our ancient intellectual tradition. Education was not a mere curriculum based theoretical activity but was meant to ensure the welfare of the individual who was pursuing it- making the entire process individual-centric and a fair mix of conceptualization as well as application. A person could have pursued education without studying theoretical subjects and focused on occupation-based skills like what we saw in Kalās. Skill based knowledge played a significant role in Indian society and enabled a person to achieve better professional and economic opportunities. Application is an aspect that needs to be implied at a greater scale in our current education and the Indic model of Kalās can prove to be relevant in this regard.

The concept of Vidyās lead us to a subject specific study where theoretical subjects and topics were pursued with full intellectual rigor. We also saw that a Kalā could develop itself into a Vidyā and the latter could itself become an entire branch of knowledge culminating into the tradition of a 'Śāstra'. An important aspect of the tradition of Vidyā was approaching a scholar with a remarkable hold over a peculiar Vidyā. Students would embark long journeys to learn a particular science from an extraordinary scholar of it in order to enrich their previously gained knowledge of a discipline. The distinction of knowledge into worldly and spiritual science uncovers the unique approach of Indian thought which did not consider an expertise in socio-economic or other disciplines as a dead end. One had to climb up the stairs of spirituality through sharpening their intellect and combining it with the necessary actions and conduct.

Finally in the tradition of Śāstra, we saw the concept of specialization in a peculiar topic belonging to a knowledge tradition and then establishing one's own original concepts in that framework. The specificity of Śāstric tradition is

12   **The International Journal of Education and Allied Science (IJEAS) (December 2023, Volume 15, No. 2)**

reflective of the intellectual rigor and dedication that were put into studying a knowledge system. The resultant treatise, text or even a new concept would have then gone to become a 'Śāstra' in itself- giving a dual meaning to the term which was firstly connected with the overall tradition and then with that particular text or concept developed through intensive research. Even though this peculiar specialization was required to pursue a career in intellectual engagement, a person could have studied numerous branches of knowledge as per their interest as well as requirements.

While this paper had a limited scope and focused on only a handful of aspects of an otherwise vast subject-matter; a reader would be able to identify how the Indian vision of knowledge differs from the modern western perspective and how 'gaining education' had a broad and comprehensive meaning in contrast with the narrower understanding of the idea prevalent today. Further research upon Indic ideas of knowledge and education are not necessary to make our current education framework more rooted in our intellectual tradition but to also refine the ongoing research on Indian Knowledge Systems by using lenses developed within those systems.

References

Altekar, A. (1949). *State and Government in Ancient India* (8th reprint 2021 ed.). Varanasi : Motilal Banarsidass.

Daṃḍī. (1970). *Viśrutacaritaṃ.* (S. K. Gupt, Ed.) Jaipur: Bharati Mandir Anusandhan Shala.

Jain, S. (1996). *Jain Dharma ka Yapniya Sampradaya.* Varanasi: Parshvanatha Vidyapith.

Jinasena. (2015). *Ādipurāṇa* (Vol. I). (S. Pannalal Jain, Ed.) New Delhi: Bhartiya Jnanpith.

Kauṭilya (1960). *Arthashastra* (Vol.I).(R.P Kangle, Ed.) Mumbai: University of Bombay (Mumbai).

Kaṭhopaniṣada. (1997). Gorakhpur: Gitapress.

Muṇḍakopaniṣad. (1992). Gorakhpur: Gitapress.

Venkatasubbiah, A. (1910). The Kalas *(Dissertation Presented to University of Bern).* Delhi: Vasant Press

Viśākhadatta. (2011). *Mudrārākṣasa* (5th edition 6th reprint ed.). (M. Kale, Ed.) Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.