

Concept Note with Sub-themes (up to 1000 words)

Seminar title and purpose: A two-day National Seminar titled “*niškāma śeva* (selfless social service) in Different Schools of Indic thought: Alternate Models for Mainstream Social Work”, proposed as initiative of the Centre of Excellence for Indian Knowledge Systems, IIT Kharagpur in collaboration with ICSSR is in response to the current social work literature that spells the need for ‘spiritually inclined social work interventions.

The purpose of the seminar is to understand the role of spirituality in the lives of social work practitioners and to determine what implications can this have for social work education.

¹Proposed dates and venue: 2nd & 3rd March, 2023, Maitrai Hall, IIT Kharagpur

Target audience: 200 plus students - faculty from Higher Educational Institutions, professionals – stakeholders from the social work arena and its allied domains.

Speakers: Experts engaged in scholarly work; grassroots volunteers engaged in *niškāma śeva* across various Indic schools of thought.

Broad Research questions aimed at being addressed through the seminar:

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

Broad themes and sun themes

- Social work *niškāma śeva* / Evaluation of mainstream social work; *niškāma śeva* (selfless social work)
- Indic conceptualizations of spirituality: Micro-oriented spiritual enculturation to macro-oriented altruistic demonstrations | Micro-oriented spiritual enculturation; macro-oriented altruistic demonstrations
- Postulates of *niškāma śeva* from various Indic schools of thoughts: *Sanātana Dharma* | *Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā*; *Daṣṇāmi Sampradaya*; Buddhism, Jainism
- Deconstructing variables from various Indic schools of thoughts to reconstruct models of spiritually inclined social work interventions
- Relevance and future research directions | Towards a new curriculum on social work education.

¹ subject to change

Expected contributions to the existing body of social science research.

1. 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.
2. Fortify existing theoretical frameworks on social service: The lack of integration of the spiritual dimension into the bio-psycho-social model has been an important academic issue – making it an onerous task towards a holistic framework of social work. Exploring the facets of *niškāma seva* across various Indic schools of thought, its exchange with the social arena - manifesting in a social work episteme-practice is expected to bridge the gap.
3. Contribute to the existing psycho-spiritual literature on social work: Spiritual philosophies and practices anchored on Indic Schools of thought can develop a paradigm of Indian psychotherapy, guiding and evolving the individual to larger macrocosmic domains instead of exploring the edges of individuality. The ‘inner life humanist spirituality in India’ can serve as a bulwark providing the moral imperative to galvanize selfless action for humanity – a guidepost to the current ‘humanity in the Anthropocene’
4. Insights from the self-reflexive, self-conscious Sociology of the Vedas : The phenomenon ‘Manushya-hita to Lok-hita’ seen across all Indic spiritual traditions, commonly encompass aspects of several existing ‘conceptual models of spirituality’, traditionally used in social work. These include the vertical–horizontal model (Ellison 1983), five level consciousness model (Vaughan [1985] 1995), holistic model (Canda and Furman 1999) and the whole person model (Ellor, Netting, and Thibaut 1999).
5. Towards an emerging model of welfare pluralism: In the past few decades in Bhārata, private involvement and voluntary engagement in the social sector has been encouraged by the state under the rubric of public-private partnership. Social welfare service initiatives by various ‘spiritual organizations’ are additionally animated by the element of individual spiritual transformation that supplements, even supplants, the state, which is seen to have limited capacity or to have failed, requiring citizens to assume responsibility. In this way, an emerging model of welfare pluralism and privatization in post-liberalization Bhārata can be reinforced, with the state expected to share its responsibilities extensively with the private, non-state sector, as well as with ethically and spiritually imbued individual citizens, who not only assume responsibility for themselves through forms of spiritual self-improvement and self-management, but also seek to bear a wider economic burden of welfare provision in a social service or *seva* mode. Further, action pursued solely for the good of others, has the benefit of being simultaneously spiritually liberating for oneself and of service to the world, contributing to the larger social environment.
6. Emerging variables and pathways from/on *niškāma seva* through the seminar deliberations would systematically be related through statements of relationships to form a theoretical framework/ model towards explaining the seminar research questions around the four components: episteme, practical steps, intervention domains and possible efficacy parameters.
7. An edited book volume tentatively titled “*niškāma seva* (selfless social service) in Different Schools of Indic thought: Alternate Models for Mainstream Social Work”, as a joint undertaking of the Centre of Excellence for Indian Knowledge Systems, IIT Kharagpur and ICSSR will be published with a lead publisher of Social Sciences (such as with Sage Publications India or Publishing India Group). The book will primarily cater to the students and faculty of Social Sciences and all its Allied disciplines/sectors. The full papers / talks by various scholars and experts through the seminar will be transcribed (as applicable) in close coordination with its specific authors and under the guidance of an expert advisory,

will be set to various chapters as per a standard text book template. This work will be accomplished between 6-8 months from the commencement date of the Seminar.