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## Effects of the Post-Truth Era on the Indian Knowledge Landscape

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### Abstract

The impact of the post-truth era on the Indian knowledge landscape is profound and multifaceted. Originating from a cultural and political shift where emotional appeals often supersede factual evidence, this era challenges the dissemination and acceptance of objective truths. It gained prominence amidst significant global events like the Brexit referendum and the US presidential election, influencing discourse on misinformation and polarization. In India, this phenomenon has eroded trust in traditional institutions, exacerbated political divisions, and complicated the preservation and interpretation of rich cultural and scientific heritage. However, amidst these challenges, efforts to promote media literacy, enhance fact-checking mechanisms, and foster critical thinking offer potential avenues to mitigate these effects and foster a more informed and resilient knowledge ecosystem.

### Key words

Post-Truth Era, Misinformation, Indian Knowledge System, Sanskrit, Media Literacy

### Introduction

The term "post-truth era" refers to a cultural and political context where objective facts and truth are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief. The term "post-truth" has been around for some time, but it gained significant popularity and usage after being named Oxford Dictionaries' Word of the Year in 2016. The concept became widely discussed in the context of political and social discourse, particularly relating to the Brexit referendum in the UK and the 2016 presidential election in the USA. The phrase itself was first popularized by the Serbian-American playwright Steve Tesich in a 1992 essay for "The Nation" magazine. Tesich wrote about a post-truth era in the context of the Iran-Contra scandal and the Persian Gulf War, where he argued that people were more comfortable with falsehoods than confronting uncomfortable truths. However, the specific phrase "post-truth era" has been attributed to various sources over the years and has evolved in its usage and implications over time. It broadly refers to situations in which emotional or personal beliefs have more influence on public opinion than objective facts. This concept has gained significant attention in recent years, especially with the rise of social media and the spread of misinformation and fake news.

### Key Characteristics of the Post-Truth Era

1. Emotion Over Evidence: In the post-truth era, emotional appeals and personal beliefs often outweigh factual evidence and logical reasoning in public discourse.
2. Misinformation and Fake News: The proliferation of false information, often spread rapidly via social media, contributes to a fragmented and polarized public.
3. Decline in Trust : Trust in traditional institutions, such as the media, government, and scientific communities, has eroded, leading people to rely more on personal networks and alternative sources of information.

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4. Confirmation Bias: Individuals are more likely to accept information that confirms their pre-existing beliefs and dismiss information that contradicts them, reinforcing divisions.

5. Political Polarization: The post-truth environment has contributed to increasing political polarization, where different groups have vastly different perceptions of reality.

#### Examples and Impact

- Political Campaigns: Politicians may spread false or misleading information to garner support, knowing that their base may prioritize alignment with their values over factual accuracy.
- Public Health: Misinformation about vaccines or diseases can lead to public health crises, as seen with the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Climate Change: Despite scientific consensus, misinformation has led to significant portions of the public doubting the reality or severity of climate change.

#### Combating the Post-Truth Era

1. Media Literacy: Educating the public on how to critically evaluate information sources help to mitigate the spread of misinformation.
2. Fact-Checking: Prominent fact-checking organizations and initiatives can help debunk false claims and provide accurate information.
3. Accountability: Holding individuals and organizations accountable for spreading misinformation can deter false narratives.
4. Transparency: Promoting transparency in media and government can rebuild trust in these institutions.

The post-truth era presents significant challenges to democracy, public health, and societal cohesion. Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach involving education, media reform, and stronger emphasis on critical thinking and scientific literacy.

What is the difference between knowledge and knowledge system?

The concepts of "knowledge" and "knowledge system" are related but distinct. Understanding the differences between them helps in grasping how information is organized, shared, and utilized within various contexts. Knowledge refers to the facts, information, skills, and understanding that individuals or groups acquire through experience, education, and research. It encompasses both theoretical and practical aspects and can be implicit (tacit) or explicit.

#### Knowledge System

A knowledge system is an organized framework that encompasses the creation, acquisition, dissemination, and utilization of knowledge. It includes the structures,

processes, tools, and people involved in managing knowledge within a particular domain or community.

#### Components of a Knowledge System

1. Sources of Knowledge: Origins of information, such as research institutions, experts, databases, and libraries.
2. Processes and Practices: Methods of acquiring, validating, sharing, and applying knowledge, such as research methodologies, education systems, and collaborative practices.
3. Tools and Technologies: Systems and technologies used to manage knowledge, including information management systems, databases, communication platforms, and digital repositories.
4. People and Roles: Individuals and groups who generate, share, and utilize knowledge, such as researchers, educators, practitioners, and learners.
5. Cultural and Organizational Context: The cultural norms, values, and organizational structures that influence how knowledge is managed and used.

#### Characteristics

- Systematic and Structured: Knowledge systems are organized in a way that facilitates efficient knowledge management and utilization.
- Interconnected and Collaborative: They often involve networks of individuals and institutions that collaborate to enhance collective knowledge.
- Purpose-Driven: Knowledge systems are designed to serve specific goals or functions, such as advancing scientific research, improving education, or solving practical problems.

#### Differences Between Knowledge and Knowledge System

##### 1.Scope

- Knowledge: Refers to specific pieces of information or understanding held by individuals or groups.
- Knowledge System: Refers to the entire framework and infrastructure that supports the creation, management, and dissemination of knowledge.

##### 2.Nature

- Knowledge: Can be static or dynamic, but is generally discrete and individual pieces of information or skills.
- Knowledge System: Is inherently dynamic, involving continuous processes and interactions that manage the flow and use of knowledge.

##### 3.Function

- Knowledge: Represents what is known and can be applied in various contexts.
- Knowledge System: Represents how knowledge is organized, managed, and utilized within a specific domain or community.

#### 4. Components

- Knowledge: Includes explicit and tacit knowledge held by individuals or documented in various formats.
- Knowledge System: Includes the structures, processes, tools, and people that facilitate the management of knowledge. In summary, while knowledge pertains to the content of what is known, a knowledge system encompasses the broader mechanisms and structures that support the creation, management, dissemination, and application of that knowledge.

What is Indian knowledge?

Indian knowledge refers to the extensive and diverse body of knowledge that has been developed, preserved, and transmitted in India over millennia. It encompasses a wide range of disciplines, including philosophy, science, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, literature, art, and spirituality. This knowledge is deeply rooted in India's cultural, historical, and religious contexts and has significantly influenced both Eastern and Western intellectual traditions.

Key Components of Indian Knowledge

##### 1. Philosophy and Spirituality

- Vedas and Upanishads: Ancient texts that form the basis of Indian spiritual and philosophical thought, addressing metaphysical questions and the nature of existence.
- Bhagavad Gita: A key philosophical and spiritual text that explores duty, righteousness, and the nature of reality.
- Darshanas: The six classical schools of Indian philosophy—Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Samkhya, Yoga, Mimamsa, and Vedanta—each offering unique perspectives on knowledge and reality.

##### 2. Literature and Arts

- Epic Literature: The Mahabharata and Ramayana are epic narratives that provide cultural, ethical, and historical insights.
- Classical Literature: Works of Sanskrit poets like Kalidasa and Tamil Sangam literature, showcasing rich literary traditions.
- Performing Arts: Classical dance forms (Bharatanatyam, Kathak, etc.) and music (Carnatic, Hindustani) that carry deep cultural and historical significance.

##### 3. Science and Mathematics

- Astronomy and Mathematics: Contributions of ancient scholars like Aryabhata, Brahmagupta, and Bhaskara in areas such as the concept of zero, decimal system, and astronomical calculations.
- Ayurveda: An ancient system of medicine that emphasizes a holistic approach to health, focusing on balance and natural remedies.

##### 4. Medicine and Health

- Ayurveda: Traditional medicine system focusing on holistic health and natural remedies.
- Siddha and Unani: Other traditional medical systems with unique approaches to healing and wellness.

##### 5. Architecture and Engineering

- Temple Architecture: Intricate and scientifically advanced construction of temples like those in Khajuraho and Brihadeeswarar.
- Urban Planning: The Indus Valley Civilization showcased advanced urban planning, drainage systems, and architecture.

##### 6. Social Sciences and Ethics

- Dharma Shastras: Texts that provide guidelines on ethics, law, and social duties.
- Arthashastra: An ancient treatise on statecraft, economic policy, and military strategy attributed to Kautilya (Chanakya).

##### 7. Environmental Knowledge

- Agriculture: Traditional farming techniques and sustainable practices that have been passed down through generations.
- Conservation: Indigenous knowledge systems that emphasize harmony with nature and biodiversity conservation.

How is Indian knowledge system affected by post truth era?

The Indian knowledge system, rich in traditional wisdom and contemporary advancements, has been significantly impacted by the post-truth era. This era's influence on India's knowledge system can be seen through both its challenges and the ways it has spurred adaptations and responses.

Negative Impacts

##### 1. Misinformation and Fake News

- Health Misinformation: During the COVID-19 pandemic, misinformation about treatments and vaccine efficacy spread widely, undermining public health efforts.
- Historical and Cultural Distortions: Misrepresentation of historical events and cultural narratives has led to confusion and polarized views on India's past.

##### 2. Erosion of Trust in Institutions

- Scientific Institutions: Distrust in scientific research and institutions can hinder the adoption of scientifically sound practices and innovations.
- Educational Institutions: Credibility of educational bodies can be compromised when misinformation infiltrates academic discourse.

### 3. Political Polarization

- **Divisive Narratives:** The post-truth era has intensified political polarization, with competing narratives often driven by partisan interests rather than factual accuracy.
- **Policy Making:** Decision-making can be adversely affected when policies are shaped by populist sentiments rather than evidence-based analysis.

### 4. Challenges to Traditional Knowledge

- **Exploitation and Misrepresentation:** Traditional knowledge systems, including Ayurveda and indigenous practices, may be misrepresented or exploited for commercial gain without proper understanding or respect for their origins.

#### Positive Impacts

#### 1. Increased Public Engagement

- **Awareness Campaigns:** There has been a rise in efforts to educate the public about misinformation, leading to more critical consumption of information.
- **Fact-Checking Initiatives:** Organizations like Alt News and Boom FactCheck have emerged to combat misinformation and provide verified information.

#### 2. Revival and Respect for Traditional Knowledge

- **Cultural Renaissance:** The emphasis on indigenous knowledge and practices has led to a renewed interest and respect for traditional Indian systems, such as Yoga, Ayurveda, and Vedic sciences.
- **Global Recognition:** Increased global interest in Indian traditional knowledge systems has spurred more rigorous documentation and validation efforts.

#### 3. Technological Advancements

- **Digital Literacy Programs:** Initiatives to improve digital literacy help equip individuals to better navigate the information landscape.
- **Innovation in Verification Tools:** Development of sophisticated fact-checking tools and digital platforms to counter misinformation.

#### 4. Academic and Policy Reforms

- **Curriculum Updates:** Educational curricula are being updated to include critical thinking and media literacy to better prepare students for the post-truth landscape.
- **Policy Initiatives:** Government and non-government bodies are implementing policies to curb the spread of misinformation and promote accurate knowledge dissemination.

Is Sanskrit affected by Post through era?

Sanskrit, an ancient and classical language of India, has been impacted by the post-truth era in several ways, both positively and negatively. As a language associated with vast bodies of traditional knowledge, philosophy, and

literature, the way Sanskrit is perceived, used, and taught can be influenced by the dynamics of the post-truth era.

#### Negative Impacts

#### 1. Misrepresentation of Texts

- **Selective Interpretation:** In the post-truth era, there is a tendency to selectively interpret or misquote Sanskrit texts to support particular ideological narratives, often distorting their original meanings.
- **Pseudoscience:** Some claims made about the scientific advancements described in Sanskrit texts are exaggerated or unfounded, contributing to a misrepresentation of both the texts and the scientific method.

#### 2. Erosion of Academic Rigor

- **Popularity Over Accuracy:** The rise of populist and nationalist narratives can sometimes prioritize the glorification of Sanskrit texts over rigorous academic study and interpretation.
- **Undermining Scholarship:** Legitimate scholarly work in Sanskrit studies may be undermined by the spread of misinformation and sensationalized claims.

#### 3. Cultural and Historical Distortions

- **Historical Revisionism:** The post-truth era's emphasis on emotional appeal over factual accuracy can lead to revisionist histories that either overly romanticize or unfairly vilify certain periods and figures associated with Sanskrit literature.
- **Political Exploitation:** Sanskrit and its texts can be exploited for political purposes, leading to polarized and sometimes divisive interpretations of cultural heritage.

#### Positive Impacts

#### 1. Revival and Increased Interest

- **Cultural Renaissance:** The post-truth era has seen a renewed interest in cultural roots, including Sanskrit, prompting more people to study and engage with the language.
- **Global Awareness:** Increased global attention to India's cultural heritage has led to more international interest in learning Sanskrit and exploring its rich literary and philosophical traditions.

#### 2. Educational Reforms

- **Curriculum Inclusion:** There has been a push to include Sanskrit in modern educational curricula, promoting a deeper understanding of ancient texts and philosophies.
- **Digital Resources:** The digitization of Sanskrit texts and the development of online learning platforms have made the language more accessible to a broader audience.

### 3. Interdisciplinary Studies

- Integration with Modern Sciences: Efforts to integrate Sanskrit studies with modern scientific and technological research have led to innovative interdisciplinary projects.
- Cultural Preservation: Initiatives to preserve and promote Sanskrit have also led to the preservation of other traditional knowledge systems and cultural practices.

#### **Conclusion**

The future of Indian knowledge is bright, characterized by a growing appreciation and integration of traditional wisdom with contemporary practices. It is a holistic venture on compassing both spiritual and material planes. With supportive policies, technological advancements, and global interest, Indian knowledge systems are poised to play a significant role in addressing modern challenges and enriching global understanding. The key lies in preserving authenticity while embracing innovation and interdisciplinarity.

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