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Myth, Science and Writing: A Valediction to Social sciences

Devi G N



**Centre for Multi-Disciplinary Development Research
(CMDR)**

Yalakkishettar Colony, Dr. Ambedkar Nagar, Lakamanahalli
Dharwad – 580004, Karnataka, India.
www.cmdr.ac.in

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I

I should state at the outset that I do not know much about social sciences. The observations I present on this field of study will be of tentative. I should have chosen to speak either in Hindi or in Gujarati; however, I am using the English language. Perhaps, that was suggested by the manner in which I was introduced to the audience in English. I would have felt happier speaking in an Indian language. When I speak English, please remember that it is a second language for me. My final prefatory comment is that 'valedictory' or 'valediction' was a form of poetry developed in early medieval times, and that genre of poetry was employed to depict lovers bidding good-bye forever to their beloveds. I know that it is not in that spirit that I am speaking to you, but with a desire to gain from you knowledge in the areas where I am ignorant.

I believe that scientific theories change. Now this is not something new that I am saying, but theories may change from age to age, and they change so radically that what was held as scientific theory at one time starts appearing like either blasphemy or a complete lie, something very remote from truth, in another time. For example, in the western tradition of knowledge, the Greeks believed that the entire universe is constructed in the form of a box. They believed that this box is covered from end to end, and the lid on top of the box like universe is what we call the sky. They believed that there are perforations in the lid, and through those perforations we see some light percolating down; and we call these gaps 'stars'. Just as today we believe that the stars are actually there in the sky, the Greek believed that they were holes, that they indicated absence rather than presence of anything; and the proof of this 'scientific theory' was that in the world above there is permanent light. They held that during the day, of course, one saw light which came from the 'up there', but even during night too, when in our world there is darkness, there is light in the world above. So they called it the 'universe of permanent light' which will not tolerate any shadows. The argument was, "if there is absolute light there will be no shadows 'up there'".

The phenomenon of shadow troubled the Greek mind a lot. So they spent a huge amount of philosophical energy, scientific energy, in interpreting what shadow is. Then they proposed that underneath the box-like universe, there is bound to be another world, which, they imagined, to

* Lecture at IRMA

be full of darkness, absolute darkness. They called it 'Dis'. The term '*dis*' means 'total darkness', darkness which cannot be lighted up. It was 'darkness forever', 'Dis' was the Greek term for describing that quality of darkness; and they felt that the combination of the darkness and light creates shadow in human life. How to segregate this shadow from the body became a big philosophical problem for the Greek thinkers.

Plato's description of the surprised man standing at the face of the cave, looking at his own shadow and suddenly realizing that the shadow is not somebody else, but he himself in a way, an externalized, though not dissociated completely, *him* in some other form, is at the heart of the Greek sciences. The search for the meaning of this other form, the search for the meaning of the relationship between shadow and the object that the *being* is, formed the foundation of Greek knowledge and Greek sciences, whether it was geometry, mathematics, understanding of law or of literature, all of it was based on this philosophical perception.

I will add some examples in passing. Socrates, Aristotle and Plato--absolutely wonderful minds--incomparable in philosophical profundity--disagreed between themselves on most issues. Plato claimed that poets should be banned from the ideal Republic as they could influence the imagination of the people, turning them potentially dangerous to the State. Aristotle defended poetry. Aristotle's defense of poetry proposed that poetry is able to recreate 'the world of all light' within language. He argued that even if a poet is making copy of an object already existing in the world, it invokes the 'ideal' of the object, 'the idea in the world which is full of light'. Since there is no death in that world, there is no decay, one does not have to have multiples of anything, only *one* of everything would be enough, only one, the unit, the Idea, only the idea was enough. So Aristotle proposed that a poet brings us closer to the *Idea*, Idea in the Greek sense, the never dying thing in that supernatural world; he takes us away from the real, and by real he meant that which diminishes, that which disappears that which perishes. The perishable was the real, the non perishable was ideal.

The Greeks constructed sciences around this kind of idea of the universe. The moment this idea of the universe changed into Ptolemy's world-view, the universe ceased being seen as a static box within which humans are placed, and came to be perceived as being dynamic, which revolves round something else, all the sciences in medieval Europe started changing. When we move further down in history and move away from Ptolemy's idea of the cosmos, we notice that the earth comes to be seen as being at the centre of the universe, with seven heavens above it and a comparable seven hells beneath it. And as we move further ahead, the earth becomes only part of a larger planetary system, the solar system. So once again the sciences get redefined radically. Call this an epistemic shift if you like. Of course, this kind of shift in knowledge is not enough to

qualify for being an epistemic revolution. An epistemic shift means a real earthquake, a complete tsunami, in the field of knowledge. The epistemic change is not just a shift in the world view. There is a lot more to that.

When we move further down, we notice an 'atomistic' view of the world operating behind all sciences, in which the entire cosmos is explained in terms of particles and energies, related or unrelated, or generally related and specifically unrelated. Then once again all sciences start afresh building theories. During most of such epistemic shifts, some of the established sciences become non-sciences, they drop out. In our own tradition, we have, for example, the case of *gyotish*, which was considered as a science at one time. It is no longer considered a science; or it is science which is out. Certain shades of ideologies get promoted at one time in history as sciences; and later, they come to be seen as non-science, though at one time they were seen as sciences. And in the history of science there is a good chance for every science to become a non-science, as new theories replace them as sciences.

Sciences aim at describing, if one may tentatively use the term, 'truth'. They try to grapple with the truth of the world, of matter and of existence. The German philosopher Immanuel Kant used the term 'the phenomenal world' to indicate the scope of what I have called 'matter and existence'. Sciences grapple with the phenomena, the multiplicity of events and objects that constitute existence, and try to fathom their integrated meaning, to locate the recurrent patterns, to make a sense out of their syntax. I am hesitant while using the term 'truth'. But if sciences aim at describing the 'truth of matter and existence', they alone can never construct the complete narration of the truth of the world. They can only talk about what is; but they rarely talk about what is not; and the truth about the world generally reveals itself, becomes evident, when one puts together the narration of what is together with a conceptualization of what is not.

In early form of the English language there was a competing term for 'is', 'to be'; and it was actually 'ought'. That term dropped off from the English language as the English speaking society accepted a certain view of the world and a corresponding paradigm of science. 'Ought', therefore, did not find much continuity in the English language. If we use the Sanskrit term *astitva*, what *is* as well as *what is not*, and think of the description of both as the true objective of science, we notice that Science and Myth are closely inter-related. The talk about the '*what is not*' part of *astitva* is done by myth. Myths do not present facts, phenomena, events and objects; yet they place all these in a sharper focus. They articulate a collective understanding of the world. Myths have a lot more meaning than one normally reads in them. For the Greek box like world view, the corresponding myths were interested in divining what was outside the box. When Ptolemy spoke of seven heavens and seven hells, myth became

interested in exploring the relationship between hell and heavens, but without the earth. Hence, when Dante wrote an epic in Italian he conceptualized seven paradises and seven hells, and the mythical places which cleanse one's soul of 'the objects, events and facts'.

Let me give another example. There was a French scientist who said, "Give me but a place outside the earth and a pole long enough, and I shall tilt the planet earth," explaining the principle of fulcrum. The greater scientist, to put it metaphorically, always tries to find this *place outside the earth* so that he can *tilt the earth*. That was what Dante was doing in his *Divine Comedy*, and constructed myth, though ideally he should have built a scientific theory as some of his intellectual successors did. Medieval Italy saw a great intellectual ferment and produced intellectuals who combined science with myth, exploration of *what is* as well as *what is not*. For describing truth fully, it becomes necessary to construct a scientific statement about it as well as a mythical narrative; it is then that we arrive at an understanding of the world which qualifies for the term 'truth'. I was hesitant earlier in using the term, now I will proceed to briefly comment on it.

Think of truth or *satya*, as in *satyam eva jayate*, or *satyam shivam sundaram*, which seems in common perception to be associated with what is relatively permanent. Science does not undergo a radical change with every new class of students, nor in every of century, but once in a millennium. Myth undergoes a change, likewise, when the description of *what is* changes, or the articulation of *what is not* undergoes a change, and *vice versa*. When there is an enormous amount of thinking done in the area of myth, sciences of the time undergo a change; similarly, when fascinating new work takes shape in scientific fields, the corresponding myth undergoes a change. Such epistemic shifts are known to have occurred in the tradition of knowledge in India, just as they have occurred in the history of knowledge in the west. In all those shifts, science and myth have moved together. For the scientific foundation of one kind, predictably there will be myth of a kind that corresponds. Change the foundation and you will have a mythology correspondingly transformed. While *truth* does not appear to be rapidly or radically changing, yet it keeps changing perpetually.

One of the theories of Truth in India presents the understanding of the universe in terms of an essence which was described as '*Tat*' or sometimes as 'that', 'nameless', at other times as 'that which can never be captured by the intellect', or as 'that which is forever'; and for 'that-forever' the term of reference was *sat*, nasathe *vidyato bhava na bhavo vidyate satah*, as stated in the *Gita*. In this theory, *that*, which is all that exists, defines the entire range of the human imagination. There is nothing outside *that* or *sat*. In some versions of the theory of truth, *sat* was seen as a permanent attachment to everything or every thought and every being,

as if it is the underbelly of phenomena. One just cannot separate that *sat* or *that nameless* from the phenomena. Philosophers in the ancient Indian tradition devised the term *Brahman* for that. Brahma came to be seen as being indestructible; it had to be there wherever there is existence. There is an aphoristic statement *jagan mithya, brahman satyam*. In this statement, *brahman* is not god, it is the underbelly of things. The Greeks wanted to see if the body and the shadow could be separated and how one can understand the slippage between the two, or ways of segregating them. Indians thinker, on the other hand, were more interested in seeing if the shadow and the body could be united and how one could read the act of the union. The meaning of the unity is at the heart of some of the Indian traditions of intellectual inquiry. The *Brahmasuthra*, the *Upanishadas* and the *Geeta*-- the three philosophical statements, scientific because they were mythical, were interested in exploring how the shadow and the body are to be seen as being essentially true in their unity. Therefore, to see the two as disunited came to be perceived as *avidya*, ignorance. However, the philosophers conceptualized ignorance too as a positive substance, or rather a condition of being, and not as an absence. This was an early theory of truth in the Indian intellectual tradition(s). This view of Truth was not the only one to have emerged in Indian philosophical schools. There were other schools, and these were numerous. For example, there were profound and engaging debates on the question of the human ability to perceive 'brahman', debates on whether this truth could be stated in language or whether it was beyond the expressive abilities of language, and debates on the formal aspects of 'truth'—if it was necessarily logical or if it had elements of arbitrariness, etc. Just as there were, the Buddhist, materialists and Jaina views of 'truth' proposed along with the view stated above, and, during the first millennium, the 'grammarians' and the 'logicians' proposed their variety of understanding of 'truth', there was a more 'subjectivized' view of truth circulated through the Bhakti school of literature

Any established view of 'truth' gets modified every few centuries, and the foundation of scientific thought too undergoes a change every few centuries. An established body of Myth too similarly undergoes radical changes. Since all of these are open to change, do we really have any durable foundation for creating what at present we call social sciences? Or, are we merely sporting in a field where defeat is already declared by the umpire? It is a disturbing question for any thinker in the social sciences. Let us, however, not assume that Social Sciences existed in all periods spanning the history of ideas. It is true that Plato had a theory of social organization, the republic, and there were others after him who proposed theory related to the human existence in the social sphere. But, it was not until the beginning of the 19th century that the disciplines now recognized as Social Sciences started emerging with any degree of a clear self-consciousness.

In Europe, the social sciences started gaining a sense purpose at the beginning of the 19 century as the consciousness of European peoples as being 'countries' started acquiring a greater cultural justification. Napoleonic wars brought such 'countries' in a situation of conflict, and the cultural confrontation between them provided themes for their intellectual pursuits. European countries and cultures started discovering that there were *other* countries and cultures and that the 'otherness' of such cultures was posing a problem in 'understanding man'. The rise of Nationalism further accentuated the need for defining and describing various cultures. To begin with, the understanding of the 'other' was no more than an aggregate of stereotypes. During the very initial phase of the rise of the Social sciences, these 'sciences' were thinly veiled intellectual ways of 'hating the other *systematically*.' Previously, European cultures, in their divide between the Catholic peoples and the Protestant peoples, had engaged in this pursuit by inventing a theory of 'race and genius', dividing themselves between the Celtic and the Teutonic. With the rise of the Social sciences, the activity of grouping or re-grouping of 'stereotypes' started receiving a greater academic acceptance. Hanna Arendt has analyzed how the stereotyping of 'other' cultures in Europe eventually led to racial violence through the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century. For a science to come into existence, a catalysis that brings reason together with imagination needs to take place. The foundations of the modern Social Sciences, within the framework of Reason, point to the quest for understanding what is peculiarly human, in contrast to what is Natural and what is Divine in the human existence. However, it is a disturbing thought for social scientists that the foundations of their intellectual pursuits, within the framework of the Imagination governing their field, lie in stereotype, caricature and lampooning.

Jacques Lacan describes how during infancy one acquires the ability to look at one self through the perspective of one's 'mirror image.' When this engagement between one's subjectivity and the external world starts developing, together with the engagement comes the child's ability to verbalize the mental transaction. Language is the human means of relating oneself, the subjective consciousness, to the objective world. We grasp the objective world through language while naming things. For example, as you look at me at this moment, you do not know whether I have a back or not, but you assume that it is there because you have at your disposal the mental concept and the word 'back'. It is by naming things that humans can speak of things absent. Let us recall what we said earlier: science describes that which exists, Myth that which is absent. Human language allows us to make a scientific statement, as well as to construct a mythical story. The ability to construct a mythical story and a scientific narrative comes to us through language; and the capacity for language is born in a person's recognition of the 'self' as being distinct from the 'other',

Social sciences require for their coming into being as disciplines an acute sense of the other, which enables them to view a community as an object. This perspective is what we call in the academic parlance a 'subject', a 'discipline'. There is one more requirement for the rise of a perspective as a science. We require institutions that allow space to the new 'knowledge'. In modern times all knowledge institutions represent 'the surplus of script'. It is language which initially allowed human beings to communicate; then subsequently in history, owing to the complexity of economic relationships, they started making marks on the rock surface, wood, or similar objects. These marks slowly became conventions and codes of representations. That is how scripts are born. Scripts are born through economic activities. They are not born because somebody is inventive, or there is a great writer who invented scripts due to some divine inspiration. A minimum of certain economic transactions is necessary for the birth of script. But the print technology is different. Print technology does not have the same genealogy as of script. Scripts are not of essence to the print technology, they are merely the substance 'produced' by that technology. If it had not been scripts, the print technology would have printed things like pictures. It is only a business of ink and pressure. We put letters there. When the print technology got tied up with the business of scripts, people had a facility for the use of language in a non-conventional way; and it is this new possibility of using language that can be described as the surplus of script. It leads to creation of institutions for social sciences. I hope you do not think that I am dismissing the whole business of social sciences. That is not what I intend to do. I am only constructing the sociology of Sociology.

Within this framework, scientific idea change, myths change, truth also changes, perspectives on truth change. It is necessary to have a certain degree of otherness or alterity for conceptualizing social sciences. The period during which the European social sciences emerged as disciplines, was also the time for Europe's colonial expansion. Since institutionalized social sciences were born during the colonial times and after the rise of print capitalism, they have on them a deep imprint of the colonial mindset. I will give a couple of examples. Take, for instance, Psychology. Is psychology seen as a social science, because it talks about the human beings as a 'subject'? It is said that Freud's description of the unconscious as dark seductive, rebellious, sexually overcharged, dreaming, non-synchronous, uses descriptive categories used by the colonial Anthropology for African people. It is primarily the description of the unconscious on which Freudian psycho-analysis is based, as also several related branches of medical sciences. It is this 'scientific foundation' that is employed for a description of society in sociology of crime or abnormal psychology and, therefore, in history of violence. Thus, a part of the social sciences have at their root the colonial 'understanding' of African countries. Similar is the case of Anthropology. It was not devised as a method of study of the immediate social contexts, not for the study of

the British society or the French society. It was always some community in the coastal area in Australia or New Zealand or Papua New Guinea, or similarly 'remote' places that interested Anthropology. It had to study the *other* people, mainly the colonized, those who were seen as 'a *little less than human*', and those who could be subjected to study but did not grumble when they were 'subjected'. They allowed being photographed naked. At present, Anthropology all over the western world is very uneasy about itself and about the skeletons in the cupboard of anthropology. Whether it was Anthropology, Psychology, Political Science or Economics, all social sciences, as we understand the field now, initially developed as disciplines during the colonial context, and they carry a clear colonial imprint of colonialism. Thanks to the history of knowledge India over the last two centuries, we have been carrying out research which is based on the 'knowledge' inherited during the colonial times. Here, in the first place, the method of knowing is colonial, and moreover the matter that is accepted in these disciplines is also colonial.

The description of Indian society as available to us has come mainly through the colonial sources. When we look at the *People of India* series (edited by K. S. Singh), we will find that colonial sources are quoted in plenty without any hesitation. 'Scheduled Caste', 'Scheduled Tribes', 'denotified tribes', 'nomadic people', 'urban', 'rural', etc. such are the conceptual categories that we are still using to describe the Indian society. These labels did not exist prior to the colonial times. It would be interesting to find out if there were descriptive or conceptual categories of the pre-colonial times, or the procedures of formulation of those categories, that could throw light on the evolution of social knowledge in India. It may be interesting to see if those categories could be used to describe the Indian society of those times, even if they are no longer relevant to use to discuss today's Indian society.

India has produced over the last century highly talented sociologists, economists, political scientists and jurists; and yet if one were to look for a dozen books which should tell us the story from any credible Indian perspective, we still do not have a fully satisfactory crop with us. Though in recent times, India has produced distinguished scholars Ashis Nandy, M.N. Srinivas, Romila Thapar, Partha Chatterjee, and others inspired by them; I do not think we have a sufficient number of scholars who can leave the social sciences transformed altogether and place them beyond their colonial moorings. Therefore, I submit that a lot of our research needs to be taken out of the disciplinary boundaries and base it on experience itself. A certain kind of knowledge receives validity from the existing traditions of knowledge and from which we gather concepts, notions theories, and our habits of thinking, attitudes and stereotypes. There is another way of knowing given to us because we are human, because the consciousness continues to function, because we have senses, and through the sensory

perceptions, through our direct contact, and accumulation of the experiences in the consciousness, we continue to articulate our thoughts.

My submission to you is that perhaps a time has come when we need to find ways of providing a greater legitimacy to our disciplines through knowledge cultivated with reference to the lived human experience, which is codified in terms of proverbs and folktales, and accessible through collective memory. We need to go beyond the false dichotomy between 'knowledge' and 'non-knowledge' based on the distinction between 'literacy' and 'illiteracy'. If the community is seen as the institution of knowledge, and what has been the institution is seen as the co-curator for the community's knowledge, our social sciences will gain in depth. The illiterate sections of the society have no access to or control over institutions which are representation of a surplus of scripts. If we allow that have knowledge worth our attention, we can achieve the transition towards becoming a knowledge society, for knowledge linked to experience is more there and less in the colonized and institutionalized habits of thought. I am not trying to dismiss all the valuable work a great many people are doing in good many institutions. Out of those inclusive institutions can emerge some relevant social science in our time. This has happened in the past. After all, the Socratic dialogues gave rise to the famous Academy of Plato; and the Gandhi's *satyagraha* gave rise to Gujarat Vidyapeeth. This too was the case of Rabindra Nath Tagore who proposed that a surplus of emotion is very valuable and pitted it against the surplus of print capitalism. Probably that is why Tagore is greater in songs than in the cold print. The social sciences need to bring the social enquiry that Socrates, Gandhi and Tagore brought to the society in their times if the social science pursuit has to have a future in the new context.

II

Sensation accumulates in human experience, finds a place in human memory and becomes what is known as knowledge. Sometimes imagination excites the intellect, unites with it and becomes knowledge. It is always sensation and memory or intelligence that come together in any production of knowledge. Knowledge is of two types, or rather it is two distinct entities.

One is the knowledge inside the human mind. The other is knowledge as a system. A knowledge system has a certain prerequisite, and that prerequisite is script. In order to carry the knowledge produced by one generation to the next, human beings have come to use documents committed to scripts. It is through script that the collective accumulation of human experience moves forward, from one generation to the next and acquires the status of a knowledge system. Since a knowledge system requires carriers, both givers and receivers, every knowledge system tends to become a tool of giving and receiving power.

Those who can give or receive knowledge tend to acquire a certain authority in a given society, and what should really have been a means of knowing becomes a means of social control. While one likes to believe that knowledge is enlightenment, knowledge as a system becomes an object which can be owned, possessed, controlled and even manipulated. The manipulation of this object is probably the worst of human inventions.

In a given society those who are in a position of power or domination always like to make what they alone know, as knowledge. What the others not in a position of power know ceases to be knowledge. The Barbarians do not have knowledge, the Romans have it. Those who speak or recite Sanskrit have knowledge; those who speak Prakrit have no knowledge. Those who speak English have knowledge, those who do not have any knowledge worth the name. Such is the political context of every knowledge system!

Owing to this history of class possession of knowledge, knowledge becomes a means of exploitation. On the one hand knowledge is an inevitable and necessary human condition—the human mind just will not stop reacting to every new phenomenon and, therefore, acquiring knowledge—on the other, when human beings find themselves within social structures or communities, they tend to use knowledge for exploitative purposes.

The source of this paradox is in the biological peculiarities of the human animal. The human being is created as a vertebrate animal. Standing erect becomes a metaphor for being fully human, and a stigma is attached to bending. In all languages in the world many abuse words are related to the bending of the human body. To stand erect is a thing of pride. Since human beings are so reluctant to bend down, they have created a tremendous aversion for labor which other animals do not have. Other animals do all the activities that are possible for them and which they are required to perform for their survival and well-being. It is the human animal alone that has an aversion towards activities it needs to carry out.

Knowledge is used as a means to avoid labor. The emergence of the Brahmin class—initially emerging out of labor-inequality and subsequently transformed into a caste—is an example of how knowledge is used to avoid labor. The rise of the middle class in the Western world is another such example. Whereas knowledge should be the path to freedom and enlightenment, knowledge as a system has been the path towards inventing slavery and perpetuating it.

I am not trying to argue that all inventions are used to perpetuate slavery, and all technologies are created to perpetuate class discrimination and class distinction. Possibly man's discovery of fire, which is shared by all human beings equally is a discovery which did not split human society (though a lot of gender injustice has originated in associating woman with the

hearth!). Perhaps the discovery of a medicine such as penicillin was useful for all human beings. But, whether we like it or not, any invention—even one that is of benefit to all of humankind—becomes an object to be manufactured at profit, allowing some people to accumulate wealth and preventing some other people from enjoying the fruits of human advancement in equal measure. When one says that knowledge as a system tends to become the monopoly of a class, a tool of exploitation, one would definitely like to exclude from this description, knowledge which is brought to us by persons who are imaginative, who have developed thoughts which contributed to the greater freedom of the entire human race.

So, while knowledge itself is not something undesirable, one would like to point to the tendency that knowledge has to allow it to be used as a means of exploitation. If this kind of simplistic bifurcation of knowledge, into the domain of the individual consciousness, and knowledge as a social institution, is accepted, it is very logical to argue that we should all strive towards reaching that condition of knowledge which is not a system but a knowledge which exists in the consciousness of individuals, exists within a small community, marginalized, thanks to its not having a share in the monopoly of the mainstream knowledge. When knowledge becomes a system, it develops rhetoric of self-justification. This is the source of marginalization of communities.

Marginal communities are not born out of economical inequality alone. They too are born, and perhaps in equal proportion, out of this strange definition that we have accepted of knowledge as a system. Think of medicine: if one accepts a given system of medicine, then another system of medicine becomes non-knowledge, though it could be an equally effective system. Since some system of medicine comes to the centre stage, all communities who subscribe to other systems of medicine automatically become marginalized.

This is true of technology as well. Now, if this be the human situation and if we want to move forward in history rather than just drift along, we will have to think of how knowledge can be freed from the monopoly of a class, from the confines of a system, from the operation of the demand of logical consistency with the rest of the knowledge, and how it can once again be linked with what is knowledge inside the mind of individuals.

Human beings have made themselves supposedly superior to other animals, since human beings alone claim to have superior knowledge. In reality the superiority is not in knowledge that human beings have but merely of script. It is in the creation of script that we have come to think that we are superior to other animals. If we really have to become superior to other animals we will have to think of a way of acquiring and preserving knowledge in which social discrimination will be absent.

It is generally assumed that knowledge will bring freedom to everybody. A paradox inherent in the concept of knowledge is that the experiential truth may have very little to do with what exists in the knowledge systems as a universal truth. As against this, with regard to freedom, it exists only in the mind and not outside. It is a relatively more subjective notion, and that is its strength. The objective and impersonal knowledge, the so-called timeless knowledge, has been unduly privileged in the evolution of the human race. As against this, freedom which is often seen as a comparable ideal, and at times even mutually linked as in the Sanskrit expression, '*sa vidya-yavimuktaye*', has not been similarly institutionalized. It has still remained closer to Nature than to Culture. While knowledge has come to be seen as an exclusively human prerogative, freedom is still seen in association with the more natural and, therefore, akin to all animal species. For example, democracy is a reflection of our collective desire for freedom; but fortunately democracies are bound to the idea of nations, of different geographical locations, and there is no universal idea of democracy.

One may say that rather than pursuing paths of knowledge it is better to pursue the path of freedom, so that an individual can have his perfect place as a creative thinker and a creative actor in the human race. Reality is much larger than human thought. The human mind has not yet found a way of grasping reality. Today, in order to be civilized, a person has to be enlightened, rational; such a norm came up through the economic domination of Western societies over other cultures. This norm spread over the world and was accepted out of a sense of fear of annihilation of culture and society. We have taken to thinking that knowledge brings freedom to people, that if we spread literacy, exploitation will stop. We do not think even for a moment, that this is a questionable idea. What one should have asserted is that it is freedom, which brings knowledge to people, not the other way round.

It is not the metaphysical freedom of *moksha*, or the freedom of scientific progress, or the idea of freedom, which will make the body painless. It is the freedom of experiencing reality. By reality one may simply mean an aggregate of all objects surrounding us, all that happens around us, in a completely neutral sense. This use of the term 'reality' has nothing to do with truth and untruth. Reality surrounding an individual brings knowledge.

In order that knowledge becomes knowledge, two individuals should have the freedom to say 'this is blue', 'this is green' without anybody trying to prove one of them wrong, maintaining that the notion of blue and the notion of green are objective and can co-exist. That will bring knowledge; and it is through such interpersonal communication that knowledge will exist, momentarily, between two persons or within a small community but not beyond that. In our developmental logic we believe that people should be made literate, so that they will become free and happiness will come to them.

We believe that thought has to progress further, so that we will know more, and what we know out of thought should be taught to people so that they become free. This will not happen. It is not at all logical. What should happen is that people must start believing in their own knowledge traditions and start acting in their own situation. Institutions that are building knowledge blocks must be loosened up, shaken up, and we must learn to recognize many knowledges rather than a single knowledge. Knowledge becomes possible because its plurality is acknowledged. It is then that the human race will attain the concentrated and unified experience of life that has so far been possible only for animals. Then the human being will become the equal of animals and know what freedom is. It is then that the knowledge stock in the threatened languages will start contributing to the stock of creative ideas that knowledge is supposed to explore.