

## **Diabolic Effects of Wokeism and Indian Knowledge System As A Counter-Narrative**

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### **Introduction to Wokeism:**

Wokeism became a major ideological phenomenon that had an immense impact on the political, cultural, and academic discourse in the early twenty-first century (Heywood, 2017; Fukuyama, 2018). It was coined on the basis of the African American colloquialism "stay awake," which originally meant social awareness, and with reference specifically to systemic discrimination and racial injustice (Merriam-Webster, 2017). In the long run, though, wokeism has ceased to be emancipatory and established itself as a generalized ideology that aims to control language, morality, and social relations by a set of prescriptive norms of thinking and expression (Hughes, 2019). Wokeism in ideology is ideally parallel to the postmodern theories of influence as well as left-liberal thought that prioritizes identity, subjectivity and power relations over the common or civilizational values (Lyotard, 1984; Butler, 1990). It often views the society in terms of binary oppositions, oppressor and oppressed, and uses such notions as identity politics, intersectionality, and social justice advocacy (Crenshaw, 1989).

Although these frameworks purport to reveal historical injustice, they tend to simplify a complex reality in society into hard moral binaries, limiting critical thought processes as well as intellectual dissent (Haider, 2018). In academia, media, and online platforms, Wokeism is becoming a new paradigm of ideological normativity, which has led to other practices, including cancel culture and post-truth, which marginalise and even silences dissent and promotes moral assertion over evidence-based reasoning (Furedi, 2021; McIntyre, 2018; Norris, 2020). The paper discusses the increasing breakdown between the purported inclusivity promoted by Wokeism and its impact on intellectual freedom and cultural persistence and epistemological plurality (Fukuyama, 2022). It is critical but academically based and suggests the Indian Knowledge System as an alternative narrative that could enhance dialogic interaction, plurality and restore the balance of civilization (Radhakrishnan, 1951; Nanda, 2016).

### **Various Aspects of Wokeism:**

The presence of Wokeism at the political, academic, and cultural levels has the power of a complex of interrelated mechanisms that make up its ideological power (Fukuyama, 2018; Furedi, 2021). Instead of being one doctrine, it appears as a set of overlapping aspects, which control discourse, participation and social activity. Some of the most noticeable of them include identity politics, intersectionality, cancel culture, and post-truth narratives (Haider, 2018; Norris, 2020). All these elements are decisive in determining what is permissible in the world of thought in the community and institutions.

Identity politics is a constitutive aspect of the wokeist theory in that it predicts social identities, including race, gender, sexuality, and ethnicity, as a main point of reference to understand power

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relations and social experience (Heywood, 2017; Taylor, 1994). Although it is meant to raise the voice of the marginalized, this method often essentialise identity to put people in strict categories and place moral authority or blame on the basis of group membership (Nanda, 2003). Consequently, the hierarchies of victimhood and privilege are pre-established to organise social relations and restrict the possibility of mutual ethical basis or general principles (Fukuyama, 2022). Intimately related to identity politics is the concept of intersectionality, which attempts to provide the reasons why various kinds of oppression are intertwined (Crenshaw, 1989). Even though an analytically useful tool, in the context of the wokeist discourse, it is more commonly used prescriptively than critically, becoming a moralising system ranking suffering and discouraging free discussion (Haider, 2018; Pluckrose and Lindsay, 2020).

Another important example of wokeism is cancel culture, mostly found in academic and cultural institutions (Norris, 2020). It is based on shaming and de-platforming people and erasing their reputation instead of debating and engaging in critical thinking, which leads to fear and self-censorship (Furedi, 2021; McIntyre, 2018). Post-truth stories also enhance the idea of wokeism as a means of prioritising emotional appeals and moral signalling in preference to facts and historical context (Keyes, 2004; McIntyre, 2018). Together, they all unify the concept of wokeism as a normative ideological framework where there is moral confidence instead of a conversation, and often rather exclusionary than inclusive (Fukuyama, 2018; Nanda, 2016).

### **Impact of Wokeism on Indian Culture and Society:**

Wokeism in Indian culture and society needs to be considered through the prism of the civilisational plurality of Indian culture, its historical continuity, and native forms of social organization (Radhakrishnan, 1951; Nanda, 2016). India is also influenced by the age-old philosophical traditions, community values, and pluralist worldview, which are unlike Western societies where the emergence of wokeism is a result of certain historical experience in race, slavery, and liberal modernity (Dharampal, 1983). Indiscriminate importation of wokeist models into the Indian context has thus created tensions that are disordered of the coherence of the cultures instead of entering into the fields of social realities (Menon, 2021). One of the greatest effects of the Indian awokenism is its re-interpretation of the indigenous social structures using the theoretical frames of foreign origins (Nanda, 2003). Caste, gender, religion, and other categories are often discussed within the frames of Western identity-based paradigms which presuppose the antagonism and overlook history and cultural particularities (Dirks, 2001). Despite the social inequalities, the discussions of the wokeists tend to simplify the realities into binary oppositions of oppressor and oppressed, and ignore the moral and philosophical aspects of Indian social life (Fukuyama, 2018; Sharma, 2007).

Wokeism is becoming a part of academic and cultural institutions, where the ideological conformity is favoured instead of a critical approach to study and research (Furedi, 2021; Pluckrose and Lindsay, 2020). Emotionally-charged rhetoric is also dependent on the public discourse and media story telling, which is further enhanced by digital platforms that see moral signalling rewarded more than thought (McIntyre, 2018; Haidt, 2012). This politics of polarisation and marginalisation of dialogue is the essence of Indian intellectual traditions (Rao, 2019). The spread of post-truth stories also disrupts the continuity of the history of civilisation selectively disregarding the civilisational knowledge as backward (Keyes, 2004; Malhotra, 2011). In turn, the effects of wokeism go beyond social criticism to epistemological disturbance, which explains the importance of alternative systems like the Indian Knowledge System that would not force them to sacrifice cultural continuity or intellectual liberty (Fukuyama, 2022; Radhakrishnan, 1951).

## **Introduction to The Indian Knowledge System:**

The Indian Knowledge System (IKS) is a civilizationally-based epistemological tradition informed through millennia of philosophical consideration, textual transmission and lived culture. Based on the Vedic corpus and developed by IKS Itihasa-Puranic literature and classical schools of philosophy, IKS offers a consistent but pluralistic approach to knowledge, ethics and social order where all three are essentially interdependent (Radhakrishnan, 1951). In contrast to contemporary Western epistemologies that value disciplinary specialisation and analytical discontinuity, IKS promotes a holistic view of knowledge as non-located in moral accountability, metaphysical inquiry, and collective welfare.

At its heart is the Vedic notion of *rta*, or cosmic and moral order, which eventually was reflected in the Upanisadic focus of self-knowledge (*atma-jnanam*) and ontological unity (*sarvam khalvidam brahma*) (Olivelle, 1996). Knowledge is understood as a transformative endeavour, one that is geared towards the harmonisation of the individual and societal life. This vision is maintained by Indian philosophical schools of Vedanta, Nyaya, Buddhism, and Jainism, which uphold a pluralist view of the validity of many means of knowledge (*pramanas*) without absolutist claims to truth (Matilal, 1986; Sharma, 2007). IKS, which is rooted in *dharma*, allows contextual moral reasoning to be made without undermining continuity in civilisation, and provides a different framework of how to address modern socio-cultural dilemmas (Nanda, 2016).

## **Indian Knowledge System as a Counter to Wokeist Cultural Destabilisation:**

The Indian Knowledge System (IKS) presents a substantive counter-narrative of the ideological abstraction through which the contemporary identity-based structures tend to destabilise the social institutions and cultural continuity. Since the late 20th century and specially in the 1990s, the Indian society had been facing the growing global liberal discourses in the media and scholarly exchange. In this phase, marriage and family were subjected to reformist criticism but most debate was still based on culturally deep-rooted structures of ethics that struck a balance between personal agency and overall accountability (Uberoi, 1993).

As early as the beginning of the 2000s, the rising prominence of Western theoretical paradigms, most notably the paradigms of identity politics, started to re-define marriage as less of an ethical and intergenerational concept and rather as a place of power negotiations and individual choice (Dirks, 2001). IKS on the other hand views marriage (*vivaha*) as a *samskara*, an ethical institution whose orientation is towards social order, mutual responsibility and continuity, but not individual fulfilment (Sharma, 2007). This difference demonstrates the Indian epistemology in its refusal of the ideological abstraction of complex social institutions. The 2010s also saw the rise in the extent of wokeist debate on gender and identity, often characterising male and female identity as mainly being determined by sexual self-identification. Though Indian traditions have always recognised symbolic and metaphysical gender plurality as in *Ardhanarisvara* and the *prakrti* concept, they did not reduce biological, social, and ethical aspects to subjective claims (Doniger, 2009).

IKS therefore is able to embrace diversity without the embodied reality being dissolved and identity being regarded as stratified and relational. The confluence of cancel culture and post-truth in the 2020s has narrowed the intellectual dissent space even more, especially in the academic and cultural institutions (McIntyre, 2018). It is on this backdrop that IKS presents a dialogic option which is based on *vada*, in which perpetual disagreement is an institutionalised good, as it is the case with classical debates in schools of Indian philosophy (Matilal, 1986). Foregrounding native knowledge, IKS redefines justice in a culturally cohesive system, which

protects cultural wholeness, intellectual liberty, and civilisational survival (Radhakrishnan, 1951; Nanda, 2016).

### **Conclusion:**

The paper has discussed the concept of wokeism as a modern ideological assemblage that goes past the sphere of social critique to the sphere of control of knowledge, morality, and cultural meaning. Despite being sold as a non-partisan reaction to historical injustice, wokeism is becoming based on hard moral dichotomies, post-truth politics and exclusionary efforts that limit intellectual diversity and erode the viability of civilisational structures. Its blind use in non-Western contexts, especially in India, has brought about the effect of epistemological dislocation in the sense that the abstract ideological structures are imposed on culturally rooted social institutions. It is against this background that the Indian Knowledge System has been developed as a substantive counter-narrative that is based on civilisational continuity, epistemic pluralism and dialogic reasoning. Relying on the Vedic-Upanisadic philosophy and ethics of dharma, IKS provides a different paradigm, which has the potential to respond to the social issues without diminishing an individual and institutions as instruments of ideology.

This paper is not opposed to social justice or reform, however, it argues that justice that is not informed by the cultural context may be ideologically coercive. By confirming that critique and continuity are not mutually exclusive, IKS becomes an intellectually hardy concept of dealing with the contemporary socio-cultural issues without jeopardising intellectual freedom and the integrity of culture.

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