

Report of the International Conference on “Imperatives of Integration of Bharatiya Knowledge System and Social Security”

The Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) of Shyam Lal College, University of Delhi, in collaboration with the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), successfully organized an International Conference on “*Imperatives of Integration of Bharatiya Knowledge System and Social Security*” on April 09, 2025. The event brought together academicians, scholars, and thought leaders from across India to deliberate on the need for integrating the rich and time-tested wisdom of Bharatiya Knowledge Systems (BKS) with contemporary frameworks of social security.

The day commenced with the inaugural ceremony, marked by the traditional lamp lighting by the esteemed chief guests, accompanied by the soulful rendition of Saraswati Vandana and the University Kulgeet, symbolizing the invocation of knowledge and wisdom. The guests of honour were warmly welcomed by Dr. Varun Bhandari and Dr. Neelam Dabas, who introduced the theme of the conference and its relevance in the present socio-economic landscape.

The international conference featured a series of insightful keynote addresses and plenary talks that enriched the discourse on the integration of Bharatiya Knowledge Systems with contemporary social security frameworks. Shri Vrijesh Upadhyay, Director of the Dattopant Thengadi Foundation, set the tone for the conference with a deeply reflective keynote address. He emphasized the pressing need to revisit and re-evaluate India's civilizational roots to understand the indigenous foundations of social security. Drawing upon ancient Indian philosophical and socio-economic systems, he highlighted how traditional models of community support, interdependence, and collective welfare offer profound lessons for modern times. Shri Upadhyay called for the incorporation of these indigenous frameworks into contemporary policy discourse to create more inclusive and sustainable social welfare systems.

Prof. Pankaja Ghai, Associate Professor at Lady Shri Ram College for Women, University of Delhi, delivered a compelling lecture on the integration of Indian heritage within the Indian Knowledge System (IKS). She underscored the vast corpus of traditional knowledge encoded in ancient texts and stressed that such knowledge cannot be fully accessed or appreciated without a strong understanding of Sanskrit. As the foundational language of many classical Indian texts, Sanskrit holds the key to unlocking the wisdom embedded in them. Prof. Ghai advocated for the revival of traditional learning methods and suggested incorporating classical languages and indigenous knowledge into mainstream education to preserve and promote India's intellectual heritage.

Dr. Omkar Sharma, Former Chief Commissioner of the Ministry of Labour and Welfare, Government of India, offered a historical perspective on the evolution of social security systems in India. He discussed early references to social protection practices in ancient Indian scriptures such as the *Shukraniti* and the *Upanishads*, noting the existence of provisions for sick leave, compassionate employment, and the payment of bonuses and gratuities during the Vedic period. Dr. Sharma emphasized the importance of bridging ancient wisdom with modern governance mechanisms, particularly to overcome the challenge of last-mile delivery in social welfare programs. He stressed the need to create systems that effectively reach the elderly, the marginalized, and workers in the informal sector.

Adding an international perspective, Prof. Munim Barai from the Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University, Japan, joined the conference virtually. Despite participating in the online mode, Prof. Barai's presence significantly enriched the discussions. In his address, he shared thought-provoking insights on the rising global importance of social security for the ageing population, a concern that is becoming increasingly urgent due to shifting demographic patterns worldwide. Drawing from both international examples and Japan's robust social security framework, he emphasized the necessity for countries like India to proactively plan for a rapidly growing elderly demographic. Prof. Barai advocated for building inclusive, resilient, and sustainable welfare systems grounded in intergenerational solidarity and integrated care. He stressed the importance of addressing not only the financial but also the health and emotional needs of the elderly. His talk resonated deeply with the central theme of the conference and highlighted the value of global collaboration in addressing contemporary social security challenges.

The conference, held in a hybrid mode, facilitated the active participation of 25 presenters, comprising research scholars and professors from leading institutions across India. The academic sessions were marked by the presentation of multidisciplinary papers that delved into a wide spectrum of themes rooted in India's intellectual heritage. Key areas of discussion included ancient Indian perspectives on welfare and social justice, traditional institutions and informal safety nets in rural India, and the role of *Dharma*, *Nyaya*, and *Arthashastra* in shaping public policy. Presenters also explored the integration of Ayurveda into contemporary health security frameworks, the philosophical foundations of mutual aid and social responsibility, and the enduring relevance of community-based models of support in modern welfare states. Through these diverse explorations, participants demonstrated how elements of the Bharatiya Knowledge System can be effectively woven into present-day welfare programs, offering the potential to enhance cultural relevance, deepen community participation, and bring an ethical and indigenous grounding to the policy discourse.

The conference concluded with a *valedictory session*, where key insights and takeaways from the discussions were presented. The session reiterated the importance of embracing indigenous intellectual traditions in developing sustainable, inclusive, and context-sensitive models of social security. The formal vote of thanks was extended to all dignitaries, participants, paper presenters, and organizing team members, acknowledging their valuable contributions to the success of the event.