

विद्या

See also: वैद्य

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Hindi

Etymology

From Sanskrit विद्या (*vidyā*), from the root verb विद् (*vid*, “to know, understand”), from Proto-Indo-European **weyd-* (“to know”).

Pronunciation

- IPA^(key): [ʋɪd̪jɑː]

Noun

विद्या • (*vidyā*) *f* (*Urdu spelling* ودیا)

- learning

विद्या का ज़ोर को उपेक्षा मत करना।

vidyā kā zor ko upekṣā mat karnā.
Do not underestimate the power of **learning**.

कुपात्र को **विद्या** न दें।

kupātra ko vidyā na den.
Do not give **knowledge** to an undeserving person.

2. discipline, branch of learning

विश्वविद्यालय में **विद्याओं** का प्रसार बहुत महत्वपूर्ण है।

viśvavidyālayaṃ mē vidyāṃ kā prasār bahut mahattvapūṇ hai.
The expansion of **disciplines** in the University is very important.

Derived terms

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| ■ <u>विद्याकर्म</u> (vidyākarma, “the study of science”) | <u>विद्यापीठ</u> (vidyāpīṭh, “a center of learning”) | <u>विद्याहीन</u> (vidyāhīn, “illiterate, stupid”) |
| ■ <u>विद्यादेवी</u> (vidyādevī, “Saraswati, the goddess of learning”) | <u>विद्याव्यवसाय</u> (vidyāvyaṣāya, “pursuit of knowledge”) | |

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Sanskrit

Noun

विद्या • (vidyā) *f*

- knowledge, wisdom

Declension

Feminine ā-stem declension of <u>विद्या</u>			
	Singular	Dual	Plural
Nominative	<u>विद्या</u> (vidyā)	<u>विद्ये</u> (vidye)	<u>विद्याः</u> (vidyāḥ)
Vocative	<u>विद्ये</u> (vidye)	<u>विद्ये</u> (vidye)	<u>विद्याः</u> (vidyāḥ)
Accusative	<u>विद्याम्</u> (vidyām)	<u>विद्ये</u> (vidye)	<u>विद्याः</u> (vidyāḥ)
Instrumental	<u>विद्यया</u> (vidyayā)	<u>विद्याभ्याम्</u> (vidyābhyām)	<u>विद्याभिः</u> (vidyābhiḥ)
Dative	<u>विद्यायै</u> (vidyāyai)	<u>विद्याभ्याम्</u> (vidyābhyām)	<u>विद्याभ्यः</u> (vidyābhyah)
Ablative	<u>विद्यायाः</u> (vidyāyāḥ)	<u>विद्याभ्याम्</u> (vidyābhyām)	<u>विद्याभ्यः</u> (vidyābhyah)
Genitive	<u>विद्यायाः</u> (vidyāyāḥ)	<u>विद्ययोः</u> (vidyayoh)	<u>विद्यानाम्</u> (vidyānām)
Locative	<u>विद्यायाम्</u> (vidyāyām)	<u>विद्ययोः</u> (vidyayoh)	<u>विद्यासु</u> (vidyāsu)

Derived terms

- विद्यालय (vidyālaya)

Descendants

- Hindi: विद्या (vidyā)
- Khmer: វិទ្យា (vityie)
- Pali: vijjā
- Telugu: విద్య (vidya)
- Thai: วิทยา (wíttáyaa)

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Vidya (philosophy)

The Sanskrit word **vidya** figures prominently in all texts pertaining to Indian philosophy – to mean science, learning, knowledge and scholarship; most importantly, it refers to valid knowledge which cannot be contradicted and true knowledge which is the knowledge of the self intuitively gained. *Vidya* is not mere intellectual knowledge, for the Vedas demand understanding.^[1]

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Meaning

Vidya or *vidyā* (Sanskrit: विद्या) primarily means science, learning, philosophy, knowledge, and scholarship, any knowledge whether true or false.^[2] Its root is *vid* (Sanskrit: विद्), which means "to reason upon", knower, finding, knowing, acquiring or understanding.^{[3][4]}

Relevance

In Hindu philosophy, *vidyā* refers to the knowledge of the soul or spiritual knowledge;^[5] it refers to the study of the six schools of Hindu philosophy: Nyaya, Yoga, Vaisheshika, Samkhya, Purvamimamsa and Uttaramimamsa.^[6] The process of gaining the knowledge of the Atman cannot commence unless one has explored the *Prānavidya* or *Agnividya* to the full in all its numerous phase; through *vidyā* or *upasana* to *jnana* was always the eternal order indicated by the Upanishads. *Jnāna* dawns after the completion and perfection of the being through the *vidyās*; then, one crosses over beyond birth and death having already destroyed the bonds of death.^[7]

Concept

During the Vedic period, *vidyādāna* or the gift for the sake of education was considered to be the best of gifts, possessing a higher religious efficacy than even the gift of land. *Vidyā* comes from the root *vid* ("to know"); it therefore means knowledge, science, learning, lore, scholarship and philosophy. There are basically four *Vidyas*:

- 1) *Trayi* (triple) which is the study of the Vedas and their auxiliary texts, 2) *Anviksiki* which is logic and metaphysics, 3) *Dandaniti* which is the science of government, and 4) *Varum*, the practical arts such as agriculture, commerce, medicine etc. *Vidyā* gives insight, in the spiritual sphere it leads to salvation, in the mundane sphere it leads to progress and prosperity. *Vidyā* illuminates the mind and shatters illusions, increases intelligence, power and efficiency; develops the intellect and makes it more re-fined; it effects a complete transformation as the root of all happiness and as the source of illumination and power.^[8] The word, *Vidyā*, does not occur in the Rig Veda, it occurs in the Atharvaveda and in the Brahmana portions of the Yajurveda and in the Upanishads.^[9]

Tantra

In Hinduism, goddesses are personifications of the deepest level of power and energy. The concept of Shakti, in its most abstract terms, relates to the energetic principle of ultimate reality, the dynamic aspect of the divine. This concept surfaces in the Kena Upanishad as Goddess Umā bestowing *Brahma-vidya* on Indra; when linked with *shakti* and *maya*, she embodies the power of illusion (*maya*), encompassing ignorance (*avidya*) and knowledge (*vidyā*) and thereby presented with a dual personality. According to the Saktas, Māyā is basically a positive, creative, magical energy of the Goddess that brings forth the universe. The ten *Mahāvidyās* are bestowers or personifications of transcendent and liberating religious knowledge; the term *Vidyā* in this context refers to power, essence of reality and the *mantras*. The gentle and motherly forms of Goddess Sri Vidyā are 'right-handed'.^[10] When the awareness of the 'exterior' (Shiva) combined with the "I" encompasses the entire space as "I" it is called *sada-siva-tattva*. When later, discarding the abstraction of the Self and the exterior, clear identification with the insentient space takes place, it is called *isvara-tattva*; the investigation of these two last steps is pure *vidyā* (knowledge).^[11] *Māyā*, which has been identified with *Prakṛti* in the Shvetashvatara Upanishad represents its three *gunas*; also identified with *avidyā*, which term primarily means the dark abyss of non-being and secondarily the mysterious darkness of the unmanifest state, *Māyā* binds through *avidyā* and releases through *vidyā*.^[12]

Buddhist belief

In Mahayana texts, the female divinities are designated grammatically feminine terms *Dhārāṇi* and *Vidyā*. *Dharani* refers to mantras, the sounds that carry the essence or energy of a deity, which enable contact with the goddess on her plane of reality because the mantras invoke all deities. *Vidyā* is also synonymous with mantra and refers to the mantric invocation of female deities.^[13] In Tibet, the word, *rigpa*, meaning *vidyā*, refers to the non-dualistic awareness or intrinsic awareness. In Theravada Buddhism, *vidyā* means 'non-dual awareness' of three marks of existence.^{[14][15]}

Agni Vidyā

Agni Vidyā or the science of fire is said to be the greatest discovery of the ancient Indians who gained direct experience of divine fire through continuous research, contemplation, observation and experimentation; their experience led them to discover ways of using this knowledge to heal and nurture the outer and the inner worlds. To them fire is sacred, and because of the pervasive nature of fire all

things are sacred. Body and mind which are extensions of the fire that the soul spontaneously emits are also sacred. Within the body the most significant centres of fire are more subtle than those of the sense organs. They are called the *chakras* which are seven fields of sacred fire. The understanding of the role of fire without and within gives proper self-understanding which understanding is gained through yogic practices. The performance of *yajnas* is the *karma-kānda* aspect of *agni vidyā*. All rituals follow set rules and conditions. The main function of the fire ritual is to make an offering to nature's finest forces and divinities that fill the space of inner consciousness; fire carries oblations to these forces and divinities. The fire has seven tongues all having unique qualities. The gods, goddesses, divinities and nature's forces are grouped in seven main categories which match with the qualities of the seven tongues of fire.^[16]

Atmaikatva

Atmaikatva or the absolute oneness of the self is the theme of entire Advaita Vedanta which distinguishes six *pramanas* or means of valid knowledge, but this *vidyā* or knowledge of Brahman is *guhahita*, *gahavareshtha* i.e. set in the secret place and hidden in its depth, unattainable except through *adhyātma-yoga*, the meditation centering upon the nature of the self. Vedanta literature is only preparatory to it, it dispels ignorance and makes the mind receptive but does not reveal the truth therefore it is an indirect means of knowledge. The oneness of the self, which is self-established and self-shining, is called *vidyā* in cosmic reference which reveals the true nature of Brahman, the self-shining pure consciousness which is not a *visaya* ('object matter or content') but the one subject, transcendent of all conventional subjects and objects.^[17] The Self or the Atman is to be sought, the Self is to be enquired into, known and understood.^[18]

Hierarchy of knowledge

The sage of the Mundaka Upanishad (Verse I.1.4), more in the context of the ritualistic than of epistemological concerns, states that there are two kinds of knowledge (*vidyā*) to be attained, the higher (*para*) and the lower (*apara*). *Para vidyā*, the higher knowledge, is knowledge of the Absolute (Brahman, Atman); *Apara*, the lower knowledge, is knowledge of the world – of objects, events, means, ends, virtues and vices. *Para vidyā* has Reality as its content; *Apara vidyā*, the phenomenal world. According to Advaita Vedanta, *Para vidyā*, by the nature of its content, possesses a unique quality of ultimacy that annuls any supposed ultimacy that might be attached to any other or form of knowledge, and is intuitively gained as self-certifying. Once Brahman is realized all other modes of knowledge are seen to be touched by *avidyā*, the root of ignorance. In this context, *Vidyā* means true knowledge.^[19] However, it is argued that the Advaita Vedanta interpretation does not answer the final question: what is the reality or truth-value of *avidyā* or what is the substratum that is the basis or cause of *avidyā*?^[20]

Valid knowledge

The Upanishads teach that the knowledge of difference is *avidyā* or ignorance, and the knowledge of identity is true knowledge or *vidyā* or valid knowledge, which leads to life eternal. For the Cārvākas, perception is the only means of valid knowledge (*pramana*). Vadi Deva Suri of the Jaina school defines valid knowledge as determinate cognition which apprehends itself and an object and which is capable of prompting activity which attains a desirable object or rejects an undesirable object; the result of valid knowledge is cessation of ignorance. Vaisheshikas recognized four kinds of valid knowledge – Perception, Inference, Recollection and Intuition. The Mimamsa schools introduced the concept of intrinsic validity of knowledge (*svatahpramanya*) and extrinsic validity of knowledge (*parastah-pramana*) but agreed that the validity of knowledge cannot be determined by the knowledge of any

special excellence in its cause or the knowledge of its harmony with the real nature of its object or the knowledge of a fruitful action. Sankara accepted perception, inference, scriptural testimony, comparison, presumption and non-apprehension as the six sources of knowledge and concluded that the knowledge which corresponds with the real nature of its object is valid. The Atman is the reality in the empirical self as the ever-present foundational subject-objectless universal consciousness which sustains the empirical self.^[21]

Significance

In *upāsanā* the movement starts from the outer extremities and gradually penetrates into the inmost recesses of the soul, and the whole investigation is conducted in two spheres, in the subject as well as in the object, in the individual as well as in the world, in the *aham* as also in the *idam*, in the *adhyātma* and also in *adhidaiva* spheres and conducted synthetically as well as analytically, through *apti* as well as *samrddhi*, which the Bhagavad Gita calls *yoga* and *vibhooti*. The *vidyās* do not rest content in knowing the reality simply as a whole but proceed further to comprehend it in all its infinite details too. The higher includes the lower grades and adds something more to it and never rejects it; the lower has its fulfilment in the higher and finds its consummation there but never faces extinction. All forms of contemplation have only one aim: to lead to the Supreme Knowledge and hence they are termed as *vidyās*; through *vidyā*, which is *amṛta*, one attains immortality (Shvetashvatara Upanishad Verse V.1). *Dahara Vidyā*, *Udgitha Vidyā* and *Madhu Vidyā* are the synthetic way whereas the analytic way is signified by the Sleeping man of the *Garga-Ajātsatru* episode and by the Five Sheaths, which ways show that the world and the individual spring from the same eternal source.^[22]

See also

- Mahavidya

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