CHANAKYA UNIVERSITY

Centre for the Study of Indian Languages (CSIL)

In collaboration with

Bharatiya Bhasha Samiti, New Delhi

Roundtable on

"Concept and Predicate Commonality in Indian Languages"

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<div align="center">**Concept Note**</div>

1. Introduction: Two Concerns and a Guiding Assumption

Concern 1: Indian languages are increasingly becoming relay languages, that is, they are becoming parasitic on English in their conceptual registers, phrase-making patterns, and semantic and syntactic styles due to a variety of global and local pressures (Wierzbicka, 2014).

Concern 2: Even though natural linguistic change cannot be regulated, it is both possible and necessary to conserve and strengthen the conceptual registers and desirable meta-linguistic resources embedded in Indian languages.

Assumption: Indian languages share a civilizational conceptual register

While individual Indian languages differ in their grammars, histories, and usage, they share a significant degree of conceptual commonality. This common register visible at the level of grammar or morphology (Emeneau, 1956) emerges clearly at a meta-linguistic level, where Indian languages function as vehicles of a shared cultural form of life that has endured for more than two millennia. What is therefore needed is a framework capable of reconstructing conceptual and predicate structures across Indian languages.

2. Background and Rationale

India's linguistic ecology is among the most diverse in the world. The Census of India (2011) recorded more than 19,500 mother-tongue labels, consolidated into 1,369 recognised mother tongues and 121 major languages. UNESCO notes that Indigenous languages are crucial for cultural continuity and social empowerment.

Linguists beginning with Emeneau have argued that South Asia is a linguistic area characterized by shared phonological, syntactic, and semantic features driven by long-standing contact. Contemporary initiatives such as the Bharatiya Bhasha Parivar reaffirm a civilizational unity that cuts across genealogical divides.

Yet attrition is evident: nearly 220 Indian languages have become silent in the past five decades, and more than 85 are endangered. But the deepest crisis is not disappearance—it is conceptual thinning. Predicate structures that once generated intelligibility in Indian lifeworlds are being overwritten by external frameworks.

Translation norms, English-medium schooling, psychological diagnostics, administrative categories, and emerging AI models all rely on conceptual repertoires shaped by colonial and anglophone defaults. These erase distinctions embedded in Indian linguistic worlds.

Thus, the roundtable seeks to articulate why the study of Indian languages must shift: from grammar to predicate-structures, from vocabulary to schemes of distinctions, from linguistic objects to ways of going about the world.

3.1 Conceptual Framework

We start with the assumption that our ways of seeing and doing involve schemes of distinctions embodied in the visual and verbal sign systems we use in dealing with our natural and social surroundings. For this project our focus is on verbal sign systems, i.e., languages.

3.2 Text-Linguistic Approaches to Language

Among other things, the approaches of text linguistics provided for the later developments in computer linguistics. These emphasize that language needs to be looked upon as schemes of actions rather than as system of objects, thus reversing the order of emphasis accorded by the earlier approaches: Prior to the advent of text-linguistics, the language is conceived by Structuralists and Chomskyeans as sets of elements weaved together by a system of two sets of rules, one the syntactic and the other semantic, the former regulating language structures internally, and the latter regulating the relation externally, i.e., the relation between language structures and the objects of the world. Accordingly, linguistic investigation is conceived as involving a study of Syntax and Semantics. Though, in addition to these, the need to study the application of this language device in specific contexts Pragmatics is conceded; nevertheless, what is supposed to provide the groundwork is Syntax on which Semantics and Pragmatics are built. In contrast, approaches embodied in Text-Linguistics consider language to be scheme of distinctions related to actions. Thus, for the study of language the context of its use is primary, and Semantics and Syntax are derivative stabilizations of action dispositions.

3.3 Language, Lifeworld, and Socialisation

This prioritizing pragmatics in the study of languages makes us look at how language is both embedded in the Lifeworld and underlies the distinctions we make to deal with it: Socialization is not necessarily a process acquisition of propositions identified as beliefs about the world of objects but that of getting initiated into the use of words and rules of combining them, as part of and as embedded in, certain domains of activity (cooking, crafting, singing, and so on). From

the initial steps of socialization in early infancy in a family milieu to the growing up in the social (economic and political) and educational activity, the individual acquires a repertoire of skills and domain distinctions which are his / her resource for learning further. Though language can be said to fulfil many functions, nevertheless, its function as a means of making distinctions in one's environment is quite fundamental. Learning how to do something does involve making corresponding distinctions: Learning how to cook, for example, involves learning to distinguish the objects and the degree of cooking from the utensils, the hot plate and such things. Learning a specialized skill of carpentry involves more specialized distinctions of utensils and wood types than we normally make in our daily dealings, as well as more skilful deployment of those devices. Suppose we consider the function of predicates of a language, i.e., concepts, as that of distinguishing the world, we can say, the more specialized a discipline is, the more elaborate the repertoire of concepts we require and more discipline we need in deploying them in appropriate contexts. Thus, Statecraft involves both making distinctions such as law and the related institutions such as legislative (to make laws), executive (to implement laws) and judicative (to oversee the right application of the law) institutions. Obviously, it involves further an array of a wide variety of sub-distinctions.

3.4 Incommensurability of Predicate Structures

Languages, whether natural or of specific disciplines, have developed in and through different historical circumstances, and accordingly, the network of implications connecting the predicates of one language differs substantially from the network of another language. As a result, a word in one language equivalent to a word in another may differ from one context to another. An easy everyday demonstration of predicate-level incommensurability is the Hindi जुगाड़.

In (1) उसने टेप और क्लिप से पंखा ठीक कर दिया—कितना बढ़िया जुगाड़ है! the word profiles clever improvisation (best rendered as a "hack/workaround"). In (2) थोड़ा जुगाड़ करके आज ही अपॉइंटमेंट मिल जाएगा it shifts to the idea of securing outcomes through informal arrangements ("pulling strings/arranging"). In (3) जुगाड़ से काम चलाना ठीक है, लेकिन सुरक्षा मानकों में नहीं it denotes a stopgap tolerated only where stakes are low ("makeshift fix/stopgap"). Because a single English token cannot preserve these roles— ingenuity, networked arrangement, and expedient stopgap—across familiar contexts, जुगाड़ is only partially commensurable with any one English equivalent, illustrating how languages' predicate networks are non-isomorphic. To refer to this phenomenon of absence of exact equivalence between the predicates of one language with that of another, one can use a

technical term 'incommensurable': The predicate or conceptual structure of one language is incommensurable with that of another. In the day-to-day life, mostly, incommensurability can be bridged by the immediate context of action or communication. Similarly, along with the learning of a (specialized) discipline we also learn the languages pertinent to it. But there is an aspect of language, let us call it 'civilizational', that forms our ethos. This aspect of knowing is at risk of erosion through the day-to-day practice of translating for putative linguistic equivalence—an adjustment we are continually obliged to make.

3.5 The Civilizational Lifeworld and Concept-Loss

Indian languages are vehicles of a shared lifeworld in this sense of a civilizational form. This commonality cannot be appreciated purely at the level of grammar, morphology, or syntax. The concepts structuring the life world of Indian culture are common across various languages. So, what we see at a meta-linguistic level with Indian languages can be seen as the tapestry of a common culture for at least over two millennia now, and what is common to them is the imprint of a common form of life, the Indian way of life or Indian culture. An important intangible cultural heritage is our life with concepts. Such a concept-world can become distorted and inaccessible due to various historical reasons. Concept-loss is every bit like livelihood loss, language loss, or biodiversity loss. However, very little attention is paid to this resource which is the very basis for a flourishing and self-sustaining cultural life, consisting of a rich matrix of actions.

How does such a loss pan out? On the one hand, most Indian languages have increasingly become parasitic on the English/European concept-sphere, on the other hand they are losing the native distinctions and concepts with which we are accustomed to function. For example: The relationship between *manas, chitta*, and *ahaṃkāra* defines a shared conceptual domain within the Indian lifeworld. But manas is usually treated as equivalent to 'mind' or 'heart' in our everyday reportage and translations. Take the phrase '*manassu karagitu*' in Kannada, which means 'my heart is melting' that signifies a sympathetic disposition towards something hard to bear. But look at the same phrase from medieval literature; Akka Mahādevi says '*mana karagadavaralli puṣpavanolleyayyā nīnu*' (you do not accept flowers from those whose manas is not dissolved). The phrase captures a distinct understanding of the mental faculty as something that can be dissolved which is impossible to render in English. The 'mind' can be absent but cannot be dissolved, but '*manas*' here can be dissolved indeed. This distinction is almost unintelligible except for the scholars of classical studies, whereas the sympathetic usage

of '*manassu karagitu*' is sensible to modern speakers who are actually functioning within the modern idea of mind. Even equipped with the most precise definition of '*manas*', that it is one aspect of the *antaḥkaraṇa*, that it represents a particular *vṛtti* of willing, or a lack of it, or a conflict between them, we would not be able to figure out how to think with and think along with this concept in today's world to produce new knowledge or appreciate the nuances of the concept. What empirical instances are tokens of *manas*? or if it is a *vṛtti*? and if it is possible that manas can cease its activity, then is it even a faculty, a competence, or only an analytical distinction to track certain aspects of mental actions? None of these questions are resolved at the definitional level, and mere exegesis from the Yoga Sutras to the Samkhya and the Vedanta texts does not seem to help us answer these questions.

3.6 The Need for Predicate Reconstruction

CSIL contends that such a conceptual network of languages is a knowledge disposition worth preserving, but it can only be preserved by deliberately recapturing the predicate or conceptual structure of the languages, through reflection and reconstruction. This activity of recapturing is an activity of reflective exploration parasitic on the knowledge by acquaintance (as against 'knowledge by description'): The languages we are acquainted with are embodiment of knowing-how, or skills, passed on from the past to deal with situations we encounter. Put differently, they embody schemes of distinctions constituting the lifeworld or the common sense embodied in multifarious milieus of India.

What we need is a reconstruction of the predicates and predicate-behaviour relevant to several domains that are relevant to Indian culture. A language consists of predicates that can be used to speak of subjects, i.e., individually or collectively designated objects, or events, or persons. These predicates form tightly interconnected networks that capture how concepts actually relate to each other within a cultural framework, revealing the implicit assumptions and relational patterns that give meaning to individual terms. By systematically mapping these predicate networks, we can reconstruct how knowledge domains genuinely functioned within Indian traditions - not as they appear through Western analytical frameworks, but as they operated within their own indigenous conceptual ecosystems. This approach allows us to recover the living logic of traditional Indian thought rather than just cataloguing isolated concepts or forced translations.

Predicates available to us through natural languages are the resources not only for learning and teaching, or acquiring and communicating knowledge, but also to constitute that very knowledge. These predicates have been shaped by the accidental and unsystematic as well as deliberate and systematic efforts by generations of people in their daily dealings. As such they are subject to change, but the fundamental distinctions achieved over hundreds of years do not yield easily to abrupt change of usage. This fact shows itself in how the nuances of meaning expressible through a predicate of one language is not expressible by the supposed equivalent predicate of another language. This incommensurability of predicates creates a possibility of recovering the scheme of distinctions passed on from the Indian traditions.

4. Conceptual Thinning Across Institutional Domains

Translation: Colonial translations reshaped Indian texts into European frames (Niranjana, 1992). Modern translation markets normalise Anglophone categories (Venuti, 1995). English concepts mask distinctions encoded in Indian languages (Wierzbicka, 2014).

Language Technology: Major investments have been made lately by Government of India and other private entities on Language Technology. But cultural biases and flattening out of non-European categories have been reported in studies. (Tao et al. 2024)

Education and Formal Disciplines: Psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic research shows how formal language domains structure cognition (Barner et al., 2007 Fishman, 1965). English-medium schooling privileges English predicate structures, sidelining Indian distinctions (ASER, 2023, Treffers-Daller, 2022).

Mental Health: Indian idioms of distress fail to map to DSM/ICD categories and get coded as "functional overlays" (Desai & Chaturvedi, 2017). The idiom *tenshun* is flattened to "anxiety," erasing distinctions (Weaver et al. 2022). Cultural formulations significantly alter diagnoses (Kirmayer et al, 2022).

5. Predicate Commonality Across Indian Languages

A culture is not primarily a set of beliefs, symbols, or values, but a repertoire of learnable action-dispositions—the practical abilities through which members of a community discriminate, evaluate, correct, and act (Rao, 2002). Concepts, in this view, are not semantic units but criteria embedded in forms of action. To possess a concept is not to know a definition;

it is to know how to go on under its description, to recognise correctness, to accept correction, and to pass the ability forward.

Indian languages share deep predicate-level structures such as shaping agency, propriety, social placement, responsibility, reasoning, and self-conduct. This tendency of predicate makes it an ideal way of recovering the distinctions and therefore the concepts salient to Indian culture. Since predicate-structures are practice-based, conceptual continuity can be traced across Indian languages without requiring lexical symmetry. Thus, Indian "conceptual unity" need not be theorised as shared metaphysics; it may instead be understood as shared ways of going about, learned and transmitted across linguistic communities.

6. Objectives of the Roundtable

- Brainstorm to develop a plausible methodology for concept mining across Indian languages.
- Establish methods and protocols for predicate reconstruction.
- Utilise the expertise from disciplines such as philology, linguistics, philosophy, psychology, and computation for Concept recovery.
- Lay the foundation for CSIL's long-term research programme through multi-layered collaborations.

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Appendix: Sample Methods of Predicate Analysis

While mapping civilizational predicates of India, it is necessary to start from pre-colonial period, hence two functional Sanskrit concepts are chosen from pre-modern era. Since it is necessarily a comparative exercise, these concepts are compared and contrasted with the related Modern/European notions that are in vogue both in popular and academic contexts. The comparison mainly focuses on the network of related ideas and the logical predicates applicable or inapplicable. The following comparison also brings out two sample methods (although indicative) for mapping the predicates of Indian concepts expecting many more to be designed.

Sample 1: *Adhikāra* vs rights

The following table presents representative usages of the concepts *adhikāra* and rights as embedded in their respective cultural networks.

Sanskrit Usage of *Adhikāra*	Translation	Sense of the term *Adhikāra*	English Usage of Rights	Sense of 'Rights'
कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन। मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते सङ्गोऽस्त्वकर्मणि ॥ (Bhagavad-Gītā 2.47)	You have *adhikāra* in actions and never in their fruits	What is accessible/ possibility of action	At least companions have the same rights as spouses without the hassle of marriage	Entitlement
निषेकादिश्मशानान्तो मन्त्रैर्यस्योदितो विधिः । तस्य शास्त्रेऽधिकारोऽस्मिन् ज्ञेयो नान्यस्य कस्यचित् ॥ (Manusmṛti 2.16)	Only he for whom the rites from conception to cremation are prescribed by mantras has *adhikāra* in this *śāstra*; no other person has such claim.	Indicating a domain	Individuals are thought of as members of a family, state, or religion, rather than as entities with a destiny and rights of their own	Entitlement & Privilege
स्त्रीषु कष्टो अधिकारः। हन्त! न खलु स्त्रीषु कृत्यं पुरुषेण विनिग्रहेण प्रवर्तते॥ (Vikramorvaśīya 3.1)	It is difficult to have *adhikāra* in women. Actions concerning women do not proceed from the control of men.	Indicating domain or possibility of acting	She wished she were in London, where a girl in a minicab would set him bang to rights	Transgressing or not following rule
अथवा अविश्रमोऽयं लोकतन्त्राधिकारः। भानुः सक्तदयुक्ततुरङ्ग एव रात्रिन्दिवं गन्धवहः प्रयाति। शेषः सदैवाहितभूमिभारः षष्ठांशवृत्तेरपि धर्म एषः॥ (Abhijñāna-Śākuntalam 5)	This *adhikāra* of the kingdom is never ending like the Sun whose steed is ever yokes, journeys day and night; like the wind which moves ceaselessly; like sesa who always bears the weight of earth. Those who get only one-sixth portion of	Indicating domain / rule	Naming rights were sold to an insurance company, and the venue is now referred to as the Aviva Stadium	Privilege

the share (as tax), they also bear this dharma.				
शिल्पाधिकारे योग्येयं दारिका नाम भार्या। भूपतिस्समागमैकस्मिन् रमावेति काङ्क्षता॥ (Mālavikāgnimitram 1)	"This maiden named दारीका is suitable for the training in arts (शिल्पाधिकारे). She is eagerly desired by the king at the moment of his arrival."	Indicating domain as a discipline	Ought we be concerned that our rights to protest are being continually eroded under the guise of enhancing our safety?	Entitlement
करोति योऽशेषजनातिरिक्तां सम्भावनामर्थवतीं क्रियाभिः । संसत्सु जाते पुरुषाधिकारे न पूर्णी तं समुपैति सङ्ख्या ॥ (Kirātārjunīya 3.51)	The person who performs actions that go beyond those required for the benefit of all beings, that are truly meaningful and contribute to the welfare of others, is rare in this world. When a man is born among people, the number of those who fulfill such a complete and perfect role is very small.	Indicating a group	No one should be coerced into a family unit against their will; this is a basic right in family law.	Entitlement
कश्चित्कान्ताविरहगुरुणा स्वाधिकारात् प्रमत्तः शापेनास्तंगमितमहिमा वर्षभोग्येण भर्तुः । यक्षश्चक्रे जनकतनयास्नानपुण्योदकेषु स्निग्धच्छायातरुषु वसतिं रामगिर्याश्रमेषु ॥ (Meghadūta 1.1)	A certain yaksha, who carelessly neglected his adhikāra(duties) due to the pain of separation from his beloved, was cursed by his master. Because of this curse, his grandeur and powers diminished. As a result, he had to endure a year-long sorrow of separation from his wife. This yaksha then took residence in the hermitages on the slopes of the Ramagiri hills—places with shaded trees and holy water tanks, sanctified by the bath of Janaka's daughter (Sita). These hermitages are serene, filled with soft shadows and cool trees.	Indicating domain as duty	The right to parental care and protection is fundamental to children's well-being	Entitlement
संहितायाम्। (अष्टाध्यायी 6.1.158) अधिकारोऽयम् अनुदात्तं पदमेकवर्जम् इति यावत्। (काशिकाव्याख्या)	This is an adhikāra (governing rule) valid up to the sūtra "anudāttaṃ padam ekavarjam."	Indicating a rule	Certain societies recognize the rights of the poor to receive support from the community	Claim

अतएव विभागं प्रक्रम्य नारदः । "विनष्टे वाप्य शरणे पितर्युपरतस्पृहे" । विनष्टे पतिते । अशरणे गृहस्थाश्रमरहिते । तेन मरणपातित्य गार्हस्थ्येतराश्रमगमनः स्वत्व - ध्वंसे उपरतस्पृहे सत्यपि स्वत्वे स्वगतधनेच्छारहिते च पुत्राणां विभागाधिकारः । धावे च भवे तत्र विप्रकर्षकं क्रमेण व्यव्हारं कर्तव्यं न संशयं। Dayatattvam, Dayabhaga, pg.4	Therefore, after dividing, Narada said: 'When the paternal protection is lost or the refuge is destroyed...' The word 'vinashte' means lost or fallen; 'asharane' means without refuge, that is, without householder's stage or ashrama. Thus, death, downfall, or abandoning the householder stage by going to other ashramas leads to loss of ownership and loss of protection by the paternal side, even though the ownership remains; also when the sons are deprived of rightful ownership without their own property, they have the adhikara of dividing property (inheritance). In such a case, proper and orderly procedure must definitely be followed without any doubt	Entitlement	Even companions who are not married may be granted the same rights as spouses in some societies.	Entitlement /claim
यः श्राद्धाधिकारी यतो यस्मात्सकाशाद्धनमादद्यात्तेन मिळितेन द्रव्येण तस्मै तदर्थं तत्प्रतिनिधिर्भूत्वा कुर्यादिति। सरस्वतीविलासः (सरस्वतीविलासः, व्यवहारकाण्डः – ४५९)	'He should give the funeral cake and take the wealth' … 'whoever received (the estate), he should perform the śrāddha for him' — (thus) the **one entitled to perform the rites (śrāddha-adhikārī)** [is fixed]."	Indicating domain of action (ritual)	There are specific rights of succession that pass property from parent to child under inheritance law	Entitlement /claim
बहुपुत्रस्थलेऽप्यौर्ध्वदेहिकक्रियाणां मध्ये एकस्यैवाधिकारः।श्राद्धादौ मृतस्य तस्यैव यः स्यान्न चान्यः पृथक् कोऽपि॥ (सरस्वतीविलासः, व्यवहारकाण्डः – ४२२)	"…where there are many sons … among the post-funeral rites … there is **authority of one alone**."	Indicating domain of action (ritual)	People involved in a contract have rights to expect performance or compensation for non-performance.	Entitlement /claim

Conceptual Difference

Western idea of "rights" is defined as entitlements - permissions or claims to certain actions, states, or objects. They denote justified freedoms and powers attributed to persons, often theorized in terms of an individual's moral or legal standing. Systematic philosophical

approaches, such as Hohfeldian analysis, subdivide rights into privileges (liberties), claims, powers, and immunities, each with precise logical structure.

By contrast, "*adhikāra*" in Indian traditions is best rendered as "assigned scope of authority, eligibility, or jurisdiction." The term arises repeatedly in ritual, scriptural, and social contexts, signifying not an individualized entitlement but a "qualified competence" or "eligibility"- the right or scope to act, learn, inherit, or perform specific social functions, often deeply contextual and ritualized.

Embedded Networks of Relation

Western rights are embedded in a structure of directed duties and correlative responsibilities **underwritten by law or moral theory**, presupposing atomized bearers of rights who interact primarily **as individuals** or abstract subjects. Rights arguments are constructed around directed duties, authority to demand, waiver, transfer, or claim. Here, the relational matrix is **contractual, legal, and individualistic**: a network of claims and counterclaims, supported by a judiciary and enforced by institutions.

Conversely, *adhikāra* is integrally tied to **networked social, ritual, genealogical, and contextual relations**. Entitlement is not universal but qualified according to caste, age, lineage, ritual initiation, or conduct. The concept governs roles, eligibility for learning Veda, inheritance (दायाधिकार), ritual performance, and succession—always with respect to contextually defined networks (family, community, office, or ritual hierarchy). The locus of adhikāra is as much about **being "fit" for a role** as about possessing entitlement.

Comparative Table

Aspect	"Rights"	"Adhikāra"
Core Definition	Entitlement, claim, power, or immunity	Eligibility, scope, qualified authority, competence
Relational Matrix	Individual-legal, contractual, correlatives, directed duties	Social-hierarchical, ritual, genealogical, contextual ethics

Semantic Domain	Claim, liberty, power, immunity, inalienable, waivable		Duty, eligibility, role, ritual competence, lineage, dharma
Directionality	"I have a right; you have a duty"		"I am fit/eligible for X by skill, role, lineage"
Enjoining Logic	Assertive, legalistic, demand-based, adjudicable		Participative, ritual, social, inherited, performative
Example	Right to free speech, property, immunity		Karma-adhikāra, śrāddha-adhikāra, da*yadhikar*

Implications:

Following the contrast of predicates and the networks of relation between the two concepts, it is interesting to try this exercise of replacing one by the other in different contexts. One such sample table is presented here focusing on *Adhikāra*. While the first set of statements make sense in Indian contexts, the second set actually does not. But the unintelligibility is not evident unless the predicates are constructed systematically. The popular and most academic uses of the term *Adhikāra* and the discourse around it stands as testimony, where the unintelligibility is somehow masked or brushed aside.

Intelligible	Unintelligible or Incongruent
You have *adhikāra* in actions and never in their fruits	You have right in actions and never in their fruits
A monk has the *Adhikāra* for begging alms	A monk has the rights for begging alms
It is difficult to have *adhikāra* in women. Actions concerning women do not proceed from the control of men.	It is difficult to have rights in women. Actions concerning women do not proceed from the control of men.
This *adhikāra* of the kingdom is never ending(tiresome)	This right of the kingdom is never ending(tiresome)
'whoever received (the estate), he should perform the śrāddha for him' - thus śrāddha-adhikārī (the one entitled to perform the rites) is fixed.	'whoever received (the estate), he should perform the śrāddha for him' thus the one who has the rights to perform the rites is fixed.

A certain yaksha, who carelessly neglected his *adhikāra*(duties) due to the pain of separation from his beloved, was cursed by his master.	A certain yaksha, who carelessly neglected his *rights* due to the pain of separation from his beloved, was cursed by his master.
This is an *adhikāra* (governing rule) valid up to the sūtra "anudāttaṃ padam ekavarjam."	This is a right valid up to the sūtra "anudāttaṃ padam ekavarjam."

Further Questions:

Assuming the predicate-structure of *Adhikāra* as shown in this brief discussion valid, we can formulate further questions:

- In case of some classical Sanskrit texts and authors, when they claim 'such and such a person has *adhikāra* in doing something', if it is not a statement about the rights of that person, what are the ideas they are referring to? For example, does *adhikāra* always come with the duty of protecting and propagating a said action?

- What kind of a community action is envisaged in the concept of *adhikāra* vis-à-vis rights? For example, rights must be conceived as entitlements/claims in contrast to duties; what kind of a community action does *adhikāra* denotes, if it resolves the dichotomy of rights v/s duties?

- What kind of a person is envisaged by such a notion: Is the personhood in Indian culture constituted entirely by social situatedness rather than abstract theorization and their relationship to normative institutions like state? In that case, how can we enquire about the nature of social and political participation in the Indian context?

Sample 2: *ṛṇa* vs indebtedness (including the modern notion of gratitude)

The second sample is based on the Indian concept of *ṛṇa* in comparison with the related ideas of indebtedness and gratitude. The following table of contrast gives a very brief sample set of statements.

Sanskrit Sentence	Machine Translation	English Source sentence
ऋणानि त्रीण्यपाकृत्य मनो मोक्षे निवेशयेत् । अनपाकृत्य मोक्षं तु सेवमानो व्रजत्यधः ॥ (Manusmṛti 6.35)	One shall turn his mind towards Liberation only after having paid off the three debts; without having paid them, if he seeks for Liberation, he sinks downwards.	I am much indebted to you, sir, for a scotch bonnet is fitted neither to my years nor my gravity."
'जायमानो ह वै ब्राह्मणस्त्रिभिर्ऋणैर्ऋणवान् जायते-ब्रह्मचर्येण ऋषिभ्यो यज्ञेन देवेभ्यः प्रजाया पितृभ्यः' इति ऋणानि । (न्यायभाष्यम् 4.1.59)	A Brāhmaṇa is indeed born with three debts — to the gods through sacrifice, to the seers through studentship, and to the ancestors through progeny; he becomes free from debt when he is a sacrificer, a student, and a father.	We are indebted to the Local Government Board for having traced to such cause's certain epidemics of typhoid
देवतातिथिभृत्येभ्यः पितृभ्योऽथात्मनस्तथा । ऋणवाञ्जायते मर्त्यस्तस्मादनृणतां व्रजेत् ॥ स्वाध्यायेन महर्षिभ्यो देवेभ्यो यज्ञकर्मणा । पितृभ्यः श्राद्धदानेन नृणामभ्यर्चनेन च ॥ (Mahabharata 12.281.9-10)	All men, are born indebted to gods, guests, servants, ancestors, and their own selves. Everyone should, therefore do his best for satisfying those debts. One frees oneself from his debt to the great Rishis by studying the Vedas; to the gods by celebrating sacrifices. By performing the rites of the Shraddha one satisfies the debts to the Pitris. One satisfies the debt to his fellow men by doing good to them.	Motley acknowledges his indebtedness to Groen's Archives in the preface to his Rise of the Dutch Republic."

ऋणमुन्मुच्य देवानामृषीणां च तथैव च । पितॄणामथ विप्राणामतिथीनां च पञ्चमम् ॥ (Mahabharata 13.37.18)	By satisfying the debts one owes to the deities, Rishis, ancestors, Brahmanas and the guests as the fifth …	He felt indebted to his mentor for his guidance
न चोपलेभे पूर्वेषामृणनिर्मोक्षसाधनम् । सुताभिधानं स ज्योतिः सद्यः शोकतमोपहम् ॥ (Raghuvansham 10.2)	He (Dasharatha) found no means for releasing himself from the debts (ṛṇa) owed to his forefathers; seeing the usual path (of performing sacrifices, etc.) as full of hardship, he adopted another way.	A grateful beneficiary will consider other options rather than only something of equal value when returning the favor... indebtedness may occur after gratitude." (AIJCRNet)
ऋणान्मोचय राजानं मत्कृते भरत प्रभुम् । पितरं त्राहि धर्मज्ञ मातरं चाभिनन्दय ॥ (Ramayanam 2.99.10)	O Bharata, release for my sake the competent king from his debt (of vow) and honour the righteous father and the mother as well.	"Gratitude promotes people's prosocial tendency, while indebtedness leads to the feeling of obligation to repay the beneficiary's 'debts' to the benefactor." (PMC)
तत्र मित्र ! न वस्तव्यं यत्र नास्ति चतुष्टयम्। ऋण-दाता च वैद्यश् च श्रोत्रियः सजला नदी॥ (Hitopadesha 1.105)	Friend, one should not dwell in a place where four things are absent - a lender (who gives loans), a physician, a learned Brāhmaṇa, and a river with water.	The problems particularly of the primitive history were first brought into clear light by him, and all subsequent work upon the subject must acknowledge its indebtedness to him.
ऋण-कर्ता पिता शत्रुर् माता च व्यभिचारिणी। भार्या रूपवती शत्रुः पुत्रः शत्रुर् अपंडितः॥ (चाणक्यनीतिदर्पणः ६.११)	A father who incurs debts is an enemy; a mother who is unchaste is an enemy; a beautiful wife is an enemy; and a son who is ignorant is an enemy.	Table B shows the total indebtedness of the Ottoman Empire, exclusive of tribute loans.

Conceptual Analysis: Both the Indian concept of *ṛṇa* and the idea of indebtedness function based on the transactional metaphor of 'debt'. Some connotations of *ṛṇa* also show this clearly. Nevertheless, the civilizational idea of *ṛṇa* looks far more complex than the general idea of indebtedness.

1. Though the civilizational idea of *ṛṇa* is transactional, the transaction is symmetrical: i.e., the repaying is not done towards the source of debt. For example, *pitṛ-ṛṇa* (debt to the ancestors) is repaid by obtaining the progeny and doing *śrāddha.* The debt of teachers can be repaid by teaching others and leading appropriate life.

2. Instead of the general transactional way, this way of conceiving indebtedness to the surroundings frees the person from the guilt of not being able to repay which is observed as aversive state in some studies (Greenberg & Shapiro, 1971). This also underlines the point that everybody is indebted to innumerable number of factors for a good life: like fellow beings, community, nature, the whole universe. Repaying all those is simply impossible and hence protecting those conditions of good life for the successive generations is a better way of acknowledging that debt.

3. By drawing our attention to this immensity of debt on any being, Indian traditions expand their horizon of thinking towards the whole cosmos. *Devayajña, bhūtayajña, manuṣyayajña* etc. are such efforts of expanding the horizon of thinking.

4. The implication of this way of conceiving is also evident in the cultural dispositions of people. For instance, many classical authors in India acknowledge the indebtedness towards their teachers by ascribing their works to the whole tradition or a paradigmatic figure in that tradition. The underlying sentiment can probably be stated as even the innovations in thinking is possible only within a tradition of thinking. Thus, ownership and its related problems can be said to be transcended.

Implications

- What is it to conceive a social being as essentially indebted to multiple factors in contrast to 'man is born free' (Rousseau, 2017) kind of a doctrine? What kind of political philosophy can be envisaged from such a premises?

- What are the psychological aspects of conceiving gratitude in a non-transactional way compared to the idea of 'closing the loop'?

- How better can we conceive the current ecological concerns like reasons for sustainable development with this premises of *ṛṇa* rather than protecting the rights of future generations?

Note: Some parts of this analysis are generated using AI by giving sample sets of data and by prompting for specific output.

References:

Greenberg, M. S., & Shapiro, S. P. (1971). Indebtedness: An Adverse Aspect of Asking for and Receiving Help. *Sociometry*, *34*(2), 290.

Rousseau, J.-J. (2017). *The social contract and the first and second discourses*. Yale University Press.