

Purva Paksha versus AI

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Representational image generated by AI

Any [education](#) in the future has to aim for true cognitive empathy. With AI, the age of mere synthesis is coming to an end. In this, India has key tools.

The fundamental crisis of education in the age of generative artificial intelligence is not one of plagiarism but of cognition. As large language models flood the [educational](#) ecosystem with frictionless, synthetically generated text, the struggle has shifted from the accumulation of knowledge to the preservation of intellectual labour itself. In the contemporary university seminar room, where students can outsource the synthesis of complex [political](#) philosophy or civilizational history to a machine in seconds, the traditional essay or summary is functionally dead.

To rescue the act of teaching and learning from this algorithmic passivity, we must look to classical Indian traditions of dialectic, statecraft, and philosophical inquiry which were not designed merely to transmit facts, but to forge intellectual resilience through intense, un-gameable friction. In an era where machines can simulate intelligence, the ancient Indian mechanisms of Purva-paksa, the Nyaya taxonomy of debate, and the Vedantic triad of realisation remain the only firewalls against the hollowing out of the human mind, demanding a cognitive empathy that no language model can replicate.

HOLLOW CORE OF FRICTIONLESS SYNTHESIS

To understand why ancient Indian techniques are the antidote, one must first diagnose the disease of AI driven education. Large language models operate on probabilistic synthesis; they predict the next plausible word in a sequence based on vast training data. They do not possess an inner life, nor do they experience the friction of doubt, the struggle of paradox, or the burden of ethical reasoning.

The education system's top priority regarding generative AI should be cognitive rather than legal. Highly advanced large language models will increase frictionless content creation at the complexity of sorrowfully uncited authors. Instant access to content will shift the burden of scholarly work to the protection of originality. As text synthesis begins

to dominate the market and students can outstream the synthesis of complex ideas involving civilizational history, the modern seminar will no longer tolerate outdated summaries and essays.

To best vie from an education system designed by algorithmic inertia, we must look upon the Sanskrit cosmopolis. Unlike modern education, ancient Indian dialectic, statecraft, and basic philosophies focused on the development of intellectual rigour rather than rote fact memorization. At a time when machines can think, the ancient Indian systems of Purva-paksa, Nyaya, and Vedanta require cognitive empathy and understanding that no language model can emulate.

PURVA-PAKSA: MORAL IMPERATIVE OF COGNITIVE EMPATHY

The absolute centre piece of the Indian philosophical defence against intellectual laziness is the tradition of Purva-paksa (the prior view, or the opponent's thesis). In the rigorous culture of Shastrartha (philosophical and theological debate) that permeated the Sanskrit cosmopolis, a scholar was forbidden from simply stating their own thesis (Siddhanta) and defending it.

Before one could offer a critique, one was mandated to construct the opponent's argument. This was not a cursory summary or a strawman designed to be easily knocked down. The rule of Purva-paksa demanded that the debater articulate the opposing worldview so perfectly, so charitably, and with such profound intellectual empathy that the opponent themselves would nod and say, "Yes, that is exactly what I believe, and you have stated it better than I could have." Only after building this unassailable fortress of the opponent's thought was the scholar permitted to begin their deconstruction.

This is the ultimate pedagogical weapon against AI slop. Many AIs can summarize an opposing point of view, but they cannot offer real ethical and intellectual unease that would allow them to truly assume the perspective of a paradigm they have been programmed to evaluate. In the university, we can set a requirement where students are compelled to engage in Purva-paksa. By requiring students to argue against themselves using primary sources before giving their opinions, we are requiring them to practice cognitive empathy. They will have to set aside their opinions and maybe internalize the logic of a foreign thinking process. This process is messy and humans are immune to the shortcuts of an LLM.

NYAYA TAXONOMY: DIAGNOSING ALGORITHMIC SOPHISTRY

Furthermore, ancient Indian logicians were acutely aware that not all discourse is created equal. The Nyaya school of logic categorised debates to distinguish genuine intellectual inquiry from mere sophistry—a taxonomy desperately needed to navigate today's hyper-mediated, AI-generated discourse.

The Nyaya-sutras outline three primary forms of debate:

- Vada (Truth-seeking): A collaborative, rigorous dialogue where both parties, usually a teacher and student, test propositions to arrive at the ultimate truth (Tattva). It requires epistemic humility and a willingness to be proven wrong.
- Jalpa (Victory-seeking): A competitive debate aimed purely at winning. It relies on rhetorical tricks, linguistic traps, and overcomplication rather than just logic.

- Vitanda (Destructive): Arguing solely to tear down the opponent's thesis without ever offering or defending a constructive thesis of one's own.

Generative AI models that students utilise naturally produce work resembling Jalpa and Vitanda. Generative AI has shown the ability to produce lengthy, valid, and unstructured essays that drown readers with synthetically generated authority (Jalpa). AI can be given the task of producing hyper-critical and cynical evaluations of historical narratives with no concern for a responsible approach (Vitanda).

The goal behind this taxonomy is to provide students with a necessary sceptical framework. Students will be able to look beyond the perfectly constructed sentences produced by these models and analyse the intention and structural integrity beyond the grammar. They will be able to separate and recognize the syntactically correct and authentic Vada.

TRIAD OF REALIZATION: MOVING BEYOND SRAVANA

Perhaps the most profound shift required in modern pedagogy is moving away from the fetishisation of information retrieval, a space where machines have already won. In the Upanishadic and Vedantic traditions, the transmission of knowledge was never considered complete simply upon hearing it. The pedagogy demanded a rigorous, tripartite cognitive process:

- Sravana (Absorption): The act of listening to the guru or reading the text. In the modern university, this is the lecture, the reading assignment, and the AI summary.
- Manana (Critical Reflection): The process of using logic and reason (Tarka) to doubt, dissect, test, and interrogate what was heard. It is the internal friction of reconciling the new information with existing knowledge.
- Nididhyasana (Embodied Assimilation): The internalising of the critically tested knowledge so deeply that it ceases to be an abstract concept and becomes a lived, embodied reality.

Modern [education](#) has become tragically stuck at Sravana. We grade students on their ability to regurgitate information—a task AI performs flawlessly. To survive, the academy must violently shift its assessment models toward Manana and Nididhyasana. We can no longer grade the essay; we must grade the intellectual friction.

How does a student apply the theories of Kautilya not to a historical exam question, but to the contemporary supply chain vulnerabilities of critical minerals in the Indo-Pacific? How do they internalize the civilizational state model to critique Westphalian assumptions in real-time? These acts of assimilation require the human mind to connect disparate, deeply contextual dots—a leap of embodied realization that bypasses the sterile synthesis of language models.

SHASTRARTHA AND THE RETURN TO THE ARENA

Ultimately, the survival of teaching and learning in the AI age demands a return to the oral, the spontaneous, and the live arena. The Upanishads are transcripts of relentless, escalating questioning. When the philosopher Gargi Vachaknavi pushes the sage Yajnavalkya to the very limits of metaphysical reality in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, there is no space for rehearsed, synthetic answers. The friction is real-time.

We must bring the spirit of Shastrartha back to the university. The conceptualisation of India not merely as a nation-state but as a civilizational state requires a pedagogy that is itself rooted in that civilizational depth.

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