

ARIC (ACTION, REFLECTION, INNOVATION, COLLABORATION) APPROACH FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHERS AS LIFELONG LEARNERS: A VIEW OF SHAMADISHATK-SAMPATTI

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Abstract

An effective education system depends on effective Teachers who are Learners in themselves. Being a teacher means being a lifelong learner engaged in continuous professional development in multiple domains, notably in Action, Reflection, Innovation and Collaboration (ARIC) aspects.

In Vedanta, Shamadishatk-sampatti is defined as one of the fourfold qualifications for a knowledge seeker to be a qualified aspirant to receive the knowledge. It is a 6-fold inner wealth (namely, Shama, Dama, Uparati, Titiksha, Shraddha, Samadhan) of an individual which needs to be cultivated and nurtured to make an individual an efficient learner to comprehend and realise the knowledge effectively and meritoriously. These six qualities working at the mind, intellect and sensory/physical level could be a framework to comprehend and actualise the development of teachers as lifelong learners from an ARIC perspective.

This paper discusses the Shamadishatk-sampatti, analyses the ARIC factors present in it and discusses its applicability for the professional development of teachers.

Keywords: Vedanta, Shamadishatk-sampatti, Teachers, Learners, Professional development, ARIC

1. INTRODUCTION

Educators as lifelong learners are the answer for the rapid transformations occurring at the school, societal, technological, behavioural, and economic dimensions (Coolahan 12). The advent of Covid-19 and related challenges in the education system with teachers at the core of the challenges and resolutions again sparked the significance of the teachers as lifelong learners.

The European Commission viewed that passionate and competent teachers who are lifelong learners are the key to an innovative and inclusive education system (SchoolEducationGateway).

Being lifelong learners, educators need to be adaptable, reflective, self-reliant, and practitioners having knowledge, attitudes, skills, motivations and perseverance to contribute to the education system (Coolahan 33). With the gargantuan technological boom and its stupendous use in the educational context, especially post-pandemic, educators need to adapt accordingly, to be innovative with the varying learning needs of the children, to be 'self-motivated' to learn new things every day and to implement in the classrooms (Hinkel).

In the spiritual traditions of India, while mentioning the attributes of the learner (adhikari) of the knowledge, the scriptures defined shamadisadhan-sampatti/shamadishatk-sampatti as one of the fourfold qualifications. It is a sampatti, a wealth of the inner strength, character, thoughts, etc., of an individual.

The objective of this paper is to discuss the concept of Shamadishatk-sampatti, to identify the ideas of Action, Reflection, Innovation and Collaboration present in the Shamadishatk-sampatti and analyse its significance for the professional development of teachers.

2. METHODS

A systematic analysis of Tattvabodha, a topical text (prakarana-grantha) in Vedanta written by Sri Adi Shankaracharya, was done. Other online resources were searched based on descriptors, like shamadishatk-sampatti, shamadisadhan-sampatti, shama, dama, uparati, titiksha, shraddha, samadhan, etc.

3. DISCUSSION

In this section, the concept of shamadishatk-sampatti and its constituents are defined in detail. Further, the applicability of the concept is discussed by analysing the skills and mindset of Action, Reflection, Innovation and Collaboration for teachers professional development.

3.1 What is Shamadishatk-sampatti?

Any prakarana-granthas (topical texts) in the Indian Knowledge System, like Tattva-bodha, Atma-bodha, Vivekcudamani, Panchadasi, etc., and other Vedantic texts, such as Upanishads, the Bhagvad-Gita, etc., mentioned four preliminary considerations with respect to the study of the texts. These four primary considerations are, Adhikari (attributes of the receiver of the knowledge), Visaya (subject matter), Prayojana (result accrues from studying the text) and Sambandha (relationship between the text and the subject matter). While mentioning the attributes of the learner (adhikari) of the knowledge, the scriptures defined shamadishatk-sampatti' as one of the fourfold qualifications. It signifies the treasure of the inner power, behaviours, ideas, thoughts, etc., of an individual

Tattvabodha, authored by Sri Adi Sankaracharya, has defined the shamadishatk-sampatti viz., shama, dama, uparati, titiksha, shraddha and samadhan in greater detail (Tejomayananda).

Having its source in Brhadaranyak Upanishad, (IV – 4 – 23), conservatively dated from 9th -6th century BCE, where Yajnavalkya teaches Janaka, he says a knowledgeable person (jnani) has to be a shanta (one with shama), danta (one with dama), uparata (one with uparati), titikshu (one with titiksha) and shamahita (one with samadhan) (Kanchi Sri Maha Periva). It is defined as six virtues which contribute towards the greatness of the character of an individual (Art of Living). Shradhha as wealth is not explicitly defined in the Vedas but is considered a basic quality to every knowledgeable and spiritual pursuit in the Indian knowledge traditions (Kanchi Sri Maha Periva).

3.2 Definitions of the Shamadishatk-sampatti

3.2.1 Shama

It means to have the inner tranquillity of the mind. The word shanti (peace) comes from the word shama. When the mind is not at peace, the intellect is also affected, which affects our understanding of the particular situation. To sharpen the intellect, we first need to calm the mind. This ability to keep a calm mind under any kind of circumstances is shama (Art of Living)

There are two ways to control the flowing thoughts and to bring the mind in full control of one self. It can be done firstly, by refusing to participate, react or engage with the thoughts, which require alertness and continuous supervision and secondly, by withdrawing the mind from the objects by understanding their true nature which is sorrowful and desire prompting. Intelligent practice and not force is required to discipline the mind. Suppression of thoughts is not the key; sublimation is needed to slowly and steadily control the thoughts and mind.

3.2.2 Dama

Dama is the restraining of the external sense organs i.e., eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and skin which have a propensity to get attached to outside objects. The senses are extrovert by nature and they run after the external objects continuously causing the mind to get indulged in sense pleasures time and again. The process of disciplining the senses and bringing them back from the cravings and pleasures and focusing the mind back on gaining knowledge is defined as dama.

Discipline and healthy habits help to control the senses. Restraining the sense organs involves self-awareness, alertness and balance for each and every activity of the sense organs and putting the faculties to proper use (Explore Vedanta). Practising dama means having a perfect alignment between the mind and senses (Art of Living). Control of the senses (dama) should aid control of the mind (shama) and vice versa.

3.2.3 Uparati

It is the strict observance of one own's duty (dharma). Adi Shankaracharya in Tattvabodha defines uparati as certain doable actions (svadharm anushthanm), the dedicated performance of one's duties. So, when one's duties are performed with dedication and enthusiasm, the performance brings joy and contentment and the mind also becomes steady, focused, peaceful and free of attractions-aversions (raga-dvesha).

It is also defined in terms of the natural withdrawal of the mind and sense organs from activities which are not suitable for the goals being aimed at, like spiritual goals or other goals depending on the age, position and place in life.

The secret of controlling the mind and sense organs is not so much a mechanical practice, as it is the cultivating of a subtler or superior interest (Explore Vedanta). As we discover subtler things, our fascination for grosser things drops off. When the mind discovers inner joy or tranquillity, its commotions will automatically cease. Thus uparati can be practised from two perspectives- first, by withdrawing the mind and the sense organs from the activities not suitable for the goals being targeted and, secondly, by developing an interest in something subtler and dedicatedly working towards it.

3.2.4 Titiksha

To bear non-conducive situations in life without reacting, complaining or blaming but with a cheerful acceptance is called titiksha. It is like a shock absorber of your vehicle which supports in the rocky terrain (at

the physical level of heat/cold etc., at the emotional level of joy/sorrow, etc., & at the intellectual level receiving pain/pleasure, etc.) of your life without affecting one's enthusiasm and joy.

3.2.5 Shraddha

It is the faith and acceptance of the knowledge and statements of the Guru and Vedanta (scriptures). Without faith in the means of knowledge, one cannot gain knowledge.

The student should see the possibility in the knowledge given by the teacher and the books which is an important aspect of the faith otherwise it would be blind faith. So, faith is placed as an intellectual facet and not an emotional facet. It gives impetus and push in any field of knowledge. As given in Bhagvada Geeta- 'shraddhavan labhate jnanam'. It is an intellectual conviction in the nobility and ability of the Guru and the validity of the scriptures that s/he teaches.

Faith is always in the unknown. Faith does not stop enquiry rather it encourages the seeker to reflect with an open and alert mind, and realise the truth. Faith is not blind; it gets strengthened through enquiry and culminates in knowledge.

3.2.6 Samadhan

It is the single-pointedness of the mind. When we have multiple goals our energy gets diverted into multiple paths and thereby affecting the chances of our progress. The enemy of good is not bad but another good as we are continuously being distracted by other things when doing something. With a single goal, our mind energies become focused and concentrated and we progress faster. It is the state of mind when we have a single goal in sight. To reach this goal, we have to cultivate and practise all the above five virtues in our life.

3.3 Application of Shamadishatk-sampatti for teachers

As discussed above, the individual nurturing and practising the Shamadishatk-sampatti will alone be in a position to receive the highest knowledge and to become a knowledgeable person. The presence of inner strength, internal characteristics, abilities and thoughts, are considered basic prerequisites in imparting knowledge in the spiritual and knowledge traditions of India.

The above detailed discussion of the six virtues namely, shama, dama, uparati, titiksha, samadhan, shraddha, focussed light upon the following concepts inherent in the Shamadishatk-sampatti which could be significant from the purview of the professional development of teachers as the lifelong learners/knowledge seekers in the education system.

Below, the different ideas of Action, Reflection, Innovation and Collaboration are first defined from the Indian Knowledge System perspective (as identified and analysed from shamadishatk-sampatti) and then, the validity of each concept is studied from the teachers development perspective.

ACTION

Actions in the Indian knowledge system can be defined from the perspective of the duties to be strictly observed (swadharm anushthanam) to attain the goals. The goals chosen are to be subtle and superior goals depending upon the age, position and place in life and the actions to be in correspondence with them, in students' life, the duty is to study and gain knowledge and for teachers to continuously gain knowledge and impart them.

The concept of Uparati in Indian knowledge tradition also delineates the performance of duty with single-pointed focus, with enthusiasm, joy, peacefulness, and without any likes, dislikes, fears and boredom, i.e., without any raga-dvesha.

Being in own Swadharm (own true and ultimate nature- Sat-Chit-Ananda) when observing one's duties and performing actions, is the core of the actions performed by human beings in their life.

This idea of Action can be summarised in the form of a radial cycle given below (fig.1).



Fig 1: IKS Radial cycle of Action

The IKS perspective of Action as defined above accentuated the following for teachers development:

- ❖ Every actions performed by teachers are their duty to be fulfilled with utmost responsibility, dedication, and happiness and without any biases and prejudices/attractions and aversions (raga-dvesha).
 - ❖ Teachers should be mindful of the goals they set for themselves in their life for which they strive. The nature and quality of goals represent the intellectual and mind/thought texture of the teachers. As one progresses in life, along with material goals, societal aims and spiritual/self-development goals to be focussed as well.
 - ❖ Aims of teachers must correspond to their age, position, and values in life. What teachers expect from their own and their careers in their 20s age should be different from what they expect in their 30s/40s/50s. With increasing knowledge and understanding of the surrounding environment and its complexities, the aims and approach towards things and people varies from being problem-oriented to solution-giving; from impatience to acceptance; from self-orientation to giving & sharing; and from linear thinking to lateral, etc.
 - ❖ While performing the actions, teachers should be present in their own true nature, i.e., their swadharma. The true nature is always Sat-Chit-Ananda (existence-consciousness-bliss), whenever actions are performed, duties are observed and goals are set.
- Existence/Sat means 'is-ness' i.e., I was, I am and I will. So, the teachers in present should be aware and incorporate their understandings and learning from the past in identifying their actions and setting goals, and also be mindful of the impact of their actions in future. In a way, the actions, impact and goals set by the teachers define their existence in all three time periods.
- Consciousness/Chit means the nature of absolute knowledge i.e., the 'I' present in me which is constantly aware of what is happening within and without. The teachers must constantly judge their own aims and actions and be aware of what they are doing, how they are doing and why they are doing it. The reflective self is the Consciousness which must be alive and kicking always in a teacher.
- Bliss/Ananda means the nature of happiness within. The teacher should always strive for happiness and calmness while resorting to any actions, discharging their duties and setting any goals.

REFLECTION

The Indian scriptures accentuated the importance of reflection and critical inquiry in seeking knowledge from others while defining the concept of faith (shraddha). The concept of faith (shraddha) is defined as the intellectual facet for the knowledge seekers and not the emotional aspect, where openness and alertness of mind, critical analysis, and reflection are considered prime and not blind belief in the knowledge sources.

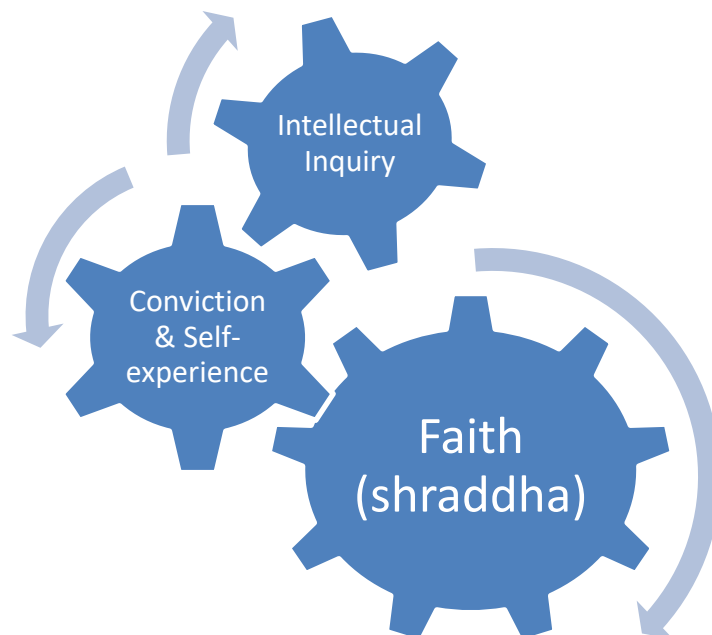


Fig 2: IKS Gear of Reflection

In Indian knowledge traditions, reflective inquiry is a significant aspect to walk the path to seek knowledge with determination and directly experience on what one has faith in. The perspective of Reflection as analysed from the shamadishatk-sampatti is defined below (Fig.2).

Analysis of the IKS Perspective of Reflection for Teachers Development:

- ❖ Faith is a critical intellectual aspect in developing a reflective mindset for the teachers which is essential for their learning and professional development. Faith in the aims and ideals of the education system for a better individual, society and nation; in the innate capabilities of children and in their own; and in the knowledge sources, etc., implies undertaking intellectual inquiry with an open and alert mind and not having a blind emotional belief in them.
- ❖ Teachers should be reflective practitioners making intellectual reviews of their own work in day-to-day professional life. The review is to be done from the rational mind without likes-dislikes (raga-dvesha), biases and prejudices and with an open and receptive mind.
- ❖ Reflective teachers while analysing their do's and don'ts in every situation builds their conviction and determination to enhance their knowledge base. Continuous expansion of knowledge brings teachers closer to experience in what they have faith in.
- ❖ Thus, Reflection is like a process to realise one's Faith, in what one intellectually believes in.

INNOVATION

Innovation means the implementation of Ideas which results in the introduction of new work and/or refining the existing work. The core concept is 'Idea' which is nothing but the thoughts about certain persons, places, things, incidents, etc.

Innovation comes with focused and intelligently controlled mind/thoughts and for an innovative mindset, control and streamlining of distracting and varied thoughts is essential. Free flow of ideas is important by routing the thoughts in a meaningful direction and not subduing the thoughts when they arise in the mind.

In Indian traditions, the practise of shama or thought control/mind control is an essential prerequisite for knowledge seekers to learn new things and generate new ideas and put them into action. It suggests that thoughts can be directed meaningfully by showcasing the least interest and engagement with the thoughts by being alert and aware of the practise of dosha-drishti (looking at the drawbacks or limitations of the thoughts/ideas) and raga-dvesha. Working without biases and prejudices (raga-dvesha) brings calmness of mind, better cognizance and an approach of neutrality towards situations, things and people, essential for the development of innovative skills.

The IKS traditions talk about the following concepts for the control of thoughts or mind control which is vital to have an innovative mind-set as given in Fig.3.

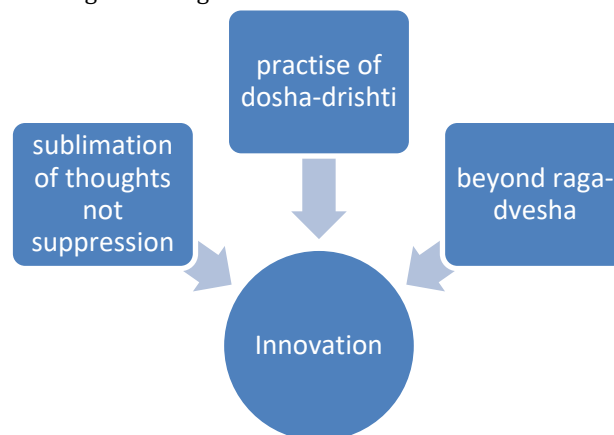


Fig 3: IKS converging radial for Innovation

The IKS perspective of Innovation for teachers development:

- ❖ Innovative teachers are the need of the hour to thrive in today's fast-changing education system where new educational prospects and challenges are coming every day.
- ❖ For Innovation, it is significant for teachers to have reduction and/or meaningful channelization of their wandering thoughts. Teachers are also human beings and are riddled with challenges in everyday life spanning from personal to professional spheres.
- ❖ In order to reduce and/or to effectively route the thoughts, teachers need to be aware of and supervise their rising thoughts with an analytical approach of dosha-drishti and raga-dvesha.
- ❖ Dosha-drishti signifies the judicious analysis of the limitations of each of the thoughts for a given situation and rationally selecting the thoughts/ideas to be put into action. This approach can be used cyclically

with every result of the actions being performed above. Doshadrishhti symbolises a kind of Action-Reflection cycle, where the mind can be withdrawn gradually from the thoughts/ideas which are not worth pondering leading to channelization of mental energy into particular thoughts or ideas.

❖ Another critical approach of raga-dvesha implies the importance of neutral and emotionally controlled thinking in reducing the number of conflicting thoughts or ideas and identifying the best available idea in a given situation. Acting without likes-dislikes, fear, agitations, stubbornness, etc., brings calmness of the mind and better execution of ideas.

COLLABORATION

Collaboration skills are the skills necessary in today's world to work together in unison for achieving higher aims, whether in the professional or personal sphere. In teaching careers, collaboration is important with children, colleagues, staff and seniors, to make a better classroom and working environment which directly impacts their social, emotional, spiritual and professional domain.

Through Shamadishatk-sampatti, the rich knowledge traditions of India put forth different ideas which are beneficial in developing the collaborative environment as shown in (Fig.4).

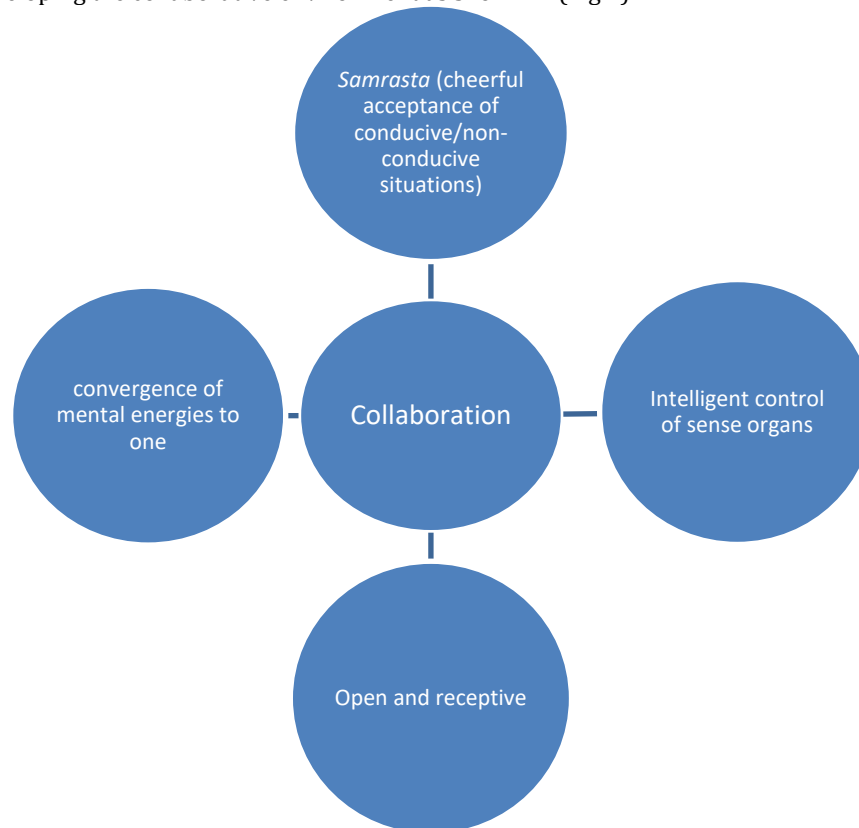


Fig 4: IKS radial outlook of Collaboration

The IKS view of Collaboration for Teachers development:

❖ Teachers need to be open and interested in different types of people, ideas and situations around them. They should be receptive to new information and ideas from experienced people (regardless of age), technology, and other knowledge sources.

Collaboration involves different people and situations which are dynamic in nature and thus activeness, openness and interest are a must for teachers to show a collaborative attitude.

❖ For collaboration, avoidance of conflicts and co-existence of people and their thoughts and ideas are significant. For teachers to maintain synchronicity, samrasta is essential, i.e., accepting favourable and non-favourable situations with cheerfulness, harmony, and poise without having any complaints, arguments, bickering, etc.

Happiness and joy are in focus for the teachers, which is also an important part of the development of the teachers as lifelong learners.

❖ Intelligent control of senses, like what you say, see, hear or do is vital from the perspective of forging a trustworthy collaborative environment among different stakeholders.

Teachers need to be conscious of their words, actions, and thoughts to build better social relationships with children and colleagues. In social relationships, the discipline of sense organs like the austerity of speech is

important which does not evoke negative emotions or hurtful but is pleasing, true and beneficial for all supports in developing the relations with others.

❖ For collaboration, the convergence of thoughts and decision-making is an essential aspect as well. Teachers need to focus and concentrate their distracting thoughts and mental energies towards a single goal to achieve the unison.

4. CONCLUSION

In Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (9th-6th century BCE), Shamadishatk-sampatti is defined as one of the four-fold qualifications other than discrimination, dispassion and yearning for liberation, for a knowledge seeker to become a qualified aspirant. It is defined as six virtues (shama, dama, uparati, titiksha, shraddha, samadhan) of an individual which need to be developed and encouraged to make an individual capable to understand and actualise the knowledge efficiently and effectively.

The concept of Shamadishatk-sampatti delineating Shama, Dama, Titiksha, Shraddha and Samadhan, not only defines the required traits in the knowledge seeker to gain knowledge but can also be a guiding light from the development of pivotal skills and mindset of the teachers, viz., Action, Reflection, Innovation and Collaboration. Different light beams in the form of different ideas impregnated in shamadishatk-sampatti, such as swadharma, raga-dvesha, samrasta, sharaddha, dosha-drishti, sublimation of thoughts, etc., can be beneficial in evolving the capacities and capabilities of the teachers as a lifelong learner in the professional domain.

Indian scriptures and Indian Knowledge system seem lucid in first look but are layered in its concept, approach, and impact depending upon the competencies of a knowledge seeker. This paper based on my limited understanding, analysed a few concepts present in shamadishatk-sampatti but with the increasing understanding and appreciation of the text, many layers will surely be unveiled.

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