CONCEPT NOTE

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

ON

CONCEPTS IN CONVERSATION: CANON AND COSMOS

Rethinking Philosophical Knowledge across Traditions, Cultures and Worlds

Date: 22-24 February 2027

Venue: Janki Devi Memorial College, University of Delhi

1. Background and Rationale

Canon refers to the accumulated memory of human thought: philosophical texts, scientific theories, religious visions, artistic forms, ethical principles, and cultural traditions that a society preserves as authoritative or foundational. Cosmos refers to the wider order of existence—nature, the universe, life, consciousness, time, space, and humanity's place within the whole and the unknown. Philosophy has never been one unified tradition but a plurality of canons formed through encounters, translations, and conflicts; its future lies not in a single universal canon but in an ethical, critical dialogue among many philosophical traditions. The canon safeguards and transmits a community's truth; the cosmos offers the broader horizon in which reality, identity, morality, and knowledge gain meaning. Here, cosmos is not just the universe but a metaphor for the many conceptual worlds through which humans interpret reality, consciousness, nature, society and existence. The theme, "Concepts in Conversation: Canon and Cosmos," seeks to examine how different philosophical canons have been formed, how they understand their own authority, how they have influenced one another and what new forms of philosophy may emerge through their dialogue. It aims to explore the relationship between two fundamental philosophical ideas: the canon as an authoritative structure of knowledge, and the cosmos as the diverse conceptual worlds in which humans interpret reality, consciousness, nature, society, and existence.

Philosophical canon has historically been shaped by particular institutions, languages, intellectual histories and structures of authority. Other traditions have frequently been classified as non-Western, traditional, religious, indigenous, local, or comparative, rather than being allowed to participate as equal sources of philosophical concepts and arguments. The challenge, however, is not simply to expand the canon by adding previously neglected thinkers and traditions. A more fundamental question needs to be asked: What happens to philosophy when different conceptual worlds genuinely encounter one another? This question provides the intellectual foundation of the proposed conference, "Concepts in Conversation: Canon and Cosmos." The conference therefore proposes to move from philosophy as a fixed canon toward philosophy as an open cosmos of concepts in conversation.

2. The Central Philosophical Problem

Contemporary philosophical discourse continues to be shaped by intellectual traditions that have historically privileged certain geographical, linguistic and epistemological centers. Although the globalization of knowledge has brought diverse philosophical traditions into dialogue, significant asymmetries remain in determining what counts as philosophical knowledge, whose concepts enter the global canon, and which intellectual traditions are treated as universal rather than culturally situated.

Philosophical concepts frequently claim universal significance. Yet the conceptual vocabulary through which they are formulated is historically and culturally situated. Can a concept be universal without denying the particular intellectual world from which it emerged? Conversely, if every philosophical concept is treated as completely culture-specific, meaningful philosophical dialogue across traditions becomes difficult. We may end up with separate philosophical worlds that merely coexist without genuinely communicating. The conference seeks to explore the space between these two extremes.

The concepts such as self, consciousness, reality, reason, knowledge, truth, freedom, justice, personhood and liberation appear across traditions, but they do not necessarily mean the same thing everywhere. The Sanskrit concept of ātman, the Buddhist anātman, the Cartesian cogito, the phenomenological subject, the embodied self, the

social self and the contemporary notion of the digital self cannot simply be treated as interchangeable versions of a single concept. Their differences are philosophically productive. Their encounter may reveal not merely similarities and differences but possibilities for conceptual transformation.

Can philosophy become a space in which concepts transform one another without being absorbed into a single dominant conceptual framework? The conference proposes that the future of philosophy may lie neither in abandoning the canon nor in preserving it unchanged, but in opening the canon to a larger cosmos of philosophical concepts.

3. Significance of Conference

One of the distinctive philosophical premises of the conference is that concepts travel. They travel: across languages; across civilizations; across religions; across historical periods; across academic disciplines; across political boundaries; across technologies. But concepts do not remain unchanged when they travel. Translation can transform them. Encounter can transform them. Misunderstanding can transform them. New contexts can transform them. Canon is not a museum of completed truths but to be understood as a living intellectual ecology. It contains concepts that can be reinterpreted, challenged, translated, and placed in dialogue with traditions that were historically ignored. "Concepts in Conversation" proposes a transformation in the way philosophy is understood and taught. Instead of treating traditions as isolated and ranked systems, it presents them as participants in a global philosophical conversation.

The canon is humanity's attempt to make the cosmos intelligible, while the cosmos continually reveals the incompleteness of every canon. The conference will examine how different traditions have developed distinctive relationships between canon and cosmos. The aim is to explore how philosophical traditions of the world encounter one another in such a way that each is transformed, none is silenced, and new forms of wisdom become possible. And to create an internal conversation with in the conversations of concepts. The purpose is not to erase differences or produce an artificial synthesis. The purpose is to create a space in which different traditions can listen, disagree, reinterpret themselves and generate new philosophical possibilities. And the aim is the transcend the binaries we have in philosophical conversations.

4. Major Objectives

The conference aims to:

a. Examine the historical formation and contemporary significance of philosophical canons.

b. Investigate the relationship between philosophy, language, culture and structures of intellectual authority.

c. Create genuine dialogue among diverse philosophical traditions.

d. Explore how concepts change when they travel between intellectual traditions.

e. Bring Indian, Asian, African, Indigenous, and other philosophical traditions into substantive conceptual dialogue with established philosophical traditions.

f.Examine how contemporary technologies generate new philosophical concepts and transform inherited ones.

5. Methodological Framework

Philosophical dialogue is most fruitful when it is not limited to mutual understanding but also includes mutual criticism and mutual transformation. The conference will adopt a dialogical and polylogical methodology rather than a purely comparative one. A comparative approach often places two traditions side by side and asks which offers the better answer. A dialogical approach asks how each tradition changes when it encounters the other. A polylogical approach goes further by bringing several traditions into an open-ended conversation. The conference will focus on historical study of intellectual exchanges, conceptual comparison, Translation and interpretation. Critical examination of attention to oral and non-textual knowledge, mutual criticism among traditions, collaborative research across cultures and engagement with contemporary global problems.

5. Major Themes and Sub-Themes

I. Indian Philosophical Concepts in Global Conversation

Untranslatability of Concepts

Metaphysical and Epistemological Distinctiveness

Modes of Thinking and Ways of Living

Anvikshiki and Modes of Philosophical Debates

II. Epistemologies and Canons

Decoloniality

Historiography

Translation and Interpretation

Non-Western Traditions

III. Minds, Selves and Machines

Consciousness,

Phenomenology,

Digital Subjectivity

Artificial Intelligence

IV. Cosmologies and Futures

Environmental Philosophy

Climate Ethics,

Ecological cosmologies

More-than-Human Worlds

6. Expected Outcomes

The conference seeks to produce:

• An international scholarly dialogue on global philosophy;

• New research collaborations;

• An international network of scholars;

• Interdisciplinary research initiatives;

• Collaborative research proposals;

• An edited academic volume;

• future workshops and international conferences.

A long-term objective is to establish a sustained scholarly platform for "Concepts in Conversation", bringing together scholars working across philosophical traditions and disciplines.

7. Proposed Conference Structure

The conference will be organized over three days and will include:

Inaugural Session

Opening Theme: From Canon to Cosmos: Why Philosophical Concepts Need Conversation

Keynote Lectures: Leading scholars addressing questions of global philosophy, comparative philosophy, Indian philosophy, consciousness, decoloniality and technology.

Round Table Dialogue: Vada-Vidhi

Plenary Sessions: Focused discussions on the major conceptual themes.

Parallel Sessions: Specialized paper presentations.

Valedictory Session: From Canon to Cosmos: What Future for Philosophy?