



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Reimagining Health Policy through the Lens of Vedanta

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Abstract

The philosophical system of Vedanta has had a profound influence on Hindu thought and practice, and we can explore its relevance in shaping contemporary health policy. As one of the six orthodox schools of Hindu philosophy, Vedanta is based on the teachings of the Upanishads, which explore fundamental questions about the nature of reality and the self. By examining key concepts and principles from Vedanta philosophy, this ancient wisdom can offer valuable insights into the limitations of dominant paradigms and identify new possibilities for more holistic and effective approaches to healthcare. Drawing on insights from Vedanta and current research in health policy, we can identify new pathways for improving health outcomes and promoting greater equity and justice in healthcare. Ultimately, this work demonstrates the importance of incorporating diverse perspectives into health policy discourse and practice to improve health outcomes for all.

Introduction

A philosophical system with deep roots in India, Vedanta has had profound influence on Hindu thought, belief, and practice. Considered one of the six orthodox schools of Hindu philosophy [1], Vedanta is based on the teachings of the Upanishads, a collection of ancient texts that explore the nature of reality and the self [1]. Due to its unique perspective on fundamental questions about life, Vedanta offers invaluable viewpoints into the human condition and our realistic role in the world.

In the context of health policy, examining Vedanta can provide a fresh perspective on assumptions and paradigms that underlie current approaches to healthcare. By exploring alternative ways of thinking about health and well-being, we can gain a deeper understanding of the limitations of dominant paradigms and identify new possibilities for more holistic

and effective approaches. For example, Vedanta's emphasis on interconnectedness and balance can challenge individualistic and competitive approaches to healthcare. By drawing on these insights, we can develop new frameworks for understanding health and well-being that are more inclusive and equitable.

We can explore the relevance of Vedanta in shaping health policy. Through an examination of key concepts and principles from Vedanta philosophy, we will consider how this ancient wisdom can contribute to contemporary debates and discussions about health and well-being. By bringing together insights from Vedanta and current research in health policy, we aim to identify new pathways for improving health outcomes and promoting greater equity and justice in healthcare [2]. In doing so, we hope to demonstrate the value of incorporating diverse perspectives into health policy discourse and practice.

The Core Concepts of Vedanta: Challenging Conventional Knowledge

Vedanta is a philosophical system that originated in ancient India and is considered one of the six orthodox schools of Hindu philosophy [1]. The term "Ved - anta" literally means "end of the Vedas" and refers to the philosophical teachings contained in the Upanishads, which are the concluding portion of the Vedas [1]. The Vedas are ancient Hindu scriptures that contain spiritual knowledge and wisdom. They serve as a foundational text in Hindu belief, providing additional necessity to utilize them in the background of cultural sensitivity.

One of the key concepts in Vedanta is the idea of ultimate reality, or Brahman. According to Vedanta, Brahman is the ultimate reality that underlies all



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existence and is the source of all being [3]. Brahman is described as infinite, eternal, and unchanging. It is beyond all attributes and qualities and cannot be fully comprehended by the human mind.

Another important concept in Vedanta is non-dualism, or Advaita. This refers to the idea that there is no fundamental separation between the individual self (jiva) and ultimate reality (Brahman) [3]. Instead, the individual self is seen as a manifestation of Brahman. The goal of spiritual practice in Vedanta is to realize this non-dual nature of reality and to experience oneness with Brahman. The concept of Vedanta challenges conventional knowledge and rationality in several ways. First, it posits that ultimate reality cannot be fully understood through intellectual reasoning or empirical observation [4]. Instead, it can only be realized through direct experience. This means that conventional methods of acquiring knowledge, such as scientific inquiry or logical reasoning, are seemingly limited in their ability to reveal the true nature of reality. This question raises many more: how do we know what is truth if our definition of the ideal is sourced from science? Does science even define the world? Second, Vedanta challenges conventional notions of the self and identity. In recent past, a so-called trend has emerged with people longing to find a sense of recognition and reality. A true search for self guides their vision through yogic methods and other such forefronts.

According to Vedanta, the individual self is not separate from ultimate reality but is instead a manifestation of it [3]. This means that our sense of being separate individuals with distinct identities is an illusion. Instead, we are all interconnected and ultimately one with Brahman.

Finally, Vedanta challenges conventional ideas about happiness and fulfillment. According to Vedanta, true happiness and fulfillment cannot be found through external means such as material possessions or sensory pleasures [5]. Instead, it can only be found by realizing our true nature as Brahman. A neighboring conception of this is deemed “param anand” or simply “eternal happiness.” Countless organizations and religious group have formed a basis of knowledge and understanding on moving beyond temporary pleasure and longing for long-term more permanent sense of peace. Despite the variability of happiness in today’s world, there is an instilled belief that this pathway is constant and provides this positive feeling to all. This means that lasting happiness and fulfillment come from within rather than from external sources. Vedanta offers a unique perspective on reality and the self that challenges conventional knowledge and rationality. By positing an ultimate reality that underlies all existence and emphasizing the non-dual nature of reality, Vedanta provides a framework for understanding our place in the world that transcends primary notions of identity

and fulfillment.

The Limitations of Conventional Knowledge and Rationality in Health Policy

Health policy is a multidisciplinary field which incorporates a myriad of assumptions and paradigms. These contributions shape how we approach health and well-being, and ultimately influence the policies and practices that are put in place to promote health. A primary assumption underlying current approaches to health policy is the idea that health can be understood and addressed through scientific inquiry and rational analysis [6]. This means that health issues are seen as problems that can be solved through the application of scientific knowledge and evidence-based interventions. While this approach has led to many important advances in healthcare, it also has its limitations.

One of the core limitations of conventional knowledge and rationality in addressing complex health issues is that it tends to focus on individual factors rather than systemic ones [7]. This means that health interventions often target individual behaviors or risk factors rather than addressing the underlying social, economic, and environmental determinants of health. As a result, these interventions may have limited impact on improving overall health outcomes. Another limitation of conventional knowledge and rationality in health policy is that it often perpetuates dualities and conflicts [8]. For example, conventional approaches to healthcare often focus on treating illness rather than promoting wellness. While it has its merit, it forms a questionable line between concepts like preventative care and traditional care. This creates a powerful duality between sickness and health, and can lead to conflicts between different approaches to healthcare. It also creates a sense of separation in the academic community on these matters, further contributing to potential developments of disparity. Similarly, conventional approaches to healthcare often prioritize individual responsibility over collective action. This could create conflicts between individual rights and social responsibilities. Current assumptions and paradigms in health policy have their limitations. By relying on conventional knowledge and rationality, these approaches may overlook important systemic factors that influence health outcomes. Additionally, these approaches may perpetuate dualities and conflicts that hinder progress towards more holistic and effective approaches to healthcare.

The Role of Vedanta in Informing Health Policy Assumptions and Paradigms

The concept of Vedanta can inform health policy assumptions and paradigms in several ways. By offering a unique perspective on reality and the self, Vedanta can challenge conventional knowledge and rationality and provide new insights into complex health issues.

One way in which Vedanta can inform health policy assumptions and paradigms is by emphasizing the diversity and complexity of reality. According to Vedanta, reality is not a fixed or static entity but is instead constantly changing and evolving [9]. This means that simplistic assumptions about health and well-being may not accurately reflect the complexity of the world we live in. Of course, our viewpoint on health policy is consistently evolving but in comparison to the rate at which medicine is growing, our policy initiatives are simply miniscule. There will not be one simple policy which applies for all and Vedanta can help complement our understanding of sciences and develop a keen sense of belief in pursuing more applicable legislation. By recognizing this complexity, we can develop more nuanced and effective approaches to health policy.

Another way in which Vedanta can inform health policy assumptions and paradigms is by offering potential solutions to dualities and conflicts. As we have seen, conventional approaches to healthcare often perpetuate dualities and conflicts that hinder progress towards more holistic and effective approaches. Vedanta, with its emphasis on non-dualism and interconnectedness, can provide a framework for transcending these dualities and conflicts [10,11]. For all of history, there has been a difficulty considering a singular guidance in policy, always favoring or biased towards one side or another. By recognizing the interconnectedness of all beings and the importance of balance and harmony, we can develop health policies that promote greater equity and justice. It can help us alleviate potential concerns with inequities forming from policy application and better dedicate the work to the overall good.

Vedanta offers a unique perspective on reality and the self that can inform health policy assumptions and paradigms. By emphasizing the diversity and complexity of reality, Vedanta challenges simplistic assumptions about health and well-being. Additionally, by offering potential solutions to dualities and conflicts in health policy, Vedanta provides a framework for developing more holistic and effective approaches to healthcare. Utilizing it as a complement to research and governmental approaches can help spread a sense of unity in policy, rather than contributing to duality.

Conclusion

Vedanta has current relevance in shaping health policy assumptions and paradigms. We have seen how Vedanta offers a unique perspective on reality and the self that challenges conventional knowledge and

rationality. By emphasizing the diversity and complexity of reality, Vedanta can inform health policy by providing new insights into complex health issues. Additionally, Vedanta can offer potential solutions to dualities and conflicts in health policy. By recognizing the interconnectedness of all beings and the importance of balance and harmony, Vedanta provides a framework for developing more holistic and effective approaches to healthcare. In light of these insights, it is clear that Vedanta has much to offer in the current context of health policy. By incorporating the insights of Vedanta into our thinking about health and well-being, we can develop more nuanced and effective approaches to healthcare. Looking to the future, there is much scope for further research and inquiry into the relevance of Vedanta in shaping health policy. Continuing to explore the insights of this ancient philosophical system, we can deepen our understanding of complex health issues and identify new pathways for improving health outcomes.

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Conflicts of Interest

The author has no conflict of interest to disclose.

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