

## Concept of Leisure in Ancient Indian Culture

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**Abstract:** Reliance on global definitions of leisure that emerge from the industrial revolution overlooks indigenous diverse understandings and experiences. By focusing primarily on the Western historical context, such definitions can miss the richness and variety of leisure as it has been experienced in different cultures across the globe. In the Indian context, leisure has long been seen as a meaningful and necessary part of life, integral to personal growth and community well-being, rather than just a break from work. This ignorance of the historical and cultural diversity of leisure practices can lead to an incomplete understanding of how different societies have approached the concept of leisure in distant past. By not acknowledging these varied traditions, we risk imposing a one-dimensional view that does not fully appreciate the complexities and richness of human experiences of leisure across different cultures.

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## Introduction

The concept of leisure, particularly as understood in the context of 19th-century industrialised societies, reflects a significant transformation in how work and free time were perceived and structured. In the 19th century, paid work became more regulated, with clear distinctions between working hours and leisure time (Best, 2010: 1). This shift occurred alongside the rise of industrialisation, which necessitated a structured work environment, often in factories, shops, or offices, separate from the home (Hudson, 2004: 29). In modern industrial societies, work and leisure are clearly separated, with structured work schedules and planned leisure time (Veal, 2004: 17). In contrast, primitive societies have no distinct separation between work and leisure; both are integrated into daily life, with activities following a natural, pre-determined pattern (Thomas, 1964: 51).

"It is simply inadequate to suggest that industrialisation created leisure, which has subsequently grown to today's level. In fact, industrialisation in Britain began by destroying leisure. When leisure re-emerged, it was given very particular social forms, which need to be understood as the outcome of a continuous struggle between dominant and subordinate groups . . . If leisure was an achievement, it was not achieved by some abstract process called industrialisation, but by the struggles, conflicts

and alliances of social groups. Both the right to leisure and the ability to pursue forms of leisure— are products of this history of conflict."

(Clarke and Critcher, 1985:48-49)

The use of subheading '*Leisure: A Nineteenth-century Invention?*' implies a question mark over the modern concept of leisure. Was it only a product of the nineteenth century, particularly influenced by the Industrial Revolution and the rise of the neo-middle class (Best, 2010: 174) Surely, this notion is overly simplistic and reductive, as it overlooks the rich and diverse practices of leisure that existed in various cultures long before the nineteenth century (Makopondo, 1997). Such a viewpoint leaves the possibility of dialogue in counter to the risks imposing a Western-centric perspective on the global history of leisure, disregarding the varied ways in which non-Western cultures have historically conceptualised and engaged in leisure (Chick, 1998: 112). Therefore, while the nineteenth century may have shaped modern academic notions of leisure studies, it is inaccurate to frame the concept of leisure as an invention of that era, as it existed in various forms and meanings long before.

'...since the 1960s leisure studies has become more uniformly Anglophone and, in this sense, more ethnocentric. However, although certain "voices" have been lost and others have been silenced by historical events, Anglophone leisure studies have demonstrated an ability to listen to voices from, and to understand the distinctive properties of leisure in societies outside, the core "leisure studies" countries.'

(Roberts, 2010:164-176)

The statement reflects that particularly since the 1960s leisure studies has increasingly become dominated by Anglophone (English-speaking) perspectives, making it more ethnocentric, meaning it has been shaped largely by the cultural norms and viewpoints of English-speaking countries. This focus has led to the marginalisation or silencing of other cultural perspectives, especially those affected by historical events like colonisation or global conflicts, which might have otherwise contributed to a richer, more diverse understanding of leisure. However, the statement also acknowledges that despite this dominance, Anglophone leisure studies has shown a capacity for inclusivity by listening to and understanding the unique aspects of leisure in non- Anglophone societies. This suggests that while the field may have been predominantly shaped by Western perspectives, there has been an effort to incorporate and respect the diverse ways in which leisure is experienced and valued in different cultures around the world. This ability to engage with and appreciate different cultural contexts helps prevent the discipline from being entirely insular and allows it to gain a more holistic understanding of leisure across global societies. Chick (1985: 23-43) through his anthropologic view believes that concepts of leisure and entertainment has adapted to the notion of 'expressive culture' in the non-Western considerations, along with this he also seems to be quite positive about the possibilities of future interdisciplinary academic's endeavors.

### **Context of Leisure Culture in India**

The rich and nuanced history of leisure in India has existed since ancient times in a very different cultural and social context. In ancient India, leisure was not just about the absence of work but was intricately linked to spiritual, intellectual, and cultural pursuits. Various terms for leisure, such as *vinoda*, *pramoda*, *kṣaṇa*, *prakrama*, *avakāśa*, *vitāna*, *vīci*, *sāvakāśatā*, *labdhāvaśa*, and

*kṣemya*, are found in the literature, though, unlike *kāma*, which signifies sexual pleasure, there is no single word specifically dedicated to leisure (Kumar, 2023:204). Chick (1998:115) analyses the context of leisure in India greatly as the games where he puts forward the argument of Tylor's (1879:116-131) comparison of the *Aztec* game of Patolli with the Indian game of Pachisi marking as an early attempt to explore the cultural transmission of leisure activities across civilisations, where he aimed to demonstrate that Mesoamerican civilisation might have been influenced by South Asian civilisation through these games. Although his study, along with Culin's (1895) later work, was eventually criticised for relying on outdated theories of diffusionism and unilinear evolution, these early efforts were significant. In this way, they laid the groundwork for more rigorous and theoretically sound cross-cultural research in leisure studies, acknowledging the complexity and diversity of cultural exchanges in shaping recreational practices across the world. This perspective is crucial in understanding the historical and cultural contexts of leisure activities in India and their global connections. These societies had their own complex understandings of leisure, often linked to spiritual, intellectual, and communal pursuits, which contradicts the idea that leisure was "invented" in the nineteenth century.

‘Ideas about leisure and leisure activities in India perforce have evolved under the combined influence of classical and folk heritage. In fact, it may not be wrong to say that the two enjoy a symbiotic relationship of give and take.’

(Bhattacharya,2006:75)

Activities such as participating in a variety of religious festivals (Chick, 1991:185-193), engaging in *krida*, enjoying music and dance performances (Brown, 1991), and practicing yoga or meditation were considered essential aspects of life, intertwining leisure with spiritual and personal growth. Critically, the nineteenth-century Western concept of leisure, as described, reflects a narrow view that tends to ignore or oversimplify non-Western perspectives. Doniger (2007:66-78) identifies the protagonist of the *Kāmasūtra*, the "man-about-town" (*nagaraka*), as urban elite who enjoys leisure and luxury without the burden of visible labor, much like a modern working man who, despite financial responsibilities, seeks to balance work with leisure.

In the context of the *Kāmasūtra*, this man lives in a city and maintains his lifestyle through various means, such as gifts, trade, or inheritance, which parallels the contemporary notion of individuals who seek leisure and pleasure after their professional obligations (Anand & Dane, 1982:81). Just as the modern working man spends his earned income on leisure activities to enhance his life outside of work, the *Kāmasūtra*'s protagonist invests his resources in the pursuit of pleasure, culture, and aesthetics. This connection highlights how leisure is an essential aspect of life for those with the means and time to enjoy it, whether in ancient or modern contexts. Various classical texts emphasise that the culture of sex as leisure were not just indulgences but integral to a sophisticated lifestyle, similar to how today's working individuals might view it as a crucial balance to their professional lives (Berdychevsky et. al., 2013:47-73). In classical texts such as the *Kāmasūtra*, *Kumārasambhavam*, *Raghuvamsa*, *Kiratarjuniya*, and *Sisupalavadha*, along with the writings of *Subandhu* and *Bana*, courtesans are frequently portrayed as symbols of prestige within royal palaces and as integral to the fabric of urban life (Bhattacharji, 1987:41). These texts suggests that the pursuit of leisure, facilitated by wealth and status, was a way to cultivate personal and social fulfillment, echoing the modern idea that leisure activities are essential for a well-rounded life. This presence of trained and skilled

prostitutes was crucial for providing a high-quality leisure experience for the urban elite. These women (*ganika*) were far more than mere entertainers; they were well-versed in the arts, knowledgeable in music, dance, and conversation, and skilled in the subtleties of seduction. Their education and refinement allowed them to engage with their clients on multiple levels, offering not just physical pleasure but also intellectual stimulation and emotional connection (Shamasastri, 1960). This made their company highly sought after, as they could provide a sophisticated form of leisure that resonated with the cultural and aesthetic values of the time. These women were not merely companions but were considered essential ornaments, often referred to as "*puramandana*," or "ornaments of the city." This designation of courtesans as inanimate objects of pleasure, valued primarily for their ability to enhance the aesthetic and sensual appeal of the spaces they inhabited, rather than for their individuality or personal agency reflects how these women played an essential role in creating an environment of elevated enjoyment and leisure for their patrons. Their skills and training ensured that the experiences they offered were rich varied, and deeply satisfying, catering to the refined tastes of those who could afford such luxuries. These dynamic underscores the importance of cultural and sensual sophistication in the leisure practices of ancient India, where the quality of leisure was as much about the cultivation of the mind and senses as it was about the pursuit of pleasure. The healthy use of sex for coping with depression was suggested not only by writers on depression, but also by the extensive literature on the positive impact of leisure on well-being. As sexual activities may be considered leisure (Freysinger and Kelly, 2004; Godbey, 1994; Godbey, 2008; Kelly, 1990; Meaney and Rye, 2007:131-188), they may moderate stress effects, contribute to individuals' well-being (Han and Patterson, 2007:328-351) and alleviate depression (Fullagar, 2008:35-52; Nimrod et al., 2012:419-449). just like any other form of leisure (Berdychevsky et. al., 2013:47-73). The sexual pleasure has transcended the mere biological function of procreation, evolving into an esteemed and 'a major form of leisure' (Kelly, 1990:373) and entertainment (Attwood and Smith, 2020:325-336). This is largely evident in texts like the *Kāmasūtra*, which emphasises it as an important aspect of personal and mutual enjoyment. The treatise elaborates on various techniques, positions, and emotional connections that heighten sexual pleasure, portraying it as an art to be cultivated and enjoyed. This approach is further reflected in the elaborate erotic sculptures of temples such as those at *Khajuraho* and *Konark*, where sexual activity is depicted not just as a means to produce offspring but as a vital, joyous expression of human desire. The discourse of pleasure in Indian history and culture is visible through a rigorous, source-based approach through the cultural practices and philosophical underpinnings of various pleasures from beauty and desire to artistic and domestic pursuits in both elite and popular spheres, including temples, courts, and households, and covering diverse topics such as the art of *Mathura*, *Ravana's* palace, and the *suratkhana* of *Rajput* royalty (Bawa, 2021). Patrick Krüger explores the concept of leisure as linked to pleasure, tracing how leisure and recreation were celebrated from ancient up to pre-colonial times. It examines how class and gender influenced access to leisure, with masculinity often reflected in sports and femininity in beauty and luxury. The labor behind this leisure is largely overlooked highlighting differing attitudes toward leisure across religious ideologies like *Brahmanism*, *Buddhism*, *Jainism*, and *Islam*, and among various social classes, including elites, women, and public spaces like gardens and performance areas (Krüger, 1952). These depictions highlight that sexuality, in ancient Indian thought, was intertwined with aesthetics, spirituality, and leisure. It was celebrated as a legitimate and fulfilling pursuit, integral to a well-rounded life, thus expanding its role far beyond mere procreation to encompass broader dimensions of personal and shared entertainment.

Ramsay highlights how the value of leisure has shifted over time, with ancient cultures deriving social status from leisure, while modern societies prioritise work. He in a way suggests that reinvesting in leisure is essential to counteract the negative effects of overwork, emphasising the need for a balance between work and leisure to enhance well-being (Ramsay, 2005). The central idea is that leisure should be recognised as a vital aspect of life, both historically and in the present, contributing to personal fulfillment and social identity. Most definitions of leisure indeed stem from the historical transformation of the working day during the industrial era. The separation of work and leisure became a defining feature, with leisure being understood as the time free from the constraints of paid work, often spent on activities chosen for enjoyment and relaxation. This perspective is deeply rooted in the Western experience, particularly as societies shifted from agrarian to industrial economies. However, when considering the meaning of the leisure experience, it's important to recognise that this definition is somewhat limited and culturally specific. In the context of India, leisure has historically been understood in a much broader and more integrated way. Ancient Indian society did not necessarily draw sharp distinctions between work and leisure as seen in the industrial West. Leisure was intertwined with everyday life, often involving activities that were spiritually, intellectually, and socially enriching.

Josef Pieper (1952) argues that leisure is foundational to Western culture and central to the philosophical and theological conception of the self. While his perspective has been influential, it is not without critique. One significant counterargument is the cultural relativity of leisure. Pieper's assertion can be seen as overly Eurocentric, as it does not account for the diverse ways in which different cultures understand and integrate leisure into their lives. Many non-Western cultures have developed rich conceptions of the self that are not rooted in leisure. For example, in Eastern traditions, the self is often understood through communal responsibilities, meditation, and disciplined practices rather than through the Western concept of leisure. In many indigenous cultures, activities that Westerners might classify as leisure, such as storytelling or rituals, are integral to daily life and not seen as separate from the serious aspects of living.

Another critique lies in the historical limitations of Pieper's view. Leisure, as he describes it, was often a privilege of the elite throughout history, and the vast majority of people, even in Western cultures, did not have the luxury of significant leisure time. Their philosophical or theological conception of self was likely shaped more by their labor and communal interactions than by leisure. Additionally, the nature of work and leisure has evolved significantly, particularly with industrialisation and the digital age. The distinctions between work and leisure are increasingly blurred, especially in today's gig economy and remote work environments, which challenges the relevance of leisure as a foundation of self in the modern world. In ancient Indian texts, leisure activities are depicted with clear distinctions between the 'high' or classical leisure of the elite and the 'mundane' or folk leisure of the common people. The elite engaged in refined activities such as music, poetry, and fine arts, which were seen as markers of cultural sophistication and status. In contrast, the common people participated in simpler, communal activities like festivals, folk dances, and storytelling, which were integral to their daily lives and social bonding. These distinctions reflect the intersection of class and leisure, where the elite's leisure reinforced their social hierarchy, while the common people found meaning and community in their own forms of leisure. Despite these differences, both forms of leisure contributed to a shared cultural heritage, with classical and folk traditions influencing each other and enriching the cultural fabric of ancient India.

Pieper's focus on leisure as a cultural foundation can also be seen as narrow. Culture is built on a wide array of human experiences, including work, family life, education, and religious practices. The

idea that leisure alone is central to the philosophical and theological conception of self may overlook the importance of these other aspects. Moreover, in various philosophical and theological traditions, the self is more closely linked to moral duties, community, and religious devotion than to leisure. For instance, in many religious traditions, the self is defined through service to others, ascetic practices, or the fulfillment of divine commandments, which may not involve leisure in the way Pieper envisions. Drama was a part of life; more than just a way to pass time—it was a gateway to a shared cultural experience in ancient India. The stories told on stage, whether about gods or ordinary people, were filled with humor, emotion, and moral lessons that resonated deeply with the audience. Watching a play was a communal activity, often taking place in vibrant settings like temples or public squares, courts of kings where people gathered not just for the entertainment but to engage with the cultural and spiritual ideas being presented. The beauty of ancient Indian drama was that it allowed people to step away from their daily lives, providing a space for both relaxation and reflection, blending leisure with a sense of connection to something greater (Prabhakar, 2024:137).

The contemporary relevance of Pieper's argument is also questionable. In today's society, the concept of leisure as foundational is increasingly challenged by the pressures of modern life. The demands of constant connectivity, economic pressures, and a pervasive work culture make true leisure harder to achieve. This raises the question of whether leisure, as Pieper envisioned it, can still serve as a cultural foundation in today's world. Furthermore, the digital age has transformed leisure, with activities like social media browsing, online gaming, and streaming services becoming dominant forms of recreation. These activities may not provide the contemplative or restorative benefits that Pieper associated with leisure, suggesting that the role of leisure in shaping the self may need to be reconsidered.

Lastly, Pieper's concept of leisure emphasises the individual's contemplative experience, which could be seen as an overemphasis on individualism. Many cultural traditions prioritise communal experiences and collective identity in the conception of self. In these contexts, leisure is often a shared experience that reinforces community bonds, rather than a solitary pursuit of philosophical or theological reflection. This perspective challenges Pieper's emphasis on leisure as primarily an individual experience and suggests that communal aspects of leisure should also be considered in understanding the role of leisure in culture and self-conception.

For Huizinga (1949), gambling represents the "dark side of play," an activity that is entirely negative and destructive, contrasting sharply with the more constructive and joyful aspects of play. This perspective finds an interesting parallel in the Rigveda, one of the oldest texts in Indian culture, where gambling is also portrayed with a sense of caution and ambivalence. In the "Gambler's Lament" (Rigveda 10.34), the excitement and allure of the dice are depicted alongside the ruin and despair that often accompany gambling.

प्रावेषा मा बृहतो मादयंतत प्रवातेजा इरिणे ववृतानाः !  
सोमस्येव मौजवतस्य भक्षो तवभीदको जागृतवमृह्यमच्छान् !!

*pravēpā mā brihatō mādayanti pravātejā harīnē varvṛtānāḥ |*  
*Somasyeva maijavatasya bhakṣo vibhidako jaganavirmahāmachāṃ || 1*

“The act of rolling dice on the board captivates me, akin to water flowing down a desert. I find myself intoxicated as if sipping sweet wine, witnessing the motion of these rolling dice. Despite being crafted

from Terminalia Belerica, wood or seeds, these dice are lively, speaking to me and luring me in various directions.”

Rgveda 10/34/1

The hymn reflects the tension between the thrill of the game and the devastating consequences it can have on an individual's life, including social and moral decline. While gambling is recognised as a form of leisure and a way to engage with fate and chance, the Rigveda also underscores the potential dangers, aligning with Huizinga's view of gambling as a darker, more negative aspect of play. This dual portrayal within the Rigveda offers a rich context for understanding the complex role of gambling in leisure studies, where it can be both a source of entertainment and a perilous pursuit.

In India, leisure has historically been viewed as an integral part of life in literature, often blending with daily routines and spiritual practices, rather than being a distinct and regulated part of the day being essential elements of the social and cultural fabric in early Indian urban centers and the spaces associated with it. Both normative and non-normative texts from early India discuss different kinds of gardens and leisure activities—how people spent their free time and found amusement in these green spaces.

सिलान् कतण्टुकाशिश्च खजृजांश्च सजपजतपपतन् ।  
 तप्रयालजन्मजकज तलंदाश्च कज टजां केतकानातप||5.2.9||  
 तप्रयंगजण गंधपूणांश्च तनपान सप्तच्छदंशथा ।  
 आसानां कोतवदाशिश्च कितविंश्च पजतपपतान||5.2.10||  
 पजपपभितणबदांश्च तथा मजकज तलतानतप ।  
 पदापान तवहगातकिणान् पवनधजतममस्तकान्||5.2.11||  
 हंसकाण्डिवातकिण वातपिः पद्मोत्मालयजतिः ।  
 आतिदान तवतवधं म्यिवान् तवतवधश्च जलाशयन|| 5.2.12||  
 संतानान् तवतवधैवृक्षैः सवृतृजफलपजतपपतैः ।  
 उद्यानातन च मिमायणी ददश्च कतपकज जिाः ||5.2.12||

(Valmiki Ramayan. (n.d.). Sundara Kanda – Sarga 2.)

*Hanuman* gazing upon *Lanka*, witnessed a scene of splendor. The city of *Lanka* was surrounded by blooming trees and flowering plants adorned with vibrant blossoms. Birds filled the air, perched on swaying branches, while ponds below housed swans and water-birds. Pleasure-gardens, rich with seasonal flowers and fruits, along with serene water-resorts, added to the enchanting beauty of *Lanka*. The development of gardens, parks, and other leisure areas was closely tied to the urban growth in early Indian cities. The connection between leisure and gardens is evident in numerous literary sources, providing historical context through their descriptions. Public baths in ancient India, such as those in Mohenjo-Daro probably served as both hygiene centers and social hubs, blending utility with communal leisure. Although a majority of scholars have focused only on the ritualistic aspects of it rather than a multipurpose approach (Kumar and Kumar, 2023:81; Vidale, 2010:59-76). These baths can be seen as early examples of spaces where people gathered for relaxation and interaction, similar to modern spas, wellness centers and community swimming pools. By examining the utility of architectural remains, modern leisure studies can gain valuable insights into the evolution of communal leisure spaces, showing the continuity and transformation of leisure activities from ancient times to

the present. In modern leisure studies, elite engagement is often characterised by access to exclusive spaces and activities that symbolise power, wealth, and social distinction. The Great Bath can be seen as an early example of this phenomenon, where leisure was not just about relaxation or enjoyment, but also about displaying and consolidating social status. The act of gathering in such a space, whether for religious rituals, socialising, or relaxation, would have reinforced the power dynamics within the society, much as elite leisure activities do today. Instead, it would have been a site of privilege, reserved for the social elite, who would engage in ritualistic or recreational activities that reinforced their status and cohesion as a class. The Great Bath was more than a communal facility; it was likely a site where the ruling class could engage in activities that separated them from the rest of the population, similar to how modern elites might frequent exclusive clubs or resorts.

### Ancient Arts and Leisure Studies

Steven Pinker's (1997) characterisation of art as a "pleasant treat for the mind" and his comparison of music to "auditory cheesecake" underscores the intrinsic connection between art and pleasure, positioning it as a significant element in leisure studies. According to him, the human drive to produce and appreciate art stems from its ability to stimulate our evolved aesthetic preferences, much like how we crave sugary or fatty foods due to ancient adaptations. This perspective aligns closely with the importance of art in leisure studies, as it emphasises how artistic activities cater to our innate desire for pleasure and fulfillment which is quite similar to Boyd (2009). Art, whether through music, painting, or other forms, engages our senses and emotions, providing a profound source of enjoyment and relaxation. Furthermore, Pinker suggests that art also serves a social function by appealing to our psychology of status within a group, highlighting its role in building and expressing social identity. In leisure studies, this paradigm reinforces the idea that art is not only a personal indulgence but also a communal activity that contributes to social cohesion and cultural expression. Thus, understanding art as a key aspect of leisure helps us appreciate how it fulfills both individual and collective needs, making it a vital component of human life across time and cultures. Art activities of leisure that are performed in a subconscious or instinctive state of mind often represent a true and authentic expression of human creativity and artistry. There are several reasons and ways this occurs, highlighting the deep connection between subconscious action and artistic expression.

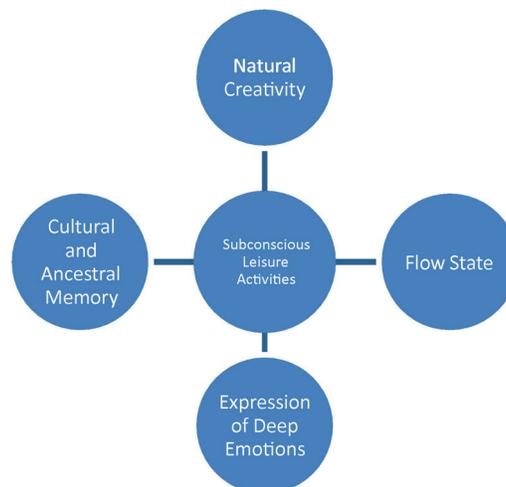


Figure 1: Chart displaying the factors responsible original expressions through sub-conscious art

When individuals engage in leisure activities subconsciously, they are not bound by the constraints of deliberate thought or external expectations. This natural flow of creativity often leads to genuine and original expressions, as the mind is free from self-censorship or rigid structures. In these moments, people are more likely to tap into their innate artistic instincts, producing work that is more spontaneous and reflective of their true self. The sub-conscious state of mind often aligns with what a psychologist calls "flow," a mental state where a person is fully immersed in an activity, with a sense of energised focus and enjoyment. During flow, the boundaries between the self and the activity dissolve, leading to a harmonious and effortless creation process. This state is where some of the most profound and authentic artistic work can emerge, as the individual is deeply connected to the creative process. Subconscious leisure activities often allow for the expression of deep-seated emotions and thoughts that might not easily surface in a conscious state. Art created in such a state can be a powerful vehicle for expressing the human experience, capturing emotions and ideas that are difficult to articulate in words. This gives the resulting work an authenticity and depth that resonates on a fundamental level. Many leisure activities, especially in traditional cultures, are performed in ways that have been passed down through generations. These activities often carry cultural and ancestral memories that are expressed sub-consciously, connecting individuals to their heritage and collective artistic traditions. The sub-conscious repetition of these practices ensures the preservation and transmission of cultural artistry in its most genuine form.

The *Gandhara* art is often associated with the visual representations that reflect a Hellenistic social milieu, characterised by refined leisure activities. These scenes vividly capture the essence of a Hellenistic lifestyle through images of banquets, musicians playing their instruments, simple wine-drinking gatherings, and even bacchanalian festivities. While such depictions are found across various sites, select examples particularly highlight the leisurely pursuits that were part of life in north-western India, offering a glimpse into the cultural blending of leisure practices during this period (Ghosh, 2019:41–67). Many cultures incorporate art into their daily lives through ritualistic practices, where the line between work, leisure, and art is blurred. These activities, whether it be weaving, pottery, dance, or music, are often performed unconsciously, driven by rhythm, tradition, and muscle memory. Over time, these unconscious actions evolve into intricate artistic expressions, showcasing the true essence of the culture's artistry. In music, dance, and other forms of performance art, improvisation is a key element that relies heavily on the unconscious mind. Artists in these fields often engage in spontaneous creation, drawing on their instincts and emotions. The result is often a raw, unfiltered form of art that is deeply personal and reflective of the artist's inner world. Improvisation allows the unconscious mind to take the lead, producing unique and often profound artistic outcomes. Techniques like automatic writing and drawing are direct examples of how unconscious leisure activities can lead to artistic expression. These methods involve creating without deliberate thought, allowing the subconscious to guide the hand. The resulting work often reveals hidden thoughts, emotions, and patterns, offering insights into the artist's inner psyche and leading to genuine and often surreal artistic creations. In leisure, the act of play—whether through physical movement, exploration, or creating something new—often happens subconsciously. Play encourages experimentation without the pressure of an intended outcome, allowing for a free flow of creativity. This kind of unstructured, unconscious activity often leads to innovative artistic approaches, as the individual explores new possibilities without fear of failure or judgment.

In essence, leisure activities performed in a sub-conscious state are closely tied to the purest forms of human artistry. They reflect the natural, instinctive creativity that exists within all of us, free from

the constraints of conscious thought and societal expectations. This kind of art is deeply personal often resonating with universal human experiences, and represents the true essence of what it means to create. The Western-centric perspective in leisure studies, which often overlooks the diverse cultural aspects of leisure, is not solely the result of Western scholars' biases. This ignorance can also be seen among indigenous scholars who, for various reasons, may adopt or perpetuate Western frameworks in their analyses. In some cases, indigenous scholars might have been influenced by the dominant academic paradigms of the West, leading them to prioritise Western concepts and definitions over indigenous understandings. Additionally, the pressure to align with global academic standards, which are often rooted in Western thought, can sometimes cause indigenous scholars to neglect or under emphasise their own cultural traditions and perspectives on leisure. As a result, the rich and varied ways in which leisure is understood and practiced in different cultures may be inadequately represented or explored, even by those within the culture itself, thereby perpetuating a narrow and incomplete understanding of leisure across the scholarly field.

## Conclusion

Leisure studies in the context of Indian culture hold immense potential for broadening our understanding of human activities, social structures, and cultural expressions. However, to truly realise this potential, it is essential to extend the scope of the ongoing leisure studies beyond the narrow confines often associated with the discipline. Traditionally being primarily focused on modern, Western-centric notions of leisure—often emphasising activities like sports, tourism, and recreation. This approach, while valuable, can limit our understanding of leisure in more diverse cultural contexts, such as that of India, where leisure is intertwined with history, art, culture, and everyday life. The assumption that leisure must be controlled to prevent disorder also does not translate well to the Indian context, where communal and celebratory activities have long been a source of social cohesion rather than unrest. In Indian culture, leisure has always been a multifaceted concept, deeply embedded in various aspects of life, from rituals and festivals to art, literature, and social practices. Ancient texts illustrate how leisure activities were integral to personal fulfillment, artistic expression, and social cohesion. These texts provide a rich idea of how leisure was perceived, practiced, and celebrated in different periods of Indian history. By expanding leisure studies to include such historical and cultural perspectives, we can gain a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of leisure as it has evolved over time.

Moreover, mainstreaming the study of history, art, and culture within leisure studies allows for the inclusion of populations and practices that have often been overlooked. For instance, traditional forms of leisure such as folk dances, music, oral storytelling, and religious rituals are vital components of Indian culture that have sustained communities for generations. These activities not only provide entertainment but also serve as a means of preserving cultural identity and passing down traditions. By incorporating these aspects into leisure studies, we acknowledge the diverse ways in which different populations engage in and value leisure, thus avoiding a homogenised or reductive view of the concept. In addition, considering leisure from a broader perspective enables us to explore the intersections of leisure with other significant cultural phenomena. For example, the concept of ethno-leisure—where leisure is closely tied to ethnic and cultural identity—can provide valuable insights into how communities use leisure to express their cultural heritage and negotiate their place in a rapidly changing world. Similarly, exploring the leisure practices related to spirituality, such as pilgrimage, meditation, and religious festivals, can reveal how leisure in India often transcends the secular,

becoming a profound means of achieving personal and communal well-being. Extending the scope of leisure studies also means engaging with the lived experiences of marginalised and underrepresented populations. In India, this includes examining the leisure activities of rural communities, women, indigenous groups, and others who may not fit the traditional mold of leisure consumers. By doing so, we can highlight the diverse and creative ways in which these groups engage with leisure, often in ways that challenge dominant cultural norms and narratives. Ultimately, expanding leisure studies in the context of Indian culture is not just an academic exercise; it is a necessary step toward a more inclusive and holistic understanding of leisure. By moving beyond a narrow perception, we open up the field to a richer, more diverse array of practices, histories, and meanings. This approach not only enhances our knowledge of leisure but also brings to light the intricate ways in which leisure is interwoven with cultural identity, social dynamics, and artistic expression in India. In doing so, we ensure that leisure studies remain relevant and reflective of the complexity and diversity of human life, both in India and beyond.

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