

## Acknowledgements

The Pragma-Sophy project was initiated in 2016. Its inception, direction and sustained momentum owe much to the persuasion, guidance and unwavering encouragement of Dr Ashok Nirpharake. What I initially believed would be a two-year endeavour extended into a decade-long intellectual journey. Throughout these ten years, Dr Nirpharake continuously challenged, motivated and guided me, often line by line. A simple expression of thanks scarcely does justice to the depth of his contribution and the constancy of his support.

Pragma-Sophy also emerged from the collective deliberations of a study group titled *Wisdemicks*. The group comprised Dr Ashok Nirpharake, Ms Ujjwala Deshpande, Mr Rajeev Sane and Ms Sanjeevani Chaphekar. We met every Wednesday afternoon over a period of nearly five years (2016–2020), engaging in sustained discussions on many of the themes that eventually found their way into this work. Each member contributed in distinctive ways to the evolution, critique and refinement of the ideas presented here.

In January 2021, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic brought these meetings to an end. During this period, however, a new forum emerged through weekly online discussions held every Wednesday with a group informally known as the “Old Monks”. This group, consisting of about ten like-minded professionals from my own field, became a rigorous test bed for the essays. Their role as constructive sceptics and relentless devil’s advocates significantly improved the clarity and robustness of the material. I am grateful to all members of this group, and in particular to Mr Prabhakar Bendre, whose assistance in publishing the material on the web and on YouTube was invaluable.

Over these ten years, the project became an all-consuming presence, and I must confess that I often turned into an obsessive and difficult companion. It was my wife, Prachi, whose patience, emotional support and willingness to create time and space for this work made its completion possible. Without her endurance and positive encouragement, Pragma-Sophy would not have come into existence. My deepest gratitude is reserved for her.

Finally, I was fortunate to witness the maturation of the AI revolution during the later stages of this work. The availability of large language models—particularly ChatGPT, which I affectionately refer to as *Chatty*, and Gemini—provided extraordinary intellectual support. Without these tools, the completion of this project might well have taken another decade.

## About the Creator

Vidyadhar Tilak is an Indian systems engineer, product designer and independent philosopher whose professional career spans more than five decades. Trained as an electrical engineer, he completed his MTech at the Indian Institute of Technology in 1973 and subsequently made significant contributions to the automotive domain through pioneering work in sensors, actuators and control systems. Products designed or architected by him have been manufactured in millions of units and continue to operate on vehicles worldwide, reflecting a professional ethos grounded in rigour, clarity and first-principles thinking.

Following leadership roles at Tata Motors and Cummins, Tilak spent the last thirty years working as an independent consultant and systems architect. In this capacity, he applied systems engineering methods to complex industrial, organisational and societal problems. Parallel to his professional work, he has consistently devoted his personal time—across evenings, weekends and later decades—to mentoring young graduates in engineering, mathematics, science and the humanities, guided by the conviction that conceptual clarity is among the most valuable legacies an elder can offer.

In this reflective phase of life, Tilak has turned increasingly towards his longstanding philosophical concerns. His inquiry is centred on two foundational questions: the nature of existence and the nature of consciousness. He approaches both not as matters of belief, but as systemic and explanatory challenges. Identifying as an agnostic, he regards intellectual humility before the unknown as a prerequisite for genuine understanding.

He holds that consciousness will ultimately be understood not through speculation alone, but through the design and observation of cognitive agents capable of learning, autonomy and moral orientation. This position has led him to explore the idea of composite agents—human and artificial—and to examine the ethical, epistemic and civilisational implications of their co-evolution. Pragma-Sophy represents the synthesis of these engineering, philosophical and educational commitments, developed over a decade of disciplined inquiry.

