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Integrating Indian Knowledge Systems into Contemporary Education: A Critical Review of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020

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ABSTRACT

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 marks a significant shift in India's educational landscape, emphasizing the integration of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) into modern education. Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) refers to the comprehensive and diverse knowledge systems developed and nurtured in the Indian subcontinent over centuries. These systems encompass traditional knowledge in various domains such as science, technology, medicine, arts, and social organisation, deeply rooted in India's cultural and philosophical heritage. Indian systems have been existing since ages but were predominant by the western thoughts, therefore there is a need to bring a change in the existing public mindset. This paper critically analyses the NEP 2020's provisions for incorporating IKS, exploring its implications for educational reform. Through a critical discourse analysis this paper identifies both the opportunities and challenges in implementing IKS based education.

KEYWORDS: Indian Knowledge Systems, National Education Policy 2020, Contemporary Education and Educational Reform.

2. INTRODUCTION

We owe a lot to the ancient Indians, teaching us how to count. Without which most modern scientific discoveries would have been impossible."
Albert Einstein

India has always been recognized globally as a prosperous and culturally rich nation, with a long history of knowledge systems and intellectual achievements. However, the British rule and their policies had a detrimental impact on India's education system and led to a decline in its prosperity. In recent years, the concept of Indian Knowledge System (IKS) has gained momentum, aiming to revive India's ancient traditions and wisdom. Under the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, India is embarking on a transformative journey to restructure its education system based on Indian knowledge traditions. The main objective of drawing from our past and integrating the Indian Knowledge Systems is to ensure that our ancient systems of knowledge represented by unbroken tradition of knowledge transmission and providing a unique perspective is used to solve the current and emerging challenges of India and the world. This article explores the significance of IKS and its potential to bring about revolutionary changes in India. Throughout history, India's prosperity was evident in its comprehensive human development, including material and spiritual aspects. The country attracted students and travelers from around the world who sought knowledge and skills. Indian culture and social life set a unique example globally, rooted in the belief that the world is one family. India's generosity and inclusiveness welcomed people from all corners of the world. This cultural ethos, combined with ancient knowledge, literature, and traditions, has shaped India's identity and contributed to its prosperity. One of the key pillars of India's ancient knowledge systems is the Vedic literature. The Vedic texts, comprising the Rigveda, Samaveda, Yajurveda, and Atharvaveda, hold immense importance in Indian culture and spirituality. These texts contain a vast repository of knowledge, encompassing various disciplines such as philosophy, science, mathematics, linguistics, astronomy, and more. The National Education Policy NEP 2020 envisions a monumental revolution in India's education sector, underpinned by Indian Knowledge System.

Indian: It refers to Akhanda Bharata i.e. undivided Indian subcontinent. It covers the area that spans from Burma on the east modern-day Afghanistan on the west the Himalayas on the north and the Indian Ocean on the south. Chanakya was instrumental in the establishment of the Mauryan Empire and Panini who wrote Sanskrit grammar got their education at Takshashila University of ancient India now in Punjab Pakistan. Ancient Indian education included the teaching of eighteen Vidya Sthanais, or schools of learning which were imparted in renowned centers such as Nalanda and Takshashila. India's global reputation has been derived from its contributions in the fields of Art Architecture Science Technology Craft Engineering Philosophy and Practices. Since most of the foreigners who visited India at that time for knowledge and disseminated this knowledge to the West and other parts of the world respectively.

Knowledge: Knowledge refers to the tacit knowledge and it lies in the wisdom of knowledge seekers. It is gained by insights into personal experiences through observations facing real life problems and solving them. Knowledge may exist in literary and non-literary forms. This tacit knowledge is transferred systematically by way of proposing new theories and frame works and in the form of literary work i.e. in the form of explicit knowledge.

System: System means a well-organized methodology and classification scheme used to access a body of knowledge. The codification and classification are based on the need interest and capacity of the knowledge seeker so that he may access the inherent knowledge. This will help them gain insights from overall knowledge and know how those different knowledge components logically complement each other.

The IKS is the systematic transfer of ancient and contemporary knowledge from one generation to another. It covers ancient knowledge from various domains to address current and future challenges. This knowledge exists in both literary and non-literary works. Literary resources cover Vedic and allied literature mainly in the Sanskrit Language resources on other religious traditions Buddhism and Jainism and knowledge that exists in Indian languages and dialects. Non-literary resources are present in oral traditions available across the country.

2.0 INTEGRATION OF IKS INTO NEP 2020

The NEP 2020 has emphasized that IKS will be part of the curriculum and will be incorporated scientifically. IKS along with tribal knowledge will be included in mathematics, engineering philosophy, yoga, medicine, sports, games, literature, languages and various other domains. NEP has focused on specific courses in tribal ethno-medicinal practices forest management and organic and natural farming. Under NEP IKS will be taught as an elective course for secondary school students. These inputs will be delivered through modern technologies fun games and cultural exchange programs among different states. NEP focuses on multilingualism and the IKS repository has many languages. Under NEP students will be delivered curriculum in their native languages and Sanskrit is the most ancient language will be taught to all. By learning different languages, they will know the rich and diverse culture of the nation. The Multilanguage formula will cover the aspects of constitutional provisions and it will create unity and integrity across the nation. It would be easy to include the history of Indian mathematics in normal math classes. The same could be done for architecture philosophy and Ayurveda. This is the goal of the NEP, but it will have to be done slowly.

The integration of the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) into the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is essential for several reasons:

- 1. Cultural Significance:-** The integration of IKS within the educational framework enhances cultural pride and identity among learners. By engaging with their heritage, students gain an appreciation for the insights of ancient Indian scholars and thinkers, fostering a sense of belonging and respect for their cultural roots.
- 2. Sustainability and Environmental Consciousness:-** Traditional Indian knowledge systems prioritize sustainability and harmonious coexistence with nature. By embedding these principles in the curriculum, students can acquire knowledge about sustainable practices, biodiversity, and the significance of ecological balance issues that are increasingly pertinent in the context of contemporary climate change.
- 3. Interdisciplinary Learning:-** The NEP 2020 advocates for an interdisciplinary approach, wherein IKS can function as a connective thread across diverse fields of study. For example, merging Ayurveda with modern medical practices can enhance students' holistic understanding of health and wellness.
- 4. Skill Development:-** By integrating traditional crafts, art forms, and practices into vocational training programs, the NEP can equip students with skills that are valuable to local economies. This initiative may also contribute to the revival of traditional arts and crafts, thereby promoting entrepreneurship and self-sufficiency.

3.0 UGC GUIDELINES ON INDIAN KNOWLEDGE SYSTEM INTO HIGHER EDUCATION

The UGC has issued specific guidelines to facilitate the integration of IKS into higher education. These guidelines include:

- 1. Establishment of IKS Centers:** Universities and colleges are encouraged to establish dedicated centers for the study and promotion of IKS. These centers should focus on research, documentation, and dissemination of traditional knowledge. By creating such centers, institutions can provide a focal point for the study and preservation of IKS, ensuring its continued relevance and application.
- 2. Incorporation into Curriculum:** The UGC recommends incorporating IKS into the curriculum across disciplines. This can include modules on traditional sciences, literature, philosophy, and art, ensuring that students receive a well-rounded education that includes IKS. By integrating IKS into various subjects, educators can provide a more comprehensive and culturally rich learning experience.
- 3. Interdisciplinary Approach:** The guidelines emphasize an interdisciplinary approach to integrating IKS. Subjects like mathematics, physics, and biology should include traditional Indian perspectives and contributions. This approach not only enriches the curriculum but also demonstrates the interconnectedness of knowledge systems, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of IKS among students.
- 4. Faculty Development Programs:** The UGC stresses the importance of faculty development programs to train teachers in IKS. These programs should equip teachers with the knowledge and skills needed to effectively teach IKS. By investing in faculty development, institutions can ensure that their educators are well-prepared to integrate IKS into their teaching practices.

5. Collaboration with Traditional Knowledge Practitioners: The UGC encourages collaboration between academic institutions and traditional knowledge practitioners. This collaboration can provide students with firsthand experience and insights into traditional practices. By engaging with traditional practitioners, students can gain a deeper understanding of IKS and its practical applications.

6. Research and Innovation: The guidelines promote research and innovation in IKS. Institutions are encouraged to undertake research projects that explore and validate traditional knowledge systems. This focus on research not only strengthens IKS but also provides new methodologies and insights that can enhance modern educational practices.

7. Holistic and Multidisciplinary Education: NEP 2020 advocates for an education system that allows students to study across disciplines. This includes integrating traditional knowledge systems such as Ayurveda, Yoga, and classical arts with modern science, technology, and humanities courses. Universities and colleges are encouraged to design curricula that include courses on traditional knowledge, philosophy, ethics, and cultural studies alongside contemporary subjects.

8. Incorporating Indigenous Knowledge: The policy emphasizes the inclusion of local and indigenous knowledge systems in the curriculum. This includes the study of regional history, folklore, traditional medicine, and environmental practices.

9. Promotion of Indian Languages: The policy supports the teaching and research of classical and modern Indian languages. This includes not only language skills but also literature, philosophy, and historical texts written in these languages. It also encourages the translation of traditional texts into modern languages and vice versa to make them accessible to a broader audience.

10. Values and Ethics Education: Integrating traditional Indian values, ethics, and philosophies such as those found in the Vedas, Upanishads, and other ancient texts into the curriculum to foster a sense of morality and ethics among students. The policy emphasizes the role of education in character building, drawing from traditional Indian teachings on duty, responsibility, and societal roles.

11. Cultural and Artistic Heritage: Arts and Crafts: Promoting traditional Indian arts, crafts, dance, music, and theatre within higher education institutions. This not only preserves cultural heritage but also provides students with a well-rounded education. Establishing departments and research centers focused on Indian cultural studies, including art history, musicology, and performing arts.

12. Health and Well-being: Incorporating yoga, meditation, and Ayurveda into the health and wellness programs of educational institutions to promote holistic well-being. Teaching traditional Indian practices related to diet, lifestyle, and wellness as part of the curriculum.

13. Sustainability and Environmental Education: Integrating traditional ecological knowledge and sustainable practices into environmental studies and sustainability programs. Encouraging the study of traditional conservation practices and their application in modern environmental conservation effort.

4.0 CHALLENGES AND CONSIDERATIONS

1. Balancing Traditional and Modern Knowledge: Ensuring that the integration of traditional knowledge complements rather than competes with modern scientific and technical education. **Resource Availability:** Creating and providing adequate resources, including trained faculty and educational materials.

2. Cultural Sensitivity: Approaching traditional knowledge with cultural sensitivity and respect, avoiding co modification or misrepresentation.

3. Scalability: Implementing these changes across diverse and widespread higher education institutions in India.

4. Resistance to Change: There may be resistance from stakeholders accustomed to the existing educational framework. Awareness campaigns and pilot programs can demonstrate the benefits of IKS integration.

5. Standardization and Validation: Establishing a standardized framework for the validation and certification of traditional knowledge is essential. Collaborative efforts between academic institutions and traditional practitioners can help develop these standards.

5.0 OPPORTUNITIES OF INTEGRATING INDIAN KNOWLEDGE SYSTEM IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Despite the challenges, the integration of traditional Indian knowledge systems offers significant opportunities in Higher Education.

1. Enhanced Employability: Students equipped with a unique blend of traditional and modern knowledge are better prepared for diverse career opportunities.

2. Sustainable Development: IKS promotes sustainable practices, contributing to environmental conservation and sustainable development goals.

3. Cultural Enrichment: Celebrating India's cultural heritage through education fosters a sense of pride and belonging among students.

4. Innovation and Creativity: The fusion of traditional wisdom and modern science can lead to innovative solutions to contemporary problems.

5. Continuous Evaluation: Implementing robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the effectiveness of IKS integration.

6. Public Awareness Campaign: Raising awareness about the benefits of IKS through community engagement and outreach programs.

7. Global Knowledge Dialogue : Positions India as a contributor, not just a consumer, in the global knowledge economy. Facilitates cross-cultural academic collaboration.

6.0 CONCLUSION

The integration of Indian knowledge systems into contemporary education, as envisioned by the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, represents a significant shift towards a more holistic and inclusive approach to learning. This integration not only fosters cultural pride but also enhances critical thinking, innovation, and sustainability in learning. The main goal of learning from the past and integrating Indian knowledge systems is to use our ancient knowledge systems, characterized by an unbroken tradition of knowledge transfer and a distinctive approach, to solve current and emerging problems in India and the world. The successful integration of IKS in higher education can lead to a more inclusive and multidisciplinary educational environment. It can bridge the gap between modern scientific methodologies and traditional wisdom, fostering innovation and creativity. Moreover, it can enhance the employability of graduates by equipping them with a unique blend of traditional and contemporary knowledge and skills. Despite several challenges, the potential benefits of integrating traditional Indian knowledge systems into higher education are immense. It can lead to the creation of a more culturally aware and ethically grounded generation of learners, capable of contributing to sustainable development and societal well-being. By embracing the vision of NEP 2020, India can pave the way for an education system that not only preserves its rich heritage but also prepares its students for the complexities of the modern world.

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