

Integrating Indian Knowledge Systems with the National Education Policy 2020: A Critical Analysis

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Abstract: *The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has been introduced to revolutionize India's education system by adopting a holistic approach to learner development. This framework offers a comprehensive and integrated strategy to enhance the education system's growth. A significant aspect of the NEP curriculum is the Indian Knowledge System (IKS), which encompasses India's diverse and rich heritage knowledge, spanning various domains such as science, technology, literature, philosophy, culture, medicine (Ayurveda), and yoga. The IKS is a treasure trove of knowledge assets accumulated from pre-historic times to the present day. By integrating IKS with NEP, India can leverage its rich cultural heritage to address contemporary and future challenges. The NEP emphasizes interdisciplinary and trans disciplinary knowledge, providing a unique opportunity to merge traditional wisdom with modern insights. The policy promotes the development of language resources and technology to facilitate the dissemination of indigenous knowledge. This integration will not only help understand underlying societal issues but also foster research, growth, and understanding of indigenous knowledge among stakeholders. Moreover, it will revitalize traditional knowledge by incorporating modern technology.*

Keywords: Indian Knowledge System, New Education Policy, Contemporary Knowledge, Interdisciplinary Knowledge

I. INTRODUCTION

India, with its rich and ancient civilization, has a treasure trove of traditional knowledge and practices that have been passed down through the ages. This venerable wisdom, inscribed on palm leaves and transmitted orally from generation to generation, has been an integral part of India's cultural heritage. However, over time, disruptions in the knowledge transmission process led to the erosion of this indigenous knowledge. The introduction of a new education system has attempted to revive and reintroduce this traditional knowledge to society, as demanded. The Indian Knowledge System (IKS) is a comprehensive framework that encompasses three key components:

- **Indian:** Reflecting the country's unique cultural, historical, and philosophical context.
- **Knowledge:** Embodying the traditional wisdom, practices, and innovations that have been developed and refined over centuries.
- **System:** Representing the structured and organized approach to preserving, transmitting, and applying this knowledge.

By examining the IKS, we can gain a deeper understanding of India's rich cultural heritage and its significance in the modern world.

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 Sthanas, 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. Most of the foreigners who visited India for knowledge and disseminated this knowledge to the West and other parts of the world. This is a part of IKS.

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 frameworks, 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 that 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 (Sanatana Dharma mainly in the Sanskrit Language), resources on other dharma 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.

IKS Division: In October 2020, the AICTE headquarters became the site of the newly formed IKS division, which is part of the Ministry of Education (MoE). In the knowledge repository, the IKS has 29 IKS research centers, 17 IKS Teacher Training Centers, and 7 IKS Bhasha Kendra. These research centers are interdisciplinary and they will preserve and disseminate the knowledge for further research and societal applications. The IKS Teacher Training Centers will provide necessary training to teachers to understand indigenous and traditional knowledge and IKS Bhasha Kendras will act as centers to promote linguistics and literary knowledge. These centers will rejuvenate the languages which are on the verge of extinction and contain the knowledge to transform the nation

Activities under the IKS Division: To provide funding support of Rs. 30-40 lakh over two years by considering the need to establish IKS centers in traditional schools and STEM educational institutions that will promote IKS and related activities to pair up students with IKS experts under the IKS Internship Program to carry out short-term research projects/ workshops/activities with a stipend (about of Rs. 25000) for two months. To establish a more structured approach to IKS teaching, the regulatory body for technical education has authorized the creation of a textbook entitled 'Introduction to Indian Knowledge System, Concepts and Applications' authored by B Mahadevan. Some IITs have shown a keen interest in IKS. IIT Guwahati has been offering Ph.D. in spoken Sanskrit and Assamese since its inception in November 2021. IIT Gandhinagar introduced the IKS optional course in 2016, well in advance of the NEP's rise in prominence.

II. CHALLENGES OF THE INDIAN KNOWLEDGE SYSTEM

With the advent of globalization there is a race to change the traditional education system and to make it of global standard by modernization. There is a dramatic change in pedagogy, curriculum, and medium of instruction. This has changed social dynamics a lot (Sharma and Joshi, 2018). This has led to social imperialism and cultural imperialism. In cultural imperialism, countries with high social status dominate the societies and cultures of countries having low social status (Coleman, 2010). The Indian education system is of Macaulay Origin and still, we are following it. In the age of vast information systems and following this education system we have lost our culturally based knowledge and heritage. We have lost our agricultural biodiversity and it has put pressure on food security, nutrition, and overall agricultural development. There is a massive loss of intellectual capital. Our IKS has more than 7000 medicinal plant species and over 15,000 herbal formulations. It has not only made it popular but it is drawing its attention to bio piracy and patenting them within or outside of the country. This amplifies the wrong ownership (Ghosh, 2015). There is a dichotomy in people whether to go with the indigenous way of living or to join the mainstream

NEP and IKS Inclusion: 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 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 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 multi language formula will cover the aspects of Constitutional provisions and it will create unity and integrity across the nation (**"National Education Policy 2020", n.d.**). 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.

Challenges of Implementation: There are certain challenges when it comes to integrating IKS with NEP. There is a lack of awareness among the community and stakeholders about the importance of IKS. IKS is generally present in non-literary form and it has been passed orally from one generation to another (**"Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS): Challenges of implementing it in", n.d.**). It makes it difficult to develop and implement IKS-based courses and programs in educational institutions. There is no clear-cut curriculum about IKS and it is leaving educationists perplexed (**"Autonomous colleges in state face challenges in implementing", n.d.**). Many stakeholders may see it as irrelevant or outdated. As IKS is available in different languages it may create barriers to those who are not well-versed with these languages. Moreover, the colonial system of education has created a bias against the IKS in the Indian Education system. The Indian education system is largely focused on the Western knowledge system and it can create difficulty in accommodating this system. There is also a shortage of well-qualified teachers to teach the IKS because it is not widely adopted yet.

III. CONCLUSION

The integration of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) into India's education framework has the potential to enrich stakeholders' understanding of their cultural heritage and foster a deeper appreciation for environmental sustainability. As IKS is rooted in tacit knowledge, it can empower students to navigate real-world challenges, such as climate change and food security, with greater resilience and ingenuity. However, incorporating IKS into the curriculum also presents several challenges that must be addressed. The Indian government has taken a significant step towards integrating IKS under the National Education Policy (NEP). To ensure a seamless implementation, it is essential to provide teachers with comprehensive training, enabling them to acquire a profound understanding of IKS and deliver it in a meaningful and effective manner. Furthermore, the existing data on IKS requires streamlining and organization using information technology, making it accessible and tailored to the needs and capacities of various stakeholders. Given the thousands of years of evolution that have shaped India's Indigenous Knowledge Systems, this process will necessarily be gradual, with IKS being incrementally incorporated into the education framework over time.

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