

Indian Knowledge System in Indian English and Literature: A Critical Analysis of National Education Policy 2020

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Abstract:

This paper explores the knowledge systems of India which were once beacon to the world. For scholars and knowledge seekers of the world like Fahien and Huen Tsang, who came to India to acquire knowledge, these Indian systems served as the reservoir and generously shared its knowledge in various fields. It saddens us to note that the youth of India flock to the West in pursuit of gaining and creating knowledge.

With regards to the role of English in enhancing the Indian knowledge system, one may point out that English being the lingua franca serves as a platform to project the vastness and richness of Indian knowledge in diverse areas to the rest of the world. For example, drama is a primary art form in India from which every other art form emerged. It is unique to India to have the first systematic text on the art of drama and aesthetics. The Rasa theory is the most fundamental and complete philosophy which cuts across all disciplines of arts.

India has the longest epic in the world, Mahabharata, and equally popular Ramayana. India also has one of the largest collections of folk tales in the world. Most of the famous folk tales all over the world, including the Aesop's Fables and the Arabian Knights, are considered to have been inspired by Panchatantra and other story collections in India. In order to connect with the local populace who were basically uneducated, they resorted to the use of common tropes, proverbs and dialects to establish a connection with the common people. In addition, Raja Rao's Kanthapura is an example of how 'sthal purana' is used as a device to connect with the masses using a narrative technique that can be related to the ordinary rural people.

In order to explore the native techniques in Indian literature, the NEP has opened its doors to give a prominent place to indigenous genres and literature to make learning interesting, inclusive, holistic, multicultural and multilingual in secondary and higher education.

Keywords: Indian English, Indian Literature, NEP 2020

Introduction

“Educate and raise the masses, and thus alone a nation is possible.”

-Swami Vivekananda

India was a beacon in terms of knowledge to the world. It was a haven to knowledge seekers of the world like Fahien and Huen Tsang, to name a few, who flocked to India to amass

knowledge from this reservoir which generously shared its knowledge in various fields. It saddens us to note that the youth of India flock to the West in pursuit of gaining and creating knowledge. However, the government of India, through its latest initiative National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, brings Indian knowledge systems into focus and tries to promote indigenous knowledge from various disciplines. This paper is a humble effort to briefly explore the Indian knowledge systems with specific reference to English language and literature.

Indian Knowledge Systems and Indian English and Literature

With regards to the role of English in enhancing the Indian knowledge system, one may point out that English being the lingua franca serves as a platform to project the vastness and richness of Indian knowledge in diverse areas to the rest of the world. The English language dictionary has absorbed many Indian words. For e.g., Cashmere is associated with wool and originates in Kashmir as it refers to the wool produced by Kashmiri goats. It is closely associated with the word shawl, a word which originates in Persian, and travelled into India via Urdu and Hindi and then became a part of the English vocabulary. The Indian climate contributed to the English language too. For example, 'veranda' and 'pyjama', which are necessary for living in a hot climate, were not part of England where the climate is cold. Another illustration of how language is continuously changing is the word "blighty." The phrase "Good ol' Blighty" is used by British expats to refer to Britain and their own country, however it actually derives from the Urdu word "vilayati," which means "foreigner" or "European."

The English language has helped to provide international platform and academic recognition to great litterateurs like Tagore who is acclaimed as the first Indian recipient of the Nobel Prize. English writers like T.S. Eliot, Rudyard Kipling and E. M. Foster document the Indian aestheticism and sensibilities in their writings.

Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata. Shantih shantih shantih.

While drama is a sub-genre of literature in the West, it is a primary art form in India from which every other art form and genres of literature emerged. India holds the unique distinction of having the first systematic text on the art of drama and aesthetics. The *Rasa* theory is the most fundamental and complete philosophy which cuts across all disciplines of arts. Tragedy was not an important part of the Indian literary tradition because of its pessimistic approach which was at variance with the Brahminical ideology which believes in the

indestructibility of the soul and life. Exposure to the classical tragic literature of the West facilitated the emergence of this genre in Indian literary tradition as also the novel form.

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English language played a pivotal role in homogenizing and uniting the multilingual and pluralistic Indian society. The concept of 'ahimsa', which offers and advocates non-violence as form of resistance, was disseminated to the world with the help of English language. It was through English language that India attempted to offer its perspective and correct the biased and prejudiced. Orientalists have worked in those lines. Author Nikesh Shukla, who lives in Bristol, believes that India's enormous influence on standard English illustrates the symbiotic nature of Empire. "It was inevitable with colonialism that Britain would imbibe the local culture and it would have a lasting effect because colonialism flows two ways." Indian philosophy and spirituality became popular in the West through English. It was Swami Vivekananda's speech in English, which helped to clear the misconception concerning India, was popularized by the English colonial imperialists. The Chipko movement introduced by Sunderlal Bahugana is India's contribution to the conservation and preservation of natural ecology.

The Rigveda, the first attested Indo-European document, reinforces the greatness of the Indian knowledge system in several domains. Oral traditions like kathn-pravacana parampara, Hari katha and Burra katha play an important role in preserving and disseminating ancient knowledge as the narrators travel all over India thereby bridging the gap between the educated and the unlettered by discoursing in the common colloquial dialect. The Indian oral tradition employs the 'nav rasa' whereby narrators enact the role and display emotions of rati (love) hasa (humour) Soka (pathos) Krodha (anger) bhaya (fear), santi (tranquility) etc. during the course of narration. It is akin to a mobile theatre, a street play or a nukkad natak. In the Deccan, Deccani writers realized early on the importance of reaching out to masses and popularized 'dastangoi', a tradition of creating and telling stories. The storytelling tradition spread across the South Asia as the Persian and Urdu writers used common tropes, proverbs and dialect to establish a connection with the common man.

Similarly, Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* is an example of how Indian tradition of the 'sthal purana' is used as a device to connect with the common and ordinary masses by using a narrative technique that can be related to with by the ordinary rural people in order to make them unite towards a common goal i.e., free India from the British rule and involve them in the nationalistic struggle for independence. These examples help to negate the misconception that knowledge in India was limited and restricted to only the elite class. According to the varna dharma analogy of Brahminic Hinduism, Ananthamurthy's *Samskara: A Rite For A Dead Man* highlights the hierarchical systems that extend from the Brahmin head to the Shudra limbs. The caste system, avarice, and self-discovery are some of the issues it examines. It portrays the breakdown of ideals and serves as a mirror for everyday life. He takes a post-structuralist stance on the rigid caste ideals that are common in Hindu discourse in his novel. His portrayal of the Brahmin community's narrow-mindedness and rigidity is performed through the main character Praneshacharya's rise and fall. The story contains Miltonic overtones in which a man is "tempted" to eat the "forbidden fruit," in this case Chandri, a woman from a lower caste, and how his actual actions bring about his destruction. The story in *Samskara* is similar to John Milton's *Paradise Lost* in that women are held accountable. Here, Chandri, a victim of heterosexual male predatory gaze, is held accountable for defiling the chaste Acharya. The main character is depicted as firmly adhering to the Manusmriti. Everyone in the caste system is observed defending and internalising their unique positions, which traps them in a cycle of caste-based anarchy. People begin to doubt Narappa's Brahmin purity as he passes away from the illness, which exposes their own flaws in the process. There are no answers to the Brahmins' predicament in the book of Dharma. It depicts a bewildered Praneshacharya pleading with the god Maruthi for help.

Indian Culture and Languages

India is a cultural treasure trove with a rich history that has given rise to a wealth of art, literature, traditions, artefacts, language expressions, and heritage sites. Every day, millions of people from all over the world participate in, enjoy, and profit from this cultural wealth by, among other things, travelling to India to experience the country's hospitality, buying Indian handicrafts and handmade textiles, reading Indian classic literature, engaging in yoga and meditation, finding inspiration in Indian philosophy, attending Indian festivals, appreciating

Indian music and art, and watching Indian movies. According to India's tourism motto, it is this cultural and natural wealth that makes India really "Incredible India".

The nation of India and the individual both benefit from the promotion of Indian arts and culture. In order to provide children a sense of identification, belonging, and appreciation for various cultures and identities, it is vital to foster cultural awareness and expression among other major competencies in them. Children can acquire a good sense of cultural identification and self-worth by becoming well-versed in the history, traditions, arts, and languages of their own culture. Therefore, cultural awareness and expression play a significant role in promoting both individual and society well-being.

One of the main ways to spread culture is through the arts. The arts are well known for enhancing people's cognitive and creative capacities as well as their overall pleasure. They also help to strengthen cultural identity, promote awareness, and uplift societies. Indian arts of all kinds must be made available to students at all stages of school, beginning with early childhood care and education, for several reasons, including their happiness/well-being, cognitive development, and sense of cultural identity.

Of course, there is a close relationship between language and art and culture. Different languages "see" the world in different ways, and a language's grammar impacts how a native speaker interprets their surroundings. Particularly, languages affect the manner in which members of a given culture communicate with others, including family members, superiors, peers, and strangers, as well as the tone of their conversations. Conversations between speakers of a shared language reflect and document a culture by their tone, sense of experience, and familiarity (or "apnapan"). Thus, our languages serve as a container for culture. Language is necessary for understanding all forms of art, including those found in books, plays, music, and movies. The languages of a culture must be preserved and promoted in order to preserve and advance that culture.

Sadly, Indian languages have not received the proper care and attention; in the past 50 years alone, the nation has lost over 220 languages. 197 Indian languages have been classified as "endangered" by UNESCO. Particularly in danger of extinction are a number of unscripted languages. Too frequently, no organised steps or procedures are taken to preserve or record these rich languages/expressions of culture, and when senior members of a tribe or group who speak such languages pass away, these languages frequently disappear along with them. Additionally, even Indian languages that are not formally listed as endangered, like the 22

languages listed in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution, are confronted with significant challenges on a number of fronts. Indian language instruction and learning must be integrated into all levels of secondary and higher education. In the broader context, the NEP 2020 comes as guiding force to promote Indian art, culture and languages through a pan-India network of educational institutions. One can only hope for better visibility to Indian languages and cultures through the NEP 2020.

Conclusion

If one aspires to visualize India as a country which beckons knowledge seekers and revive its lost glory of the past then one needs to emulate and echo Tennyson who years in *Ulysses*:

*To follow knowledge like a sinking star,
Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.*

The India nation and its citizens both benefit from the promotion of Indian arts, culture and languages. In this context, the NEP 2020 comes as guiding force to promote Indian art, culture and languages through a pan-India network of educational institutions.

"Men are mortal. So are ideas. An idea needs propagation as much as a plant needs watering. Otherwise, both will wither and die." – Dr. B. R. Ambedkar.

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