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Promotion of Indian Knowledge System – A Blend of Ancient Learning System with Contemporary Practices in the New Age Of Information

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Abstract: *Indian knowledge system is ancient, yet it is with a contemporary significance. It encapsulates all the elements with immediate relevance, such as diversity, openness, scientific-rationale, and logic, to its very core. It is an institutionalized pointer of culture and traditional values of different times and generations. The diversity in the present form is swiftly transferred from the cultural seeds spanning over many ages. The country known as the origin of one of the earliest developed civilizations, such as Indus Valley and Harappan, is no less than an ancient miracle when most of the learning philosophy was based on attaining a higher self through rightful knowledge. It is unfair to call it a promotion of the Indian knowledge system because it is the foundation of Indian Civilization. The knowledge system, which was founded on the recognized disciplines of Nyaya (logic), Vyakarana (language), and Mimansa (hermeneutics), unfortunately, lost its virtue before the modernized western system. This is the right time when we should consider what happened that even after being so developed, the glimpse of ancient Indian knowledge is rarely seen in today's knowledge system. What happened in history that other knowledge systems replaced the Indian knowledge system, and what is the new education policy going to do so that the ancient Indian knowledge system will get a new boost for inclusion? This paper discusses the diversity, significance, and promotion of the Indian Knowledge System with relevance under the broad headings of diversity, continuity, equity, learning systems, language, and vocation from as early as the 5th century CE.*

Keywords: National Education Policy, Diversity, NEP 2020, Ancient Education System, Rich Cultural Heritage, Multidisciplinary

I. INTRODUCTION

India as a country has a long sustained history of many years spanning over different periods. Most historians classify these periods as ancient, medieval, and modern. Over these periods, India has witnessed diverse yet significant transformations, especially in the education system. Vedic scriptures mostly influenced the ancient education system with learning based on moral lessons propagating auxiliary science and deep philosophical concepts. When art, literature were in bloom, and knowledge descendance was mostly based on recitation and intellectual debates. The popular gurukulam system also flourished during this period, thus establishing the earlier recognition of peer learning methodologies in ancient India. Education during this period was considered to be a pious subject with all-around societal support. The growth of multidisciplinary universities such as Taxila and Nalanda with diverse exposure and global appeal also took place. The society was so focussed that a distinct treatise was formed for grammar, warfare, and even some of the tabooed subjects which remained less talked about till recent times. In medieval times, the education system was mostly inspired by Islamic invasions and left a profound impact on the openness and diversity of the Indian education system by making it a subject of few with special restrictions to women's education. The modern Indian education system is chiefly inspired by educational policies implemented during the British Era. These policies were designed to systematically sabotage the rich educational heritage while marginalizing the indigenous educational practices. The long-term vision was the sectoral division by creating discordant learning silos with no connection with ancient roots and wisdom. The policies worked well for Britishers, and even after many years from independence, India failed to free it from the clutches of policies formulated with vile intentions.

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NEP 2020 – Some key points related to the promotion of the Indian Knowledge System

The NEP 2020 is a bold initiative towards addressing both the intent and the content of the Indian education system. Due to value-based existence, these ancient practices succeeded in surviving the extinction from the brutality of time and found contemporary relevance and acceptance in the modern Era through the NEP 2020.

Promoting Multilingual Learning - Language is important because it has a personal connotation. Sanskrit is one of the oldest known languages in the world and almost all Vedic scriptures including Some of the great treatises in literature, Science, and mathematics such as Mahabharata, Arthshashtra, Āryabhaṭīya in the Vedic era have come composed in Sanskrit Language which is also known as a signature of our rich diversity passed on as a social legacy from one generation to another with an element of belongingness. The instructions in local dialects and vernaculars resulted in vast popularity and spread of knowledge during earlier times. For a long time, languages are considered to be a great tool for learning and communicating ideas. In fact, many studies acknowledge the significance of the mother tongue as the medium of instruction especially for the early twelve years of the child's life. India presently has many recognized languages and local dialects. Some of these languages such as Sanskrit have been in existence for 5000 years. In other words, these languages are the footprints of ancient diversity and wisdom. The NEP 2020 strikes a chord with the insignia of ancient tradition and wisdom by specifically promoting the learning of regional languages, especially at the school level in order to protect these languages from extinction.

Promoting Learning Continuity - The rich Indian Cultural heritage is full of examples proving the significance of continual learning irrespective of any barriers of age or place for that matter. The prenatal learning of Abhimanyu (Mahabharata) and Prahalada, lullabies of Madalasa, Lord Krishna's life-changing sermons to Arjuna (The Bhagavad Gita) on the battlefield highlights our key understanding of learning irrespective of any barriers of age or place. Some of the ideas such as prenatal learning have been later scientifically proven and learning-induced neural plasticity of speech processing before birth. The NEP 2020 focuses a separate attention on learning informative years.

Promoting Multi-disciplinary Learning - The modern problems and challenges are multidisciplinary in nature. Hence, a cross-disciplinary approach is required to solve them. The universities like Takshila were a center of higher experiences with diverse exposure. The curriculum included astronomy, Vedanta, Ayurveda, agriculture, law, and commerce all under one roof. The NEP-2020 also works towards transforming the present-day silos of specificities into multidisciplinary centers of learning as inspired by the ancient wisdom of promoting exposure to arts, commerce, law, language, literature, culture, theatre, music, science, mathematics, logic, sports, medicine, environment, yoga, psychology, philosophy and sociology all at the same place for the holistic development of learners based on opinions, discussions, and debates on diverse issues through analytical and not on rote learning. This will help in two ways, one by encouraging holistic learner development and second by inducing universal appeal through its diverse catering.

Promoting Global Exposure - Ancient Indian education system was of global standard and appeal and many scholars from different parts of the world such as Korea, China, Tibet, Japan, etc. visited and participated in intellectual discussions. Many such pieces of evidence are cited in reports from Chinese scholars such as Fa-Hein, Huan-Tsang, and I-Tsing who visited these places at different times. The NEP 2020 acknowledges it by allowing Indian Universities to design curricula with global appeal and promoting it by expanding their reach to other countries.

Promoting Peer Learning - Peer learning through a monitoring system which later played a vital role in promoting affordable primary education in England lost its vitality in the Indian Education System. Earlier Vedic texts emphasized the cardinality of the peer learning system and it was greatly practiced in the gurukul - the residential learning systems in ancient India.

Promoting Infrastructural Support - The idea for creating National Educational Technology Forum (NETF) and the National Research Foundation (NRF) - for exploring new avenues for funding new research and making research and education more affordable. This idea is again inspired by the ancient system when education was completely free and funding for learning and infrastructural resources was mostly done through social services and charity.

Promoting Skill Trainings - The idea of promoting early vocational training. Educational technology like computational thinking from age six onwards and vocational education are to be integrated into the school curriculum. The realm of science is based on finding the unknown or exploring the unexplored - again an idea deeply rooted in rich core Indian Philosophy.

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Promoting Rich Cultural Heritage - Ancient India is full of marvels pertaining to arithmetic, military science, law, performing arts, ethics, and art and architecture.

Mathematics in Ancient India - Many incredible contributions such as the decimal number system, concept of shunya (zero), calculus, trigonometry have been made possible because of the mathematical geniuses of Aryabhata, Brahmagupta, Bhaskara II, and Varāhamihira. Even the excavation sites of Harappa and Mohenjodaro supports evidence of high degree of accurate measurements or in other words pragmatic mathematical practices during indus valley civilization. Many great examples such as the Sulbha Sutra from the Vedic era is an earliest known example of a geometrical expression which was later called as the Pythagorus theorem.

Astronomy (*Jyotisha*) in Vedic era - Astronomy holds a significant position in the earlier indian knowledge system. Vedic literature is full of examples citing our early familiarity with the motion of planets, sun and the moon. The work done by Aryabhatta, Brahmagupta, Varahmira towards tithi, nakshatra, yuga, equinoxes, and solstices computation is incredible in every sense. The intent was to figure out the right timings for the various rituals carrying immense importance at that period.

Architecture in Ancient India - Architectural studies in ancient india were known as Vastuvidya or Śilpaśāstra. The earliest known technical subject was used for the planning and construction of temples, buildings, drainage systems and even roads. Complex structures, such as Mohenjo-daro's Great Bath demonstrated advanced planning and construction skills. Samarangana Sutradhara by King Bhoja (1010-55 CE) even discusses the significance of site and soil selection and other building materials for an effective construction. Many ancient scriptures such as Sankhayana Grihya Sutra, Mayamata and Manasara exclusively deal with various aspects of architecture. Various temples, forts, stupas, rock-cut caves, monolithic monuments are no less than ancient marvels.

Discussion

The NEP 2020 envisions blossoming the new flowers of the skilled workforce shining with the new skills, and laden with the fragrance of ancient wisdom. It endorses multi-disciplinary approach with universal access in higher learning - An idea inspired from holistic development approach of ancient centres of learning with global appeal such as Nalanda, Takshila etc. Ancient Indian wisdom towards learning is based on core-concepts of inner as well as outer experiences. On one side, skill-based learning was kept at prominence on the other, deeper insights into inner experiences and wisdom beyond existence has taken the front seat. The NEP 2020 takes care of these ideas by keeping enough room for promoting 360 degrees or all-around learner experiences. Some of the challenges in present day context will be:

- Creation of multilingual peer-reviewed context will take many resources both in terms of trained manpower and time.
- Scaling universities to multidisciplinary capacity will again be a challenging task and striking a chord in between them will again be a tough task.
- Redesigning curriculum to appeal global demand will require creative efforts
- Assessment of learner's holistic development will require new strategies
- Accessibility demands can be met either by erecting more infrastructure or by utilizing technology to reach masses through shared e-learning. This again will require minimum hardware, networking, and internet accessibility with good bandwidth to remote areas.
- Transforming the siloed existence of Indian Universities into multi-disciplinary learning centres will not be easy, the existential crisis arose as a result of this change must need to be properly addressed and counselled with thorough discussions and debates.
- The NEP 2020 introduces vocational components at a quite early stage of learning at school level. This is a welcome step from the point of view of harnessing the demographic dividend and also meeting global skill demand for economic development. The biggest challenge could be changing the mindset of stakeholders towards its acceptance.

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Action Plan for Implementation of major policy recommendations

- **Training of trainers -** A large pool of well-trained faculty and training infrastructure will be a prerequisite for effectively implementing the multi-disciplinary, multi-lingual suggestions as made by NEP 2020. This can be done by clubbing the existing infrastructures and using technology to expand their accessibility to others. Therefore a capacity built-up and scaling with the rightful use of technology will be required to achieve this target.
- **Sensitization Drives -** Organizing seminars, discussions and debates towards changing mindset for accepting the need for multi-disciplinary existence and integration of vocational components to combat future existential crises.

II. CONCLUSION

One of the ancient civilizations in the world, the Indian Civilization has one of the longest documented history. India was once an epitome of learning known to the world as the harbinger of character building. Ancient parchments prevalent during this era carried not just the key to ancient learnings but also footprints of oneness with nature and earlier sustainable practices. The saga of our great heritage is immortalized in different commentaries made by foreign travelers, visitors and scholars from time to time. Ancient civilizations are termed developed as they built well-planned towns with developed drainage systems – a signature of their skill-centric approach to lead life. This was not possible without having a formalized skill training or in other words a defined system of learning. So, the history of Indian Education System alike India's history resonates a persistent change through evolution from ancient to modern days. The insight into the ancient system makes us aware about the multi-dimensional, skill-based, overall development of the human mind not just for society but also for attainment of higher self - the qualities which are yet so relevant in the modern day context. Gradually, even the world is acknowledging the cardinality of ancient concepts like yoga, meditation and minimalistic living deeply rooted in the indian philosophy hence any thought process towards reigniting and promoting the indian knowledge system as a part of contemporary mainstream knowledge system is a welcoming step as taken through the New Education Policy 2020.

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