Indian Knowledge System and Education Heritage

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India is an incomparable source of knowledge which has created rich culture and traditions. Unlike several countries of the world, India is a liberal, secular and democratic country. The concept of knowledge in India is holistic and systematic. It encompasses knowledge, spirituality, scientific and rational aspects. Knowledge is not just information but it is a path to freedom from ignorance. It encompasses a wide range of subjects from philosophy to science. Knowledge is interconnected with all things from physical materials to spiritual aspects. For example, body is physical but soul is spiritual. Body is not an end but a means to knowledge, spirituality and Dharma. Knowledge also refers to truth, perception, experience and testimony. It is also connected with profound study, research and inner understanding.

In India, people believed that knowledge holistically integrates body, mind, soul and entire universe. Knowledge arises from experiments, observation, research, data collection and analysis. Indian philosophy identifies several ways to gain valid knowledge—perception, inference, testimony etc. Perception is a direct sensory experience, inference means reasoning and drawing conclusions from evidence. Testimony is a knowledge from sources like scriptures, experts and elder people with practical experience of life.

Knowledge includes information, skills, values and learning. It is linked with ethics, culture, social concerns and environment. It is the body of facts, theories and practices. It is also related to study and learning with curiosity. Knowledge is theoretical and practical. Objective knowledge is natural and scientific. Subjective knowledge refers to literary and aesthetic aspects. Moral knowledge is human, social and ethical knowledge. Religion refers to faith in God. There are two major beliefs in religion—monotheism and faith in multiple gods. In Indian theory, God is one but also in multiple forms, avatars etc. Gujarati 'Adi Kavi' (first poet) says:

> Akhand Brahmandma Ek Tun Shri Hari,
>
> Jujave roop anant bhase.
>
> (Shri Hari is only one in the entire universe but He is seen in multiple forms)

Spiritual aspect of knowledge is divine. It provides eternal peace and happiness to mankind. Thus, knowledge is connected with spiritualism. Harmony between human beings and nature is also spiritual concept. In Indian concept of knowledge, there is a multidisciplinary system which includes Ayurveda, Yoga, environment, astronomy, arts and architecture. Knowledge is achieved through observation, experiments, analysis and research. There are six valid means of knowledge as below:

1. Perception: (Direct sensory experience)
2. Inference: (Drawing conclusions based on evidence or reasoning)
3. Testimony: (The word or testimony of reliable authorities)
4. Comparison: (Analogical reasoning)
5. Postulation: (Deriving knowledge from circumstances)
6. Non-perceptive Negative Proof: (Proof from other non-perception)

In India, there are six ancient schools of philosophy (Darshan) which is generated in Vedic philosophy. There are three periods in Indian philosophy: (1) Vedic period (2) Upanishadic period and (3) Post-Vedic period. In Indian philosophy, there were following six orthodox views of knowledge:

1. Nyaya: (4th Century B.C. by Gautama) (Logic)
2. Vaishesika philosophy: (Atomic theory)
3. Samkhya: (Dualistic philosophy)

4. Yoga: (Mind and body connection - Patanjali's Yoga Sutras)
5. Mimansa: (Vedic interpretation)
6. Vedanta: (Metaphysical exploring of Brahma)

Traditional knowledge is ancient, holistic, ethical and spiritual. Indian knowledge system was developed over thousands of year in India and Indian sub-continents. The Vedic corpus is the foundation of IKS (Indian Knowledge System). Major features of IKS are holistic, sustainable and spiritual. In ancient traditions of Indian knowledge, there were multiple subjects like Yoga, Ayurveda, Mathematics, astronomy, architecture, agriculture and governance and economics. In ancient India, Kautilya (Chanakya) in his 'Arthashastra' presented political and economics which are highly relevant even in modern times. Ayurveda is herbal and plant-based medical science. It is based on three doshas (Tridosha) - vat, pitta, cough. Charaka Muni wrote a book - Charak-Samhita. Sushruta Samhita was written by shushruta who described surgical techniques. In Ayurveda, there is use of plant-based herbs like Turmeric (haldi), neem, giloy, ashwagandha, harde, amala etc.

In Vedanga, there are six disciplines-Shiksha, Vyakarana, Chhandas (prosody), Nirukta (etymology), Jyotisha (astrology) and Kalpa (rituals). Smritis are ethical as well as social texts. Manusmriti refers to caste-system and social duties. Kautilya's 'Arthashastra' discusses political views, economics, and administration. Bhagavad Gita is a part of the, epic Mahabharata. It is a unique guide to all human beings with practical and spiritual guidance. Lord Krishna advises and explains Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga and Jnana Yoga to Arjun. He says that soul is immortal while body is mortal. Body dies but soul lives forever.

In India, after Vedas and Upanishads, there was Puranic Age. Puranas are mythological stories. It is historical, mythological and cultural tradition. Vishnu Purana describes creation of universe by Lord Vishnu. It also refers to Vishnu avatar (incarnation). Shiva Purana focuses on Lord Shiva's stories and teachings. Bhagavata Purana explains the life of Lord Krishna in Mathura, Gokul and Vrindavan. He lived spiritual but romantic life with Radha and Gopis (cowherd women). It influenced many poets and devotees like Jaydev, Narsinh Mehta etc.

Yoga is based on Patanjali's Yoga Sutras. He discusses eight parts of Yoga like Yama, Niyama, Asanas, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi. In Indian knowledge system, there is prominent focus and spiritualism and faith in God. Bhakti tradition is devotion to God which spread all over India during medieval period mainly in Maharashtra, Gujarat and North India. The Hindu tradition also believes in Sanatan Dharma which includes monotheism, polytheism and even heterodox schools. Heterodox refers to atheism (Nastika). Gautam Buddha rejected the existence of God, Vedas and caste-system. He taught The Middle Path which avoided the extremes of self-indulgence and self-denial.

He presented Noble Eight Paths: (1) Right View (2) Right Thought (3) Right Speech (4) Right Action (5) Right Livelihood (6) Right Effort (7) Right Mindfulness and (8) Right Concentration.

Jainism was founded by Mahavira (599 B.C.E). He emphasized Ahimsa (non-violence), truth and non-possessiveness. Charvaka focused on materialism and rationalism. He rejected existence of God, religion, Vedas and restraints. He advised people to eat, drink and enjoy life. Thus in Indian Knowledge system, there are features that include spiritualism, materialism, ethical and sustainability. In traditional knowledge of India, there were oral traditions, scriptures, gurukul and ashram education by gurus. In those days, there were highly intellectual rishis and munis who taught their disciples Vedic philosophy, scriptures, mantras etc. Guru like Drona taught his disciples the use of weapons to fight with their enemies bravely. In ashrams of the Gurukuls, the disciples were provided knowledge of environment, nature, agriculture, animal husbandry. In those days, there were Gaushalas were regarded as Gaumatas. Cow-milk, butter, ghee etc. were used as food for students of the ashrams. The students grazed the cows in the jungle area. Rituals were performed in Yagnas with mantra-jap in Sanskrit. In ancient India, gurukuls were the ashrams in the forest where disciples of various castes were educated. However, Brahman Guru Drona rejected Eklavya, a tribal boy as a student.

According to cultural tradition of ashrams and gurukuls, in India, all gurus were great scholars and teachers treating all students equally and liberally. They taught their disciples various disciplines like astronomy, ayurveda medicines, Vastu (architecture) and organic farming.

Vedic views are highly spiritual which believe that God is everywhere and God is everything. God is inside, outside, above, below and in all directions. Even tribal people believed that God was in river, trees, forest, mountains and all lands. Vedas tell that Ishvara is everywhere and that is why India is not a political country but punyabhumi. Hinduism is based on Vedic vision which explains that life is multiple forms. The whole world (Jagat) is one conscious being. Knowledge, memory and understanding are also God. In Vedic tradition, Dharma is sanatan (universal and eternal). Goal of life is to live; death is not the goal of life.

Major aspects of Indian Knowledge system are as follows:
(1) Vedic views.
(2) Interdisciplinary nature.
(3) Practical aspect.
(4) Preservation for future study.
(5) Theoretical and practical combination.
Indian Knowledge system affected education in India after independence. During the British rule on India, Indian Knowledge system was rejected. Macaulay in 1835 proposed reforms in Indian education. He recommended replacement of Sanskrit and Indian philosophy by English and Western education system. Macaulay's 'Minute on Indian Education' promoted English language and British education system. He declined Indian culture and Indian system of education. Macaulay's education policy was colonial mental project aiming to reject Indian culture and spiritual views. He regarded English as a superior language and Indian languages as inferior. He believed that Western culture was modern and rational. He also regarded Indian Knowledge system irrelevant and backward. Indian literature, philosophy, science and mathematics were depicted as inferior to Western knowledge. Mahatma Gandhi criticized British education policy and said that Indian education system was ethical, intellectual, local-cultured.

Western culture influenced Indian lifestyle and education. Art, literature, music and architecture were influenced by Western Knowledge system. Local skills and small industries were destroyed by British colonialism. The British domination affected Indian economy by exploiting local culture in India. English became the language of universities, courts and modern industries. Sanskrit, Bengali, Pali and Hindi were excluded from educational competition. Laws were designed under the influence of British laws and administration.

Now Indian education has changed after independence in 1947. Educational policies were reformed after independence. Kothari Commission served as a foundation of Indian education in 1968. In 1986, Rajiv Gandhi proposed a new educational strategy. In 1992, education policy was amended with a new strategy. Recently in 2020, New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has been introduced addressing a number of issues in the educational system of India. This policy is revolutionary and global with maintenance of Indian Knowledge System (IKS) and cultural traditions. NEP-2020 has decolonized British influence. Though English language is accepted as a source of global knowledge, AI technology, social equality, modern education in India also respects Ancient Indian culture, nationalism, Vedic views and Indian Knowledge System.

New Education Policy decolonizes education in India. It is based on mother tongue and other regional languages. In IKS, learning was skill-based which has impacted NEP-2020. Colonial laws have been revised or repealed. Administrative frameworks have also been restructured with focus on ancient Indian culture. In India now, duties are more necessary than power. Indian culture has been restored in times which include Vedic views, Sanatan Dharma, Yoga, Ayurveda, folk-arts, crafting, etc.

In present India, we believe that India is Atmanirbhar with indigenous innovation and local productions. There is sustainable development of Indian production and environmental responsibility based on Indian lifestyle. Cognitive decolonization has redefined thought, education, law and culture with NEP in 2020.

Indian Knowledge System has impacted education in India. It is influenced by ancient Indian culture, Vedic

views and interdisciplinary learning. There are subjects like Vedic mathematics, researching, Ayurveda and astronomy. Indian Knowledge System focused on spiritualism and intellectualism. Cultural and identity formation motivated learners to connect themselves with Indian culture and intellectual heritage. In modern education, a major change has occurred in interdisciplinary education. Students can learn interdisciplinary subjects like science, literature, sociology etc. Literature is connected with sociology, psychology, political ideas etc. Indian Knowledge System believes that all subjects are the parts of knowledge and so, they are linked with one another.

Indian Knowledge system was also philosophical, rational and intellectual. Critical thinking and rationalism were always active in ancient India. Indian scholars were logical and analytical. They researched about Ayurveda, environment and socio-political life of the people. In modern education, these things have been highlighted profoundly. Amitav Ghosh's novels are not just imaginative but environment-concerned, critical and based on research. Ecology is highly relevant today. Human life depends on environment and connection with nature. There are innovations in modern education connected with AI, Technology and medical science. NEP-2020 has focused on technology and science besides psychology, neurology and social concerns.

Indian Knowledge System (IKS) in modern education generates holistic development, cultural pride and sustainability. It covers multiple subjects with ancient Indian philosophy, Ayurveda, astronomy etc. It contributes to global knowledge. However, the impact of colonization on Indian education neglects indigenous wisdom. Indian Knowledge System offered holistic approach which integrates both physical and spiritual aspects. Ancient Indian texts— the Vedas, Upanishads and Bhagavad Gita— emphasize on harmony, spiritualism and environment.

Ancient Indian scholars were great researchers and experts of mathematics, science, astronomy and ecology. They also researched in herbal ayurvedic medicines based on plants, trees, roots, home remedies etc. The Mahabharata and the Ramayana were not mere religious stories but spiritual, ethical and psychological aspects. They contained social and cultural wisdom. Thus, the integration of IKS in modern education revisits history addressing social, political and psychological problems all over the world. IKS teaches students about knowledge, understanding, skills and inner wisdom.

New Education Policy creates pride in students and teachers for Indian culture, philosophy and spiritual awareness. NEP-2020 is a visionary blueprint which repositions Indian Knowledge system in modern education. The basic principles of NEP-2020 accesses equity, quality, affordability and sustainability. The vision of NEP-2020 is holistic, learner-centric and multidisciplinary education system. It is rooted in ancient Indian culture but it also focuses on nationalism, economic growth and social equity. Modern policy of education now also deals with research, teacher development and technological development. Students are supported financially for education and study in Research, Universities with digital infrastructure, internationalization and on-line and Distance learning.

Recently after NEP-2020, there are additions in Central Universities, IITs, IIMs, IIITs and so on. Total institutions have increased from 115 to 157. These institutions promote research, innovation and technology. NEP-2020 envisions research, Artificial Intelligence and vibrant eco-system.

The government of India has prioritized the promotion of Bhartiya Bhasha and integration of IKS (Indian Knowledge System). In modern education, multiple languages play an important role. Regional languages are used in Engineering now. NEP-2020 aims to position India as a global hub for higher education by promoting research, innovation and internationalism. Foreign universities from Australia and UK have launched in India. In future, other famous global universities may be launched in India providing global education to Indian students and other international students. Finally, we can say that like Indian economy, Indian education system will progress at the global level soon. Vande Mataram.

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