



**INTEGRATION OF TRADITIONAL AND FOLK KNOWLEDGE WITH  
CURRENT EDUCATION SYSTEM: INDIANIZING EDUCATION SYSTEM AND  
REGAINING THE STATUS OF VISHWA-GURU**

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**Abstract**

Indian education became westernized owing the implementation of Macaulay's *Minutes on Education* 1835. Gradually, not only English was taught as a language and also the medium of instruction but western literature, science and technology etc. was also taught; totally bypassing the Indian languages, science, technology and culture etc. English education instilled in young minds a western worldview even to look at their indigenous knowledge and education system. Consequently, the grand tradition of teaching-learning, science and innovation was offshored from the education system. Now, National Educational Policy (2020) recommends the integration of traditional and folk knowledge into the current education with a target to meet the contemporary global demand and simultaneously Indianization of education and knowledge system in the country. Therefore, in the backdrop of modernization, its synchronization into a global village, locating Indian cultural heritage and *gyan prampara*, the objective of this paper is to investigate if the

Indianization of education and knowledge system, through the integration of Indian traditional and folk knowledge, can be more meaningful, fruitful and useful than the western education system and a great bridge to make Indian students proud of India's *gyan prampara*.

The study proves that the folk and traditional knowledge is not only scientific, logical, and relevant even today but more practical too which may help future generations learn easily, use that knowledge in the time of need, establish the Indian knowledge system at a global level and restore its *gyan prampara* and also take pride in India and its Indianness.

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## **Introduction**

Swami Vivekananda said that “The gift of knowledge is the highest gift in the world” (Statustown). But, education is used as a tool to (dis)empower the people by dominant sections and also to exercise the power over others: socially, economically, culturally etc. The knowledge in India before the colonial period was self-reliant and self-sufficient to cater for the needs of society. But, English colonization had different needs to administer in India. Therefore, they not only introduced English as a medium of instruction but also taught English arts, science, culture and literature that prepared Indian students to evaluate and critique the Indian knowledge and education system from the western mindset. Thus, Indians not only adopted the dress, foods and manners but the western perceptions too, consequent to the Britishers’ mission to westernize India and Indians. To a great extent, they had been successful too and consequently, Indian traditional and folk knowledge got marginalized completely. Consequent to the sidelining of Indianness, Indians forgot to centralize, glamorize, and take pride in their culture, tradition, arts, language, literature, science etc. During the colonial period, Indian history was fabricated to ensure that Indian people would believe perceive their ancient knowledge as inferior one while western ‘modern’ knowledge as superior one. This process is called ‘Macaulayism’, named after Lord Macaulay. (Singh, 2022)

But, the National Education Policy (2020) recommends the combination of ancient information within the course of study at each levels: college education also as higher education. the most objective of NEP (2020) is to develop associate education system creating it more rootedness in Indianness and restore India's pride in terms of its rich, diverse, ancient culture, knowledge systems and traditions

## **Aims and Objectives**

The objective of this paper is to examine how the westernized education system has marginalised Indian culture, tradition and knowledge system and the centralization of western ideas, art, literature, science and technology etc. Further, it aims to map how the inclusion of Indian traditional and folk knowledge can help students to learn better than the western education system and it further helps India and Indianness regain centre stage which may end up in the status of India as vishwa guru.

## **Method and Material**

For this purpose, the undertaken study is mainly based on the westernized education system prevalent in India and its outcomes which are perceptible in form of distortion of Indian educational tradition, perspective and worldviews. Further, the Indian traditional and folk knowledge is also used as a source to map how it can improve education in India making it richer and how it can help regain the status of India as vishwa guru. For this purpose, as it is an ideological study, the postcolonial and linguistic theories will be used as tools to analyse the data selected for the study.

## **Discussion**

Nelson Mandela says that to bring the changes in the society or the world, education is the only and influential weapon. The change may be brought in any human being, community, society or nation. Realization of one's full potential; development of a fair and just society, and advancement of global progress all depend on education. According to Habitat, it demonstrates the difference between right and wrong, helps them find better jobs, and helps them become better citizens. Education teaches us the value of patience and supports our personal growth. Therefore, knowing and following our rights, rules and regulations can make our society a better place to live in. But it is possible when the right kind of relevant education is imparted to the students. In the colonial period, for their selfish motives, Britishers imparted western education, neglecting the Indian knowledge system. This western education disconnected people, more or less, from their own language, culture, tradition and knowledge in every domain and it is still in vogue.

Shiva (2000) argues that education with a stronger emphasis on Western values is seen as a means of preparing young people for life outside of their small-town communities. The traditional knowledge system is not highly regarded by this knowledge system, which is founded on Western principles. In addition, Gupta (2007) argues that western education has contributed to the notion that traditional knowledge is antiquated and unscientific. But, it is increasingly acknowledged that different knowledge systems should be assessed using criteria other than just the western ones. Even on the basis of current standards, many historic sciences and technologies were highly advanced and were appropriately suited to local conditions and requirements than the modern ones, despite the fact that the name "traditional" frequently connotes "primitive" or "outdated" practices. (Malhotra & Patel, n.d.) The United Nations does not look traditional knowledge in a disparaging sense but in high esteem and thus defines it in these words:

“Traditional knowledge or local knowledge is a record of human achievement in comprehending the complexities of life and survival in often unfriendly environments. Traditional knowledge, which may be technical, social, organisational, or cultural was obtained as part of the great human experiment of survival and development.” (Orient, 2013)

But as formal education has become more classroom-focused for a variety of reasons, it is widening the gap between community and school based knowledge (Niraula 2007; Goonatilake, 2001). As a result, the mechanism for passing down traditional knowledge from one generation to the next has disintegrated. This disintegration proves how after-school clubs, community centres, and home activities can all have a significant impact on student's academic success (Bell et al. 2006; Bransford 2001). Thus, traditional and communitarian knowledge is most important for academic achievements which also end up in pride in its culture, tradition and knowledge.

In light of this, the National Education Policy (2020) contributes directly to the sustainable transformation of Bharat or India into an equitable and vibrant knowledge society by providing quality education for all and India. , envisions an educational system rooted in the Indian spirit. Knowledge becomes a global superpower. According to our policy, our institution's curriculum and educational law encourage students to develop a deep respect for constitutional principles and fundamental obligations, a sense of belonging to one's country, and a conscious understanding of

### *Integration of traditional and folk knowledge with current education system...*

one's role and responsibilities in a changing world. must grow up. The Policy's vision is to help learners acquire knowledge, skills, values and inclinations, instilling in learners a deep sense of pride in being Indian, not only in their thinking but in their spirit, intellect and behavior. It is a commitment to action, defending human rights, promoting sustainable development and lifestyles, promoting global well-being, and what it means to be a true global citizen.

Inculcating Indigenous traditional knowledge (ITK) is a critically important component of NEP (2020), which aims to alter Indian citizens, the educational system, and society. Indigenous Traditional Knowledge (ITK) is an essential component of a community's culture and history. It has developed over many years of consistent experimenting with daily living and the resources that are close to the community. It is the special, traditional knowledge from a place that has existed and grown as a result of the unique circumstances of the native men and women living there.

The International Development Research Centre (IDRC) highlights and declares in its Report (1993) that traditional knowledge is a complicated notion It reflects the more complex combination of experiential, intellectual, social and spiritual elements that make up human culture. This refers to the holistic manifestation of social norms and values that govern interactions between groups of people and with the natural world. Societies have developed over the years by picking up knowledge from experience and passing it on to the next generation. ITK contains the traditional technological, social, economic, and philosophical knowledge of a particular society that is based on mental abilities, habits and ways of living in nature. It covers a wide range of topics such as agriculture, law, mathematics, psychology, as well as sustainability and health. It is important to make efforts to incorporate this knowledge into formal schooling in order to better one's understanding of the community in which one lives. Additionally, owing to its diverse and rich culture, India has the capacity to recognize and preserve the knowledge facets crucial to its continuation and existence as a unique nation in the world. These ITK-related factors that would create the ideal educational system that the current generation needs to succeed have been taken into account by the NEP (2020).

Indigenous traditional knowledge systems aid us in realising that there are various lenses through which we might perceive and learn about the world. The only scientific or contemporary approach is never the "correct" way to learn something. Epistemological plurality refers to the notion that there are various ways to learn about the universe. Traditional Knowledge differs from science in certain aspects, yet it is comparable to Western science that it is founded on observation. Some historians distinguish between historical traditions and the knowledge that is encoded in rituals and in everyday cultural practices; and abstract traditions to which scientific ecology belongs. The tradition knowledge system depends heavily on theoretical ideas and sees knowledge as being considerably more subjective than the West which receives knowledge through the senses and verifies it by commonsense, scientific, or mathematical tests. ITK is thus regionally specific (indigenous to a certain region), culturally and contextually specific, informal, verbally conveyed, and typically not documented. However, it has a holistic nature and is intimately connected to survival and subsistence for many people around the world.

### *Integration of traditional and folk knowledge with current education system...*

In order to make education as relatable, interesting, and effective as possible, NEP (2020) states that all curriculum and pedagogy, from school education onward, will be restructured strictly rooted in the Indian context and ethos in terms of traditions, culture, gyan and guru-shishya prampara taking into account societal needs etc. ITK is concealed in our towns, cities, and rural areas in the shape of folklore, music, poetry, elders, local authorities, historic documents, published works in numerous languages, etc. There are various ways to gather data on ITK, based on the data's nature, the scenario, the people involved, the social structure, cultural norms, and other factors.

For sustainable dissemination of knowledge for making balance in life of an individual, society, the world for the good of everyone, indigenous education is necessary. Its propagation and documentation are therefore crucial and have the power to improve the community, society, and country. It will accelerate growth, particularly in our nation, which has a thriving and wonderful culture. Kids' minds are truly opened up by the traditional knowledge system, whereas western education not only limits students' scope for learning but also denigrates the Indian knowledge system. According to Laura Nader, the purpose of studying Traditional Knowledge Systems (TCS) is to open people's minds to other perspectives and questions, change their attitudes towards knowledge, and redesign the organization of science, Singh (2022) quotes.

Indian traditional knowledge is respected and has its own value in the field of knowledge. The fabrication of history, minds, and Indian knowledge by the British for their own selfish ends in order to undermine Indian culture, customs, and education is a different matter. Otherwise, Singh (2022) cites Albert Einstein who has high regard for Indian contributions to the field of science. We owe the ancient Indians a lot for teaching us how to count, Einstein claims, without which the majority of recent scientific findings would have been impossible. Singh (2022) also cites a report published in 2016 by The Army War College, Mhow, which used examples from a variety of sources and linked elements of ancient and modern state technology and warfare. This study argues that indigenous strategic ideas and martial arts embodied in Aasastra, Mahabharata, and other literature are not only organic to the Indian psyche, but are also relevant to today's context.

To prove the destructive impact of western education in the Indian education system the researcher has taken some examples related to Mathematics and language.

#### **Language**

The impact of the English language has spoiled the linguistic domain in India. The pronunciation of names of disciplines and places has really come to the stage that it has become difficult now to find out which is the real name. For example, 'योग' is spelt as yoga<sup>1</sup> in English. Consequently, students, teachers and other stakeholders in India now pronounce it as योगा owing to the linguistic system of Indian languages. However, it is pertinent to mention that Google

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<sup>1</sup> A Hindu spiritual and ascetic discipline, a part of which, including breath control, simple meditation, and the adoption of specific bodily postures, is widely practiced for health and relaxation.

Translation translates 'yoga' as 'योग'. But the majority of people in India pronounce it योगा which spoils the etymology of the word itself in the discipline.

Further, there are names of the places spelt in English in the colonial period which has no relation to the real names of the place. And, Indian citizens continue to pronounce in the same fashion. For example, the capital city of India that is दिल्ली is spelt as Delhi which has no relation to the real name. And people speaking in the Indian language pronounce it as Delhi, not as दिल्ली. The same is the case of मेरठ which is spelt as Meerut. The use and pronunciation of मेरठ is also the same as that of दिल्ली. No one ponders over the reality of Britishers as the English language doesn't have many sounds that Indian languages have. For example, in the case of मेरठ, ठ sound doesn't exist in English therefore Britishers put it as ट only. But, Indians under the impact of the English language have gone far away from the reality of their culture, geography etc.

Furthermore, as NEP (2020) recommends, the Indian language must be the medium of instruction at an initial level as it helps in learning to a great extent. It is a well-known fact that students nowadays who learn tables in mathematics remain poor. They are not as efficient and fast as the students who study in Hindi medium or in any other Indian vernacular. In Indian languages, the tables are taught in a rhythmic way and being sung is easy to learn and for a longer time as songs and poems are easy to learn. A teacher in Bihar practises it and the video of the same goes viral (Maths). It generally can be accomplished in a productive manner only in vernacular.

## **Mathematics**

Mathematical calculations become very difficult for students until they totally engrossed in mathematics. But, India has a long tradition of teaching-learning even difficult ones too. Vedic mathematics<sup>2</sup> is one of them as it through formulae and tricks increases the calculation speed by five times with accuracy. There are many teachers in India who teach students using different tricks which are easy to learn for the student and learning proves to be fun. In addition to Vedic Mathematics, indigenous knowledge is more helpful than anything else. For example, we do multiplication of Feet and Inches<sup>3</sup> it becomes difficult to calculate even with the help of the calculator. Below is an example of calculation by calculator and indigenous knowledge

This infers that indigenous knowledge helps to calculate faster than the calculator and is approximately accurate.

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<sup>2</sup> Vedic maths is a system of mathematics that was discovered by an Indian mathematician, Jagadguru Shri Bharathi Krishna Tirthaji during A.D. 1911 and 1918. Vedic mathematics is also called mental mathematics in the mathematical world. We can say that the brain's capacity and its speed of calculations increases fivefold with the practice of Vedic maths.

<sup>3</sup> Unit of distance



### *Integration of traditional and folk knowledge with current education system...*

The traditional Indian bed (charpai) which was used in every household and is now replaced by wooden beds is being sold for Rs 22500 by KHAI which easily can be made in Rs. 2000-3000. It is easy to carry and doesn't need any mattress like the wooden bed is more body posture friendly than the other beds. Likewise, other items are being sold at a high price. The reason for all this is that western education has undermined Indian culture, tradition, religion, items, and way of life. Consequently, Indians discarded their Indianness and others now are making patents of Indian knowledge, selling Indian items at a high price.

### **Conclusion**

This study can be concluded that westernized education has looked down upon Indian tradition and folk knowledge. Western perspective has imprinted deeply on the mind and psyche of Indian students that the Indian knowledge system is outdated. Hence, they have detached themselves completely from their own culture, tradition and education. Now, the Indian traditional and folk knowledge is being commercialized to earn profit by MNCs. It is evident that Indian knowledge is more scientific, eco-friendly, need-based, and timeless whereas western education may not bring any fruitful results except employability. Owing to the current westernized education and knowledge system, students neither could become westernized completely nor did they remain Indian. Consequently, Indian pride and Indianness have become marginalized and so is the case of India's traditional and folk knowledge. Therefore, now, the NEP (2020) taking this lapse into cognizance has recommended the integration of tradition and folk knowledge into the school curriculum in an attempt to Indianize education which will undoubtedly prove fruitful and restore Indian pride which will result in the restoration of India's status of Vishwas guru. The integration of folk knowledge, as the study proves, will make children faster in their learning and work, more intelligent and more productive besides and equilibrium in their lives and society. In addition, the overlooked Indian knowledge and education system will come to centre stage and help in India's sustainable education and knowledge system and development.

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*Integration of traditional and folk knowledge with current education system...*

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