

Editorial Note

Integrating Indian Knowledge Systems into Curricula: Prospects and Challenges

The National Education Policy 2020 prescribes that knowledge of ancient India be integrated in both school and higher education curricula. The Ministry of Education, Government of India, recognises it as an 'Indian way' of striving for a sustainable and welfare-based society. The promotion of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) in higher education has been introduced with the intention to catalyse original research and education. It represents a roadmap for establishing a thriving *Bhāratiya Gnana Paramparā*¹ that seems to promise a *Bhāratiya Drishti* that can provide solutions to emerging global challenges of India and the world in contemporary times.

1 <https://www.education.gov.in/nep/indian-knowledge-systems#:~:text=The%20Indian%20Knowledge%20Systems%20comprise,health%2C%20manufacturing%2C%20and%20commerce.>

This issue provides an interrogation into whether this is prompted by the rise of postcolonial inclinations and examines the cultural roots of colonialism. Edward Said's work *Orientalism* spells a critique of the "Western order of knowledge", as an epistemological precondition of imperialism. Creating knowledge systems about countries outside Europe was central for justifying colonial conquests, wherein perpetuation of images of the colonised as inferior became indispensable to validating the European conquest of the world. This colonial experience left its traces in different forms of knowledge systems in the worlds of both the colonised as well as the colonisers. Postcolonial literature not only attempts to reclaim (and celebrate) one's own cultural identities. It also aims to critically examine and expose the dubitable and in fact false knowledge about non-European societies that was linked to colonial ambitions.

Can the induction of Indian knowledge systems be seen as an attempt towards the same? Interrogating this would involve a careful examination of the relationship between knowledge creation and power. The broad premise of Michael Foucault's *Archaeology of Knowledge* is that creation of knowledge is inseparable from power and together they function as a system of control. Hence, knowledge creation is never an objective, neutral process. Knowledge creation becomes a mechanism of power that produces and systematises different types of knowledge from information collated about people's beliefs, customs, activities and existence. Following this trail of theorising, what type is knowledge can be characterised as 'Indian', what comes to be characterised as 'knowledge' (and what remains at margins or gets left out) and what are the mechanisms to systematise the same into 'systems' become questions of utmost importance.

The University Grant Commission (UGC) document of Guidelines for *Incorporating Indian Knowledge in Higher Education Curricula* highlights that the Indian Knowledge System is a traditional

system of knowledge that has influenced many aspects of Indian life, including education, arts, law, and health. It is knowledge that is passed down through generations through a systematic method, rather than as a custom. It is described as *Jnan*, *Vignan*, and *Jeevan Darshan* that have evolved out of experience, observation, experimentation, and rigorous analyses which was put into practice through education, arts, administration, law, justice, health, manufacturing, and commerce. This promises to provide a unique Indian knowledge perspective that can be relevant to building global competencies.

The UGC has outlined Indian Knowledge Systems as including a wide range of knowledge, including areas of science and technology where discoveries of ancient scholars like Aryabhata and Brahmagupta in mathematics and astronomy are underscored. In the field of literature as also mental health/spiritual development, Vedic literature, in particular, the Upanishads, are the central focus. A holistic understanding of the universe captured in the Upanishads is noted as relevant to multiple fields, including philosophy (and we would like to add – psychology). Ayurveda and Yoga are considered pivotal with regard to knowledge of India's achievements in the fields of healthcare and medicine. Sanskrit as a classic language has been highlighted as promising for future national goals. Other languages and traditions in the document remain at the periphery of what constitutes the Bhāratīya Jñāna Paramparā, thus raising debates about the hegemony of a particular historical consciousness that will further marginalise, if not erase, plural and diverse epistemologies.

Can this theoretically be considered a postcolonial attempt to reclaim one's identity from an unjust European colonial repressive academic consciousness? Or does this further deepen the process of appropriation that hinders negotiation with diverse alternate modes depicting the past, the present and the future? Does the introduction of Indian Knowledge Systems enable a language

that can identify, acknowledge, and negotiate with that which has been historically dispersed and inhibited, thereby contributing to the liberal education frameworks that deepen Indian democracy? Will university knowledge disciplines integrate the complex, rich and diverse knowledge systems in an open manner that resists essentialising and totalisation (that is often a form of nostalgia and mystification), and instead builds a culture of resistance, that is, a culture of resisting all forms of dominance that hinder freedom, liberty, identity and individuality. In this issue, the aim is to explore the prospects and challenges of constructing and defining cultural as well as national identity through the introduction of Indian Knowledge Systems in curricula.

Overview of the Current Issue of Sambhashan

The current issue begins with Ozarkar and Pandey's article that explores modern linguistics as an example of the confluence of various knowledge traditions, highlighting how India's multilingual fabric illustrates continuity in knowledge production across time and space. They examine the implications of these insights for understanding the complex and heterogeneous nature of knowledge processes, ultimately reflecting on the essence of Indianness.

In the second article, Pawar argues that the Bhakti movement in India can be viewed as a translation movement, prioritising the expression of spirit and emotion over mere linguistic meaning. By exploring the historical context of translation practices alongside Bhakti poetry and its saints, she advocates for understanding the Bhakti Movement as a pivotal force in Indian cultural and knowledge systems.

In the third paper, Sethi examines the complex interplay between caste and Indian knowledge systems, exploring historical developments and their impact on disciplines like philosophy and literature. The transformations in knowledge during colonial

and postcolonial periods, particularly the efforts to address caste inequalities and advance educational democratisation, are also the highlights of this paper. In the fourth article, Chakravarty explores the rich historical, cultural, and intellectual landscapes that have shaped Ayurveda in India. The evolution of this ancient system is traced, and contemporary implications are examined in the article.

Roy and Dhikale, in the next paper, shed light on the concept of peace across various Indian philosophical traditions and its relationship to epistemology. They clarify how these traditions inform our understanding of peace and knowledge. Ganneri, in the sixth article, explores the infusion of Indian Knowledge Systems into higher education curricula, highlighting state initiatives to formalise this integration. The push for IKS integration, it is argued, often overlooks critical questions of knowledge and power, while many challenges in this endeavour remain unaddressed.

The following article by Garud addresses key theoretical issues arising from the Phule–Ambedkarian perspective on caste-based exclusions. Next, Zubin Mulla demonstrates the effectiveness of content analysis in understanding religious scriptures by presenting a content analysis of the Dhammapada, mapping each verse to universal values and comparing the findings with the perspectives of Buddhist scholars. In the ninth paper, Ranade and Subhedar examine Bhakti as a transformative pedagogical movement in India, asserting that its values can enhance contemporary education by fostering holistic development and purpose. Bhakti, positioned as analogous to modern social movements, is advocated as a model for creating a compassionate and inclusive knowledge-based society.

The tenth article by Bakshi presents a discussion of Vedantic perspectives on personality especially the three broad types of personality yielded through three types of attachment, each

representing one dominant mode of material nature. However, the essence of this explanation is definitely not taxonomical, as in the Indian classical tradition, human development is synonymous with psychospiritual development, and transcendental goals outweigh any typology. The last article by Verma presents a general overview of vedas and its contemporary relevance in terms of building employability skills.

The final section in this issue features book reviews by Aishwarya Bellam, Tina Chakravarty and Aishe Debnath covering books dealing with diverse topics related to the Indian Society and Indian Knowledge Systems.

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