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## Bridging Tradition and Modernity Incorporating Indian Knowledge Systems into English Curriculum

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### **Abstract:**

*This research paper critically reviews the introduction of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) in the English language program, as a bridge between tradition and modernity. The history of English education in India has been shaped by colonialism in which English is seen as the language of power, progress and social mobility. But for modern education, besides the ability to communicate in the global standard, the ability to be culturally grounded, having a sense of ethics, and intellectual self-confidence are also needed. Indian Knowledge Systems provide a deeply rich pool of philosophical, literary, linguistic, aesthetic, ecological, medical, governmental, ethical and oral traditions. This paper proposes that fusion of IKS in English learning does not equal rejection of modernity or global English. Instead, it has to do with the use of English to comprehend, explain and share Indian knowledge practices in the present context. The study is qualitative, analytical and secondary in nature, using secondary sources, policy documents and scholarly works. It reflects the colonial history of English education, explanation of what IKS is, curriculum options, pedagogical options, advantages and problems. The authors conclude that a balanced English curriculum can create students that are globally competent and culturally and linguistically aware.*

**Keywords:** Indian Knowledge Systems, English curriculum, decolonisation, multilingual education, NEP 2020, tradition and modernity

### **Introduction:**

There is always a dual nature of English education in India. English has opened doors to higher education, career opportunities, technology, administration, global communication and international scholarship opportunities, all on one hand. Conversely, colonial policies were imbued into the history of English education that demeaned indigenous language and knowledge traditions and Indian texts. In 1835, Macaulay's educational vision was to produce a class of Indians for colonial administration

and have them internalize the intellectual superiority of the West (Macaulay, 1835). The historical background continues to have an impact on the teaching and learning of English in many ways.

The issue in modern India is not about the teaching of English. English is a global language which is important for students' academic and professional development. The question that should be asked is how English should be taught. A reliance on Western texts, examples, theories, and cultural references for English education could lead students to learn English but not to their own intellectual and cultural heritage. Thus, there is a need to integrate Indian Knowledge Systems in the English curriculum to connect tradition and modernity.

Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) are the traditional systems of knowledge that have evolved over time in India through experience and observation, reasoning, practice and cultural transmission. The official education sources say IKS is the knowledge, which is related with Jnan, Vignan and Jeevan Darshan and is created by experience, observation, experimentation and analysis. (Education Ministry of India) Ministry of Education, Government of India, set up the IKS Division to encourage interdisciplinary research and the dissemination of Indian knowledge traditions in arts, literature, agriculture, science and technology, architecture, management and economics. (iksindia.org)

The use of IKS in English education can make English education more meaningful, inclusive and contextual. It can be helpful for learners to use English not only as a language tool to mimic native speakers, but to convey Indian realities, local experiences, philosophical ideas and cultural knowledge.

### **Research Objectives:**

**The objectives of this research paper are:**

1. To examine the need for incorporating Indian Knowledge Systems into the English curriculum.
2. To understand the relationship between tradition, modernity, and English education.
3. To analyze how IKS can enrich English language and literature teaching.
4. To identify possible pedagogical strategies for integrating IKS into English classrooms.
5. To evaluate the benefits and challenges of IKS-based English curriculum development.

### **Research Questions:**

**This study addresses the following research questions:**

1. Why is it important to integrate Indian Knowledge Systems into the English curriculum?
2. How can English education bridge tradition and modernity?
3. What areas of IKS can be included in English language and literature teaching?
4. What teaching methods can support IKS-based English education?
5. What are the major challenges in incorporating IKS into the English curriculum?

### **Literature Review:**

The English education in India is intertwined with the colonisation of English. Macaulay's Minute on Indian Education, which went so far as to suggest that English education would be the path

to disseminating European knowledge and thus would generate colonial administrative intermediaries (Macaulay, 1835). This led to the association of English with authority, modernity and elite status. Pennycook (1998) contends that English cannot be seen as a neutral language since the spread of English is inextricably linked to colonialism and cultural influence.

Criticism has been directed at the supremacy of colonial languages in education by the Postcolonial scholars. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986) states that language is linked to culture, memory and identity. If education takes place in a language other than the local language, and without regard to their own culture, the learner may feel disconnected with his/her own society. The same applies to Phillipson (1992) who claims that English can be a form of linguistic imperialism as it undermines other languages and knowledge systems.

But Indian users have also made changes to English. Indian English is a legitimate variety of English and has its own social, cultural and linguistic identity in the view of Kachru (1983). This implies that English is no longer just a colonial tongue but a language that Indian experience local and global experiences. It is, therefore, not a question of rejecting English, but one of Indianizing and democratizing English education.

Multilingualism, Indian ethos and integration of Indian knowledge traditions in education is the focus of the National Education Policy 2020. The policy reacts to the significance of the knowledge legacy of India and promotes curriculum reform based on Indian contexts. The University Grants Commission also lays down guidelines for introducing Indian Knowledge Systems in higher education courses, emphasizing on interdisciplinary and cultural learning. The Ministry of Education, Government of India)

IKS can be used in the English curriculum in the fields of literature, linguistics, translation studies, communication skills, ethics, environmental studies and cultural studies. It can also ensure that students realize that Indian customs are not against contemporary education. Rather, tradition and modernity can converse together via English education.

#### **Methodology:**

The research design of this study is qualitative, descriptive and analytical research. It is derived from the secondary data gathered from the policy documents, books, journal articles and theoretical treatises in English education, post-colonial theory, Curriculum studies and Indian Knowledge systems.

The paper does not rely upon data from the field survey. Rather, it critically appraises the current literature and policy frameworks. The major themes for analysis are colonial legacy, curriculum reform, multilingual pedagogy, Indian knowledge traditions, cultural identity, English language teaching and modern educational needs.

The study is based on a conceptual approach. It provides a comparison between the traditional

English curriculum practices and potential for including an IKS within curriculum models. This approach is appropriate because the paper seeks to provide both theoretical and practical insights into the possibility of connecting tradition and modernity in English education curriculum.

**Conceptual Framework:**

The concepts in this paper are based on three main concepts, namely tradition, modernity and curriculum integration.

Tradition is defined as Indian knowledge traditions such as philosophical works, narrated stories, local texts, folk knowledge, grammar, rhetoric, poetics, ethics, knowledge of the environment and community practices. Tradition shouldn't be rigid and conservative. It is a living repository of knowledge which is the continuing influence on Indian society.

Modernity is related to the current education, communication, professional skills, scientific mentality, critical questioning, digital skills, and international academic standards. Modernity is not a blind imitation to the west. It should imply openness to new knowledge and yet a linkage to local realities.

Integrating curriculum is making the traditional knowledge and modern English learning together in a meaningful way. English can now serve as a medium for students to read, translate, discuss and present Indian knowledge, both locally and globally.

Curriculum Area	Conventional English Curriculum	IKS-Integrated English Curriculum
Text Selection	Mostly Western texts	Indian, regional, folk, classical, and global texts
Language Practice	Standard grammar and communication	Communication through Indian contexts
Literary Theory	Mainly Western theory	Western theory with rasa, dhvani, vakrokti, and Indian poetics
Writing Tasks	General essays and reports	Local culture, ecology, ethics, community knowledge
Pedagogy	Teacher-centered learning	Discussion, translation, storytelling, project work
Outcome	English proficiency	English proficiency with cultural confidence

This framework shows that IKS integration does not reduce the importance of English. Instead,

it makes English education more rooted, relevant, and intellectually balanced.

### **The incorporation of IKS in the English Curriculum.**

#### **Indian Literature and Translated Texts:**

Incorporating the concepts of IKS into the English curriculum is one of the best possible ways and that too through Indian literature and translated books. Students can learn from selections of the Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, Buddhist literature, Bhakti poetry, Sufi poetry, Sangam literature, Dalit literature, Adivasi literature, and modern Indian English writing. These texts can introduce students to concepts of self, society, duty, nature, justice, devotion, resistance, and ethical life that are Indian.

For instance, a literature class might explore how Shakespeare's conception of tragedy differs from that of the Indians; or, how Wordsworth's understanding of nature is like that of the Indians. Likewise, students can learn about Indian writers like Tagore, R. K. Narayan, Mahasweta Devi, A. K. Ramanujan, Toru Dutt, Kamala Das, and modern Indian English writers; to know the way Indian experiences are communicated in English.

#### **Indian Poetics and Literary Theory:**

Much attention is paid to Western literary theories in English literature curriculum. Although these theories are helpful, introduction of Indian aesthetic theories like rasa, dhvani, alamkara and vakrokti should also be given to students. These are ways of reading poetry, drama and narrative that can help students to understand it from an Indian point of view.

In fact, teachers can talk about not just imagery and symbolism in poetry, but about rasa, or emotional experience. As they teach drama, they might explain to students how the theory of tragedy by Aristotle is like the Natyashastra by Bharata. Such an exercise enables students to realise that India has its own heritage of literary criticism and aesthetics.

#### **Indian Linguistic Knowledge:**

India had a rich tradition of linguistic analysis, particularly by Panini's grammar. The study of English may incorporate the analysis of Indian grammatical thinking, multilingualism, translation and language diversity. This is particularly important as it is a multilingual society and students may think in one language and express in another.

One way of using multilingual pedagogy is for teachers to give students the opportunity to discuss ideas in their mother tongue and then present them in English. This is not a disincentive to learning English. Instead, it enhances understanding and self-assurance. The native speaker norms should be avoided, and instead English teaching should acknowledge the local languages and the identities of learners in the postcolonial context as argued by Canagarajah (1999).

#### **The oral tradition and storytelling:**

Indian Knowledge Systems are not just in written texts. Oral traditions, folk songs, proverbs, community stories, legends, local stories, and performance traditions are also sources of knowledge.

They can be applied to speaking, listening, writing and critical thinking in the English classroom.

For instance, students can gather a folk tale from their village or community, translate it into English, and share what they think the moral, social, or ecological message is. A student can write English reports on festivals in the locality, about the culture of the river, traditional markets, handlooms, rural medicine or agricultural wisdom in any locality in Bangladesh or India. These activities help to link English to the real world.

### **Ethics, Ecology, and Life Skills:**

The lessons presented in IKS are rich with information about ethics, ecology, self-discipline, community living and sustainable living. Reading and writing activities related to wisdom for the environment, traditional water conservation, food habits, yoga, Ayurveda, cooperation in the village and solving problems with the community can be part of the English curriculum.

Students can write essays on traditional rainwater harvesting; compare modern wellness culture to yoga philosophy; create presentation about the local medicinal plants. All these activities are language development and social awareness.

### **Advantages of English Curriculum with IKS Approach:**

Several benefits of using IKS in the English curricula. Firstly, it encourages cultural self-confidence. The students' understanding is broadened of Indian traditions being not inferior to Western knowledge systems. Secondly, it enhances contextual learning. When examples are taken from a student's own context, students have a better understanding of English.

Thirdly, it promotes multilingual identity. There is no need for students to abandon their native language when learning English. Thirdly, it fosters critical thinking. Students compare Indian and Western ideas to analyze and not just remember them. Fifth, it develops communication skills, as students become able to share knowledge of the local community in English for a broader audience.

This method can be useful in practical aspects for students in academic writing, public speaking, translation, research, cultural tourism, journalism, civil services, education and international communication. For instance, a student from Bangladesh or India could share their research projects in English about culture of food, community health, entrepreneurship, and local rivers.

### **Challenges and Critical Concerns:**

However, there are challenges with integrating with IKS. First, there's tokenism. A single Indian text can't be introduced in the syllabus. However, there is a need for change in teaching, assessment, teacher training, and curriculum design for real integration.

The second challenge is selective representation. The Indian Knowledge Systems are not restricted to only elite Sanskrit or classical culture. The knowledge heritage of India also consists of Dalit traditions, Bahujan traditions, Adivasi traditions, women's traditions, regional, folk and minority traditions. This diversity needs to be represented in a truly inclusive English curriculum.

The third challenge is romance. Old tradition should not be taken on faith. It should be learnt critically, historically and comparatively. The students should be made to appreciate tradition at the same time questioning social inequality, caste exclusion, gender discrimination, and outdated practices.

The fourth challenge is for teachers. English teachers might not be trained in Indian poetics, oral traditions, translation studies or in pedagogy based upon IKS. Thus, there is a need for teacher training.

The fifth challenge is being able to work. There may be concerns that learners will be less competitive in the world if an IKS based curriculum is used. This can be tackled by ensuring good English communication, academic writing, digital literacy and professional skills are present, but content remains culturally relevant.

### **Discussion:**

It is not an easy task to bridge the gap between tradition and modernity in the context of English curriculum with Indian content. It needs a paradigm change in educational practice. English should not be a language of cultural superiority. It should be taught in the context of language of communication, language of creation, language of critical thinking, language of knowledge sharing.

Students can be grounded as global citizens using an IKS-based English curriculum. They can read literature from other countries and understand Indian classics. They can not only gain knowledge of modern communication skills, but also with local wisdom. They can use English in the workplace but are also confident in representing their own culture in English.

But IKS must be done in an inclusive and critical way. It should not be a narrow nationalist project, or a decoration. It should be able to foster intellectual discussion between Indian and world knowledge system. Classical works, contemporary Indian writing, regional voices, oral traditions, marginalised voices and contemporary issues should be part of a balanced curriculum.

The English classroom can be a place where students can translate their local experiences into global language. For instance, a student can write an English piece about a village craft, a local river crisis, folk healing practice, or a regional festival. In this way, English is no longer a language of alienation, but rather a language of cultural expression and production of knowledge.

### **Conclusion:**

It is important to introduce and include Indian Knowledge Systems in the English syllabus to connect between tradition and modernity. The primary role of English education in India is to equip students with the skills needed for effective communication, further learning, and career success in the global world. Concurrently, it is important that it also enables students to gain insight into their own knowledge cultures, national identity and social context.

The present paper has pointed out that literature, translated literature, Indian poetics, languages,

oral literature, moral philosophy, ecological knowledge and local knowledge can be used in English curriculum to enrich the teaching and learning of the language with IKS. This integration can help to make the learning of English more meaningful, inclusive and context based.

But the steps need to be careful and critical. IKS shouldn't become content or a cultural pride of the moment. It should feature a variety of traditions and promote questioning, comparison, and discussion. The English curriculum should be a blend of world class and Indian intellectual resources. Therefore, a bridging of tradition and modernity would be to develop an English curriculum that does not leave students with the choice between English and Indian identity. Rather than that, they are taught to utilise English to comprehend, retain, re-interpret and share Indian knowledge in the contemporary world.

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