National Seminar

on

The Rich Cultural Past of India : Concerns and Demystification of Realities

19-20 August, 2023

Organized By:

**Department of Sociology,
Sardar Bhagat Singh Govt. P.G. College
Rudrapur (U.S.Nagar), Uttarakhand.
(Affiliated to Kumaun University, Nainital)**

Sponsored By:

Indian Council of
Social Science Research

Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), New Delhi.

LITERATURE DEFICITS IN INDIAN KNOWLEDGE SYSTEM

*Dr. Deepmala **

ABSTRACT

Literature deficit in Indian knowledge system is both orthogenetic and heterogeneity in nature. Any scholarship requires state sponsorship to grow and establish its identity. The orthogenetic source is about within India, the scholars have experienced optical illusion in demystifying the significance of Indian wisdom. It has happened in higher education. It has happened more so in school education curriculum. This deficit refers to a relative lack of prominence given to Indian knowledge systems by indigenous people. As such, the Indian knowledge was not mainstreamed. In the context of heterogametic sources, the outsiders have also underrated or not rated the Indian knowledge system. The Indian knowledge was mostly clubbed around Charvak philosophy or branded knowledge system being spiritual. The foreign scholars went to the extent of banning medium of education in local languages, particularly in Sanskrit and Hindustani. As such many scriptures, Veda including Shruti and Smriti texts were side lined and marginalised incredibly. This isolation led to the depletion of Indian literature. At the same time, they got phased out from agenda of research and advocacy. Thus misnomer became evident and the deficit of Indian literature contributing to the mainstream knowledge became obsolete. The paper tends to find the reasons why such soch and approach became prudently persistent. However, this is not the case. This is the broad context within which the paper intends to wither away the unwanted dirt superimposed through the literature deficit.
(**Keyword:** Colonial Legacy, Western centric, language barrier, priorities and adequacy)

INTRODUCTION

Indian knowledge system has witnessed colonial legacy, western-centric mind-set, language barrier and substandard priorities and inadequacy of emphasis given on Indian text. The fact that even today, Indian scholars are hegemonised by the western idea and want their papers and books to be published from some foreign publishers. The fact that few scholars are ready to write in their local languages. It is because of the colonial legacy that does not let them think independently. Their *soch* and approach are still British driven. This is highly unfair not to recognise Panini's Ashtadhyai (Eight chapters of Grammar) as an ancient text which was written much before the world knew about the grammar. During the colonial era, British colonial rulers imposed Western education systems in India, which emphasized European knowledge and languages while marginalizing traditional Indian knowledge systems.

***Department of Zoology, S.B.S. Government Post Graduate College, Rudrapur* (*U.S.Nagar),Uttarakhand. E-mail id: deepmala2dm@gmail.com, Mob. No.9411794565.*

INDEX (अनुक्रमणिका)

As a result, Indian indigenous knowledge was devalued and often left as inferior. In the p[ost] independence period, Indian educational institutions largely adopted a Western-centric acade[mic] orientation, which prioritized Western theories, methodologies, and research paradigms. [This] orientation led to the neglect of traditional Indian knowledge systems and a lack of emphasis [on] studying and preserving Indian classical texts and heritage. Many ancient Indian texts and knowle[dge] systems are written in classical languages such as Sanskrit, Pali, and Tamil, which are not wid[ely] accessible to a majority of students and researchers. The dominance of English as the medium [of] instruction in higher education further restricts the dissemination of Indian indigenous knowled[ge.] Government funding and research priorities in India have traditionally focused on modern science [and] technology fields rather than traditional knowledge systems. As a result, research on Indian knowle[dge] systems often receives limited financial support and recognition. Indian educational institutions ha[ve] often struggled to integrate traditional knowledge systems into their curricula in a meaningful [and] comprehensive manner. As a result, students may not have the opportunity to study and engage w[ith] Indian indigenous knowledge during their academic journey.

COLONIAL LEGACY AND INDIAN KNOWLEDGE SYSTEM (IKS)

The colonial legacy in India had a profound impact on Indian knowledge systems, leading to significant disruption and marginalization of traditional indigenous knowledge. The British colon[ial] rule, which lasted for nearly two centuries, not only imposed political control but also sought [to] establish cultural and intellectual dominance over India. This had several consequences for Indi[an] knowledge. The British colonial administration regarded traditional Indian knowledge system[s,] including classical texts, Ayurveda, astronomy, and other sciences, as backward and superstitio[us.] They actively discouraged the study and practice of indigenous knowledge, replacing it with West[ern] education and knowledge paradigms. The British introduced a new system of education th[at] prioritized Western subjects, languages (particularly English), and methodologies. Indian tradition[al] knowledge systems were largely excluded from the curriculum, leading to a shift away fro[m] indigenous knowledge in favor of Western ideas. Many ancient Indian texts and manuscripts we[re] neglected, lost, or even deliberately destroyed during the colonial period. The loss of these te[xts] resulted in a significant gap in the understanding of Indian knowledge systems. The colonial rule l[ed] to the denigration of Indian culture and heritage. Traditional practices, art forms, and knowled[ge] systems were often deemed inferior to Western counterparts, leading to a loss of confidence and pri[de] in Indian intellectual achievements.

Western-centric research priorities and funding tend to favor topics and disciplines that align with Western interests and concerns, often overlooking or undervaluing research related to indigenous knowledge and local contexts. The marginalization of indigenous knowledge within academia can hinder efforts to preserve and revitalize traditional practices and knowledge systems, potentially leading to their loss over time.

LANGUAGE BARRIER AND DISSEMINATION OF INDIAN KNOWLEDGE

The language barrier has been a significant challenge in the dissemination of Indian knowledge, particularly traditional and classical knowledge systems. Many ancient Indian texts, scriptures, and scholarly works were written in languages such as Sanskrit, Pali, Prakrit, Tamil, and other regional languages, which are not widely understood or accessible to a large section of the global population. Some of the ways in which language barrier has affected Indian knowledge systems are limited access to original texts, translation challenges, loss of nuances and contexts, exclusion from mainstream education and limited dissemination challenges. The language barrier restricts access to the original texts for scholars and researchers who are not familiar with the classical languages. As a result, many valuable insights from ancient Indian knowledge remain inaccessible to those who do not have expertise in these languages. Translating ancient texts from classical languages to more widely spoken languages, such as English, is a complex task. It requires not only linguistic expertise but also a deep understanding of the cultural context and nuances of the original texts. Translating ancient texts can sometimes result in the loss of subtle nuances and cultural context, leading to potential misinterpretations of the original knowledge. The dominance of English as the medium of instruction in global academia further marginalizes classical Indian knowledge, as it is often taught in English translation or not included in mainstream curricula. Traditional Indian knowledge, due to language constraints, may not find enough representation in international academic journals, conferences, and other global dissemination platforms.

RESEARCH FUNDINGS AND PRIORITIES

Research funding and priorities have a significant impact on the promotion and preservation of Indian knowledge systems. Historically, research funding and priorities in India have been skewed towards modern science and technology fields, often neglecting traditional Indian knowledge systems and indigenous practices. This has led to a relative lack of financial support and recognition for research related to Indian knowledge systems, including classical texts, arts, medicine, and other traditional disciplines. Some of the key factors that contribute to the disparity in research funding and priorities concerning Indian knowledge systems are western centric bias, utility and profitability, lack of advocacy, language barrier, and modernisation bias.

The promotion of English as the medium of instruction further distanced Indians from their traditional knowledge systems, as many classical texts were written in Sanskrit, Pali, and other regional languages. Colonial-era accounts and writings about India often portrayed the country's history, culture, and knowledge systems through a Eurocentric lens, leading to misrepresentations and misinterpretations of Indian knowledge. Despite these challenges, Indian knowledge systems did not entirely disappear. There were efforts by some Indian scholars and intellectuals to preserve and promote indigenous knowledge during the colonial period. However, the dominance of Western education and the marginalization of traditional knowledge left a lasting impact on India's intellectual landscape. In the post-independence era, India has made efforts to reclaim and revive its traditional knowledge systems. There has been a renewed interest in studying and preserving ancient texts, classical arts, and indigenous sciences. Initiatives have been taken to promote the integration of traditional knowledge into modern education and research. However, addressing the colonial legacy and its impact on Indian knowledge is an ongoing process that requires continued efforts to recognize, preserve, and celebrate India's rich intellectual heritage. Embracing both traditional knowledge and modern advancements can lead to a more holistic and culturally sensitive approach to learning and research in India.

WESTERN CENTRIC ACADEMICS AND INDEGENIOUS KNOWLEDGE

The concept of Western-centric academia refers to the dominance and prioritization of Western perspectives, theories, methodologies, and knowledge paradigms in the global academic discourse. It is a legacy of the colonial era when European powers, particularly the British, held political and cultural hegemony over many parts of the world, including India and other colonized regions. Western-centric academia often resulted in the marginalization, neglect, or even dismissal of indigenous knowledge systems, including traditional knowledge and practices that have evolved over centuries within non-Western cultures. This has led to epistemological bias, cultural appropriation, language and medium of instructions, research priorities and funding, preservation and revivalWestern-centric academia tends to impose Western ways of knowing and understanding the world as the norm, often disregarding the diverse ways in which knowledge is generated and transmitted in non-Western cultures. Indigenous knowledge is sometimes co-opted or appropriated within Western academic frameworks, leading to the erasure of its cultural origins and diminishing its significance in its original context. Many indigenous knowledge systems are embedded in local languages, which may not be widely studied or valued within Western-centric academia. This creates barriers to accessing and understanding indigenous knowledge.

The influence of Western-centric academic paradigms has led to the prioritization of Western disciplines and methodologies in research funding decisions, sometimes at the cost of traditional Indian knowledge systems. Research funding is often directed towards projects perceived to have direct utility and potential economic benefits. Traditional Indian knowledge systems may not always fit this criterion, leading to their marginalization in funding priorities. Traditional Indian knowledge systems often lack strong advocacy and representation in academic and research institutions, making it challenging to advocate for adequate funding and recognition. As many classical Indian texts are written in languages not widely understood by the global academic community, research on these texts may face additional barriers in securing funding and recognition. In the process of modernization, certain traditional knowledge systems have been overlooked or deemed outdated, leading to reduced funding support for research in these areas.

INADEQUATE CURRICULA INTEGRATION AND INDIAN KNOWLEDGE SYSTEM

The inadequate integration of Indian knowledge systems in educational curricula is a significant concern that affects the preservation and promotion of India's rich cultural and intellectual heritage. The prevalence of Western-centric curricula and the lack of emphasis on traditional Indian knowledge can lead to the marginalization and neglect of indigenous wisdom. The factors contributing to these anomalies are: Colonial legacy, standardized national curricula, language barriers, lack of awareness and expertise, and emphasise on examination. The colonial education system introduced by the British in India laid the foundation for modern educational institutions, which often prioritized Western subjects and knowledge paradigms. This legacy continues to influence curricular decisions, side-lining indigenous knowledge. National educational curricula in India have historically followed standardized models that emphasize subjects and disciplines aligned with Western educational frameworks. As a result, traditional Indian knowledge systems may not find adequate representation. Many classical Indian texts and knowledge systems are written in languages like Sanskrit, Pali, and Prakrit, which are not widely taught in mainstream educational institutions. This language barrier hinders the integration of traditional knowledge into curricula. Teachers and educators may have limited awareness and expertise in traditional Indian knowledge systems, leading to their omission from curricular content. Educational systems that focus heavily on examinations and standardized testing may prioritize subjects with more straightforward evaluation methods, which can leave out complex and nuanced aspects of traditional knowledge.

Promoting multilingual education in India and other regions with rich linguistic diversity can help preserve and revitalize classical Indian languages, making them more relevant and accessible. Leveraging digital technologies and online platforms can facilitate the dissemination of translated versions of Indian knowledge to a broader audience, transcending geographical barriers. Collaborating with scholars, institutions, and organizations from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds can foster mutual understanding and facilitate the exchange of knowledge. Engaging in cultural exchange programs and initiatives can provide opportunities for scholars and researchers to study and learn about Indian knowledge systems first hand. To address the imbalance in research funding and priorities concerning Indian knowledge systems, recognition and integration, multidisciplinary approach, cultural heritage conservation, research collaboration and public awareness need to be emphasized. There is a need to recognize the value and relevance of traditional Indian knowledge systems in modern contexts. Integrating these knowledge systems into research and academic curricula can lead to increased funding and support. Promoting interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research that bridges traditional knowledge with modern science and technology can attract funding from both traditional and contemporary funding sources. Positioning research on Indian knowledge systems as part of cultural heritage conservation efforts can garner support from organizations dedicated to preserving cultural legacies. Collaboration between researchers specializing in Indian knowledge systems and those working in Western-centric disciplines can lead to cross-disciplinary projects that appeal to diverse funding sources. Raising awareness among policymakers, funding agencies, and the general public about the significance and relevance of Indian knowledge systems can garner support for research in these areas.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, there exists a significant gap in Indian knowledge literature, which refers to a relative lack of prominence and recognition given to traditional Indian knowledge systems, cultural heritage, and indigenous practices in mainstream academia and research. This deficit is a consequence of various historical, social, and institutional factors. The colonial legacy plays a crucial role in shaping this deficit, as British colonial rule imposed Western-centric education systems in India, marginalizing traditional Indian knowledge. The dominance of Western-centric academic paradigms and the preference for Western subjects and methodologies in research funding decisions have further contributed to the marginalization of indigenous knowledge. The language barrier poses a significant challenge, as many classical Indian texts and scriptures are written in languages not widely understood by the global academic community.

[29]

WAY FORWARD

The way forward to revive 'Indian Knowledge systems' requires a frontal priority by Union, State and provincial governments. Indian educational institutions should re-evaluate their curricula to integrate traditional knowledge systems and cultural heritage. This involves recognizing the significance of ancient texts, literature, and art as valuable sources of knowledge. Efforts should be made to preserve and promote classical languages to ensure wider access to traditional Indian texts and knowledge. Scholars and researchers should be encouraged to explore Indian knowledge systems and contribute to the body of literature in this area. This can be achieved through research funding, incentives, and recognition for work in this domain. Increasing cultural awareness and appreciation of Indian knowledge systems among the general population can help in fostering pride in indigenous heritage and the recognition of its value. Educational authorities should undertake curriculum reforms that actively incorporate traditional Indian knowledge systems into the syllabus. This includes revisiting subject offerings and introducing modules on Indian philosophy, arts, sciences, and other indigenous disciplines.

Promoting multilingual education in schools can help preserve classical languages and facilitate the study of traditional texts, making them more accessible to students. Providing teacher training and capacity building programs on Indian knowledge systems can enhance educators' awareness and expertise, enabling them to teach these subjects effectively. Integrating Indian knowledge systems through interdisciplinary approaches can showcase their relevance and interconnectedness with modern disciplines, fostering a deeper appreciation for their contributions. Facilitating cultural exchange programs can enable students and educators to learn directly from practitioners and experts in traditional Indian knowledge systems. Raising public awareness about the importance of preserving traditional knowledge and advocating for its inclusion in educational curricula can garner support from policymakers and stakeholders. By promoting the integration of Indian knowledge systems in educational curricula, India can celebrate its diverse intellectual heritage, fostering a sense of pride and understanding of its cultural legacy among the younger generation. Additionally, it can contribute to a more holistic and inclusive approach to education that appreciates the richness of both traditional and modern knowledge. To overcome the language barrier and facilitate the dissemination of Indian knowledge, translation initiatives, multilingual education, digital platforms, collaboration and networking, and cultural exchange programmes should be promoted. Encouraging and supporting the translation of classical Indian texts into widely spoken languages can make this knowledge more accessible to a global audience.

This limits access to and understanding of traditional Indian knowledge. Moreover, the inadequate integration of Indian knowledge systems in educational curricula hampers efforts to preserve and promote indigenous wisdom among the younger generation. Standardized national curricula often overlook the inclusion of traditional knowledge, perpetuating the neglect of India's rich cultural and intellectual heritage. To address the deficit in Indian knowledge literature, concerted efforts are needed. Curriculum reforms that actively incorporate traditional Indian knowledge, multilingual education to preserve classical languages, and teacher training to enhance educators' awareness are essential steps. Promoting interdisciplinary approaches and cultural exchange programs can foster a deeper appreciation of traditional knowledge's relevance and interconnectedness with modern disciplines. Public awareness and advocacy efforts can create a broader understanding of the value of preserving indigenous wisdom. Research funding priorities need to be re-evaluated to recognize the significance of Indian knowledge systems and encourage research in these areas. By recognizing and rectifying the deficit in Indian knowledge literature, India can reclaim its diverse intellectual heritage, fostering a sense of pride and understanding of its cultural legacy. Embracing both traditional and modern knowledge can lead to a more holistic and inclusive approach to education and research, contributing to the nation's progress and cultural enrichment.

REFERENCES

Breidlid, A & Roy K. 2020. Indigenous Knowledge and the Sustainable Development Agenda, Routledge, New Delhi.

Buruma. I. 2001, 2007, India: A Mosaic, New York Books, Ney York.

Chatterjee D &Ors. 2022. Globalising Indian Thought: Insights from Indian Knowledge Systems, Sage Publications, New Delhi.

Dastagiri, MNG and D Nagesh K. 2014. (ed.) Indigenous Knowledge Systems: In Search of Sustainability, Rupa Publications, Delhi.

Guha, B S. 1994. In Search of Roots: A Study of Ethnogenesis, University of Michigan Press, Michigan.

Jha, A. 2009. Traditional Knowledge Systems in India, Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, Delhi.

Mahdevan B. and Ors. 2022. Indian Knowledge Systems: Concepts and Applications, PHI Learning, Delhi.

Malhotra, R and Aravindan N. 2011. Breaking India: Western Interventions in Dravadian and Dalit Faultlines, Amaryllis, New Delhi.

Sanyal, S. 2008. The Indian Renaissance: India's Rise After a Thousand Years of Decline, Penguin Books, New Delhi.

Singh, S. 2022. Revisiting the Educational Heritage of India, Global Publishers, USA.