Need of Sanskrit Clusters in Higher education to attain IKS goals of NEP 2020

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Abstract

The latest link in the series of education policies in India, the National Education Policy 2020 is distinguished by several features. One of the most prominent projects in it is the promotion and promotion of Indian Knowledge Systems. Its biggest users and beneficiaries are going to be those dealing with Sanskrit in higher education in India. But under the current university structure there are many obstacles to accomplishing this. R&D activities in Indian Knowledge Systems require equitable resource allocation, structured and pre-defined guidelines and mechanisms. The teachers and students studying in the colleges under the universities of the states who are not ready to cooperate with this project due to social and political reasons will have to face severe neglect and injustice because of this. As an alternative to this, the method of forming Sanskrit clusters and assigning research in the branches of knowledge to each cluster taking into account the local characteristics can be tried. This way it will be possible to transform such clusters into powerful centres of Indian science. This article examines the need for these Sanskrit clusters, their formation and functioning

Keywords— NEP 2020, IKS, Indian Knowledge Systems, Sanskrit Higher Education, Sanskrit University, Sanskrit Departments, IKS Projects, NEP implementation, Sanskrit Cluster

1 Introduction

India has the oldest and most extensive chapters in the history of education in the world. Successive foreign invasions shook the foundations of India's education system. In India, which introduced the world to a comprehensive education program that touches all levels of life, the change in the field of education after the said attacks has caused many problems. The English system of education introduced by the British to achieve political and religious goals has greatly corrupted India's unique education system. Even if there has been a big leap in science and technology in India after independence, it cannot be said that it is due to the changes in the education system. The said boom has also happened in other countries of the world where there was no British rule through the global exchange of intellectual and cultural wisdom. But the price India had to pay for the post-independence educational reform was huge. Blindly believing the British version that all Indian branches of knowledge were uncivilised and unscientific, so-called creative educationists largely excluded them from public education without any checks. Therefore Bharath had to exercise many commissions during half a century to make up for the shortages that occurred and heights of development to be attained.

2 Former commissions and policies [1]

The first Commission to be appointed in independent India was the University Education Commission of 1948, under the chairmanship of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, to report on the status of

[1] History of Education policy in India, Epgpathsala

Indian university education and suggest improvements and extensions that would be desirable to suit the present and future requirements of the country. The Secondary Education Commission was set up under the chairmanship of Dr. A. Lakshmanaswami Mudaliar in 1952. The Commission submitted its report to the Government in 1953. The report gave a broader view about the educational problems of Indians and proposed to increase efficiency of production. In 1968 the Government of India had formulated the National Policy on Education, in response to the recommendations of the Kothari Commission. The National Policy on Education sought 'total reformation' and aimed at extending the prospects of education to all sections of the society to accomplish the goal of harmony and integration. The Draft National Policy on Education – 1979 proposed the development of an educational system that helped people not only to enhance their knowledge but also academic skills. It also called for building awareness of morals and ethics among students so that they can develop a good personality and become worthy citizens. Then Government of India initiated the National Policy on Education in 1986. Its major objective was to provide education to all sections of society, with a particular focus on scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, other backward classes and women, who were deprived of educational opportunities for centuries. Again the government had set up a commission under the chairmanship of Acharaya Ramamurti in 1990 to reassess the impact of the provisions National Policy on Education and also to give recommendations. Later, under the leadership of N. Janadhana Reddy the Central Advisory Board of Education was set up. This stressed on promotion of development and strengthening national integration. NEP 2020 comes as the latest in this series. K.Kasturirangan is the chairman of NEP 2020.

3 IKS Initiatives in NEP 2020

IKS stands for Indian Knowledge Systems. NEP 2020 emphasises the propagation of Indigenous systems of knowledge into academic as well as social and industrial sectors. Centuries of slavery have caused the lack of awareness on local streams of knowledge in various branches. True independence is enjoyed only then, while we stand straight in our own economy designed and built with indigenous streams of wisdom. Therefore Bharath has to rediscover its vibrant tradition of knowledge which was once the hope and light of the whole world. The very peculiarity of IKS is its practicality in all streams. Bharath has never sprouted out a branch of knowledge which can never turn into practical. Therefore each system has a skill factor in it. Skill is the key-mantra of successful implementation of each system. Creativity, wisdom and skill set should simultaneously go on. Indian knowledge systems are multi and interdisciplinary in nature and structure. Therefore learning a single subject of IKS only will not be beneficial. IKS subjects are to be collaborated to any subject and discipline which are eligible to research and develop shoulder to shoulder. Indian astronomy is a vibrant IKS division to be learned with modern physics, astronomy, space science and mathematics. Vastusastra is another one which can be collaborated with civil engineering and architecture. Indian theatre is very much beneficial to literary and visual science subjects. Ayurveda, Yoga and Siddha demand no explanation for the relevance nowadays. Hence IKS has plenty of research sectors to establish in the academic scenario of our nation. NEP 2020 furnishes a number of opportunities to embrace IKS subjects in various disciplines.

4 IKS and Sanskrit

IKS initiatives are inevitably dependent on Sanskrit language. Apart from some regional practices and tribal knowledge systems included in IKS, most divisions are coded in Sanskrit. In fact, most of the tribal and regional practices have deep roots in source subjects, of which authentic texts are composed in Sanskrit. The system and structure of Sanskrit language make it a repository of countless ideas and conveyor of great treasure of knowledge. Relying on standard translations of Sanskrit texts not only results in incomplete understanding of the concepts but also often leads to misunderstandings. When we translate technical,philosophical and scientific texts written in Sanskrit based on dictionaries built by the western scholars on the framework of the English language, many conceptual conflicts occur. Although the process of word-sense awareness in Sanskrit is extremely complex, it is easy, accurate and error-free for a person who

has learned the language in its own system. The study of Sanskrit language is absolutely necessary for the study and research of texts and sciences written in any regional language as other Indian languages have grown and developed around this one structure of Sanskrit language.The study of Sanskrit language is absolutely necessary for the study and research of texts and sciences written in any regional language as other Indian languages have grown and developed around this one structure of Sanskrit language. Therefore IKS has an important role to propagate and develop Sanskrit learning and learning centres in India. Core challenges of Sanskrit in Higher Education sector of India Bharath has eighteen Sanskrit Universities, a number of Sanskrit Colleges and Sanskrit departments in affiliated arts and science colleges for the propagation of Sanskrit. Several Deemed to be universities have turned into central universities in the recent past. Most of them have passed through traditional subjects taught almost in the traditional way of Sanskrit teaching. Since the basics of each discipline in Sanskrit demands such a pedagogy, an interdisciplinary approach was adopted only in fewer sections like Natural Language Processing in Sanskrit etc. Most of the specialised subjects in Sanskrit like Nyaya, Vedanta, Jyothisha, Sahithya etc. have to set the time aside for acquiring thorough knowledge in them. When skill as well as OBE oriented education took place, this pedagogy was forced to change its framework and it had to break the rules of conventional Sanskrit teaching. Those who have not yet coped with this change are in academic numbness. But it is not right to blame such institutions, since most of them don't have a free and autonomous academic structure. Those who enjoy such a freedom have started their experiments in the field of Sanskrit and Indology in many aspects. They are getting more funds and financial support from government and other sources to pursue their developments in academics. Self-financing institutions might have commenced their trials to withstand this situation. Many of them have started new UG or PG programmes in the modern stream to attract students.2 [2] Openings in various employment sectors are the main attraction for every academic programme. Unfortunately Sanskrit is dependent mainly on the occupations in the teaching community of the education sector. This happens because Sanskrit is only seen as a mere language. Though Sanskrit gets importance in the three-language formula in NEP 2020, this cannot fulfil the placement requirements of all students passing out from all institutions of India. All the new programmes designed by various institutions are not recognised by other universities and government agencies, hence students enrolled and completed suffer later for higher studies and placements. Research in designing new curriculum and pedagogy of new interdisciplinary programmes have not yet attained its fueling to rise from the launchpad. Central Sanskrit Universities are playing the main role as nodal agencies for the propagation of Sanskrit with various schemes for the past several years. In fact, some vague ideas are spreading across the academic community as IKS projects. Many faculty members in institutions approach these research projects like regular projects done in the past. Highly politicised communities are the forces that pull back. Mere programmes like seminars, workshops, symposiums etc. in general topics of sanskrit literature will hardly help to answer the questions raised in new conditions and developments. In this age where technology has almost completely taken over, it is unethical to rely solely on traditional subjects. Therefore, in this technology-dependent society, research needs to be launched with precise plans to find out the areas where it cannot penetrate and the areas damaged by its excessive effect and to identify the areas where the Indian scientific tradition can work to achieve its positive effect. Therefore a clear and precise plan and design for the research and development of IKS should be taken place as soon as possible.

5 Sanskrit Clusters for IKS initiatives

Ministry of Education, Govt. of India has released a competitive research proposal programme [3] for 2023 which includes seven main themes of research. They are Mathematics and Astronomy, Sustainable agriculture and food preservation, New universal sociological models based on emic perspective, IKS approaches for management of water resources, weather and rainfall predictions, IKS approaches to psychology, cognition, and consciousness, Evidence based music

[2] https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/sanskrit-university-initiates-restructuring-drive-to-meet-c hallenges-in-higher-education-sector/article66449767.ece

[3] https://iksindia.org/2023-2024_BGSamvardhanaYojana_Research_final_25Jun23.pdf

and dance interventions and their relevance in contemporary world and Pashuayurveda based approaches. Individual research projects either as single or joined are preferred in this project. As a part of promotion of interdisciplinary approach researchers from any discipline are eligible to apply for the same. Since the habit of cliche projects of old times unwittingly influences researchers, the goal set gets unachieved. Therefore the situation demands clusters of Sanskrit to work institutions and faculty together for attaining a prescribed mission. There are various reasons that force us to think seriously about Sanskrit clusters. Central Sanskrit university is the nodal agency of important projects on Sanskrit. They have their own campuses and learning centres in various parts of the nation. Accordingly they get more financial support for the proposals. But, institutions affiliated to other universities get limited funds for the projects and they complete them somehow in the midst of other duties that help the RD in Sanskrit in no way. The value and importance of such institutions cannot be neglected, forgotten or omitted in the work for the propagation and survival of Sanskrit in higher education. Still students and faculty in such institutions suffer too much distinction in the opportunities to excel in Sanskrit in their academic life. The ability of the Central Universities to conduct various academic and allied programs in Sanskrit makes them the conduits for the students to avail themselves of various opportunities. They have autonomy to decide,design and deliver new things for the students. Most commonly a shortage of funds will not be a hazard for them. As a result students in other affiliated institutions are side-lined. A cluster system can resolve this issue by embracing the departments in other institutions either under the jurisdiction of the Central University or on a zonal classification basis. This will ensure the participation of all guest institutions in the academic activities of CSUs. Clusters will accelerate the active research and development of IKS in institutions. Scholars and faculty with genuine research aptitude and interest are not located in any single institution. They are scattered and hardly collaborated. There are many more administrative and academic headaches enough to eliminate the research desires in each faculty member in the department. Therefore a cluster can manage themselves by faculty and student exchanges for filling up the gaps formed in maintaining a balanced academic scenario in institutions. Use of IT including LMS will help to reduce the heaviness of academic responsibilities and that will help them to share sufficient time with RD in IKS divisions. As discussed above, such a modest and ideal research rarely takes place in IKS because of the lack of perfect proposals. Perfect proposals rarely happen because of the lack of identification of real and relevant research gaps.Such lack of recognition of productive research gaps is due to lack of broad understanding of various disciplines and fixation on single topic isolations as well as alienation of the tools of social science research methods. Since IKS system is a borderless confluence of various disciplines, it is possible to solve the above-mentioned deficiencies to a large extent. But just like a seed will germinate, grow and spread into a tree only under favourable conditions, if the right research projects take place and develop effectively in the research areas formed by the IKS project, the conditions for that should also be created in the institutions. Creating research areas, inviting projects and disbursing funds alone will be a fruitless exercise like sowing apt seeds without knowing the soil. Keeping some static core areas of research at all times is also an exercise which cannot be recommended. There are different needs and opportunities for every discipline in geographically specific sectors across the nation. IKS research topics will have different needs and opportunities from time to time in each place marked by geographical and social characteristics across the country. It is also part of research ethics to recognize them and encourage research only on topics that should be encouraged in their respective places and times. On the contrary, if the same topics are reserved for everyone without taking into account the differences in time and place, the quality and value of the research will be negatively affected. It is also a matter of fact that IKS subjects, with their omnivorous characteristics, find qualitative or empirical connections with modern disciplines beyond the prescribed and given areas. A survey within the cluster to identify the true research gap is inevitable to state the relevance of the work. All these things will get applied only while establishing IKS research through clusters of Sanskrit. Conventional system of employing a P.I and some Co.P.Is should be replaced with a research team of equal responsibility including members irrespective of subject differentiations. Each team should be trained to identify the research gap that will ensure the success of the research they are assigned to. IKS system should decide the disciplines which are mandatorily to be employed in an approved proposal. All such research projects should be primarily benefiting the geographical border of the cluster and secondarily to the broader

community. Then only the team can test, finalise and ensure the fruitfulness of the goal they achieved.

6 Conclusion

A cluster of Sanskrit will help both academic and public community to establish a healthy relationship with IKS disciplines which is directly perceivable. A preoccupation with purely conceptual and theoretical research often overlooks an essential reconciliation between academics who enjoy public resources for research and the common people who deserve the direct benefit of every drop of their sweat. This awareness can only be achieved if research is raised to be a public responsibility rather than just an individual or an individual organisational responsibility. Clusters of Sanskrit can extend countless services to the IKS research and academic community by sharing the resources and opportunities with other institutions irrespective of level, discipline and sector, identifying the needs and gap for R&D in each fields of corresponding cluster by collaborated surveys, usage of research methodology interdisciplinarily to achieve multifaceted fruitfulness of the work etc. Moreover the most highlighted feature of NEP 2020, the borderless common education community will have its effective prototype in these clusters.

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