

## Background Note

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### Introduction

The cultural understanding of India is evident from the given verse, from Vishnu Purana:

उत्तरम्यत्समुद्रस्यहिमाद्रेश्चैवदाक्षेणम्  
वर्षस्तदभारतम्भारतीयत्रसन्ततिः॥

*“uttaramyatsamudrasya  
Himadreshchaivadakshinam,  
varsham tad Bharatam  
namaBharatiyatrasantatih”*

The above verse beautifully says, ‘the country that lies to the north of the ocean and to the south of the snowy mountains is called Bharata as there reside the descendants of Bharat’.

The rapid changes in the global knowledge economy with the advancement in science and technology have led to dramatic changes in the society. No doubt that India has leaped many boundaries in all sectors- commerce, technology and development etc., but at the same time there has also been detachment from our belief and fall in values. In such a fluid scenario, it is very important to retain our glorious ancient past which reverberates the philosophy of Upanishads revolving around the concepts of the *Brahman* (the universal soul) and the *Atman* (the individual soul), the teachings of the Bhagavad-Gita elucidating the ideals of the ‘*KarmaYoga*’ (the path of action), the ‘*Bhakti Yoga*’ (the path of devotion), and the ‘*Gyan Yoga*’ (the path of knowledge) for self-realisation. Today we need to draw our identity from such a sprawling belief system which gives a unique stature to India at the global platform where people from abroad look up to India and resort to yoga and meditation to de-stress and rejuvenate their mind.

### Challenges

The various constructive recommendations of NEP 2020 need a pragmatic integration in our curriculum which emphasizes not only being technologically endowed but an ethical usage of latest technologies in our everyday life. For such a revolutionary step we need to identify the various challenges of the educational ecosystem of India, some of which are as follows:

- ❖ At present our education system is reeling under the ills of Westernization, excessive privatisation and an exclusion from its cultural underpinnings. This alienation from its

indigenous wealth and repository has not let us achieve much in the domain of education in the 21st century.

- ❖ We all know that just achieving the literacy targets is insufficient for intellectual enlightenment of the masses. Thus we need to incorporate Indian Knowledge and Tradition in the fold of education in such a way that it becomes our '*way of life*'.
- ❖ Being home to one of the youngest populations in the world, we also need to realize the demographic dividend for the growth and development of our country.
- ❖ It is thus the moral responsibility of all the stakeholders in the Indian educational system to strive for quality and equitable education for all by extending stimulating courses on Indian Knowledge System to the students at a young age so that they know the importance of "doing what's right", with a logical framework for making ethical decisions.

### **NEP-2020 Reference**

The National Education Policy 2020, as the first such document of the 21st century, aims to reconfigure the education system of India on the framework of Indian knowledge System. With its emphasis on the rejuvenation of Indian languages, arts and culture, the NEP 2020 is a promising policy document.

The NEP 2020 bears testimony to the fact that the Indian Education System needs a complete overhaul. It recognizes that the distinct place that India holds at the global stage is only because of its cultural developments, civilisational values and rich literature in all the fields. Therefore, all curriculum and pedagogy, from the foundational stage onwards needs to be redesigned which is strongly rooted in the Indian and local context and ethos in terms of culture, traditions, heritage, customs, language, philosophy, geography, ancient and contemporary knowledge, societal and scientific needs, indigenous and traditional ways of learning etc. (para 4.29, NEP, 2020 ). The curriculum of this nature would ensure that education is relatable, relevant, interesting, and effective for our students. It will also lead to strong identity formation as the young generation would be well versed with the rich culture and heritage of India and can take pride in it.

NEP 2020 further mentions, rightly, that India is a treasure trove of culture, developed over thousands of years and manifested in the form of arts, works of literature, customs, traditions, linguistic expressions, artifacts, heritage sites, and more (NEP 2020; para 22.1). India is always looked up to for its spiritual and transcendental elevation. India has much to offer to the world from its glorious past. Thus, the promotion of Indian arts and culture is important not only for the nation but also for the individual. Cultural awareness and expression are among the major competencies considered important to develop in children, in order to provide them with a sense of identity, belongingness and appreciation of other cultures and identities. It would also build a positive cultural identity and self-esteem among the children. Thus, cultural awareness and expression are important contributors both to individual as well as societal well-being. (NEP 2020; para 22.2).

Our ancient education system focused on the holistic development of the individual and emphasised on values such as humility, truthfulness, discipline, self-reliance and respect for all creations. Teaching and learning followed the tenets of Vedas and Upanishads fulfilling duties towards self, family and society, thus encompassing all aspects of life. Education in India has a heritage of being pragmatic, achievable and complementary to daily life.

Thus, it's enthralling to see that the NEP 2020 has not only recognised the glorious past of ancient India but has also drawn our attention towards the inclusion of the seminal works of stalwarts like, Charaka, Susruta, Aryabhata, Varahamihira, Maitreyi, Gargi etc. in the present curriculum at various level from preschool to the university level.

### **Way Forward**

The National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) is one of the National Boards of Secondary Education and is committed to the vision of NEP, 2020. NIOS has launched the new stream in 'Indian Knowledge Tradition (भारतीयज्ञानपरम्परा)' for reviving the Vedic Education, Sanskrit Language and literature, Indian Philosophy and many other areas of ancient Indian Knowledge.

Under 'Indian Knowledge Tradition' stream, NIOS already developed five courses at both secondary and Sr. Secondary level in Sanskrit Medium and Hindi:

- Veda Adhyayan,
- Sanskrit Vyakaran,
- BhartiyaDarshan,
- Sanskrit Sahitya,
- Sanskrit (Language Subject).

The preservation and promotion of India's cultural wealth must be considered a high priority for the country, as it is truly important for building the nation's identity. Understanding its importance at the international forum and with the spirit of creating cultural bonds and promotion of Indian culture abroad, NIOS has established Diaspora Study Centre for the promotion of civilizational values of peace, plurality and universal fraternity in the spirit of '*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam.*'

A course on Folk Art course at Secondary level is under development. This would help in keeping alive the rich folk culture of India. These innovative and creative courses at NIOS encompass a holistic learning approach which would enhance the personality of our learners with their roots intact in the Indian culture and tradition.

### **Conclusion**

Today, the emphasis is on 21st Century competencies among our learners. It is worth mentioning here that it was already a part of our Ancient Indian Education system. The thinking principle, *Manana Shakti* was given the utmost importance in the Ancient Indian Education system where primary subject of education was the mind itself. According to the ancient Indian theory of education, the training of the mind and the process of thinking, are essential for the acquisition of knowledge. The education was based on the three simple processes of *Sravana, Manana and Niddhyaasana*. It means a learner needs to listen to the truths, to think and reflect upon what is taught so that one may live the truth and not merely explain it by word and not only that, such knowledge must result in self-realization as well.

We all must take pride in the ancient; Indian educational institutions like Nalanda, Takshila, Vikramshila, etc. These institutions were not just mediums for providing education but they were the embodiment of Indian ethos and philosophy too. Institutions of such stature with multidisciplinary approach offer learning for today's education system, as it is the kind of education that required for the 21st century.

The National Education Policy 2020 envisions an educational system fashioned on the lines of India's profuse linguistic, cultural and artistic heritage. The promotion of Indian arts and culture is seen very important and it could be effectively imparted through integrating Indian arts into the main curriculum which would not only develop a strong sense of identity and aesthetic outlook but also enhances creative and cognitive skills among the children.