

Bharatiya Knowledge System and the Higher Education Reform in Bharat

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ABSTRACT

Colonization caused a rupture in the diverse knowledge traditions of Bharat. Consequently, for centuries, Bharatiya knowledge tradition was left unreformed. The Bharatiya knowledge tradition has yet to be rediscovered, reformed, and integrated with modern knowledge systems in each discipline. Reforming Bharat's higher education system with the integration of the Bharatiya Knowledge tradition will decolonize our life-world. Consequently, Bharat will move forward to become Atmanirbhar through NEP 2020. After discussing the Bharatiya Knowledge System (BKS) in the context of Atmanirbhara Bharat, decolonization and NEP 2020, this paper presents a model course in linguistics to demonstrate how BKS can be integrated while reforming higher education in Bharat.

The mark of wisdom is to discern the truth from whatever source it is heard.
(*The Possession of Knowledge in Tirukural* by Thiruvalluvar 300 BC-7th AD)

This known here is not different,
it is knowing alone, if looked into;
as Knowing is always one with this known,
nothing but Knowing exist, anywhere.
(*Knowing* by Narayana Guru 1856-1928)

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INTRODUCTION

The Bharatiya Knowledge System (BKS) is now wrongly named Indian Knowledge System (IKS) (UGC 2020) since India is a given name to Bharat (Clémentin-Ojha, 2014; Barrow, 2003). Indian, the adjectival form of India, is not an appropriate name for Bharat's diverse and distinct knowing system perpetually evolved across centuries. Therefore, this paper uses Bharat and Bharatiya instead of India and Indian. This is a lexical disobedience to approach the BKS towards the epistemological disobedience yet to be initiated to decolonize Bharat. BKS is exceptionally emerging as a fashionable subject in the Bharatiya Higher Education Area (BHEA). Many factors contributed to this mounting interest. Among them, the resource support

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from the Indian Knowledge System Division, Ministry of Education Govt. of India and the consistent instruction, campaign on BKS and resource development for BKS by the University Grant Commission are the primary motivations. The Plethora of literature also appears on the BKS (Kapoor & Singh 2021; Mahadevan 2022).

Bharat is emerging as a higher education area in the world with the transformation of Bharat as *Vishvaguru* (Narayanguru 2022). It should be especially noted that BKS was introduced in BHEA during the second phase of Higher Education Reform (HER) and the first phase of the life cycle of National Education Policy 2020. BKS, as a given knowledge and diverse way of knowing and practices across centuries in Bharat, should be integrated into Bharatiya HER through NEP 2020. Therefore, higher education in Bharat will be decolonized, and the BKS will be advanced. In this paper, we will discuss how BKS can be integrated into the BHEA in the context of NEP 2020. First, we will discuss what BKS is. Second, we will deal with the BKS in the context of HER and NEP 2020. Third, we will discuss how BKS can be integrated with an illustration of a course in linguistics.

BHARATIYA KNOWLEDGE SYSTEM

BKS is the diverse ways of knowing the consciousness, nature, human and cosmic, the subsequent revising of what is known, and the knower and the diverse skill sets to spread across the different domains of everyday life transmitted across generations through centuries in the Akhand Bharat region and its expansion across the world. BKS is distinct from the Bharatiya Knowledge Tradition (BKT). BKT is a continuum of diverse practices, learning and transmitting skills and knowledge across generations. BKT is transmitted orally and by practice by specialized communities across the domains of life. BKT may not be documented in any other forms. BKT is genealogical and perpetual. On the contrary, BKS is an abstraction, an abstraction of the method and practice of doing and knowing from the BKTs. BKSs can be developed from each domain of BKTs. For instance, the practice of native medicine across generations is the Bharatiya Ayurvedic tradition. It is not one. There are many Ayurvedic traditions in Bharat (Narayanaswamy 1981, Jaiswal and Y.S, Williams 2017). BKS of Ayurveda can be abstracted from each stream of practices. In other words, the system can be abstracted from the tradition. Therefore, BKS is abstract and archaeological. The number of BKTs is innumerable. BKT is broad and covers even the knowledge tradition about soil spread across Kamasutra and even up to the cosmic and spiritual knowledge like *Yogasuthra*. *Rigveda* classified soil into 12 types based on fertility. 1. *Urvara* (fertile) 2. *Ushara* (barren) 3. *Maru* (desert) 4. *Aprahata* (fallow) 5. *Shadvala* (grassy) 6. *Pankikala* (muddy) 7. *Jalaprayah* (water) 8. *Kachchaha* (land contiguous to water) 9. *Sharkara* (full of pebbles) 10. *Sharkaravari* (sandy) 11. *Nadimatruka* (land water from the river) 12. *Devamatruka* (rainfed). Tamil tradition classified geographic regions with psychological mindsets as *mullai* (forest), *Kuringi* (hills), *marudham* (cultivable) and *neithal* (coastal). Bharat is enriched with innumerable knowledge traditions of

all domains - humans, nature and the cosmic. When it was practiced across centuries, it never had been understood as a system. It was traditions, the traditions of practices. The BKS is the codification or the documentation of these traditions, which is not done except for a few source texts. Now, we are not practicing all these traditions except for a few communities that are unaffected by modernization. There is a discontinuity of these traditions except for a few domains like Ayurveda, Jyothisha and spiritual practices etc. Therefore, now we understand the BKTs as the BKSs. Many of the BKTs are discontinued, undocumented and extinct.

THEORETICAL CONTEXT

Three contexts are vital while we discuss the integration of BKS in BHEA. The first one is the life cycle the BHEA passes through. Second is the Atmanirbhar Bharat, “self-reliant India”, the political economy of independence into which our nation is entering. The third is the context of decolonization. We will discuss each.

BHEA is not of colonial origin. However, modern higher education in Bharat was initiated for the needs of the colonial masters, and it continues as colonial, both in content and objective, even today. The objective of higher education might have changed across different higher education policies after political independence. However, no significant effort has been made to reform the content of higher education. After the 1990s, as part of the global neoliberal policies, Bharat also started reforming the content and the objective of higher education. The introduction of outcome-based education (OBE) is the prime of the reform. Introduction of OBE in BHA has never been critical. No effort is being made to reform the content of the postgraduate and research programs in BHEA. OBE may assure employable graduates and postgraduates. By the implementation of OBE, the students may become employable. The students may benefit from getting a job across the world, like our IIT students. However, the people of Bharat will not benefit from the colonial context of higher education in Bharat. This indicates that, during the colonial period, the content of higher education was to create the servants for colonial rule; in the same way, in this neoliberal regime, higher education was to create the labour forces for the Euro-American world. As much we export trained human resources outside Bharat, as much we import the product from the outside, the country will consequently remain dependent on the world economy. The ongoing reform of BHE is making little substantial change for this trend. However, the NEP 2020 is proposing a paradigm shift by “recognizing, identifying, and fostering the unique capabilities of each student, by sensitizing teachers as well as parents to promote each student’s holistic development in both academic and non-academic spheres” (MHRD: 2020) NEP 2020 is facilitating a policy-level framework to integrate the BKS into the BHEA.

Atmanirbhar Bharat is an economic policy of the nation to be self-reliant. This will enable us to cut down import dependence and focus on substitution and quality goods to gain global market share. This mission focuses on the importance of promoting local products to global markets and

involves the creation of a helping hand to the whole world. How is this possible? This can be attained only through training our country's human resources in the required skills at different levels. To achieve this, we must reform our higher education both in content and objective. As much we reform the content and the objectives of education with an alternate worldview, we can change the life world of the people. The emerging urbanization of Bharat by going away from our tradition with ultra-materialism and consumer culture should be balanced with a world view based on our tradition. This does not mean that we have to retain the tradition as it is. The perpetual Bharatiya tradition across centuries has been broken with the colonization of the world. In every epoch of time, Bharatiya traditions have been reformed in terms of object and content. On the contrary, colonization broke the reform. The reform of tradition in Bharat is replaced by refutation after colonization. Tradition is placed as something to be thrown away. Consequently, colonial modernity left traditions in Bharat as a pre-modern system of life. This left all traditions, including the knowledge traditions in Bharat, unreformed since the colonization of Bharat. Knowledge tradition is one of the most affected by colonization in Bharat. Therefore, the BKS is to be reformed. To reform the BKS, we first have to get decolonized.

The transformation of higher education reform through NEP 2020 and the strengthening of the country with the promotion of local production are possible only with the decolonization of higher education. Decolonization is an epistemological practice that undoes the colonial understanding of nature and humans. Colonialism has adverse effects on the colonized. "It denies the colonized their experience of the world by imposing an unjustifiable framework of description through violence" (Balagangadharan et al., 2002, p. 203). Freedom from such a framework, the Freedom to access one's own experience of the world, requires displacing the colonial framework. However, such a displacement cannot occur unless one becomes aware that it is preventing one from accessing one's experience. Such awareness comes through a pedagogical process; it requires education. One has to become critical of the colonial consciousness, and this involves rational scrutiny of the nature of the imposed framework. In doing so, one is forced, as it were, to examine the nature of the native framework critically as well" (Balagangadharan et al., 2002, p. 203-04). The native framework is structured in the native knowledge tradition. Therefore, the first step in decolonizing is the introduction of native knowledge traditions. In short, the three contexts, reform of higher education in Bharat, Atmanirbhar Bharat and the decolonization of higher education, form a context where BKS can be integrated with the advancement of higher education in Bharat.

HOW TO INTEGRATE BKS IN BHEA

Bharatiya Knowledge Tradition covers diverse domains of life. However, colonialism and colonial modernity raptured it at different levels of Bharatiya knowledge traditions. It made an ontological distinction between private vs public, disadvantaged past and better future, religious and secular, etc. Many of the Bharatiya knowledge streams that existed only in practice among

the generations of practitioners were extinct. Very few of the traditions could be sustained since they were documented and codified, like Ayurveda, the spiritual knowledge system, etc. Since the spiritual and Ayurvedic knowledge systems were codified in Sanskrit, Bharat remains the world capital of spiritual and Ayurvedic knowledge.

Integrating BKS in BHEA is a disciplinary practice. This disciplinary practice needs epistemological disobedience. Each discipline in BHEA should reconstruct the BKS in the disciplines. The knowledge tradition of each discipline may not be accessible at this point in time since it is not documented and abstracted as a system. Therefore, it should be explored beyond the discipline. The engendering practices should be identified. Once it is identified as a practice or in oral form, it should be documented as it is. Documentation of the existing practice is the primary concern now. For instance, many of the diverse agricultural practices across the different regions of Bharat are not adequately documented. Once it is documented, from the thick documentation, it is abstracted as a system that should be a part of the curriculum of the course and the programs offered in the discipline. One major issue we will face in integrating the BKS as part of the modern discipline is the question of the scientific value of the knowledge. There, we need epistemological violence. Empiricism is dominating the world knowledge system as a result of the colonial expansion of British empiricism. We forget the fact that every community has its own way of understanding the world and measuring the truth value of the knowledge the community practices, produces and reproduces. Due to colonization, empirical science gained dominance, and it emerged as a meta-knowledge and the measure of all forms of knowledge. The empirical meta-science emerged as an episteme or the measurement of truth and epistemicide of all other forms of knowledge worldwide. Therefore, the introduction of BKS in each discipline needs epistemological disobedience to integrate it. The following case study will illustrate it.

A CASE STUDY FROM LINGUISTICS

I will present a case study of reforming linguistics by the integration of BKS in modern linguistics. Modern linguistics is a colonial discipline in Bharat. Therefore, linguistics in Bharat has hardly contributed to the linguistic well-being of the people and the linguistic solidarity of the country. While making the discipline useful for the linguistic well-being of the many language communities, I have been developing a course, “linguistic counselling”, for the post-graduate programs. Linguistic counselling is the study of the function of language in the intra and inter-personal relations of people. The objective of this sub branch of linguistics is to make life beautiful by using language in all domains of human interaction. The course plan is given below:

COURSE: LINGUISTIC COUNSELING (FOUR-CREDIT COURSE)

Course Description: This course is to make the students aware of the role of language in human relations and wellbeing, reform their language expressions, develop human resources for linguistic counseling services in the language aspect of interpersonal relations, and conduct research in the area.

Expected outcome: After completing this course, the participant will be able to

1. Understand the functions of language towards strengthening human relations and wellbeing.
2. Understand aspects of language in relation to human consciousness.
3. Identify the unhealthy types of verbal expressions and the alternate expressions in interpersonal relations.
4. Change themselves in the linguistic expression and able to integrate the traditional linguistics practices for linguistic counseling.
5. Counsel and conduct research in the language aspect of interpersonal and intra-personal relations.

Module 1: Functions of language; revealing, informative, emotive; language and altruism; language as a common good; levels of speech, *para*, *pasyanthi*, *madhyama* and *vaikhari*; signifier vs signified; *sabda* and *artha*; phono semantics, diagnostic and therapeutic aspect of language, language and care, expression of care in language.

Module 2: Interpersonal and intrapersonal communication; different domains of communication, home, workplace, public sphere; communicative rationality and intersubjectivity; type of expression in domains of communication; intra-personal communication; monologue, autosuggestion, *matra japa*; *bijakshara*, and confession.

Module 3: Methodology of linguistic counselling; empirical observation, *anubhava* and *anubhuti*; identification of patterns; development of alternate expression; a corpus of expression; interview, advisory and autosuggestion; metaphysical auto counselling and *Japa*; life narration and narrative method, aspects of listening; language, power and care in language.

Module 4: Prescription on speech in *Tirukural*, by *Vidurar*, *Sreenarayanaguru*; techniques of sharing *anubhuthi*, method of collecting linguistic expression; generalization techniques of expressions; method of developing alternate expression; training in expression.

SUMMARY

In the above course syllabus, we have attempted to integrate BKS while reforming linguistics in Bharat. I have introduced the *mantra* “chanting” knowledge tradition of Bharat as one of the

components of the linguistic counseling course, which is metaphysical counseling. The usefulness of *the mantra* cannot be empirically proved since it is epistemologically based on *anubhūthi*, not based on *anubhava*. Therefore, there needs to be an epistemological disobedience to accept that *anubhūthi* is another form of knowledge. Once *mantra* is included as a component of linguistic counseling, it will advance linguistics in Bharat as a discipline for the linguistic wellbeing of many language communities. As I have developed the new course above, every discipline can integrate the BKS towards reforming higher education in Bharat. Consequently, the country will be decolonized and move forward with knowledge from its past. Towards that, we first have to reform the disciplines one by one. Reforming any discipline can be done by asking a primary question. What does discipline contribute to the wellbeing of people? Every branch of knowledge has epistemic and wellbeing content. Unlike development, well-being is relative. Each society is living in a different life-world. The well-being of each society is realized in the life-world of the society. However, colonization denies access to the life-world of the people as it is and makes a colonial worldview the frame of reference to look at the life-world. Colonial education is a cognitive tool that works at the epistemic level. Consequently, the colonial worldview emerges as a parameter of knowledge, and the knowledge legitimized by the colonial episteme justifies the truth, good and bad, etc. Bharat is the victim of English education, not as the medium of education, but the imposition of English men's worldview as the world view of Bharat. Linguistics is the epitome. Despite Bharat's rich and diverse linguistic traditions, British officers and missionaries introduced linguistics to Bharat as a modern discipline. To them, languages in Bharat are a medium of control and the translation of the Bible for conversion. The other aspects of language among the language community and how languages work in the people's life-world are not a concern for the linguistics introduced in Bharat, and the same continues. Therefore, the prime concern is reforming modern linguistics from a colonial discipline that directly addresses the linguistic well-being of the language community. While doing this reform, we have to decolonize the modern linguistics in Bharat by dismantling the colonial content and replace with the linguistic tradition of the Bhartiya Knowledge System. The introduction of *mantra japa* use of language in Bharatiya is an unrecognized linguistic practice with its immense wellbeing and epistemic potentials. When we integrate the *mantra japa* practice as a part of linguistic counseling, we have to address an epistemic challenge, i.e. the question of the scientific base of *mantra japa*. Here, we need to have epistemic disobedience by placing *anubhūthi* as one of the ways of knowing, like empiricist and rationalist ways of knowing. In brief, the integration of BKS in BHEA needs reform in every discipline and subsequent epistemic disobedience.

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