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Reponsibilities of All the Actors in the field of Higher Education in
Context with NEP 2020**



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*Revival of Ancient Indian Art and Learning under the National
Education Policy 2020*

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Abstract:

Art is defined as, ‘the expression or application of human creative skill and imagination, typically in a visual form such as painting or sculpture, producing works to be appreciated primarily for their beauty or emotional power.’ The various branches of creative activity, such as painting, music, literature, and dance are considered to be Art. Every country’s one of the prime identities, is its art. India is a diverse country possessing diverse kinds of people, regions, religions, communities, tribes, languages, culture, traditions and values. Owing to India’s diverse nature, it has diverse forms of art and artists. With the advent of Arabic, Persian, Portuguese, French and British invaders and their long rule over India, the Indian art forms underwent drastic changes. Especially under the British colonial rule, when the clouds of westernisation spread over the Indian cultural horizon, attempts were made by the colonial government to wipe out the Indian art which is India’s identity. This is evident from various exploitative policies of the British colonial government such as the commercialisation of agriculture, deindustrialisation policy which shut down the Indian handicraft industry, Macaulay’s Minute, Anti-Dance Movement etc. The British colonial rule not only colonised India but also the minds of the Indians. After the independence of India in 1947, the British left India but the minds of the Indians were enslaved by the westernisation which also severely affected various art forms of the nation. This was a matter of concern which leaders like Lokmanya Tilak, Lala Lajpat Rai and Bipin Chandra Pal, had highlighted under their neo-nationalism, in the late 19th century, which aimed at revivalism of ancient learning in India. After 75 years of India’s independence, the minds of Indians are still enslaved by the western ideas. The National Educational Policy 2020 is a strong initiative of the Government of India towards reviving the ancient Indian learning, art and culture. This is an important step towards building up of nationalism in the minds of young Indians and thereby establishing an independent country with a strong foundation.

Keywords: Indian Culture, Ancient Learning, Art, Westernisation, NEP 2020

Introduction:

India can be called as a blessed land in terms of its geography, climate, bounteous nature, diverse people with their religions, cultures, values etc. It is a region which is rich in natural resources, soil and fertility. Countless social, religious, political and philosophical ideas have taken birth on this land. The oldest known scriptures of the world- the Vedas were written here. Endless works on science, mathematics, art, astronomy, astrology, medicine and others were created here. This is a land of wonderful seats of learning like Taxila, Nalanda, Valabhi University, Vikramashila, Somapura Mahavira, Pushpagiri Vihara and others. The rivers of India- Ganga, Yamuna, Sutlej, Indus, Narmada, Krishna, Mahanadi etc. have also been a centre of attraction as it made transport and communication viable for the maritime activities and overall control of the empire. This is a prime reason why the great empires around the world were attracted towards India and desired to imperialise it. The vastness of ancient Bharat proved to be an area of satisfaction for the ambitious emperors who aimed at expansion of their territories. We can see here the impact of India's geography on its history (Vidya Dhar Mahajan, 1983). Various dynasties established their empires in India, one after the other, and left behind their political, religious, economic and cultural traces. One of the major facets of India's identity is its culture which includes ideas, principles, religious institutions, educational system, customs, traditions, rituals, ceremonies, art etc. These aspects of Indian culture which makes India a marvellous nation has extensively undergone evolution. The dynasties who have ruled India have patronised cultural developments in their empires. Hence, we can say that India has the oldest continuous cultural tradition in the world (A.L Basham, 2004).

During the medieval and the modern times, with the Arab, Persian, Dutch, French, Portuguese and British imperialism, India endured severe changes in every field. In this paper, we shall focus on the adverse impact of the British colonialism on the ancient Indian art and learning, and the attempt of revival of the same under the National Educational Policy, 2020.

Indian Art:

Indian art comprises of dance, drama, music, painting, sculpture, building, weaving, pottery and jewellery making. Its nature has always been exquisite, expressive, intricate, orderly and harmonious. Themes of Indian art forms can be categorised into religious and secular. Religious art consists of the religious ideologies, worship of deities and their relationship with humans. For example, worship of sculptures of Hindu deities, propagation of Buddhist and Jain ideologies through carvings on stupas and such monuments, narration of occurrences from the epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata through dance, music and others. Secular art includes praises of the kings through music, portrayal of luxuries of king's life

through paintings and sculptures, carving of a king's figure on the coins, painting of the palaces, temples etc. The earliest evidence of artistic excellence in India goes back to the 3rd century BC in the Indus Valley Civilisation where various sculptures, seals, sealings, pottery, jewellery and terracotta figurines have been found. Especially, the representation of animals carved on the seals shows a mark of artistic brilliance. With expansion of the civilisation, art and culture grew and spread in the rest of India.

Indian art and architecture have been highly influenced by ancient Sanskrit literature. Countless Sanskrit literary works like Ramayana, Mahabharata, Meghdoot, Shakuntala, Svapnavasavadatta, Pratijna Yaugandharayana, Nagananda, Ratnavali, Priyadarsika, Harshcharita etc. have provided source materials, stories and characters for many Indian traditional and classical art forms. Similarly, a prominent ancient treatise on arts- *Natyashastra* has strongly influenced dance, music and literary traditions in India. Its date goes back as far as around mid-1st millennium B.C (Dr. M. Rameshwar Singh, 2019). Indian art, in some or the other manner have recorded India's past. Therefore, it helped historians to write the history of India in an organised and chronological manner.

By inclusion of art into the curriculum, flexibility and choice of subjects has been provided to the students which will enable them to derive their field of study. NEP 2020 states that, 'Holistic development and a wide choice of subjects and courses year to year will be the new distinguishing feature of secondary school education. There will be no hard separation among 'curricular', 'extra-curricular', or 'co-curricular', among 'arts', 'humanities', and 'sciences', or between 'vocational' or 'academic' streams. Subjects such as physical education, the arts and crafts, and vocational skills, in addition to science, humanities, and mathematics, will be incorporated throughout the school curriculum, with a consideration for what is interesting and safe at each age' (National Education Policy 2020).

Indian Learning:

Ancient Indian learning was as a spring of knowledge, traditions and practices which encouraged and steered humanity. It was imparted in the gurukul, ashrams and temples under the able guidance of highly knowledgeable gurus or sages. There existed two systems of education- Vedic and Buddhist (Mangesh M. Ghonge, 2020). Sanskrit, which is considered as the oldest language in the world and a distant cousin of most European languages, was the medium of instruction under the Vedic system of education. Whereas the Buddhist education was imparted through Pali. In the context of Vedic education, varied subjects were taught such as Vedas, Vedangas, Brahmanas, Aranyakas, Upanishads, Shaddarshanas, Dharmasutras, Puranas, Mahabharata, Ramayana, Bharmashastras (smritis) etc. It is notable that the topics taught under the above subjects were mostly scientific based, for example, the six Vedangas are phonetics, astronomy, ritual, grammar, etymology and metrics. During the ancient times various schools of thoughts emerged who

created Sutras- Kalpasutra, Srutasutra, Grihyasutra, Dharmasutra and Sulvasutra which dealt with manuals on rituals, rules related to sacrifices, domestic rights, dharma or law and building of sacrificial places, respectively. Though certain texts like Mahabharata and Ramayana are looked at as religious, it surely does record certain historical events. The Vedic education not only aimed at imparting religious and scientific education but also physical and spiritual education which aimed at individual personality development. It focused on valuable ethics like discipline, integrity, honesty, responsibility, self-reliance, loyalty, kindness, compassion and respect towards every living and non-living being. The ancient Indian education system undoubtedly has unique characteristics which cannot be found in any other ancient education systems of the world.

The British established their imperial rule in India and slowly developed their idea of 'White Man's Burden' wherein they considered that it was the duty of white people to manage the affairs of non-white people whom they looked at as underdeveloped. With this idea, they made successful attempts to change the education system in India by replacing the ancient Indian education system with the western education. The British Orientalist F. E. Pargiter was of the view that "Vedic literature lacked historical sense and cannot be trusted." (Vidya Dhar Mahajan, 1983). This view of theirs might have solely come from the fact that Indian education was far away, higher and deeper from their ignorance and understanding.

The National Education Policy 2020 is highly inspired by the rich heritage of ancient and undying Indian knowledge. An attempt for revival of Indian languages will be done through their thorough study which will include '...unity of most of the major Indian languages, starting with their common phonetic and scientifically-arranged alphabets and scripts, their common grammatical structures, their origins and sources of vocabularies from Sanskrit and other classical languages, as well as their rich inter-influences and differences...' (National Education Policy 2020). This will acquaint students with a sense of unity and awareness of India's beautiful cultural heritage and diversity. Sanskrit will be offered at all levels of education. Most of the Indian classical literature are written in Sanskrit, hence, its study will help the students of all ages to understand them better. Sanskrit textbooks at the foundational and middle school level may be written in Simple Standard Sanskrit (SSS) to teach Sanskrit through Sanskrit (STS) and make its study truly enjoyable (National Education Policy 2020).

Conclusion:

The 200 years of British rule in India consisted of economic exploitation, political suppression and cultural imperialism. It resulted in destruction of Indian handicraft and industries, introduction of a manipulative form of governance in India, erosion of India's cultural identity and loss of traditional knowledge and practices. Even after attainment of independence in 1947, India has not completely recovered its loss of art, culture and education. The National Education Policy 2020

is a crucial measure introduced by the Government of India towards Indian cultural and educational revival. It has included the study of Indian art and culture in curriculum of the students at all levels of education right from early childhood care and education. It states that 'The promotion of Indian arts and culture is important not only for the nation but also for the individual.' Any Indian art form serves the purpose of imparting Indian culture. It will also contribute in developing a sense of identity and belonging amongst the coming generations. NEP 2020 emphasises study of any art form not only as a hobby but also as a part of curriculum. This will achieve the cultural recognition, happiness and overall development of an individual. After independence of India in 1947, the new democratic Indian government tried to rebuild India and her lost resources. Western or modern education constitutionally became India's new system of education. Gurukuls were already replaced by the western schools and colleges. The subjects taught in these modern educational institutions also drastically differed from what was taught under the ancient Indian education. Though education became easily accessible to all the Indians, but it has to be noted that they all were getting western educated. Somewhere, the emphasis on ancient Indian subjects became weaker and therefore, the Indian values and ethics has gradually started declining. After 75 years of India's Independence there is a need for revival of Indian values, ethics and culture. Indian learning aims at attainment of the highest human goal in the form of knowledge, wisdom and truth. The ancient Indian scholars' ideas and works which became unheeded because of westernisation can be revived, preserved, enhanced and researched through implementation of the NEP 2020.

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