



HISTORY OF THE INDIAN KNOWLEDGE SYSTEM

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ABSTRACT

Indian ancient traditional knowledge system is unique and has many roots of learning relevant to any time. It has evolved, and different chapters of ancient Indian Knowledge are classified into various sections. It has its history. Recently, interest in diagnosing such Knowledge to find out the most relevant forever is increasing and is necessary for sustainability. That would help us to improve our efforts to enhance human welfare. Therefore, there is a need to analyze the nature and history of those Knowledge, philosophy and values related to human welfare. Such an attempt to analyze the history of the ancient Indian knowledge system is made in this paper.

The primary purpose of this paper is to analyze the evolution of the ancient Indian knowledge system and related philosophy relevant to human welfare.

The paper reviews different sections of the ancient Indian knowledge system, the associated philosophy, and how they evolved. Indian ancient Knowledge and education system was strongly built by philosophy for human welfare. In fact, it was more concerned with seven Janmas (Births) rather than the current living in the world. The Indian knowledge system had two critical concepts, "Jnana" and "Ajnana" which may be referred to as concurrent with Vedanta and Vyavahara (Business). All these issues are discussed in the paper.

KEY WORDS: Ancient Knowledge, Birth and Rebirth, Vedanta and Business, Philosophy

INTRODUCTION

Indian ancient traditional knowledge system is unique and has many roots of learning relevant to any time. It has evolved, and different chapters of ancient Indian Knowledge have been classified into various sections over time. It has its history. Recently, interest in diagnosing such Knowledge to find out the most relevant forever is increasing and is necessary for sustainability. That would help us to improve our efforts to enhance human welfare. Therefore, there is a need to analyze the nature and history of those Knowledge, philosophy and values related to human welfare.

India is the land where the hopes and aspirations of humankind have always been nurtured. Science, medicine, mathematics, philosophy, religion, and astronomy may all trace their roots to India. India is often referred to be "the cradle of human civilization," "the mother of speech," "the grandmother of stories and customs," and similar titles.

India is a very unique country. Each state has its culture, attire, food, environment, nature etc. However, something is still familiar in the entire Indian religion, and that common factor is the culture of India. Indian culture is the oldest living culture in the whole world. Many civilizations and cultures were at their prime at some point but are no more there. Either they are not living or have not been practised. Then what makes it the oldest living culture in the whole world? The

foundation or base makes Indian culture strong. The basis of Indian culture or civilization is Knowledge. Knowledge is abundant in our Indian culture.

Objectives: The primary purpose of this paper is to analyze the evolution of the ancient Indian knowledge system and related philosophy relevant to human welfare. The specific objectives are;

1. To review the literature on the ancient Indian knowledge system.
2. The philosophy of the Indian ancient knowledge system. (Ethics)
3. To identify the relevance of the potentials of the Indian knowledge system in the present context.

The paper reviews different sections of the ancient Indian knowledge system, the associated philosophy, and how they evolved. Indian ancient Knowledge and education system was strongly built by philosophy for human welfare. It was more concerned with seven Janmas (Births) rather than the current living in the world. The Indian knowledge system had two critical concepts, "Jnana" and "Ajnana" which may be referred to as concurrent with Vedanta and Vyavahara (Business). all these issues are discussed in the paper.



Some important places of Knowledge (Vidyastanas): There are 14 places of Knowledge. They are called Chaturdasha Vidyastana.

Vedas

It is well known that the Vedas are the oldest surviving literary works in the whole world. The experiences of the *Rishis* (sages) poured out in the form of poetry came to be known as *Mantras*, which make up the content of the Vedas. Veda means 'knowledge'. 'Veda' is derived from the Sanskrit word 'vid'. As knowledge Veda is one. Vedas are called 'Aparushya', which means not created by men. These are revelations of different *Rishis* (Sages-Whom we can refer to as subjective scientists) to students.

Vedas are also called *Shruthi* and *Smriti*. Shruti means heard, and Smriti means memory. From generation to generation, this Knowledge is handed over orally. When he found it to be written, Veda Vyasa met different *Rishis*, received this Knowledge orally, and began to write it. It may be the right time to preserve Knowledge because of reduced memory capacity. His work helped in the preservation of Knowledge. It helped in the production of Textbooks which are called Vedas. There are four Vedas: *Rig Veda*, *Sama Veda*, *Yajur Veda* and *Atharvana Veda*. All this effort in preserving the Vedas shows how much our ancestors cared for Knowledge and tried to preserve every letter. Due to such perfect preservation of the Vedic texts, the Vedas may be considered good archaeological sources of evidence for conducting research.

Vedangas: They are six beautiful sciences that must be studied to understand Vedas correctly.

Puranas: They are 18 in number.

Mimamse: One of the six systems (Darshanas) of Indian Philosophy.

Dharmashastras: A Brahmanical collection of rules of life often in the form of metrical law book.

Darshanas: The six principal Hindu Darshanas are Samkhya, Yoga, Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Mimamsa, and Vedanta.

Upavedas (When Upavedas are added with this Knowledge, it is called Ashtadasha Vidyasthana.

Every place of Knowledge is beautifully documented and taught as a formal education.

When we speak about the Indian knowledge system and education, we see Knowledge by itself, which deals with a different aspect of Life or which is necessary information or subjects to be studied by one individual. However, the deep purpose of it was human welfare.

Indian Ancient Philosophy

Indian ancient knowledge system was value-based and more philosophical. One of the most notable aspects of the ancient

Indian philosophy of Life is that despite attaching slight importance to physical beings, the significance of action in this material world is not undervalued. The physical universe serves as the laboratory of the human soul, where the person must receive methodical instruction to promote self-development. Life's simplicity and moral education's value for one's development are most highly valued in India's ancient civilization.

Karma Yoga

The Indian philosophy was more concerned about the seven *Janmas* (Births) than the present birth or Life. So Indian philosophy emphasizes the theory of Karma. The *Purusharthas* are mentioned in the section on Karma. The term *Purusharthas* means "man's property" in the original Sanskrit. It is central to Hindu thought and describes the four noble pursuits one should make throughout their lifetime. *Dharma* (righteousness), *Artha* (wealth), *Kama* (desire), and *Moksha* (liberation) are the four *Purusharthas* (Liberation). Our Karma is dependent on these *Purusharthas*. It means all human endeavours are certainly meant for ultimate liberation. To find true freedom, we must cultivate a profoundly and comprehensively rewarding life. The *Purusharthas* offer a way to evaluate our Life and make good decisions. When we do our deeds, we should be harmonized between the three *Purusharthas*, which would help us achieve the ultimate goal of *Moksha* or Liberation.

Karma or deeds decides our lives to come. If our *Karma* were evil in previous *Janma* (Births) then we suffer in our present *Janma* (Births). So in the present *Janma* (Births) itself, we must prepare for the next *Janma* (Births) by doing good deeds. Our deeds or Karma are responsible for *Athma* or soul suffering in the cycle of Life and death cycle.

Jnana and Ajnana: (Knowledge and Ignorance)

Along with the seven *Janma* (Births) theories, our Indian Knowledge also speaks about *Jnana* (Knowledge) and *Ajnana* (Ignorance). These two aspects are concurrent with *Vedanta* and *Vyavahara* (*Business*). We need a guru there when we try to know about his *Jnana* and *Ajnana*. With the help of a guru, we can destroy the *Ajnana*, which is ignorance and attain *Jnana*, that is, Knowledge, proper Knowledge.

Let us try to differentiate between *Jnana* and *Ajnana* in the light of *Vedanta*. Lord Krishna in *Geeta* speaks about *Deham* and *Dehi*. The concept of *Deham* is ignorance, and the concept of *Dehi* is Knowledge. For example: If an individual thinks he is a body, that is called *Ajnana*; that is ignorance. Moreover, if he thinks I am the *Dehi* who resides in the *Deha*, that is *Jnana*. Let us know the usefulness of *Jnana*. Whenever there is a thought that I am the body in us, we shall have birth and death, sufferings, miseries, difficulties, worldly bondage, and everything. We should liberate our souls from the circle of suffering. Just like we shall discard old clothes, we shall put on new ones. We enjoy changing clothes. The weapon cannot pierce through the body, fire can't burn it, water cannot do anything, and air cannot do anything. *Panchabhutas* cannot do anything to *Atman*. *Panchabhutas* are powerless. When we realize we are the *Dehi*, not *Deham* that is called *Jnana*. *Jnana*



is covered by Ajnana. That is why all are being deluded. People fall into delusion because of this. The person who removes Ajnana with the help of *Jnana* attains *Atma Jnana*. To attain this, Ajnana should be removed. To get rid of Ajnana, the light of Jnana is essential. So here the question arise which should be first? Is either going or coming? To remove or to get rid of *Ajnana*, light is essential. Moreover, that light is '*Jnana*'. Moreover, for this, we need one person's help, and he was called a Guru ("Gu" means ignorance and "Ru" means destroyer).

Ignorance is seen as an obstacle to freedom in all schools of Hindu thought (Moksha). This lack of understanding is due to people confusing their sense of identity with their physical bodies. Our immoral, self-centred actions and the resulting pain result from our inability to break the cycle of enmity and dependence. Absolute freedom from the bonds of the senses and relief from all pain is only possible upon realization of the actual self (God, Brahman, Consciousness). It is believed that under the light of Vedanta, one can remove ignorance and liberate one's soul from the circle of Life and death. Not only that one can reform the society in which he lives and the religion which he follows.

The three Acharyas- Shanakaracharya in his Advaita (absolute Monism) philosophy, Madwacharya in his *Dwaita* (Dualism) philosophy and Ramanujacharya in his Vishistadvaita (qualified Monism) philosophy speaks about the relationship between Atman and Paramatman, that is the individual soul and supreme soul and suggests a different path for the Moksha or salvation. (Karma Marga, Jnana Marga, Bhakthi Marga). Salvation or Moksha is either the complete merging of Athman (individual soul) with Paramathma (Supreme soul) or attainment of nearness with Supreme soul in which the relationship between Athma and Paramathma will be like Guru, his disciple or like master and his servant. One of the socio-religious reformers of 19th century India, Swami Dayananda Saraswathi, gave a call 'Go back to the Vedas' to say that the light of Vedas will help in the reformation. Vedantists believe that there is only one Purusha (Sanskrit for "spirit," "Person," "Self," or "awareness") and that everything else, including the mind and its many permutations, is only a superimposition onto this one Reality. Superimposition, also known as Maya, is the cause of the one seeming as many. This is because of the inherent ignorance (avidya) associated with it (illusion).

Importance of the study of Indian ancient Knowledge

What can we learn about an inquiry from India's ancient texts? How exactly? If so, how much? The finest method of learning—inquiry into a topic of interest—has been supplanted in modern classrooms by organizing knowledge content (or "What to know"). How, rather than what, has always been the primary emphasis of India's knowledge heritage. Humanity has gotten itself into many problems because of all this new technology. The very survival of humanity is in jeopardy. Humanity's innate abilities are in jeopardy. To effectively deal with this challenge, a new educational system must be implemented that emphasizes the development of relevant new skill sets. Life skills that allow

one to put Knowledge to practical use are just as crucial as the technical abilities necessary to access and utilize that information. The balancing act relies heavily on ancient Indian Knowledge. The principles of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam," which translates to "the entire world is a family," and "Sarve Bhavanthu Sukinah," which translates to "may everyone be happy," may be traced back to the Vedas. Since our forebears went to such lengths to protect it, maybe we should shift our focus from preservation to use. The mission of establishing Bharat as a hub for cutting-edge research will be realized. Indian Knowledge encompasses a vast array of disciplines, including but not limited to astronomy, ayurveda, yoga, mathematics, computing, language and linguistics, metalworking, Rashi shastra (the science of Indian astrology), public administration, military technology, management science, and many others.

Indians have made significant contributions to many different areas of study, including astronomy (through their understanding of planetary motions, the solar system, and the Earth's shape and diameter), botany (through their understanding of the properties of plants and herbs), medicine (through their discovery of zero and the decimal system, as well as approximation algorithms for computing Pi), linguistics (through their mastery of steelmaking), administration (through their grasp of taxation), and statistics (through their grasp of grammar).

The fast expansion of human Knowledge, thanks to scientific and technological progress, has had far-reaching consequences for civilization. India has broken new ground in every sphere, including trade, technology, and development. However, this success has come with a price: a loss of spiritual connection and a decline in moral standards. Keeping the Upanishads' philosophy on Brahman (the global soul) and Atman (the individual soul) and the Bhagavad Gita's teachings on Karma yoga, Bhakti yoga, and Gyan yoga (the yoga of Knowledge) intact is crucial at such a time and place. The world looks to India for leadership, and we must find our identity in that tradition.

As it is, our educational system is affected by Westernization ideas, too privatized and stripped of its traditional beauty. We focus only on literacy goals in the existing educational system. However, this alone is not enough to bring about proper intellectual illumination in a person. Education must include Indian culture and history so that it may be internalized as a way of Life. By providing engaging courses on the Indian knowledge system to kids at a young age, the Indian educational system can ensure that all students get a high-quality education and a solid moral foundation from which to make ethical choices.

We may fortify our feeling of who we are as Indians by learning about our ancestors via the study of India's ancient knowledge system and using that Knowledge in the modern world. Culture is significant in the larger social context. Our culture is heavily influenced by the books we read and the information we learn from them; "accepted wisdom" benefits greatly from the insights of the past. This is the continuity of



ideas and values from generation to generation. It also includes concepts developed by appreciating our history, heritage, and primary cultures. Having this information inspires original thinking and fresh approaches. It makes sense for a nation like India, which has preserved much scientific Knowledge from the ancient world, to adopt this approach.

The 2020 National Education Policy seeks to reorganize India's educational infrastructure within the context of the country's indigenous knowledge system. Values like modesty, honesty, discipline, independence, and respect for everything were stressed in our old educational system, which sought to nurture a whole person. All areas of Life were considered in the classroom as students were taught according to the Vedas and the Upanishads precepts. India's educational system has a long history of being user-friendly, realistic, and relevant.

The New Education Policy 2020 acknowledges ancient India's illustrious history and calls attention to the current curriculum's integration of the works of ancient Indian academics like Charaka, Susruta, Aryabhata, etc.

CONCLUSION

India should provide serious attention to preserving and promoting its cultural heritage, which is essential to the country's sense of self. India's new education policy aims to give pupils a sense of independence and a deep appreciation for India's complex and fascinating history, cultural heritage, and contemporary knowledge base and practices. The policy's goal is to help students become "true global citizens" by helping them gain the information, skills, values, and attitudes necessary to commit responsibly to issues like human rights, sustainable development and living, and global well-being.

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