



# Reclaiming The Roots And Going Global?: A Post Colonial Analysis Of NEP 2020

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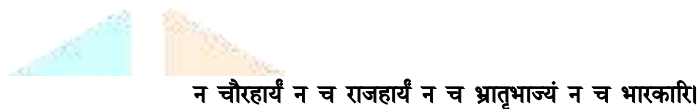
**ABSTRACT:**

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which was introduced in India, has been widely discussed and debated since its release. The primary focus of the paper lies in the breakdown of India's recent "revolutionary" education policy in the context of Higher Education. This paper presents a critical postcolonial analysis of the NEP 2020, which examines the policy's implications on the education system in India from a decolonial lens. Through the lens of postcolonial theory, this paper analyzes the NEP 2020's underlying assumptions, values, and ideologies that are rooted in colonial history and perpetuate hegemonic power structures. The paper questions the legitimacy of policy's claims to raise the acquirers of education as pillars of Indian rich culture and heritage, and weigh the possibility of this desired outcome. The paper argues that the NEP 2020, despite its progressive rhetoric, perpetuates colonial patterns of knowledge production, and social hierarchies. This paper also highlights the need to decolonize the education system and rethink the role of education in postcolonial

India. The article throws light on the works of post-colonial theorists namely, Gayatri Spivak, Homi K. Bhabha and Edward Said to examine critically the provisions of the policy through a post-colonial bent of mind. The analysis draws upon a variety of sources, including primary and secondary literature, government documents, and media reports. The findings of this study can be used to inform policy-makers, educators, and scholars to critically examine the NEP 2020 and to develop more inclusive and equitable educational policies.

KEYWORDS: NEP 2020, Indian Education Policy, Higher Education, Post-colonial Study, Critical Analysis.

## INTRODUCTION :



व्यये कृते वर्धत एव नित्यं विद्याधनं सर्वधनप्रधानम्॥

*Neither can it be robbed by a thief, nor can a King strip it off of you; It can not be split between brothers, never does it weigh like a burden. The more you spend it, the more it grows; the wealth of education is the greatest kind of wealth.*

The prosperity of ancient India reflected in its unimaginable opulence was a result of the nation's investment and belief in the wealth of education. The roots of the country's culture resided in the diverse forms of art, architecture, philosophies and literature that date back to the settlement of earliest civilizations on the planet. In recorded history, acquisition of knowledge has found its sources in the tenets of Vedas and Upanishads that incorporated a holistic approach to man's intellectual and physical progress. Indigenous forms of imparting knowledge were adopted during the early Vedic period, *Gurus* and *shishyas* under the roof of a *Gurukul* taught and learnt respectively the roots of their culture, skills for their development and methods to utilize their potential. Scholars who visited India provided accounts of the *Viharas* and universities catering to the need of higher education, which were considered among the best and most advanced institutions of advanced learning. Kings and scholars never compromised on the promotion of education, hence India's education system retained qualitative aspects to its worldwide recognition attracting scholars from around the globe to witness and record

this historic milestone. Pre-colonial period continued to serve as an extension of native education with the inclusion of religious and spiritually diverse forms of teaching.

The advent of Educational Policies in India was a product of the country's colonization. An introduction to Western education was initiated by the establishment of Christian Missionaries, which found resistance from the East India Company when they tried to extend their work towards the education of Indians. Missionaries demanded to be permitted to carry out their educational activities also towards Indians, the protests leading to the formation of the first Education Policy of India in the Charter Act of 1813. The Act allowed for the Christian Missionaries to establish their institutions to create a formal course of education and that the British Government would invest an amount of one lakh rupees for the education of Indians. The debate of language was a very controversial point in developing a medium of instruction for education only for Lord Macaulay to state in his minutes the superiority of the English language over the vernacular, in its ability to generate meaningful exchange of "western" ideas of education. This decision taken in the year 1835, has held its ground even two centuries later. But was it for the better or worse? The 1854 Woods Education Dispatch served as a very important and revolutionary document in creating a systemized and comprehensive scheme of education with equal importance awarded to Indian languages and the establishment of universities for higher learning. The British played an active role in bringing modern education to India and to help create formalized ways to impart the same.

Independent India explored the education system of India to enable its restructuring in the most efficient manner. It had now become the responsibility of the government to cater to the promises that had been made. Commissions were set up to establish a clear path for implementing the policies in a post-independent India that was moving on from the remains of colonization. These Education Commissions gave way to the formulation of Education Policies - 1968, 1986, 2020 - and various movements and Acts that helped provide a sturdier structure to the Education System of India.

India's journey from *Taxila* to Indian Institutes of Technology has been an arduous one, but the status these premier institutions enjoy now reflects how the nation has come full circle despite the hurdles of history. It is vital for one to understand the evolution of education policies that have been implemented and executed while also analyzing their effects and aspirations. The aim of this paper is to conduct a critical reading of the NEP 2020 in context of its application to the higher education sector of India. The article intends to explore through a postcolonial lens how the policy makes an attempt to let go of the residues of colonization and reclaim the Indian roots but is limited by its cultural complexities. This interdisciplinary study is fundamental to the achievement of a detailed critical analysis of the Education policy and to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the underlying structures. Studying the recent modifications incorporated into the system with their relevance to the works of theorists like Edward Said in the field of Orientalism, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's theory of the subaltern and Homi K. Bhabha's interesting take on post-colonialism has provided influential insights to support the argument of this study and its findings.

#### POLICING THE POLICY :

Since its release into the world of education, the New Education Policy 2020 has been successful in drawing attention from critics, scholars, media, students, educators, and everybody concerned with its implementation. The framework set down by the aforementioned document holds multi-functional aspects to its implementation and displays a desperate need to fulfill the fourth Sustainable Development Goal by the year 2040. It has been more than 7 decades since India was declared independent, yet successive policies implemented in the field of Education have continued to perpetuate colonial patterns and this policy is an attempt at integrating the country's diverse culture with the process of imparting education. The objectives of NEP 2020 concern the detachment of the education system from the colonial residues and the promotion of an India-centric approach, and simultaneously laying emphasis on the global exposure to and from the country. Ancient India's wealth of education invited scholars from around the world and NEP aims to recreate history by providing the world an access to its cultural diversity. The most controversial feature of the NEP 2020 is the rigid emphasis on the teaching of regional Indian languages in educational institutions and their promotion as a medium of instruction. It is a departure from the colonial imposition of English as the language of intellectuals

and its hegemonic existence; the inclusion of Indian languages extends to the sections that have been marginalized due to language barriers. English as a standard medium of instruction in schools, colleges, and office spaces extended its grasp on the societal conclusion of bringing the acquisition of the knowledge of the language at par with the development of an individual's personality. This is a prime example of the residues of colonialism in the Indian subcontinent, that continued to seep into its educational structures. In application of Gayatri Spivak's argument of the Subaltern, the incorporation of Indian languages in the curriculum becomes a challenge to the previously Western academic discourse in Indian Education and how it has been capable of side-lining or marginalizing the voice of the oppressed. In case of Higher Education Institutes (HEI), the provisions of the policy dictate the incorporation and inclusion of Indian languages in addition to the English language, e.g. the provision of bilingual education for future lawyers - English and the language of the state, that further propagates Spivak's argument of the need for the West to engage with discourses of the East to better understand the voices of the marginalized. The stress laid on the achievement of multilingualism to fully encapsulate the diversity of the nation is prominent in the provisions for all levels of education; in addition to multilingualism, higher education modules intend to bring back the Kadambari approach - integration of all disciplines to disable existing rigidity in the curriculum structures that limit individual access to certain streams and allow a flexible approach towards acquisition of multi-disciplinary education. The NEP states that students of allopathy are to also be imparted with necessary knowledge and understanding of traditional healing and healthy well-being measures like Ayurveda, Yoga, Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, and Homeopathy and a vice versa approach to also be undertaken by the medical students of AYUSH. Although the approach seems questionable and confusing, with the potential to blur the clarity of career goals, it makes space for interdisciplinary innovation and advancement of theories like the establishment of a National Research Foundation to sponsor and encourage quality as well as interdisciplinary research in universities and colleges by way of Research-intensive universities. Bhabha's concept of 'hybridity' comes into application in the sphere of these multifaceted approaches that aim at the integration of Indian Knowledge systems into the pre-existing mainstream education. It opens up interesting avenues for research without limitations to learning; this approach acknowledges the hybridity of Indian culture, and the NEP seeks to create an increasingly inclusive and

empowering academic structure. There is also a demand for standardization of Teacher preparation programmes by the help of aptitude tests designed keeping in mind the linguistic and cultural diversity of the country.

Moving beyond the binaries of 'mainstream academic education' and 'secondary almost negligent vocational education', the policy lays emphasis on vocational education to further encourage participation in skill-enhancing programmes; focus on exposure to the significance attached to labor and craftsmanship; promotion of local artisans, Indian art and craft, craftsmanship and culture rooted in the diversity of the country. There is a breakdown of the hegemonic hierarchical structures associated with the nature of the work one is employed in, but in breaking down such structures, there is a creation of binaries. Edward Said's Orientalism theory argues that Western cultures have constructed an image of the "Orient" that is based on stereotypes, misconceptions, and fantasies. According to Said, the West has created a binary opposition between the rational, modern, and superior West and the exotic, irrational, and inferior East. The NEP 2020 seeks to reform the Indian education system and make it more inclusive, multidisciplinary, and modern. However, it also perpetuates some of the Orientalist tropes that Said identified in Western representations of the East. While the emphasis on "Indian knowledge systems" and "ancient wisdom" in the NEP 2020 is important to acknowledge and appreciate India's rich cultural heritage, the document tends to romanticize and exoticize this heritage. This is evident in the policy's use of terms such as "Bharatiya" (Indian) and "Indic" to describe these knowledge systems, which implies a monolithic and static view of India's diverse cultural traditions. Moreover, the NEP 2020's focus on these systems reinforces the binary opposition between the 'rational and scientific' West and 'the mystical and spiritual' East. While it is important to preserve and promote India's linguistic and cultural diversity, the NEP 2020 tends to view Indian languages as inferior to English and other Western languages. This is evident in the policy's recommendation that all students should learn three languages, including English, and that English should be the medium of instruction in higher education. The NEP 2020 also seems to imply that Indian languages and cultures are somehow less relevant or important in a globalized world.

In a step towards attaining a prominent and promising position on the global platform, the NEP intends to promote multidisciplinary undergraduate education as a reflection of capabilities of Ancient Indian Universities like Nalanda that provided a holistic approach to education to Indians and foreign students alike,

exposing them to a wide array of educational disciplines. The policy framework is focussed on the execution of traditional Indian methods of developing well-rounded personalities through academic knowledge, physical training as well as extra-curricular activities offering space for innovation. The Accreditation system introduced by the policy has been created to ensure quality and efficient resources of education through external evaluation of institutes, transferability of credits and improved educational outcomes, but this can harbor standardization of educational programmes thereby stifling innovation and creativity.

In the integration of traditional Indian systems of imparting education and the need to attain global exposure, there is a potential emergence of diversified cultural forms and identities. It makes room for Homi Bhabha's concept of the 'Third Space' - an ambiguous and complex state of creative cultural identity which also provides scope for dominant identities to be challenged. This 'Third Space' is a space that offers hybridity where diversified cultural identities are always evolving, pushing in on promises of creativity and innovation. The NEP 2020 is largely focussed on this third space with its holistic and comprehensive approach to education. By allowing the students a space to critically analyze and exploit creative freedom, NEP is promoting their empowerment to challenge dominant narratives and create new forms of knowledge and identity. This progressive move perpetuating Bhabha's ideology of a 'Third Space' can also be identified in the policy's objective of globalization by paving way for the setting up of selected high-performing Indian universities in international regions and inviting international universities to set camp in India - universalising Indian education and simultaneously exposing Indians to universal education. But in doing so, the policy might be harboring neoliberal ideas, ignoring the adverse potentiality of commercializing institutions from developed countries that would end up contributing to the marginalization of indigenous educational institutes. The promotion of international universities offers grounds for prioritizing foreign universities over Indian Universities; and the access to globally recognized education by way of encouraging privatization can further lead to increasing the existing gulf between social classes and communities due to reasons of affordability. The creation of hegemonic social structures is not to be only viewed with the perspective of Orientalism, but is also to be recognized within the country's social systems. Spivak indefinitely argues that the Western academic discourse often silences the voices of subaltern groups, and this is due to the power dynamics that exist between the West and the subaltern. In the context of the NEP 2020, it is important to consider how power dynamics between different regions,

communities, and groups within India may influence the development and implementation of education policies. For example, it is important to consider how policies developed at the national level may impact the experiences of marginalized and oppressed communities at the local level. The policy is oriented towards providing all communities with proper access to education, especially the underprivileged sectors of the country, which is also in line with Spivak's assertion on the responsibility of Western/ oppressive intellectuals to identify the needs of the subaltern/oppressed and work in harmony towards fostering a state of equitable opportunities for all. Yet, it is only in the justified implementation of the guidelines of the policy that one will be able to recognize how the policy has addressed societal barriers that cause hindrance in increasing the Gross Enrollment Ratio of the country, for example, factors such as social discrimination, caste barriers, poverty, lack of resources and many others. The policy, however, recognized the colonial impact on education as well as the economic conditions of the country and is aimed at providing inclusive education to all.

While the policy acknowledges the need to decolonize its educational framework by way of growing closer to the cultural roots and traditions, it significantly understands the demands of the 21st century. Technological advancements have revolutionized the world, and India, the seventh largest and second most-populated nation aims to contribute in the field of cutting-edge progressive scientific fields like Artificial Intelligence - that has potential to integrate and dominate every other discipline with its fast-pacing growth in all avenues. The policy intends to promote the integration of education and research in areas of nanotechnology, biotechnology, neuroscience, 3-D mapping techniques with prosperous applications to the health sector, and environment to promote sustainable living. This will bridge the gulf created by economic deprivation in India by enabling growth prospects to the current state of technology in the country, boosting availability of knowledgeable and skilled intellectuals in the nation and creating an increase in their demand across the globe. In the process of developing the ideas and providing wide exposure to the future of the country, the policy is also creating competencies with the educational development of the developed and other developing nations.



## CONCLUSION:

The NEP 2020 has been created with an aim to detach itself from the colonial residues of previously established education structures since independence. It aims to do so by way of promoting the significance of the Indian language and challenging the hegemonic structure of the English language in the land of the colonized. The integration of traditional knowledge systems to promote creativity and innovation, pressing on the need for vocational education to enhance skill development, promotion of Indian culture, art and tradition with the help of exposure to local artisans, artists and revision of curriculum, addressing social inequalities and creating a gender inclusive space on the level of higher education are all the concerns that the document seeks to address as a revolutionary step in the field of Indian education systems. A post-colonial analysis of the policy has augmented this study and facilitated details in how the policy is making an effort to decolonize numerous aspects of the Indian higher education systems and yet, hasn't fully recognized the complexities of India's culture and diversity. The policy also dictates terms for globalization of Indian education and enriching the qualitative standards to challenge the dominant structures on the global platform. The study has foregrounded the possibility of achievements as well as loopholes in the implementation of the policy with a post-colonial lens of theorists like Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha. Their influential contributions in the field of Post-Colonial studies supports the findings of this study and help advocate the argument that while the policy seeks to modernize and reform the Indian education system, it also perpetuates some of the stereotypes and misconceptions that have historically characterized Western attitudes towards the East. To truly create an inclusive and multidisciplinary education system, the NEP 2020 needs to move beyond Orientalist tropes and embrace a more nuanced and complex understanding of India's diverse cultural traditions. It is a promising reform if it caters to justified execution of the policies concerned and honestly, moves towards an inclusive education system by uplifting especially the marginalized and underprivileged communities and addressing their socio-economic concerns. The Policy, by embracing the hybridity of Indian culture can help create a more empowering and transformative education system for all students. According to the Press Information Bureau, there has been an increase in the GER from 25.6 to 27.3 percent, and the policy is determined to increase this ratio by significant difference by the year 2040. It is yet to be seen how effectively and efficiently the desired

goals will be achieved, and the success of its outcomes is highly dependent on the acknowledgment of socio-economic hierarchies and their breakdown.

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