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**THE ROOTED COSMOPOLITAN: DECOLONIZING THE ENGLISH DISCIPLINE THROUGH THE INTEGRATION OF INDIAN KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS (IKS)**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The discipline of English Studies in India has historically functioned as a colonial inheritance, often prioritizing Western canons and epistemologies over indigenous ways of knowing. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has recently emphasized the integration of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) across curricula to foster "rootedness." This paper argues that integrating IKS into the English subject—both in literary studies and English Language Teaching (ELT)—is not an act of nostalgic revivalism, but a critical pedagogical necessity for decolonizing the academy. By shifting the theoretical lens from Western critical theory to indigenous aesthetics (such as Rasa-Dhvani), and by moving pedagogy from monolingual instruction to multilingual, holistic approaches inherent in Indian traditions (such as Katha and Tarkashastra), the English classroom can be transformed. This paper examines theoretical frameworks for this integration, proposes practical methodological shifts in teaching literature and language, and addresses the challenges of implementation, ultimately arguing for an English studies paradigm that is globally competent yet indigenously grounded.*

**Keywords:** Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS), Decolonization, English Language Teaching (ELT), Rasa Theory, Multilingualism, Pedagogy, NEP 2020.

**1. INTRODUCTION**

Historically, the introduction of English education in India, epitomized by Thomas Macaulay's 1835 "Minute on Indian Education," was designed to create a class of interpreters, Indian in blood and color, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect. For nearly two centuries, English Studies in India has struggled with this legacy, often functioning as an outpost of Western academia. The canon remained largely British, critical tools were borrowed from European philosophers, and the pedagogy was rooted in monolingual assumptions alien to India's linguistic ecology.

However, the contemporary academic landscape is witnessing a significant paradigmatic shift, catalyzed by postcolonial theory and formalized recently by the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The NEP mandates the integration of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) into higher education to ensure that education is relatable, relevant, and rooted in the Indian ethos while remaining globally responsive.

It is crucial to define what is meant by IKS in this context. IKS is not merely a repository of ancient Sanskrit texts or a return to Vedic rituals. It is a broad, living spectrum of indigenous knowledge traditions comprising philosophy (*Darshana*), aesthetics (*Sahitya Shastra*), ethics (*Niti*), governance, oral traditions, folk knowledge, and unique pedagogical methods developed on the Indian subcontinent over millennia.

This paper argues that the integration of IKS into the English subject is essential for decolonizing the discipline. It posits that English in India can no longer be taught solely through Western epistemological frameworks. Instead, English must be reimagined as an Indian language, taught through Indian pedagogical lenses, and used to analyze texts—both Western and Indian—through indigenous theoretical frameworks. This paper will explore the theoretical justifications for this shift, examine methodologies for integrating IKS into literature and language teaching, and discuss the practical challenges involved in this academic restructuring.

**2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The call to decolonize English studies is not new. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, in *Decolonising the Mind* (1986), famously argued against the "cultural bomb" of colonial languages that annihilated a people's belief in their own heritage. In the Indian context, scholars like G.N. Devy have extensively documented the "aphasia" that struck Indian languages due to the hegemony of English.

However, the conversation has moved from merely critiquing colonial dominance to actively constructing alternatives. The theoretical framework for integrating IKS rests on two pillars: epistemological pluralism and linguistic reality.

**2.1 Epistemological Pluralism vs. Eurocentrism** Mainstream English literary criticism has heavily relied on Aristotle's poetics, European Romanticism, and 20th-century French critical theory (Derrida, Foucault). While valuable, these are often applied universally to texts that operate on different philosophical premises. Scholars such as Kapil Kapoor and Avadhesh Kumar Singh have argued for the revitalization of Sanskrit Poetics—

specifically theories of *Rasa* (aesthetic flavor), *Dhvani* (suggestion), and *Auchitya* (propriety)—as viable, sophisticated tools for literary analysis in English classrooms. Integrating these does not mean discarding Western theory, but rather creating a comparative space where a text by John Keats could be read alongside Kalidasa through the lens of *Rasa*.

**2.2 The Linguistic Reality of India** In English Language Teaching (ELT), the dominant methodology for decades has been the "Communicative Approach," often imported from monolingual Western contexts which view the mother tongue (L1) as interference. IKS, conversely, is rooted in a deeply multilingual tradition. As scholars like Ajit Mohanty have argued, India's linguistic landscape is characterized by fluid multilingualism. An IKS-based pedagogy recognizes multilingualism as an asset, not a deficit, aligning with modern concepts of "translanguaging." The Indian tradition of learning never isolated languages; Sanskrit, Prakrit, and regional languages coexisted in literary and scholarly pursuits.

### 3. RE-READING LITERATURE THROUGH THE IKS LENS

The most immediate application of IKS in English studies is the transformation of literary analysis. Currently, even Indian Writing in English (IWE) or Indian Literature in English Translation (ILET) is often taught using Western modernist or postmodernist frameworks.

**3.1 Applying Rasa-Dhvani Theory** Instead of teaching a poem solely through the lens of New Criticism (focusing on irony, paradox, and ambiguity), an IKS approach would introduce *Rasa* theory. Developed by Bharata Muni in the *Natyashastra* and refined by Abhinavagupta, *Rasa* focuses on the emotional transference from text to reader.

- [Expansion needed here for 10-page goal: Provide a concrete example. Take a poem often taught in Indian colleges, perhaps by Rabindranath Tagore or Sarojini Naidu. Analyze it using standard Western literary terms. Then, re-analyze it by identifying its 'Sthayi Bhava' (dominant emotion) and how the 'Vibhavas' (determinants) and 'Anubhavas' (consequents) work together to manifest a specific 'Rasa' (e.g., Karuna Rasa/compassion or Shringara Rasa/erotic love). This demonstrates the practical application of the theory.]

**3.2 Comparative Aesthetics: The Epic Tradition** The English curriculum often centers on Homer or Milton. An IKS approach promotes comparative reading. When teaching epic conventions, the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* should not be treated merely as religious texts but as literary masterpieces offering alternative worldviews on heroism, duty (*Dharma*), and ethics. Comparing the concept of the "tragic flaw" (hamartia) in Greek tragedy with the concept of *Karma* and *Dharma* in Indian epics provides students with a richer, more diverse ethical framework for understanding literature.

### 4. IKS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING (ELT) PEDAGOGY

Integrating IKS into language teaching involves shifting from purely functional, transactional views of language towards holistic, experiential learning methodologies indigenous to India.

**4.1 The 'Katha' Tradition (Storytelling) as Pedagogy** India has one of the world's richest, oldest continuous traditions of storytelling (*Katha*), seen in the *Panchatantra*, *Jataka Tales*, and *Kathasaritsagara*. In modern ELT, storytelling is often reduced to a warm-up activity. In the IKS framework, *Katha* is central. It is a holistic tool where language is learned in the context of ethics, morality, and worldly wisdom (*Niti*).

Using Indian folk tales in English translation to teach vocabulary and grammar connects learners to their cultural roots while acquiring the target language. The narrative structure of traditional Indian stories—often cyclical or framed narratives rather than linear Western structures—offers different ways of organizing thought in language.

**4.2 Tarkashastra (The Art of Debate) and Critical Thinking** Western education emphasizes "critical thinking," often taught through Socratic questioning. India has its own robust tradition of logic and debate known as *Tarkashastra* or *Shastrartha*. This tradition emphasizes disciplined argumentation, analyzing the opponent's view (*Purvapaksha*), and establishing one's own view (*Uttarapaksha*).

Developing English debating skills using the structured protocols of *Tarkashastra* can be far more effective for Indian students than importing unstructured Western debate formats. It provides a culturally familiar scaffold for developing advanced argumentation skills in English.

**4.3 Translanguaging and Multilingualism** An IKS-inspired ELT classroom must abandon the "English Only" policy that still pervades many institutions. The *Gurukul* system and later traditions were inherently multilingual. Teachers should encourage "translanguaging," allowing students to use their linguistic repertoire to make meaning. Explaining a complex English concept using a parallel concept from the student's mother

tongue is not a failure of teaching English; it is an effective bridging strategy deeply rooted in the Indian reality of simultaneous language use.

## 5. CHALLENGES AND PATHWAYS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

While the theoretical arguments for IKS integration are strong, the practical implementation faces significant hurdles that this paper must acknowledge to remain balanced.

**5.1 The Challenge of Resources and Training** The primary challenge is a severe lack of trained faculty. Most English professors in India are trained almost exclusively in Western canonical literature and theory. They may lack the requisite knowledge of Sanskrit poetics or indigenous pedagogies to teach them effectively. There is a danger of "tokenism," where IKS is included superficially without deep understanding, doing more harm than good.

*Pathway:* Massive Faculty Development Programs (FDPs) are required. Interdisciplinary collaboration between English departments and Sanskrit/Philosophy departments is essential to create credible curricular resources.

**5.2 The Fear of Revivalism vs. Critical Engagement** There is a valid concern in parts of academia that IKS integration could lead to an uncritical glorification of the past or a "saffronization" of education.

*Pathway:* It is vital to frame IKS integration not as religious instruction but as academic engagement. Indian traditions are not monolithic; they contain immense internal debates, dissent (e.g., the Bhakti movement's critique of orthodoxy), and diverse philosophical schools. An IKS approach must be critical, not hagiographic, subjecting ancient texts to the same rigorous scrutiny as modern ones.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The integration of Indian Knowledge Systems into the English subject is an ambitious yet necessary project for the 21st-century Indian academy. It is a move away from the "mimicry" that Macaulay envisioned, toward the creation of a "rooted cosmopolitanism."

By adopting indigenous aesthetic theories like *Rasa*, English literature students gain access to sophisticated tools of analysis that resonate with their cultural psyche. By embracing indigenous pedagogies like *Katha* and multilingualism, English language learners find a more hospitable, effective environment for acquisition.

Ultimately, integrating IKS does not mean rejecting the global role of English. Rather, it means empowering Indian students to engage with the globalized world not as cultural orphans dependent on borrowed epistemologies, but as confident scholars rooted in their own rich intellectual heritage. This shift promises to transform the English classroom from a site of colonial residue into a vibrant space of decolonial possibility.

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