

Renaissance of Kala: The Ancient Educational Pedagogy for Modern Educational Goals

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Abstract— This paper delves into the ancient Indian concept of "Kalā" (कला), and introspects 64 Kalā, traditionally encompassing a vast array of learnings; a mix of contemporary faculties of arts, skills, and sciences, and examines its alignment with the multidisciplinary educational framework proposed by India's New National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. It argues that Kalā, with its comprehensive scope, offers invaluable insights for developing a holistic education system in contemporary India, bridging the gap between traditional wisdom and modern educational paradigms, offering insights on implementation of NEP 2020.

Keywords— *Keywords: kalā, Kalā NEP 2020, National Education Policy 2020, multidisciplinary education, traditional wisdom, India, Ancient India, Bharat*

I. INTRODUCTION - A LOOK INTO NEP 2020, FOR BUILDING FUTURE YOUTH

In an era dominated by specialized education systems, emerged during and post-colonial period, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 of India charts a visionary course back to its roots, aiming to rekindle the rich tradition of holistic and multidisciplinary learning that once flourished in the ancient seats of learning like Takshashila and Nalanda. Chapter 11 of NEP 2020, titled "Towards a More Holistic and Multidisciplinary Education," quotes India's venerable educational heritage, underscoring the remarkable depth of ancient Indian learning, especially giving reference of Banabhatta's "Kadambari,"[5] which portrays an ideal education as encompassing the knowledge of 64 Kala's or arts. Further, NEP 2020 mentions that these arts were not limited to creative pursuits like singing and painting but spanned a wide array of fields including scientific disciplines such as chemistry and mathematics, vocational skills like carpentry and clothes-making, professional domains such as medicine and engineering, and essential soft skills including communication, discussion, and debate [5].

This eclectic mix of knowledge and skills highlights an educational philosophy that valued the development of a well-rounded individual, equipped not only with technical expertise but also with the ability to think critically, communicate effectively, and engage in building constructive society.

The NEP 2020 draws inspiration from this illustrious past, advocating for the reintroduction of these principles into the modern Indian educational framework. The policy underscores the relevance of this approach to education in the 21st century, especially to suit a time characterized by rapid technological advancements and a shrinking global landscape. It posits that the challenges of the contemporary world require

learners to be versatile, innovative, and adept at interdisciplinary thinking.

By proposing a shift towards a more holistic and multidisciplinary education, NEP 2020 aims to prepare students not just for specific careers but for life itself.

The recommendation clearly attempt to revive and integrate India's traditional educational ethos into the current system and is a bold step towards creating a future-ready generation - reclaiming its legacy as a global centre of learning, and other transformative experiences to the youth of India that shapes the mind, spirit, and character of its learners.

However, to implement this vision successfully and fully comprehend the recommendations of the Chapter 11, NEP 2020, and further implement them, it is important to understand the nuances of Indian traditions. This paper attempts to bring to surface the comprehensive implications of the term Kalā for better interpretation of recommendation in NEP 2020.

II. THE MULTIFACETED CONCEPT OF KALĀ IN ANCIENT INDIAN TRADITION

There are numerous texts that mention Kala. The paper investigates the following texts that mention the term Kalā and 64 kalas: (शैवतनूत्रम्) Shaivatantra [3] (64 Kalas (चतुष्टयकला), 2020), (कामसूत्रम्) Kamasutra [6] [12] [13] by Vatsyayana (Sastri, 1964), (नाट्यशास्त्रम्) Natya Shastra by Bharatamuni (Bharatamuni, 1951), (भगवतपराणम्) Bhagavata Purana (Commentary) (Veda Vyasa, 1989), (शक्रनीपत) Shukraneeti [10] by Shukracharya, (शिवतत्त्वरात्नाकर) Shivattvaratnakara by Basavarajendra (Deveerappa, 1964), Ayurveda.

Study of these texts does allow the readers to comprehend the vast concept of kalā, far beyond its simplistic interpretation as understood by the English word "art". It embodies a comprehensive framework that can significantly contribute to transforming the Indian academic scenario and nurturing a better generation of students.

In Sanskrit, the term kalā boasts a rich tapestry of meanings that reveal the depth of the Indian cultural and philosophical landscape. As elaborated by Sir Monier-Williams, kalā's definitions span a remarkable range, from literature, astronomy, and mathematics to art and philosophy, illustrating its integral role in various domains of knowledge and practice [14], The table (1) gives a brief outline of the variation of the meanings.

“Fig. 1”, illustrates Variations in the meaning of Kalā and in various Contexts. It is interesting to note that the contexts are from numerous interesting domains

TABLE I. TABLE TYPE STYLES

Variou s Meani ngs of Kalā	Table Column Head	
	Meaning of Kalā	Context of Use
1	Part, especially the sixteenth part of the moon (Sūri's & Mahalakshmi, 2024)	Upanishads
2	Arts and Science [4] (Harshananda, n.d.)	Cultural and educational
3	Human body parts [4] (Harshananda, n.d.)	Ayurveda
4	Time-measure in music and dance [11] (Sūri's & Mahalakshmi, 2024)	Natyashastra [9]
5	Time (period) and season [11] (Sūri's & Mahalakshmi, 2024)	Jyotisha
6	Syllabic instant in poetry [14] (Williams, 1963, 261)	Prosody
7	Limited authorship, cosmic division	Trika Philosophy
8	Elements of the gross material world, division of time [14] (Williams, 1963, 261)	Material and Temporal Contexts
9	Boat, parts of a sacrifice, Dākṣāyaṇī [14] (Williams, 1963, 261)	Cultural and Religious Significance
10	Mechanical or fine art, practical art [14] (Williams, 1963, 261)	Arts and Sciences
11	Atoms, elements of the body, stages of embryonic development (Williams, 1963, 261)	Human Physiology and Metaphysical Concepts
12	Interest on capital, grammatical commentary [14] (Williams, 1963, 261)	Measure of Interest and Linguistics
13	Ignorance, skill, menstrual discharge, mantra-resonance [14] (Williams, 1963, 261)	Esoteric and Everyday Contexts

Fig. 1. Variations in the meaning of Kalā and in various Contexts

One can observe that kalā signifies the precision and structure in the metric composition of poetry, highlighting its importance in Sanskrit literary traditions.

In the philosophical realms of Trika and Pāśupata, kalā represents the concept of limitation and division within the cosmic order, contrasting the idea of omnipotence and offering a nuanced understanding of creation and divine power.

The term extends its meanings to the material and temporal, including elements of the physical universe, divisions of time, and astronomical measurements, showcasing ancient Indian scholars' efforts to categorize the cosmos and temporal phenomena.

Moreover, kalā's cultural and religious significance is evident in its use to denote objects like boats, parts of a sacrifice, and as a name for the deity Dākṣāyaṇī in certain regions, imbuing it with symbolic value.

In the realm of arts and sciences, kalā acknowledges the specialized skills and ingenuity required in various crafts, underscoring the appreciation for artistry and technical proficiency. It also finds application in describing physiological and metaphysical concepts, indicating an early comprehension of the physical and subtle aspects of existence. Additionally, kalā's relevance extends to economic and linguistic domains, denoting monetary interest on capital and serving as a name for grammatical commentary.

Exploring esoteric and everyday contexts, kalā's association with a range of experiences and practices, from the mundane to the spiritual, reveals the word's versatility. According to Patanjali's Yoga Sutra, [4] within the Śrī Cakra framework, kalā symbolizes the creative desire fundamental to the process of differentiation and manifestation in the universe, illustrating its pivotal role in the cosmic creation narrative.

Kashmiri Shaivism positions kalā as a crucial element in the philosophical discourse on divine limitation and the illusion of separation, contributing to the soul's journey of realization. Similarly, the Mahanirvana Tantra's reference to kalā in relation to divine entities underscores its significance in spiritual practices, demonstrating the nuanced understanding of the divine and natural elements in Hindu tantra.

Upon investigation of various instances of kalā, one may agree that the framework can be understood as an “aspect of action”, as in act of increasing Moons kalā. Alternatively, one can observe that the definition can be derived as ‘that which increases, part by part’. [4], or in other words is a smaller fragment of the whole.

Either way, Kalā embodies a holistic approach as a framework that can be adopted in education. The framework puts in focus the pragmatic needs of society for holistic results and the diverse applications of knowledge and skill in accomplishment of the result. Through this lens, kalā indicates not only a unique methodology for understanding and engaging with the world, but also encourages an equally unique approach to build modern syllabi. [4] Advocating the seamless integration of diverse fields, suggesting an educational model where learning is not compartmentalized but is an interconnected exploration of knowledge.

III. 64 KALĀ

It's essential to understand that the concept of 64 Kalās [1] [2][8] encompasses multiple sets, each tailored to different contexts and purposes. For instance, the 64 Kalās referenced in Shukraniti [10] are adapted for governance and kingdom management, whereas those in the Kamasutra [6] [12] [13] are aimed at enhancing the quality of human life. Each set encompasses a diverse range of skills, including chemistry, architecture, and product design, tailored to specific needs.

For example, बलदपवनाशान्तं न्यद्धम् || Baladarpavinashantam Niyuddha (Niyuddha for destruction of enemy's power and vanity) [8] (64 Kalas (चतुष्टय कला), 2020) - this Kalā from shukraniti [10] is one portion required to ensure a ruling of a kingdom and वृक्षाययोगा vrkṣāyuryogā

- Gardening; knowledge of treating the diseases of trees and plants, of nourishing them, and determining their ages. Taking care of Trees - Gardening this Kalā from Kamasutra [6] [12] [13] focus on enriched life of humans [13].

IV. KALĀ AS A FOUNDATION FOR MULTIDISCIPLINARY LEARNING

The integration of kalā into the curriculum, then, encourages a return to an education system where knowledge is not fragmented but is seen as an interconnected whole. Or rather a fragmentation of a whole, one Kalā at a time. It characterizes free flow between various modern disciplines, without barriers, without restraints. Facilitated by only one purpose - to complete a holistic growth, one aspect at a time, to complement the whole. Thus a student can take up a course in mathematics, and then in chemistry, in metallurgy, in painting, dance, as the need for a person arises, for the expected outcome.

V. IMPLEMENTING KALĀ FRAMEWORK IN MODERN EDUCATION - FOR A HOLISTIC EDUCATION MODEL

By embracing this framework of kalā, the Indian education system can foster a learning environment that encourages students to explore beyond their restricted fields, to understand the interconnectedness of various domains of knowledge. This holistic model of education will not only prepare students for the complexities of the modern world but also instills in them a sense of cultural identity and appreciation for their rich heritage. It encourages the development of versatile individuals capable of leadership.

To integrate kalā into the modern educational framework, curricula need to be redesigned to encourage exploration, creativity, and interdisciplinary learning. Schools and universities should offer programs that allow students to engage with a broad range of subjects, from the sciences to the humanities, arts to technology, reflecting the diverse aspects of kalā.

VI. CONCLUSION

Understanding and integrating the framework of kalā into India's education system is pivotal for achieving the goals set out in NEP 2020. It represents a return to the roots of India's educational heritage, one that values the development of a holistic individual. To ensure the successful integration of this multidimensional concept into the contemporary educational framework, the following recommendations are made:

A. Enhancing Kalā's Role in School Education

It's imperative to reassess and expand the portrayal of kalā within the school curriculum, transcending its current perception as mere arts or crafts. A reimagined curriculum should reflect the depth of the concept of kalā, introducing students early on to the interplay between its true relevance, broader context, and value in shaping young lives. By doing so, we can provide children with a correct contextual orientation from a young age, preparing them to appreciate the interconnectedness of knowledge systems.

This broader understanding of kalā will cultivate in students an appreciation for India's intellectual legacy and foster a sense of cultural identity. Schools must strive to infuse kalā's concept and principles throughout the educational experience, thereby constructively shaping India's educational pedagogies.

B. Adopt a Pragmatic Approach for Syllabus Building in Higher Education

Higher education institutions should focus on the framework of kalā, bringing in curricula that champions interdisciplinary study and research, bridging ancient insights with modern-day issues.

By incorporating these recommendations into the educational reform process, and changing orientation and perception of the word kalā, India can foster an academic environment that truly reflects the spirit of NEP 2020.

Ultimately, by reintegrating the wisdom of the past into the educational strategies of the present and future, India can aspire to lead the way in creating a more comprehensive, adaptive, and enriching educational landscape for generations to come.

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