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## Revisiting the Indian knowledge System: A Multidisciplinary Framework for Holistic Learning

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### Abstract

Indigenous knowledge traditions are receiving more attention as a basis for holistic learning as a result of the growing demand for value-based, transdisciplinary, and culturally orientated education. This article examines the Indian Knowledge System's (IKS) philosophical underpinnings, educational strategies, and current applicability in promoting students' intellectual, moral, emotional, and spiritual growth. It looks at how well IKS supports experiential learning, critical thinking, and interdisciplinary integration—all of which are key components of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which was unveiled by the Indian government. Major issues including low awareness, a lack of organized validation models, a lack of academic resources, and the need to strike a balance between scientific rigor and conventional knowledge are all highlighted in the conversation. Proposed future directions include curriculum innovation, international research collaboration, teacher preparation in interdisciplinary pedagogy, translation and digital preservation of ancient literature, and institutional support through specialized centers. The study highlights that using indigenous knowledge is a forward-looking strategy for creating an educational system that balances cultural legacy with international modernism and creativity, not a way to go back in time.

**Keywords:** Indian Knowledge System (IKS), Holistic Learning, Multidisciplinary Education, Indigenous Knowledge

### Introduction

India's intellectual, cultural, and spiritual legacy are embodied in the Indian Knowledge System (IKS), a huge repository of indigenous expertise. It sees knowledge as a cohesive whole that ties together the moral, spiritual, and physical aspects of existence. IKS, which has its roots in experiential learning and ethical consciousness, strives to develop students holistically by fostering the harmonious development of the hand, heart, and head. The Vedic, Buddhist, and Classical Indian traditions provide the philosophical underpinnings of IKS. The Vedic tradition placed more emphasis on self-realization and the search for truth via methodical investigation while the Buddhist worldview encouraged reason, compassion, and mindfulness. A genuinely diverse and integrated approach to knowledge was demonstrated during the Classical Indian period by the development of several disciplines, including logic, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, and the arts. There is a growing need to revisit the Indian Knowledge

System in the context of education in the twenty-first century, which is characterized by compartmentalized learning and rapid technological innovation. Emotional development, ethics, and values are frequently neglected in modern schooling. By encouraging inclusive, sustainable, and value-based learning that equips people for societal and personal well-being, reintegrating IKS can aid in re-establishing equilibrium.

By fusing ancient knowledge with modern educational demands, the Indian Knowledge System is examined in this paper as a multidisciplinary framework that supports holistic learning. It seeks to demonstrate how IKS might provide an alternative educational model based on ethics, integration and lifelong learning.

### Historical Roots and Evolution of The Indian Knowledge System

A composite framework of philosophy, science, art, culture, and ethics that represents India's comprehensive and holistic

worldview is known as the Indian Knowledge System (IKS). Across a wide range of fields, including spiritual philosophy, empirical sciences, literature, medicine, mathematics, architecture, and moral philosophy, it represents the cumulative knowledge of centuries. IKS, which has its roots in the search for harmony (Dharma) and truth (Satya), views all fields of knowledge as interrelated and geared toward societal and personal well-being. It is a complete paradigm for holistic education and sustainable life since it fosters not only intellectual but also moral, emotional, and spiritual development.

Over thousands of years, India's intellectual continuity, adaptability, and in-depth philosophical investigation have been reflected in the development of the Indian Knowledge System (IKS). Its development can be followed through several historical eras, each of which has aided in the expansion and modification of knowledge in a variety of fields, including philosophy, science, art, language and ethics.

### **Vedic Period**

The Indian Knowledge System was founded during the Vedic period (1500–500 BCE). At this time, learning was passed down orally through the Gurukula system, and knowledge was considered a sacred endeavour. A comprehensive view of life was expressed by the Vedas, Upanishads, and other holy writings, which united philosophy, science, and spirituality into a single framework. Insights into astronomy, medicine, and the natural sciences can be found in the Rig Veda and Atharvaveda, demonstrating the coexistence of spiritual knowledge and scientific observation. The Upanishads laid the groundwork for introspective study by emphasizing the idea of unity between the individual self (Atman) and the universal consciousness (Brahman). It was believed that obtaining knowledge (Vidya) would lead to liberation (Moksha), harmony (Rta), and truth (Satya). Therefore, education in the Vedic age strove to develop the full range of human personality—moral, mental, and spiritual—rather than just academic advancement.

### **Classical Period**

Within the Indian Knowledge System, specialization and organization occurred during the Classical period (500 BCE–1200 CE). Grammar, logic, mathematics, medicine, and astronomy were among the subjects that were organized into formal divisions of study at this time. Prominent academics who blended logical reasoning with moral and spiritual understanding included Panini (grammar), Charaka and Sushruta (medicine), Aryabhata and Bhaskara (astronomy and mathematics), and Gautama (logic and philosophy). During this period, educational institutions fostered rigorous discussion and intellectual interaction by implementing systems such as Shastrartha (philosophical conversation). Since comprehending nature, human behaviour, and the cosmos was viewed as a single, on-going quest for truth, the confluence of scientific research and metaphysical ideas demonstrates the multidisciplinary nature of IKS.

### **Medieval Period**

Scholarly traditions expanded and institutional learning flourished during the medieval period (1200–1750 CE). Prominent academic institutions including Nalanda, Takshashila, Vikramshila, Valabhi, and Jagaddala developed into international hubs of learning, drawing students from all around Asia. The multidisciplinary nature of IKS was embodied by these institutions, which provided courses in philosophy, language, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, the arts, and governance. Teaching strategies placed a strong emphasis on debate, logic, and hands-on learning. To ensure that learning was both intellectual and value-oriented, texts were studied in conjunction with real-world applications. Indian scholars persisted in making substantial contributions to a variety of subjects in spite of invasions and political upheavals, maintaining the core of IKS via literature, art, and community-based learning.

### **Colonial Period**

Because the Western educational paradigm was imposed throughout the colonial period (1750–1947), the Indian Knowledge System saw a significant collapse. Indigenous knowledge, dialects, and traditional institutions were marginalized when the British imposed a system centred on administrative training and memorization. The Macaulay's Minute (1835) substituted a Eurocentric curriculum that prioritized Western literature and sciences above Indian research for holistic education. As a result, education lost its connection to culture, community, and moral growth, and India's traditional centres of learning began to erode. Thought leaders like Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore, and Sri Aurobindo spearheaded reform movements and intellectual resistance during this time, emphasizing the restoration of traditional knowledge and holistic education grounded in Indian values.

### **Post-independence & NEP 2020**

The Indian Knowledge System was revived and reinterpreted in contemporary education after independence. The significance of combining ancient knowledge with modern scientific and technical developments became apparent to academics and decision-makers. In this rejuvenation, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is a pivotal moment. It reflects the core tenets of IKS by imagining education as comprehensive, multidisciplinary, and value-based. To encourage research, curriculum development, and recording of India's traditional knowledge history, the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) Division was established under AICTE. This phase is a reinvention of IKS for the contemporary world, where tradition and innovation, science and spirituality, coexist to foster inclusive, human-centred, and sustainable education. It is not merely a return to ancient wisdom. The goal of the contemporary reinterpretation is to make IKS a living framework that continues to influence global understanding, cultural identity, and educational philosophy in the twenty-first century.

India's persistent pursuit of knowledge as a tool for self-

realization and societal well-being is demonstrated by the development of the Indian Knowledge System. IKS serves as a continuity of multidisciplinary learning, spanning from the Vedic age's divine wisdom to the medieval era's institutional developments and the current renaissance to NEP 2020. It provides a timeless educational model that incorporates moral responsibility, spiritual depth, and academic rigor-the real meaning of holistic learning.

### **Philosophical Foundation of IKS**

All knowledge is interrelated and aimed at achieving harmony (Dharma) and truth (Satya), according to the philosophical underpinnings of the Indian Knowledge System (IKS). IKS, which has its roots in the Vedic, Upanishadic, Buddhist, and classical philosophical traditions, places a strong emphasis on the interconnectedness of the material and spiritual aspects of life, the unity of existence, and the quest for self-knowledge. It is predicated on the idea that education is important for an individual's holistic development, which includes their physical, emotional, moral, and spiritual elements of being, rather than only their intellectual growth. These theories were supported by intellectuals like as Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, Mahatma Gandhi, and Rabindranath Tagore, who promoted education as a path to social harmony and self-realization.

Thus, IKS's philosophical foundation supports an educational vision that combines science and spirituality, individual development and group welfare, and moral principles with logical inquiry. This vision is the foundation of India's multidisciplinary and holistic learning tradition.

### **IKS As a Multidisciplinary Framework**

The Indian Knowledge System (IKS) is a genuinely multidisciplinary framework that unifies various fields, including science, philosophy, art, technology, ethics, and environmental knowledge. The Indian tradition sees knowledge as interrelated and complementary, contributing to a thorough understanding of life and the world, in contrast to disjointed disciplinary approaches. This integrative viewpoint places a strong emphasis on the learner's intellectual, moral, emotional, and spiritual growth all occurring in harmony. As a result, IKS fosters holistic learning by integrating several academic disciplines into an educational framework that is both meaningful and values-based.

Traditional knowledge systems like Ayurveda, which combines biology, chemistry, psychology, and environmental elements to promote holistic health, are clear examples of this multidisciplinary character. Similar to this, yoga combines spirituality, psychology, and health sciences to promote self-realization, emotional equilibrium, and physical well-being. Scientific research was connected to more general considerations of cosmic order and human existence, as seen by the historical advancements in mathematics and astronomy.

The coexistence of aesthetics, physics, and social values in disciplines like music, architecture, and literature further demonstrates the integration of knowledge. While traditional architecture blends geometry, engineering, and environmental harmony, classical music is grounded in the

science of sound and expresses emotional and spiritual experiences. These examples show that knowledge in the Indian tradition was not just theoretical but also experiential, contextual, and value-oriented.

The Western concept of compartmentalised learning, which frequently divides disciplines into distinct domains, stands in contrast to this strategy. Although specialisation offers benefits, it can occasionally result in a fragmented understanding. IKS, on the other hand, encourages a connected and experienced understanding of knowledge with the goal of fostering the holistic growth of both individuals and society. As a result, it can be viewed as a multidisciplinary framework that is still very important for sustainable living and modern education.

### **IKS and Holistic Learning**

The term "Holistic Learning" is an educational strategy that strives to develop balanced personalities capable of critical thinking, moral decision-making, and meaningful engagement in society, going beyond the mere accumulation of academic knowledge. Learning is most successful when it is connected to life experiences, values, and self-awareness, according to holistic education. In order to present education as a value-based and life-oriented process, the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) closely aligns with constructivist and experiential learning theories by placing a strong emphasis on self-realization (AtmaVidya), ethical living (Dharma), environmental consciousness (Prakriti Samman), and community-based education (Gurukul system).

The Indian Knowledge System (IKS), which emphasises self-realization (AtmaVidya) as the ultimate goal of education, strongly supports this holistic viewpoint. Knowledge was seen in ancient Indian traditions as a way to achieve inner consciousness and personal growth in addition to being a way to comprehend the outside world. By directing people toward moral responsibility, social harmony, and righteous behaviour, the idea of dharma further encourages ethical living. The concept of Prakriti Samman, or reverence for nature, which emphasises the connection between people and the natural world and promotes sustainable living habits, is another way that IKS fosters environmental consciousness. Community-based education, such as the Gurukul system, where students lived with teachers in a natural and social setting that promoted cooperation, discipline, experiential learning. Education was experiential and value-oriented since learning was not limited to theoretical instruction but also included participation, observation, introspection, and hands-on involvement with everyday life.

In contemporary education, constructivist and experiential learning theories-which place an emphasis on learning via experience, reflection, social interaction, and active participation-are closely aligned with these ideas. Similar to constructivism, IKS acknowledges students as active contributors to the creation of knowledge, and its experiential focus reflects modern methods that link learning to real-world situations. IKS can therefore be seen as a life-oriented and value-based educational approach that integrates knowledge, ethics, skills, and self-development to support the overall development of people and society.

### **IKS In the Vision of The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020**

The Indian Knowledge System's (IKS) key tenets are closely reflected in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which places a strong emphasis on creating a multidisciplinary, comprehensive, and values-based educational system. The strategy acknowledges that in order to support students' total growth, education should not be restricted to disciplinary specialisation but rather should incorporate knowledge, skills, ethics, and cultural awareness. NEP 2020 aims to re-establish a connection between contemporary education and India's rich intellectual legacy by promoting curriculum flexibility, interdisciplinary learning, and the incorporation of Indian customs.

Promoting the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) in modern education has been greatly aided by institutional measures under the NEP 2020 framework. While higher education institutions are increasingly incorporating IKS-based courses, under the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) Indian Knowledge System (IKS) division was established to support research, curriculum development, and the dissemination of indigenous knowledge across disciplines. The Ministry of Education, Government of India, also supports innovation programs and research funding with the goal of enhancing the academic basis and worldwide applicability of traditional knowledge systems. Thus, by fusing India's traditional knowledge with contemporary teaching methods to support holistic, moral, and environmental growth, NEP 2020 marks a significant step toward the resuscitation and reinterpretation of IKS.

### **Pedagogical Implications of Integrating IKS**

The incorporation of local knowledge systems like folk science and traditional practices, interdisciplinary projects, and the inclusion of Indian languages, arts, and philosophical viewpoints are all necessary for the integration of the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) into modern education. While teachers play a critical role as facilitators, aided by teacher education programs and institutional policies that support curriculum reform and research, inquiry-based and experiential learning techniques that draw inspiration from ancient traditions can foster deeper understanding. The comprehensive and immersive character of IKS encourages critical thinking, creativity, teamwork, ethical awareness, and sustainability, assisting learners in becoming internationally competent and culturally rooted individuals. This kind of integration also fits with 21st-century skills.

**Challenges in Mainstreaming the Indian Knowledge System:** A number of obstacles prevent the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) from being effectively incorporated into regular schooling. Teachers' access to trustworthy materials on indigenous knowledge traditions is hampered by the lack of awareness and availability of authentic resources in school and institutional libraries. To guarantee that IKS content satisfies current educational standards while preserving its original essence, there is also a great demand for academic evaluation and organised integration models. Furthermore, striking a balance between

scientific rigour and traditional knowledge is still a major challenge since making indigenous knowledge relevant and credible in contemporary academic environments calls for careful interpretation, study, and evidence-based methodologies. For IKS to be meaningfully included into the educational system, several issues must be resolved.

### **The Way Forward: Towards an Inclusive and Innovative Knowledge Paradigm**

It takes methodical work at several levels to successfully incorporate the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) into modern education. In order to foster research, creativity, and interdisciplinary learning, curriculum reforms should integrate IKS viewpoints across disciplines, bolstered by the creation of specialised IKS centres in academic institutions. In order to make indigenous knowledge available to a larger academic community and future generations, it is also imperative that traditional Indian writings be translated and digitalised. Additionally, international cooperation and research alliances can support comparative and transdisciplinary studies while assisting in placing IKS within global academic discourse. Teachers' training in interdisciplinary IKS pedagogy is equally crucial since it allows them to successfully combine conventional knowledge with contemporary teaching techniques. These measures can ensure the sustainable revival and meaningful application of IKS in the 21st-century educational landscape.

### **Conclusion**

A comprehensive and interdisciplinary view of knowledge, the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) is still very applicable to contemporary schooling. It offers a well-rounded approach to human growth by fusing ethical principles, cultural rootedness, ecological living, and intellectual research. Therefore, revisiting IKS is not just an attempt to go back in time; rather, it is an attempt to reimagine education's future by fusing ancient knowledge with creativity and modern demands. IKS has the ability to lead India toward an educational system that successfully combines cultural identity with global modernity, equipping students to handle the problems of an interconnected and quickly changing world, by leveraging its rich legacy while interacting with global advancements.

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