

INDIAN KNOWLEDGE SYSTEM AS A PATHWAY TO HOLISTIC EDUCATION IN THE ERA OF NEP 2020

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Abstract: The Indian Knowledge System (IKS) is a treasure trove of wisdom that can shape the minds of students. It has gained renewed significance in contemporary educational discourse, especially in relation to holistic learning under NEP 2020. This study explores how IKS can contribute to the intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual development of learners. It adopts a qualitative and conceptual review approach and draws on secondary sources such as journal articles, policy documents and scholarly writings on IKS, holistic education and NEP 2020. The analysis identifies recurring themes in the literature, examines how the policy framework positions IKS in education and considers its relevance to classroom practices such as experiential learning, reflective pedagogy and value-based assessments. The review suggests that IKS can enrich modern education by connecting knowledge with values, culture and lived experience. Simultaneously, it highlights challenges such as limited teacher preparation, epistemological resistance and the risk of superficial implementation. The study concludes that IKS should be viewed as a complementary framework rather than a substitute for modern knowledge systems, so that it can support a more balanced student-centered model of education aligning itself to the vision of NEP 2020.

Introduction

IKS is a collection of knowledge that has been passed down through generations in India through vivid chronologies. It covers subjects like philosophy, science, medicine and spirituality. IKS is not about books; but it is the way of life that emphasizes the importance of living in harmony with nature and with each other (Pandey, 2024). Traditional Indian educational practices like the Gurukul System, yoga and meditation provide a model for holistic education. In today's context, this approach matters even more because students face stress, mental-health concerns and social fragmentation (Maharana, 2025). NEP 2020 acts as a boon as it creates a room to rethink IKS as a living educational resource rather than bridging things to the past.

Need and Significance of the Study

The Indian education system has often been criticized for placing too much emphasis on examinations while giving less attention to the overall growth of learners. As a result, many students experience stress and undergo disengagement. In this context, IKS offers a meaningful framework for making education more balanced and holistic. It supports learning that connects knowledge with values, reflection and real life understanding which aligns closely with the aims of NEP 2020. Studies by Jacob and Gaur (2024) and Kumar (2025) suggest that IKS can contribute to learner development by encouraging self-awareness, resilience, ethical understanding and a broader sense of purpose. Taken together, these insights show that IKS is relevant not only for preserving cultural traditions but also for improving the quality and depth of education in contemporary India.

Objectives of the Study

- To examine the role of IKS in promoting holistic education under NEP 2020.
- To analyze the contribution of IKS to the overall development of learners.
- To analyze the integration of IKS in the modern educational practices.
- To explore the challenges and opportunities of integrating IKS into education.

Methodology: This study follows a qualitative, conceptual review approach based on secondary sources, including peer-reviewed journal articles, policy documents, and related scholarly writing on IKS, holistic education and NEP 2020. The analysis focuses on three steps:

- Identifying the main ideas used by different authors to define IKS and holistic learning.
- Examining how NEP 2020 positions IKS within broader educational reform.
- Mapping IKS based ideas to classroom practices such as experiential learning, reflective teaching and value-based pedagogy (Balchandani, 2026; Jacob and Gaur, 2024; Lawati, 2025).

This method helps synthesize existing scholarship and presents a clear basis for understanding how IKS can contribute to holistic education.

Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to review of secondary sources and does not include primary data from students, teachers or schools. The findings therefore appear interpretive and context-specific rather than empirical and direct classroom evidence. In addition, the discussion is focused on Indian context and NEP 2020, so the conclusions may not fully apply to other education systems.

Results and Discussion

Role of IKS in promoting holistic education: IKS can support holistic education by connecting academic learning with values, reflection and lived experience. Rather than treating knowledge as separate pieces, IKS encourages students to see links between subjects, community and everyday life. This makes learning more meaningful and also supports emotional, moral and spiritual growth alongside intellectual development (Balchandani, 2026; Jacob and Gaur, 2024). In this way, IKS does not replace modern education, but strengthens it by adding depth, context and a stronger sense of purpose (Rout and Sahoo, 2025; Lawati, 2025).

Role of IKS in overall development of learners: IKS supports learner development in a more balanced way because it does not only focus on academic achievement but also encourages intellectual growth through reflection, deeper understanding and emotional growth through practices such as mindfulness and self-control, moral growth through ideas like dharma and non-violence, and spiritual growth through inner awareness and sense of connectedness to life (Balchandani, 2026; Jacob and Gaur, 2024; Rout and Sahoo, 2025). This makes IKS relevant to holistic education because it helps students develop not only knowledge, but also character, empathy and purpose (Lawati, 2025).

Integration of IKS in the modern educational practices: IKS can be integrated into modern education at several levels including curriculum, pedagogy, teacher education and assessment level. At the curriculum level, themes such as ethics, mindfulness and traditional ecological knowledge can be included across subjects. At the pedagogy level, methods such as storytelling, discussion, project work and reflective learning can make classes more engaging and meaningful (Mamgain, 2025). At the teacher education level, training programs can prepare teachers to use IKS ideas in a balanced and practical way. At the assessment level, evaluation can move beyond memory-based tests and include portfolios, journals and presentations that can reflect deeper learning (Balchandani, 2026; Jacob and Gaur, 2024; Lawati, 2025).

Challenges in integrating IKS: Although IKS appears to have a strong potential in education, integrating it into regular classrooms is laden with difficulties. Many schools still follow exam-oriented practices, so there is limited space for value-based and experiential learning. Teachers may also lack enough training, resources or confidence to handle IKS content in a balanced and non-sectarian way. In addition, there is always the risk that IKS may be introduced only at a surface level rather than being meaningfully connected to curriculum and teaching (Balchandani, 2026; Isser et al., 2024).

Opportunities under NEP 2020: NEP 2020 creates several opportunities for bringing IKS into education in a meaningful way. It focuses on multidisciplinary learning, flexibility and experiential methods to allow traditional knowledge to be connected with modern subjects and classroom practices. It also opens space for projects, digital resources and teacher development that can make IKS more practical and accessible. If proper support gets applied, the policy directions can help turn IKS into a useful part of promoting holistic education rather than a symbolic addition (Parmar, 2026; Isser et al., 2024).

Future research directions

The existing literature shows gaps that future research can address. There is a need for empirical study on how IKS based interventions affect students' emotional and moral development in a classroom-based setting. Regardless that, more work is needed to understand how IKS-based activities like yoga, community service, storytelling and reflective lessons affect the moral, emotional and spiritual growth in students. Comparative studies across different school boards and regions would also help us identify what works best in different contexts. In addition to it, teacher-led action research can provide practical insights into how IKS can be used more effectively in everyday teaching (Jacob and Gaur, 2024; Rana and Jain, 2025).

Conclusion

This paper examined the role of Indian Knowledge System (IKS) in promoting holistic education under NEP 2020. The discussion showed that IKS can support the intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual growth of learners while making education more meaningful and connected to life (Balchandani, 2026). Although challenges such as teacher preparedness, curriculum overload and limited practical implementation remain. The policy direction of NEP 2020 creates a strong space for IKS to be used as a valuable educational resource. Overall, IKS can strengthen modern education by adding balance, values and deeper sense of purpose (Jacob and Gaur, 2024; Lawati, 2025).

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