

“Indian Knowledge System in NEP 2020: Bridging the Past and Present”

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Abstract

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 marks a transformative step in India’s educational reform by integrating Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) into modern curricula. This integration seeks to bridge India’s rich civilizational heritage with contemporary educational needs, ensuring that traditional wisdom complements modern scientific and technological advancements. Indian Knowledge Systems encompass philosophy, mathematics, medicine, arts, ecology, governance, and ethical traditions developed over thousands of years. NEP-2020 recognizes that education must be rooted in Indian ethos while preparing learners for global challenges. The policy promotes multidisciplinary education, inclusion of Indian languages, research on indigenous knowledge, and holistic learning approaches. By embedding IKS into higher education, research institutions, and school curricula, NEP-2020 aims to create culturally grounded, innovative, and globally competent citizens. This paper examines the objectives, implementation strategies, significance, and challenges of integrating Indian Knowledge Systems in NEP-2020, demonstrating how it serves as a bridge between India’s past heritage and present-day educational and societal needs.

Keywords: NEP-2020, Indian Knowledge Systems, Education Policy, Cultural Heritage, Multidisciplinary Education, Indigenous Knowledge.

Introduction

Education plays a vital role in preserving cultural heritage while enabling societies to progress toward innovation and modernization. India has historically been a global center of knowledge, contributing significantly to mathematics, medicine, linguistics, astronomy, philosophy, and governance. However, colonial educational frameworks marginalized indigenous knowledge traditions, leading to a disconnect between India’s past intellectual heritage and modern education. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 aims to restore this connection by integrating Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) into the educational framework.

NEP-2020 envisions “an education system rooted in Indian ethos” that contributes to building an equitable and vibrant knowledge society while preparing students for global challenges. [1] The policy

emphasizes multidisciplinary learning, research, cultural awareness, and the integration of traditional knowledge into modern curricula. This approach ensures that education is not merely a transfer of information but a holistic process that develops intellectual, ethical, and cultural awareness.

The integration of Indian Knowledge Systems represents an effort to bridge the gap between ancient wisdom and contemporary educational needs. It acknowledges that traditional knowledge remains relevant for addressing modern challenges such as sustainability, health, ethics, and social harmony.

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Indian Knowledge Systems: Meaning and Scope

Indian Knowledge Systems refer to the vast body of knowledge developed in India over thousands of years through observation, experimentation, and philosophical inquiry. These systems include fields such as Ayurveda, Yoga, mathematics, astronomy, architecture, environmental science, linguistics, logic, and governance. NEP-2020 recognizes this heritage as a guiding principle and emphasizes its relevance to modern education and research. [OBJ]

Indian knowledge traditions emerged from experiential learning, critical analysis, and empirical observation. Ancient scholars such as Aryabhata, Sushruta, Charaka, and Panini made pioneering contributions to science, medicine, and linguistics that continue to influence global knowledge systems today. The Indian tradition emphasized holistic learning, ethical values, and harmony between humans and nature.

IKS is not limited to ancient texts; it also includes traditional crafts, arts, oral traditions, and indigenous ecological knowledge. These forms of knowledge reflect practical wisdom developed over generations and are essential for sustainable development.

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Objectives of NEP-2020 in Promoting Indian Knowledge Systems

NEP-2020 aims to transform India's education system by integrating cultural heritage with modern knowledge. The policy focuses on several key objectives:

1. Rooting Education in Indian Culture and Values

NEP-2020 emphasizes cultural awareness, ethics, and Indian traditions as essential components of education. It seeks to develop students who are intellectually capable and culturally grounded.

2. Integrating IKS into Curriculum

The policy mandates the inclusion of Indian Knowledge Systems in undergraduate and postgraduate curricula. The University Grants Commission (UGC) has introduced guidelines to incorporate IKS courses across disciplines. [OBJ]

3. Promoting Multidisciplinary Education

NEP-2020 promotes multidisciplinary education that integrates sciences, humanities, arts, and traditional knowledge. This approach ensures the unity of knowledge and fosters innovation and creativity. [OBJ]

4. Preserving and Promoting Indian Languages

Language plays a crucial role in knowledge transmission. NEP-2020 promotes teaching in Indian languages and translation of educational materials to ensure accessibility and cultural continuity.

5. Encouraging Research in Indian Knowledge Systems

Research centers and academic programs have been established to study and promote Indian Knowledge Systems. These initiatives aim to generate new knowledge and apply traditional wisdom to modern challenges.

Implementation Strategies of Indian Knowledge Systems under NEP-2020

1. Establishment of IKS Centers and Courses

To promote Indian Knowledge Systems, specialized centers and courses have been established across educational institutions. More than 8,000 higher education institutions have begun adopting IKS in their

curriculum, supported by digital resources and faculty training programs. 

These centers conduct research in areas such as ancient metallurgy, town planning, mathematics, and environmental management. They also organize workshops, conferences, and internships to promote awareness and academic engagement.

2. Curriculum Reform and Multidisciplinary Learning

NEP-2020 integrates Indian knowledge into subjects such as science, humanities, and social sciences. Students can study Indian philosophy alongside modern philosophy, Ayurveda alongside modern medicine, and traditional architecture alongside modern engineering.

Courses such as Sanskrit literature, Indian philosophy, and Vedic mathematics have been introduced to revive traditional knowledge streams. 

3. Digital Preservation and Access

Digital platforms have been used to preserve and disseminate Indian Knowledge Systems. Thousands of traditional texts and manuscripts have been digitized to make them accessible to students and researchers.

Technology also enables online courses, virtual labs, and digital repositories, ensuring that traditional knowledge is accessible globally.

4. Faculty Development and Training

Teacher training programs have been introduced to equip educators with knowledge of Indian Knowledge Systems. Faculty members receive specialized training to incorporate traditional knowledge into teaching and research. 

5. Integration of Arts, Crafts, and Local Knowledge

NEP-2020 promotes the inclusion of local crafts, arts, and traditional skills in education. Local artisans and experts are invited as instructors to share practical knowledge with students. This approach ensures that traditional skills are preserved and transmitted to future generations.

Bridging the Past and Present through NEP-2020

1. Reviving India's Intellectual Heritage

Indian civilization has contributed significantly to global knowledge. However, colonial education systems marginalized indigenous knowledge. NEP-2020 seeks to restore this heritage by integrating traditional knowledge into modern education.

Research initiatives now explore ancient Indian contributions to science, medicine, and environmental sustainability. This revival strengthens national identity and intellectual confidence.

2. Applying Traditional Knowledge to Modern Problems

Indian Knowledge Systems provide solutions to contemporary challenges such as environmental sustainability, health, and ethical governance. For example:

- Ayurveda promotes preventive healthcare.
- Traditional water management systems offer sustainable solutions to water scarcity.
- Indian philosophy promotes ethical and moral values essential for social harmony.

These systems remain relevant and practical in modern contexts.

3. Promoting Holistic Education

NEP-2020 emphasizes holistic development, including intellectual, emotional, ethical, and cultural growth. Education must develop critical thinking, creativity, and cultural awareness. [00]

Traditional Indian education systems such as Gurukul emphasized character development, discipline, and holistic learning. NEP-2020 adopts similar principles in modern education.

4. Strengthening National Identity and Cultural Pride

Integrating Indian Knowledge Systems fosters cultural pride and national identity among students. It

helps learners appreciate their heritage and recognize India's contributions to global knowledge.

5. Enhancing Global Relevance

India's traditional knowledge systems, such as Yoga and Ayurveda, are globally recognized. NEP-2020 promotes these disciplines internationally, positioning India as a global knowledge leader. This enhances India's soft power and global academic influence.

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Role of Indian Knowledge Systems in Higher Education

Higher education institutions play a crucial role in implementing NEP-2020. Universities have introduced interdisciplinary programs that integrate traditional knowledge with modern subjects.

Research programs explore ancient Indian scientific techniques and their modern applications. Students participate in internships, research projects, and workshops focused on Indian Knowledge Systems.

These initiatives promote innovation by combining traditional wisdom with modern scientific methods.

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Benefits of Integrating Indian Knowledge Systems

1. Cultural Preservation

IKS integration preserves India's cultural and intellectual heritage.

2. Holistic Development

Students develop intellectual, emotional, ethical, and cultural awareness.

3. Innovation and Research

Traditional knowledge provides new perspectives for scientific research and innovation.

4. Sustainable Development

Indigenous ecological knowledge promotes environmental sustainability.

5. Global Recognition

India's traditional knowledge enhances its global academic and cultural influence.

Challenges in Implementation

Despite its benefits, integrating Indian Knowledge Systems faces several challenges:

1. Lack of Awareness

Many educators and students are unfamiliar with traditional knowledge systems.

2. Limited Research and Resources

More research and academic materials are needed to support IKS integration.

3. Faculty Training Requirements

Teachers require specialized training to teach Indian Knowledge Systems effectively.

4. Curriculum Development Challenges

Balancing traditional knowledge with modern scientific education requires careful planning.

5. Institutional and Structural Limitations

Educational institutions need infrastructure, funding, and administrative support.

Future

Prospects

NEP-2020 provides a long-term vision for transforming India's education system. By integrating Indian Knowledge Systems, India can create an education model that combines cultural heritage with modern innovation.

Future

initiatives

include:-

- Expansion of IKS research centers
- Development of digital knowledge repositories
- International collaboration in Indian studies
- Increased interdisciplinary research

These initiatives will strengthen India's position as a global knowledge leader.

Conclusion

The National Education Policy 2020 represents a historic step toward reconnecting India's past intellectual heritage with its present educational system. By integrating Indian Knowledge Systems into curricula, research, and institutional frameworks, NEP-2020 bridges the gap between traditional wisdom and modern knowledge. This integration promotes cultural preservation, innovation, sustainability, and holistic education.

Indian Knowledge Systems offer valuable insights for addressing contemporary challenges and fostering ethical, sustainable development. NEP-2020 ensures that India's educational system is rooted in its cultural heritage while preparing students for global challenges.

Thus, NEP-2020 serves as a bridge between India's past and present, ensuring that ancient wisdom continues to guide future generations toward knowledge, innovation, and national progress.

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