



## Reimagining Holistic Development in Education Through Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS)

Stephen Subha Maity<sup>1</sup> & Dr. Niranjan Manna<sup>2</sup>

1. Postgraduate Student, Midnapore College (Autonomous), Department of Education, Midnapore, West Bengal, Mail: [stephensubhamaity@gmail.com](mailto:stephensubhamaity@gmail.com)
2. State Aided College Teachers, Midnapore College (Autonomous), Department of Education, Midnapore, West Bengal, Mail: [niranjan.manna@midnaporecollege.ac.in](mailto:niranjan.manna@midnaporecollege.ac.in)

### Abstract:

*Holistic development has emerged as a central concern in contemporary education as societies increasingly require individuals who are intellectually competent, emotionally balanced, ethically grounded, socially responsible, and culturally rooted. However, modern education systems often remain fragmented, examination-oriented, and disconnected from indigenous knowledge traditions. In this context, Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS), grounded in India's ancient philosophical, scientific, and cultural heritage, offer a comprehensive framework for reimagining holistic development in education. This study examines how IKS can contribute to integrated personality development and strengthen contemporary educational practices, particularly in alignment with the vision of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The study adopts a qualitative research design based on document analysis and thematic review of peer-reviewed journal articles, edited volumes, policy documents, and conference papers related to IKS, holistic education, and educational reform. The analysis reveals that Indian educational traditions—such as the Gurukul system, ancient universities like Nalanda and Takshashila, and philosophical practices emphasizing reflection, ethical inquiry, and experiential learning—were inherently holistic and multidisciplinary. Contemporary research further demonstrates that IKS-informed practices, including yoga, mindfulness, value-based education, ecological consciousness, and culturally responsive pedagogy, remain highly relevant to modern educational needs. Despite challenges such as curriculum integration, teacher preparedness, and prevailing misconceptions about indigenous knowledge, the findings indicate that IKS can significantly enhance holistic development by fostering balanced growth, ethical reasoning, cultural identity, and interconnected learning. The study concludes that integrating Indian Knowledge Systems within modern pedagogy can contribute to an inclusive, meaningful, and future-oriented education system capable of nurturing well-rounded individuals and responsible global citizens.*

**Keywords:** *Holistic Development, Indian Knowledge Systems, NEP 2020, Multidisciplinary Education, Indigenous Knowledge.*

### 1. Introduction

Education in the twenty-first century is confronted with complex and multidimensional challenges. Rapid technological advancement, globalization, environmental crises, and social inequalities demand learners who

possess not only cognitive competence but also emotional intelligence, ethical judgment, cultural awareness, and adaptability. Yet, many contemporary education systems continue to prioritize examination performance, content memorization, and narrowly defined academic outcomes. Such approaches often neglect the holistic development of learners, resulting in fragmented learning experiences and limited personal growth. Holistic development refers to the integrated growth of intellectual, physical, emotional, social, moral, and spiritual dimensions of human personality. This concept emphasizes the development of the whole person rather than isolated skills or knowledge domains. In recent years, holistic education has gained renewed attention as educators and policymakers recognize the limitations of reductionist and utilitarian models of education. In India, this shift has been formally articulated through the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which places strong emphasis on multidisciplinary learning, value education, experiential pedagogy, and the integration of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS). Indian Knowledge Systems represent a vast and interconnected body of knowledge developed over thousands of years, encompassing philosophy, science, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, linguistics, arts, ecology, ethics, and spiritual inquiry. Rooted in classical texts such as the Vedas, Upanishads, and Shastras, as well as in regional and community-based traditions, IKS has historically emphasized harmony between knowledge, life, and values. Traditional Indian education aimed not merely at information transmission but at character formation, self-realization, and social responsibility. Ancient Indian institutions such as Nalanda, Takshashila, Valabhi, and Odantapuri followed inherently multidisciplinary curricula, integrating logic, medicine, mathematics, philosophy, arts, physical training, and ethical discourse. Pedagogical practices such as *śravaṇa* (listening), *manana* (reflection), and *nididhyāsana* (contemplation) encouraged deep understanding, critical inquiry, and self-discipline. These traditions demonstrate that holistic development was a foundational principle of Indian education long before its recognition in modern educational discourse. Reimagining holistic development through Indian Knowledge Systems does not imply a return to the past. Rather, it involves critically engaging with India's intellectual heritage to address contemporary educational challenges. By integrating IKS with modern pedagogical approaches, education can become more inclusive, culturally grounded, ethically oriented, and relevant to real-life contexts. This study, therefore, seeks to explore the role of Indian Knowledge Systems in promoting holistic development and to examine their relevance for contemporary education in the light of current reforms.

## 2. Review of Related Literature:

Scholarly studies demonstrate that IKS has the potential to transform education into a holistic, culturally grounded, and multidisciplinary experience.

**Gardia, Singha, and Mehta (2024)** conducted a conceptual analysis of the Bharatiya Knowledge System and highlighted that ancient Indian educational traditions were inherently designed to promote holistic development rather than fragmented learning. Their study emphasized practices such as reflection, meditation, experiential learning, and ethical inquiry, arguing that these practices nurtured emotional stability, moral values, and cultural identity, which are often neglected in contemporary education systems.

**Mahesh, Aithal, and Sharma (2023)** examined ancient Indian universities to understand their role in imparting holistic and multidisciplinary education. Their literature review revealed that institutions such as Nalanda, Takshashila, and Valabhi followed comprehensive curricula integrating philosophy, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, linguistics, arts, ethics, and physical training. The study emphasized that debate, logical reasoning, moral discipline, and spiritual inquiry were central pedagogical practices, demonstrating that holistic development was deeply embedded in India's educational heritage.

**Dey and Mitra (2025)** explored the relevance of Indian Knowledge Systems in contemporary global thought and education. Their study traced the historical marginalization of IKS during colonial rule and highlighted

recent efforts to reintegrate indigenous knowledge into mainstream education through policy reforms such as the National Education Policy 2020. The authors argued that reclaiming IKS is essential for intellectual decolonization, ethical innovation, and the promotion of holistic and sustainable educational practices in a globalized world.

**Parmar (2026)** examined holistic education as envisioned in NEP 2020, with specific emphasis on the integration of Indian Knowledge Systems into multidisciplinary learning. The study highlighted that NEP 2020 conceptualizes holistic development as encompassing cognitive, emotional, social, moral, and spiritual dimensions. Parmar argued that the successful integration of IKS requires reforms in curriculum design, teacher education, assessment practices, and institutional structures to ensure that traditional knowledge is meaningfully embedded rather than symbolically included.

**Koner and Chattopadhyay (2025)** conducted a meta-analytical study to examine the contribution of Indian Knowledge Systems to holistic development under NEP 2020. Their findings suggested that the integration of IKS enhances creativity, critical thinking, ethical reasoning, and value-based education among learners. The study emphasized that interdisciplinary engagement with yoga, Ayurveda, environmental ethics, and spiritual traditions strengthens cultural literacy and national identity, contributing to balanced personality development.

**Baral (2024)** analyzed the integration of Indian Knowledge Systems for holistic development through NEP 2020. The study found that indigenous practices such as yoga, meditation, and traditional healing systems play a significant role in enhancing emotional intelligence, mindfulness, and resilience. Baral also identified challenges related to curriculum integration, limited teacher preparedness, and misconceptions about traditional knowledge, but concluded that IKS-based education holds strong potential for fostering holistic development.

**Aggarwal (2023)** examined the curricular vision of NEP 2020 and highlighted the policy's emphasis on experiential learning, critical thinking, and the inclusion of Indian Knowledge Systems and values. The study argued that shifting away from rote memorization toward culturally grounded and learner-centred pedagogy can significantly enhance holistic learning outcomes. Aggarwal further emphasized that curricular flexibility under NEP 2020 provides opportunities for integrating indigenous knowledge into formal education.

**Deb, Choudhury, Sofal, and Pradhan (2026)** explored the integration of Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) with Indian Knowledge Systems in education. Their scoping review revealed that although technology is increasingly used to document and disseminate indigenous knowledge, pedagogical approaches often lack deep cultural contextualization. The study highlighted that meaningful integration of IKS within technology-mediated education can promote culturally sustaining pedagogy and holistic learning experiences.

**Thirupathi, Oyyappan, and Sinha (2025)** examined the application of Indian Knowledge Systems in education and lifelong learning to achieve sustainable human resource development. Their study demonstrated that principles derived from Gurukul pedagogy, yoga, Ayurveda, and Vedantic philosophy contribute to ethical leadership, emotional well-being, and sustainable productivity. The authors argued that IKS-based approaches support holistic development by integrating professional competence with moral and emotional growth.

**Jena (2026)** investigated the role of public libraries in promoting sustainable development through the integration of Indian Knowledge Systems. The study emphasized that libraries function as inclusive community learning spaces that preserve indigenous knowledge, promote cultural awareness, and support lifelong learning. By aligning IKS with Sustainable Development Goals, public libraries contribute to social inclusion, environmental responsibility, and holistic community development.

**Aggarwal (2023)** examined the curricular vision of the National Education Policy 2020 with specific reference to the reorientation of Indian education toward experiential, multidisciplinary, and value-based learning. The study emphasized that NEP 2020 seeks to move away from rote memorization by incorporating Indian Knowledge Systems, indigenous values, and culturally rooted pedagogies into curriculum design. Aggarwal argued that such curricular reforms have strong potential to promote holistic development by fostering critical thinking, problem-solving abilities, ethical awareness, and learner autonomy. The study further highlighted that flexible curricular structures and experiential learning spaces provide opportunities for meaningful integration of Indian Knowledge Systems within formal education.

**Dani (2025)** examined the integration of Indian Knowledge Systems with contemporary research and innovation practices. The study argued that IKS offers holistic epistemological frameworks that enhance research methodologies by emphasizing interconnectedness, sustainability, and ethical responsibility. Dani concluded that integrating IKS into modern research practices can promote inclusive innovation and address complex global challenges more effectively.

**Chandratreya (2025)** analyzed the role of Indian Knowledge Systems in higher education and emphasized the need to bridge ancient wisdom with modern academic practices. The study highlighted that IKS-based approaches encourage critical thinking, ethical awareness, and interdisciplinary learning, thereby contributing to holistic development in higher education contexts.

**Murria (2022)** examined the future of Indian higher education with reference to reimagining the system by 2050. The study highlighted the need for a value-oriented, learner-centred, and culturally grounded education system to address emerging global challenges. Although not exclusively focused on IKS, the study emphasized that integrating indigenous knowledge and holistic perspectives is essential for the sustainable transformation of higher education.

**Gupta (2025)** explored Indian Knowledge Systems as a pathway to holistic development and argued that integrating traditional wisdom with modern pedagogy enhances emotional balance, ethical reasoning, and social responsibility. The study emphasized that IKS-based education nurtures well-rounded individuals capable of addressing personal and societal challenges.

**The study on the feminine dimension of Indian Knowledge Systems (2025)** examined how indigenous Indian epistemologies recognize feminine principles such as care, balance, nurturing, empathy, and interconnectedness as foundational to knowledge creation and human development. The study argued that traditional Indian philosophies integrate masculine and feminine dimensions to achieve harmony between intellect, emotion, ethics, and spirituality. It further emphasized that acknowledging feminine epistemologies in education contributes to emotional intelligence, social harmony, inclusivity, and holistic personality development, thereby strengthening the relevance of Indian Knowledge Systems in contemporary educational discourse.

### **3. Objectives:**

- To explore the concept of holistic development in the context of Indian Knowledge Systems.
- To examine the contribution of Indian Knowledge Systems to integrated personality development.

### **4. Methodology:**

The present study adopts a qualitative, descriptive, and conceptual research design based entirely on secondary sources. The study is grounded in a systematic review of existing literature related to Indian

Knowledge Systems (IKS) and holistic development in education. No primary data were collected, as the objective of the study is to synthesize, interpret, and analyze existing scholarly knowledge rather than to generate empirical data.

Secondary data were collected from peer-reviewed journal articles, edited books, conference proceedings, policy documents, and scholarly reports focusing on Indian Knowledge Systems, holistic education, multidisciplinary learning, and educational reforms, particularly in the context of the National Education Policy 2020. The sources were selected through purposive sampling, ensuring direct relevance to the objectives of the study.

The collected literature was analyzed using a descriptive and interpretative approach. Key concepts, arguments, and perspectives related to holistic development and integrated personality formation were identified and compared across studies. The analysis emphasized philosophical foundations, educational practices, and contemporary applications of Indian Knowledge Systems as discussed by various scholars. This approach enabled the study to develop a coherent understanding of how IKS contributes to holistic development in education.

The adopted methodology is appropriate for a conceptual and review-based study, as it allows for critical synthesis of existing knowledge and supports theoretical interpretation without making empirical generalizations. The method aligns closely with the nature of the reviewed literature and the stated objectives of the study.

## 5. Operational Definitions:

**Holistic Development** In the present study, holistic development refers to the integrated growth of intellectual, physical, emotional, social, moral, and spiritual dimensions of an individual's personality, as conceptualized within Indian Knowledge Systems and contemporary educational discourse.

**Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS)** Indian Knowledge Systems denote the body of indigenous knowledge developed in India over centuries, encompassing philosophy, science, medicine, arts, ethics, ecology, and spiritual traditions, which collectively contribute to holistic understanding and human development.

**Integrated Personality Development** Integrated personality development refers to the harmonious formation of cognitive abilities, emotional balance, moral values, social responsibility, cultural identity, and spiritual awareness through educational processes informed by Indian Knowledge Systems.

## 6. Objective-wise Analysis:

### 6.1. To explore the concept of holistic development in the context of Indian Knowledge Systems:

The analysis of the reviewed literature indicates that Indian Knowledge Systems conceptualize holistic development as the harmonious growth of intellectual, physical, emotional, moral, social, and spiritual dimensions of human personality. Unlike modern education systems that often emphasize cognitive achievement in isolation, Indian educational philosophy views education as a life-oriented and value-centred process. Traditional pedagogical practices such as reflection, dialogue, experiential learning, and ethical inquiry were central to Indian Knowledge Systems and aimed at nurturing balanced and well-rounded individuals. The literature further reveals that holistic development within Indian Knowledge Systems is deeply rooted in the integration of knowledge with conduct, values, and lived experience. Education was not confined to classroom instruction but extended to self-discipline, moral responsibility, community engagement, and spiritual awareness. This integrated approach ensured that learners developed not only

intellectual competence but also emotional stability, ethical sensitivity, and social responsibility. Thus, Indian Knowledge Systems provide a comprehensive conceptual framework for understanding holistic development beyond narrow academic outcomes.

## **6.2. To examine the contribution of Indian Knowledge Systems to integrated personality development:**

The reviewed studies highlight that Indian Knowledge Systems contribute significantly to integrated personality development through multidimensional educational practices. Physical well-being and mental discipline are fostered through practices such as yoga and structured daily routines, while emotional balance and self-awareness are cultivated through meditation and reflective practices. Intellectual development is strengthened through inquiry, debate, and logical reasoning, encouraging critical thinking and ethical judgment.

Furthermore, Indian Knowledge Systems emphasize social and moral development through community-based learning, cooperation, and value-oriented education. Learners are encouraged to develop empathy, responsibility, cultural awareness, and respect for harmony between individuals and society. In the contemporary context, these contributions align closely with the vision of the National Education Policy 2020, which emphasizes holistic development, multidisciplinary learning, and value-based education. The integration of Indian Knowledge Systems within modern education thus supports the formation of integrated personalities capable of addressing personal, social, and global challenges.

## **7. Findings**

- i. **Indian Knowledge Systems support holistic development** by integrating intellectual, physical, emotional, moral, social, and spiritual dimensions of education. Literature shows that education in the Indian tradition focuses on balanced growth rather than isolated academic achievement.
- ii. **Holistic development in IKS is value-based and life-oriented**, emphasizing self-discipline, ethical conduct, cultural awareness, and social responsibility along with intellectual growth.
- iii. **Ancient Indian educational institutions followed multidisciplinary pedagogy**, where sciences, arts, philosophy, ethics, and physical training were taught together to promote comprehensive personality development.
- iv. **Indian Knowledge Systems contribute to integrated personality development** through practices such as yoga, meditation, reflection, dialogue, and experiential learning, which enhance physical well-being, emotional balance, and mental clarity.
- v. **Social and moral dimensions are central to IKS**, as learners are trained through community living, cooperation, storytelling, and moral dialogue, fostering empathy, responsibility, humility, and social harmony.
- vi. **The principles of Indian Knowledge Systems align with contemporary educational reforms**, particularly the National Education Policy 2020, which emphasizes holistic development, multidisciplinary learning, value education, and experiential pedagogy.

**Despite its potential, challenges exist in integrating IKS into modern education**, including a shortage of trained teachers, limited learning materials, resistance stemming from colonial mindsets, and difficulties in contextualising ancient knowledge for present-day curricula.

## 8. Conclusion:

The present study concludes that Indian Knowledge Systems provide a rich and comprehensive foundation for promoting holistic development in education. The review of literature and analysis reveals that Indian educational traditions emphasize the integrated development of intellectual, physical, emotional, moral, social, and spiritual dimensions of human personality. Unlike fragmented and examination-oriented modern education systems, Indian Knowledge Systems view education as a life-centred and value-based process aimed at self-realization, ethical conduct, and social responsibility. Ancient educational institutions and pedagogical practices followed multidisciplinary and experiential approaches that nurtured balanced personality development through inquiry, reflection, discipline, and moral training. The study further highlights that Indian Knowledge Systems contribute significantly to integrated personality development through practices such as yoga, meditation, experiential learning, dialogue, and community-based education. These practices promote emotional balance, critical thinking, ethical sensitivity, cultural identity, and social harmony. The principles of Indian Knowledge Systems closely align with contemporary educational reforms, particularly the National Education Policy 2020, which emphasizes holistic development, multidisciplinary learning, and value-based education. Although challenges exist in integrating Indian Knowledge Systems into modern curricula—such as a lack of trained teachers, limited learning resources, and prevailing misconceptions—the potential benefits are substantial. By drawing upon India’s intellectual heritage and adapting traditional wisdom to contemporary educational contexts, Indian Knowledge Systems can play a vital role in reimagining education as an inclusive, meaningful, and culturally grounded process that prepares learners for personal fulfilment and responsible citizenship.

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