



Shri Aurobindo Integral Education as a Framework for Integrating the Indian Knowledge System

Nurtaj Banu*¹ & Shibsankar Jana*²

1. Postgraduate Student, Department of Education, Midnapore College (Autonomous), Midnapore, West Bengal, India, Email: nurtajbanu9@gmail.com
2. Corresponding Author: Assistant Professor (Cont.), Department of Education, Midnapore College (Autonomous), West Bengal, India, Email: shibsankarjana230@gmail.com

*These authors contributed equally to the study.

Abstract:

This research explores Shri Aurobindo's Integral Education as a comprehensive framework for effectively integrating the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) into modern educational practice. The introduction highlights the growing need for an educational model that moves beyond information-based learning toward holistic development. Shri Aurobindo's philosophy, centered on the integral evolution of the physical, vital, mental, psychic, and spiritual dimensions, aligns naturally with the core principles of IKS, which emphasize harmony, self-awareness, and experiential knowledge. The goals of education in the Integral framework include cultivating inner potential, fostering balanced personality growth, developing higher consciousness, and nurturing ethical and responsible individuals. These aims reflect the values embedded in traditional Indian knowledge, such as self-mastery, interconnectedness, and the pursuit of wisdom. The methodology of the study employs a qualitative, analytical approach, drawing from primary texts of Shri Aurobindo, educational literature on IKS, and contemporary pedagogical perspectives. Comparative and interpretative analysis is used to explore the compatibility and transformative potential of integrating both systems. The importance of education is underscored in its role in shaping holistic learners capable of critical thinking, emotional balance, and cultural rootedness. Findings indicate that Aurobindo's multidimensional model provides a strong foundation for embedding IKS components—such as yoga, Indian philosophy, arts, environmental wisdom, and value-based learning—into mainstream education. The educational significance lies in its potential to create a culturally grounded, future-ready, and spiritually enriched pedagogy that nurtures well-rounded, conscious individuals suited for the challenges of the 21st century.

Keywords: *Integral Education, Holistic Development, Indian knowledge system, Value Education, Indigenous Knowledge Integration.*

Introduction:

Aurobindo [1872–1950] proposed integral education, which aims to develop all facets of human potential. His goals of incorporating IKS into the curriculum are outlined in NEP2020. Education has always been

central to the civilizational development of India. From the ancient Gurukul and monastic systems to medieval centres of learning such as Nalanda and Takshashila, Indian education traditionally aimed at the holistic development of the learner. Knowledge was not viewed merely as information or vocational skill but as a means of self-realization, ethical living, and harmony with society and nature. However, with the advent of colonial education and the subsequent dominance of Western epistemological frameworks, Indian education underwent a fundamental transformation. The focus gradually shifted toward utilitarian objectives, examination-oriented learning, and fragmented disciplinary structures, resulting in the marginalization of the Indian Knowledge System (IKS). In recent decades, there has been a renewed recognition of the importance of reviving and integrating IKS within contemporary education. The Indian Knowledge System encompasses a vast and diverse body of knowledge developed over millennia, including philosophy, metaphysics, logic, mathematics, astronomy, medicine (Ayurveda), yoga, linguistics, arts, ecology, ethics, and social thought. IKS is characterized by its holistic worldview, experiential epistemology, ethical grounding, and spiritual orientation. It views knowledge as interconnected and inseparable from values, consciousness, and lived experience.

Despite increasing policy-level emphasis on IKS, its meaningful integration into modern education remains a complex challenge. Contemporary educational structures are largely shaped by compartmentalized curricula, standardized assessments, and an instrumental view of learning. Simply adding IKS-related content to existing syllabi without rethinking the underlying philosophy of education risks superficial inclusion rather than genuine integration. Therefore, an appropriate educational framework is required—one that can accommodate the holistic, integrative, and consciousness-based nature of IKS.

In this context, Shri Aurobindo's philosophy of integral education offers a powerful and relevant framework. Shri Aurobindo, one of India's foremost philosophers, educators, and spiritual thinkers, envisioned education as a means for the integral development of the human being. His educational philosophy is rooted in India's spiritual tradition while remaining open to modern scientific thought and global knowledge. Integral Education seeks the harmonious development of the physical, vital, mental, psychic, and spiritual dimensions of the learner, thereby transcending the limitations of purely intellectual or vocational models of education.

Objectives of the study:

- i. To study how integral education supports the integration of IKS in modern education.
- ii. To analyse the compatibility between integral education and IKS.

Methodology:

The descriptive method has been used to analyse the content-based data of the paper. The descriptive content analysis examines the collected data qualitatively. This method's primary goal is to get practical conclusions from the data. Secondary sources, such as online journals, books, research articles, online magazines, and theses, are used to gather data for this study. In addition to numerous online libraries including Hathi Trust, Internet Archive, and Library, the author consulted the official websites of Sri Aurobindo's writings, including Auroville School, Sri Aurobindo Studies, and California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS).

Literature Review:

Ghosh and Saha (2023) discuss Sri Aurobindo's concept of Integral Education as an education of the body, mind, and intellect. Sri Aurobindo presented Integral Education as a transformative model for Indian society.

According to this view, education is considered meaningful when the physical, mental, and intellectual dimensions of the individual are harmoniously integrated. Integral Education seeks to develop the human body, mind, and intellect in a coordinated manner, thereby shaping a well-balanced and fully developed individual. Sri Aurobindo proposed five aspects of human development under Integral Education. These fivefold principles emphasize holistic development. The five basic dimensions of human nature—physical, vital, mental, psychic, and spiritual—must be represented in education for it to be considered comprehensive and truly integral.

Yadav (2019) examines Sri Aurobindo's philosophical framework of Integral Education and its practical application in promoting physical and spiritual development in Auroville schools, particularly The Mother's International School and Mir Ambika in New Delhi. The study highlights Sri Aurobindo's educational ideas as expressed in his weekly journal *Karma yogin*. He expressed dissatisfaction with the prevailing education system, considering it inadequate because it failed to address the spiritual and mental growth of children. Furthermore, he believed that the existing system did not meet the demands of modern life or the broader developmental needs of the nation.

Shrivastava, S. P. (2018) explores spiritual education within Sri Aurobindo's philosophy of Integral Education. The paper discusses spiritual education with special reference to Aurobindo's life philosophy and social psychology, both of which significantly influence his educational thought. It also outlines the principles of his educational philosophy, which are based on consciousness, mind, intelligence, and knowledge—elements regarded as integral components of spiritual education. The study attempts to recognize, comprehend, analyse, synthesize, and evaluate spiritual education as the highest aim of education, helping individuals realize their full potential through the ideal of universal brotherhood.

Axer (2017) focuses on reconstructing the core elements of Integral Education through contemporary scholarship. Recent academic work has concentrated on extracting and systematizing the foundational principles of Integral Education from both textual sources and lived educational practices. Research projects and studies conducted in the context of Auroville schools examine how these principles are translated into curriculum design, assessment methods, and school culture. These reconstructed frameworks help bridge the philosophical descriptions found in primary texts with practical and implementable educational models.

Findings:

Integral Education and the Holistic Nature of Knowledge:

One of the major findings of this study is that Shri Aurobindo's Integral Education aligns fundamentally with the holistic conception of knowledge that underlies the Indian knowledge system. Integral education rejects the reduction of education to intellectual training or skill acquisition alone. Instead, it stresses the growth of all parts of a person's personality, including their physical, vital, mental, psychic, and spiritual sides. Similarly, IKS does not compartmentalize knowledge into isolated disciplines. Traditional Indian thought perceives knowledge as a unified whole, where science, philosophy, ethics, art, and spirituality are interconnected. For instance, disciplines such as Ayurveda and yoga integrate physical health, mental well-being, ethical conduct, and spiritual awareness. The finding indicates that integral education provides a philosophical foundation capable of accommodating this integrative nature of IKS without distortion.

Emphasis on Inner Development and Consciousness:

A significant finding is the shared emphasis of integral education and IKS on inner development and consciousness. Shri Aurobindo viewed education as a process of awakening the learner's inner consciousness rather than imposing external information. According to him, the role of education is to help

the learner discover their true nature and highest potential through self-observation, reflection, and inner growth. The Indian knowledge system similarly places consciousness at the center of knowledge. Concepts such as Chitta, buddhi, atman, and purusha highlight the importance of self-awareness and inner realization. Knowledge is not considered complete unless it leads to transformation at the level of consciousness. This congruence allows Integral Education to function as a natural medium through which IKS can be integrated meaningfully into modern learning environments.

Experiential and Practice-Oriented Learning:

The study also finds that Integral Education strongly supports experiential learning, which is a defining feature of IKS. Shri Aurobindo emphasized learning through experience, practice, and self-discovery rather than rote memorization. He believed that true education emerges from the learner's active engagement with knowledge. IKS similarly values experiential knowledge (Anubhav) over purely theoretical understanding. Practices such as meditation, yoga, artistic expression, and traditional scientific methods are grounded in direct experience and disciplined practice. The alignment between these approaches suggests that Integral Education can effectively integrate IKS through pedagogies that emphasize practice-based learning, reflection, and embodied understanding.

Value-Based and Ethical Orientation:

Another important finding is the centrality of values and ethics in both Integral Education and IKS. Shri Aurobindo considered education to be incomplete without the cultivation of moral and spiritual values such as truth, harmony, courage, compassion, and self-discipline. These values, according to him, must arise from inner awakening rather than external enforcement. IKS is deeply rooted in ethical principles such as dharma, Satya, ahimsa, and seva. These values guide individual behaviour, social responsibility, and ecological harmony. Integral Education's emphasis on inner moral development provides a strong framework for integrating the ethical dimensions of IKS into contemporary education in an organic and non-dogmatic manner.

Discussion:

Philosophical Compatibility between Integral Education and IKS:

The compatibility between Shri Aurobindo's Integral Education and the Indian Knowledge System is grounded in their shared philosophical vision of reality and knowledge. Both frameworks view reality as fundamentally unified and dynamic, rather than fragmented and static. In Indian philosophy, knowledge is inseparable from being and consciousness, and the ultimate aim of learning is self-realization. Similarly, Shri Aurobindo's philosophy of Integral Yoga views education as a process of conscious evolution, leading toward greater integration and unity.

Integral education emphasizes the awakening of the psychic being, which serves as the inner guide for growth and learning. This concept resonates with the IKS emphasis on atma-jnana (self-knowledge) as the highest form of knowledge. Therefore, the integration of IKS through Integral Education does not require a radical restructuring of philosophical assumptions; instead, it emerges naturally from a shared worldview.

Pedagogical Implications for Modern Education:

From a pedagogical perspective, Integral Education offers innovative and flexible approaches that support the integration of IKS in modern education. These include learner-centered pedagogy, interdisciplinary curricula, contemplative practices, and experiential learning methods. For example, Indian philosophical

texts can be taught alongside modern philosophy, psychology, and ethics to encourage comparative and integrative thinking. Yoga and meditation can be incorporated not merely as physical exercises but also as tools for mental discipline, emotional balance, and self-awareness. Integral education also redefines the role of the teacher as a facilitator, guide, and co-learner rather than an authoritarian transmitter of information. This approach echoes the traditional guru–shishya relationship, where education is based on personal guidance, trust, and inner development. Such pedagogical alignment enhances the feasibility of integrating IKS into contemporary educational settings.

Addressing Contemporary Educational Challenges:

The discussion reveals that integrating IKS through Integral Education can address several contemporary challenges in education, including student alienation, mental health issues, ethical erosion, and ecological crises. Modern education often emphasizes competition, performance, and external success, leading to stress and disconnection. Integral Education, with its focus on inner balance and harmony, offers an alternative vision that nurtures well-being and purpose. IKS contributes valuable insights into sustainable living, ecological balance, and ethical responsibility. When integrated through integral education, these insights can help learners develop a holistic understanding of global challenges and their role in addressing them. Thus, the integration of IKS is not merely a cultural or academic exercise but a response to pressing societal needs.

Conclusion:

This research paper has examined Shri Aurobindo’s Integral Education as a framework for integrating the Indian Knowledge System into modern education. The analysis demonstrates that Integral Education and IKS share deep philosophical, pedagogical, and ethical compatibility. Both emphasize holistic development, experiential learning, value-based education, and the centrality of consciousness in the process of learning.

The findings indicate that Integral Education provides a comprehensive and coherent foundation for integrating IKS in a manner that is authentic, dynamic, and relevant to contemporary educational needs. Rather than treating IKS as an add-on or supplementary subject, Integral Education allows it to be woven organically into the fabric of modern education.

The discussion highlights that such integration can address critical challenges facing contemporary education, including fragmentation of knowledge, ethical decline, and lack of inner development. While challenges in implementation remain, they can be addressed through thoughtful reforms, capacity building, and a commitment to educational transformation.

In conclusion, Shri Aurobindo’s Integral Education offers a visionary and practical pathway for re-envisioning education in India. By serving as a bridge between ancient wisdom and modern knowledge, it enables the meaningful integration of the Indian Knowledge System and contributes to the creation of an education system that nurtures complete human development and supports the evolution of society as a whole.

References:

- Aurobindo, S. (1997). *The synthesis of yoga*. Sri Aurobindo Ashram.
- Aurobindo, S. (2005). *The life divine*. Sri Aurobindo Ashram.
- Banerjee, D. (2019). *Indian knowledge systems: Retrospect and prospect*. PHI Learning.

- Bhattacharya, S. (2018). Indian education and colonialism. *History of Education Review*, 47(2), 123–138.
- Chaudhuri, H. (1977). *Integral yoga: The philosophy of Sri Aurobindo*. George Allen & Unwin.
- Dasgupta, S. (2009). *A history of Indian philosophy (Vol. 1)*. Motilal Banarsidass.
- Giri, A. K. (2013). *The calling of a creative transdisciplinarity*. Springer.
- Govinda, L. A. (1991). *Foundations of Tibetan mysticism*. Weiser.
- Joshi, K. L. (2016). Indian knowledge traditions and education. *Journal of Value Education*, 14(1), 1–15.
- Kireet, J. (2001). *Education at the crossroads*. NCERT.
- Mohanty, J. N. (2000). *Classical Indian philosophy*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Mukerji, S. N. (2010). *Education in India today and tomorrow*. Acharya Book Depot.
- National Education Policy. (2020). Ministry of Education, Government of India.
- Nussbaum, M. C. (2010). *Not for profit: Why democracy needs the humanities*. Princeton University Press.
- Radhakrishnan, S. (1951). *Indian philosophy (Vol. 1)*. George Allen & Unwin.
- Rao, K. R. (2011). *Cognitive anomalies, consciousness, and yoga*. McFarland.
- Sharma, R. N. (2014). *Philosophy of education*. Surjeet Publications.
- Srinivas, M. D. (2015). Indian mathematics and knowledge traditions. *Studies in History*, 31(2), 245–266.
- Subramaniam, K. (2012). Education and spirituality in Sri Aurobindo. *Journal of Integral Studies*, 6(1), 45–60.
- Tagore, R. (2009). *Towards universal man*. Asia Publishing House.
- UNESCO. (2015). *Rethinking education: Towards a global common good?*
- Vivekananda, S. (2006). *Complete works of Swami Vivekananda (Vol. 4)*. Advaita Ashrama.
- Yadav, S. (2021). Integrating Indian knowledge systems in higher education. *University News*, 59(12), 34–40.

Citation: Banu. N. & Jana. S., (2026) “Shri Aurobindo Integral Education as a Framework for Integrating the Indian Knowledge System”, *Bharati International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Development (BIJMIRD)*, Vol-4, Issue-03(2), March-2026.