From Gurukul to Global: Indian Knowledge Systems Shaping NEP 2020

Shilpi Jadon[1], Dr. Vartika Saxena[2], Anjali Jadon[3]

[1]Amity University Madhya Pradesh.
[2]Amity University Madhya Pradesh.
[3]Amity University Madhya Pradesh.

Abstract

India's educational system experienced an important shift with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which focuses on a return to the roots while educating students for a global future. The intentional integration of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS), an immense collection of indigenous philosophies, sciences, arts, and pedagogies that have developed over millennia, lies at the core of this change. This paper examines how Bhartiya Shiksha is repositioned by NEP 2020 as a dynamic and full basis for learning in the twenty-first century, rather than as a legacy from the past. In the journey "From Gurukul to Global," the chapter serves as an example of how traditional Indian educational systems—based on principles like experiential learning, critical thinking, ethical reasoning, and harmony with nature—are being reframed within modern frameworks. It examines important policy provisions and charts their relationships to traditional Indian traditions, such as the Vedas, Upanishads, Ayurveda, Natyashastra, and the Nitya Shastra. These include multilingualism, value-based education, arts integration, yoga, environmental sustainability, and vocational training. The paper highlights the potential of IKS to promote intellectual, emotional, physical, and spiritual growth as well as to close the gap between local wisdom and global significance through a multidisciplinary perspective. The chapter continues by making the case that the rebirth and mainstreaming of Indian Knowledge Systems under NEP 2020 represents a strategic breakthrough in education policy rather than just a cultural renaissance. It allows India to produce a generation of students who are both firmly grounded in their culture and with the skills necessary to successfully navigate and make a significant contribution to a globalized society. An education system that is both globally influential and authentically Indian is the obvious aim.

Keywords; Indian Knowledge Systems, National Education Policy 2020, Education Policy, Value-based Learning.

INTRODUCTION

A significant moment after over three eras, in India's educational history is the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP). The government launched on 29 July 2020. This is the first education policy of the Twenty-First Century in India and supersedes the National Educational Policy of 1986, which was revised in 1992Government of India. (2020). The aim of the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP) lays a connected on being deeply anchored in Indian values and cultural heritage, and also introduces many major reforms. National Education Policy 2020 (NEP) attempts to address the numerous expanding developmental needs of our nation (Joshi, M. 2021). The policy prioritises everyone's well-being and emphasises the Indian knowledge tradition. This updated education policy places a strong emphasis on physical education and mother tongue instruction. Understanding our history and educating the globe on best practices are crucial if we are to become a knowledge power in this century. India has a long history of civilisation and customs that are accepted by people worldwide.

The policy suggests to integrating the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) into all levels of the Educational System, intending to promote Holistic development, Cultural heritage, and Regional language, Vocational Education (Subrahmanyam, K. 2022).

The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP) lays the groundwork for the Bhartiya Shiksha – Educational system that encourages both academic excellence and learning on value-based, and has an essential link to cultural legacy, in India's historical context.

The methodical transfer of information from one generation to the next is known as the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) (Mukherjee, R. 2020). Rather than being a custom, it is an organised system and a knowledge-transfer process. The Vedic literature, the Upanishads, the Vedas, and the Upvedas form the foundation of the Indian Knowledge System (Ministry of Education, Government of India 2021). As a guiding principle, the National Education Policy-2020 (NEP-2020) acknowledges this rich legacy of timeless and ancient Indian knowledge and philosophy (Rangana, V. K. 2023). Experience, observation, experimentation, and thorough analysis have all contributed to the development of the three components of the Indian knowledge systems: Jnan (knowledge), Vignan (science), and Jeevan Darshan (philosophy of life).

Main Key Aspects of Indian Knowledge System (IKS):

1. **Vedic Literature:** One of the main components of IKS is its foundation in ancient texts like the Vedas and Upanishads, which are thought to be fundamental to Indian knowledge systems.
2. **Interdisciplinary Nature:** IKS encourages interdisciplinary research and exploration and emphasizes the connections between knowledge.
3. **Practical Utility:** By utilizing historical knowledge and methods, IKS aims to address contemporary societal concerns and promote sustainable development.
4. **Preservation and Dissemination:** IKS initiatives focus on preserving and disseminating traditional knowledge for future study and societal application.

IKS Vision
The IKS Division aims to modernize and mainstream Indian knowledge systems for the modern world.
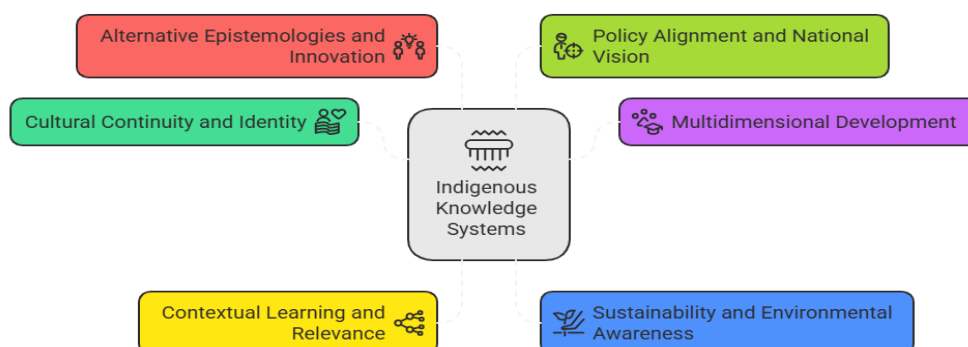
IKS Mission:

1. Encourage and facilitate additional research in a number of fields, such as psychology, neuroscience, holistic health, nature, the environment, and sustainable development, to address the societal issues of our day.

2. For comprehensive learning outcomes, incorporate IKS into curricula in both higher institutions and schools in accordance with NEP 2020.
3. Educate and train researchers, educators, and institutions in IKS-based methods and pedagogy.
4. To produce frequent publications and obtain reports of the job completed by everyone who has contributed to IKS.
5. To encourage IKS research to generate new knowledge, prove concepts, and conduct productive interdisciplinary work that benefits society.
6. To establish research grants or fellowships for visiting professors, scientists, and scholars, including Sanskrit professors at IITs, IISERs, IIMs, and universities that teach science and technology.
7. To offer funding for publications, conferences, seminars, and research initiatives aimed at advancing IKS. To recommend ways to include IKS in the reference and textbook materials for contemporary academic subjects taught in schools and universities.
8. To set up IKS cells in Sanskrit universities, general universities, and other MoE-affiliated establishments.
9. To encourage interdisciplinary study combining contemporary streams and ancient Shastras by establishing cooperation and coordination amongst the Ministry of Education (MoE) institutions, other ministries, departments, independent scholars, non-governmental organizations, and private institutions engaged in IKS.
10. To investigate and implement a PPP model whenever possible (for example, by developing a comprehensive IKS portal and wiki-style platform).
11. To establish committees and expert groups to organize, carry out, and monitor the IKS division's goals.

Integrating IKS is necessary for holistic development:

Indian knowledge systems (IKS) must be included in modern education in order to support students' holistic development as well as to preserve India's intellectual legacy. IKS has been highlighted as a pillar for changing education in India by the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which acknowledges this necessity.

Figure 1 Integration of Indigenous Knowledge Systems in Education

Objectives

1. To investigate how NEP 2020's holistic education is shaped by Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS).
2. To examine how well modern teaching techniques and traditional Indian educational values mesh.
3. To assess the frameworks of laws and policies that facilitate IKS integration.
4. To identify the obstacles to incorporating IKS into regular courses.
5. To provide methods for successfully integrating IKS into educational establishments

LITERATURE REVIEW

The colonial heritage that gave priority to Western epistemologies is the reason why Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) are marginalized in the formal educational system (Baral S.2024) . This pattern was maintained by post-independence educational reforms, which made no attempt to resurrect old knowledge systems like indigenous science, Ayurveda, yoga, and Sanskrit literature.

The integration of indigenous knowledge into mainstream education has garnered renewed attention due to recent studies (Chowdhury, T., & Deb, J. P. 2024). In their defense of epistemic decolonization, academics such as Kumar (2021) emphasise the value of IKS in creating a culturally appropriate curriculum. NEP 2020 is a revolutionary policy that specifically promotes re-centring Indian cultural ethos in pedagogy, as Sharma (2020) highlights.

Comparative context is provided by the increasing global push to include indigenous knowledge in national curriculum, which is seen in nations like Canada (First Nations inclusion) and New Zealand (Maori Education) (Kumar, A., & Kishor, V. 2024).

There are still issues with execution, nevertheless, such as a shortage of qualified teachers, unclear policies, and curriculum frameworks Tomali Chowdhury & Joy Prakash Deb (2024). A balanced, multidisciplinary approach is required because of the conflict between old knowledge forms and contemporary academic perspectives Jacob, R. (2024).
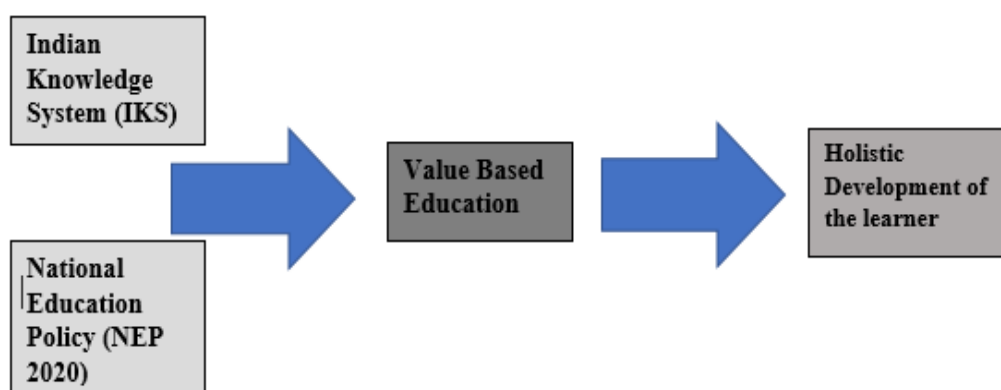
Figure 2 Conceptual Framework

According to the study's conceptual model, integrating Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) within the NEP 2020 framework can act as a fundamental accelerator for attaining holistic learner development (Kelkar, Mahajan, & Choudhary 2024). The groundwork for changing education to reflect Bhartiya principles was laid by important input variables such as curriculum reforms, teacher preparation, policy backing, and the methodical integration of traditional Indian knowledge. These inputs create a rooted, inclusive, and transformative learning ecosystem when they are mediated by strategies like value-based education, creative pedagogy, community involvement, and cultural identity building. Numerous benefits follow, including increased cultural awareness and pride in the country, cognitive, emotional, and spiritual development for students, and international recognition for the Indian educational model's ability to successfully combine tradition with modernity. This model demonstrates that IKS is a live, breathing framework that can redefine education for India in the twenty-first century, rather than just being historical content.

Table 1 Indian Knowledge Systems: A Dynamic Journey from Gurukul to the World

Measurement	Gurukul System (Indian culture)	Globally Consistent NEP 2020 Structure
Gurukul System (Indian culture)	Globally Consistent NEP 2020 Structure An education philosophy that is character-based,	spiritual, value-driven, and holistic, Multidisciplinary, holistic, competency-based, and ethically grounded
The Learning Environment	Nature-based, teacher-student (guru-shishya) schools	ashrams, blended learning, digital platforms, and individualized learning pathways
Teaching	Memorization, oral tradition, experience, and dialogue-based (Shastrartha)	Inquiry-based, immersive, interactive, and critical thinking pedagogies
Course of study	Ayurveda, Vedas, Upanishads, Astronomy, Mathematics, and Philosophy	IKS inclusivity, coding, AI, yoga, the arts, STEAM education, and career training
Instructional Medium	Pali, Sanskrit, and regional tongues	Mother tongue and regional languages are prioritized in multilingual education.
The teacher's role	Guru as life counsellor, mentor, and moral advisor	Emotionally competent educator, skill developer, facilitator, and motivator
Evaluation	Oral feedback, ongoing, informal, and life-based assessment	Formative and summative assessments, competence mapping, and holistic report cards
Ethics and Values	Self-control, seva (service), dharma, and reverence for the natural world	Environmental awareness, life skills, empathy, and constitutional values
Technology	Depending on nature and memory, non-digital	Artificial intelligence technologies, digital learning, e-content, and national education platforms (DIKSHA, SWAYAM)
Access & Inclusivity	Traditionally restricted to the male upper classes	Socioeconomic inclusivity, gender parity, and universal access
Worldwide Significance	Native American but with little outreach	Integrating Indian culture with international norms to establish India as a leader in knowledge

DISCUSSION

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020's incorporation of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) signifies a dramatic change in Indian education from a framework based on colonial legacies to one that values indigenous knowledge, cultural rootedness, and holistic development. As an educational basis, IKS is more than just a collection of historical writings or activities, as the conceptual model put forward in this study demonstrates. It stands for an all-encompassing worldview that includes sustainable knowledge, ethical life, scientific investigation, and spiritual awareness.

The institutional scaffolding required to integrate IKS in contemporary education is provided by NEP 2020 through curriculum reforms, teacher capacity building, and supportive policy measures. However, the degree to which communities, educators, and educational institutions successfully absorb and convert IKS into worthwhile learning experiences is a major determinant of its effectiveness. This shift depends on creative pedagogies that strike a balance between traditional knowledge and contemporary resources.

By acting as mediators, cultural identity and value-based learning make sure that education fosters civic engagement and character development in addition to skill acquisition.

In today's morally complicated and globalized world, where education must also ground children in their traditions and values, this is especially crucial.

Furthermore, the concept emphasizes that holistic development is a dynamic process that equips students to think critically, live morally, and interact with others around the world while maintaining their Indian cultural roots. This IKS-driven strategy has the potential to transform Indian education and serve as an inspiration for educational reform in other heterogeneous societies if it is faithfully applied.

However, there are still issues to be resolved, like modernizing teacher preparation programs, standardizing multiple knowledge traditions, and guaranteeing inclusivity without perpetuating antiquated methods. To maintain the applicability and influence of IKS in modern education, future research and policy initiatives must concentrate on striking a balance between authenticity and adaptation.

1. Prior Education Policies

Using the "Gurukul" approach and "Macaulay's education system," we have now traversed three national education policies and reached the 2020 policy's implementation phase. The Kothari Commission's recommendations served as the foundation for the 1968 National Education Policy. It featured equal educational opportunities for all, a three-language formula, free and required schooling up until the age of 14, teacher preparation and credentials, and a 10+2+3 structure. Rajiv Gandhi implemented the 1986 policy. Its objectives were to ensure that everyone, including women, scheduled castes, and tribes, had equal access to education, to district education and training facilities, to quickly implement the 10+2+3 pattern across the country, to ensure that schools had a healthy environment and adequate access to food, and to open universities and distance learning centers. Under the direction of Prime Minister P. V. Narasimha Rao, it was updated in 1992. It was stipulated that each state would have at least one open university.

For admission to technical and professional schools, the Common Entrance Exams were used.

2. Lord Macaulay's Education System

In 1835, British politician and historian Thomas Babington Macaulay, who was a member of the Supreme Council of India, proposed a reform of Indian education policy that would replace traditional Sanskrit and Arabic studies with Western education and English as the medium of instruction.

Known mostly as the "Downward Filtration Theory" or "Macaulay's Minute on Indian Education," Macaulay's thesis promoted a system in which a small number of upper-class Indians would receive an English-language education with the hope that they would subsequently spread

Knowledge for the broader population. Macaulay believed that Western knowledge was more valuable than the insights found in Sanskrit and Arabic literature, and that English was a superior language. His recommendations led to the establishment of an educational system that placed a high value on Western science and literature as the foundational subjects and English as the primary language of instruction. Macaulay's views caused controversy; according to certain Indian intellectuals, his project would lead to the decline of Indian customs and culture. The educational system that the British developed is still in use today.
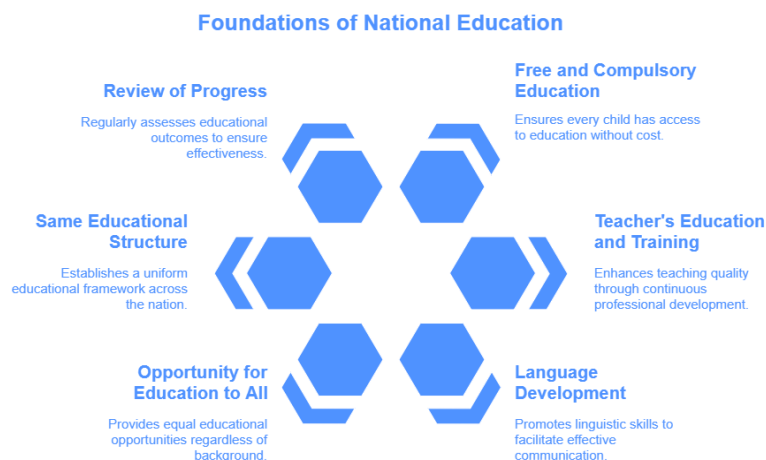
3. National Educational Policies Following Independence

To combat the problem of illiteracy in both urban and rural areas, the Indian government launched a number of initiatives following independence. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, India's first education minister, promoted a standardized educational system and strict central government control over all national education. The Kothari Commission (1964–66), the University Grants Commission (1952–1953), the Secondary Education Commission (1952–1953), and the University Education Commission (1948–1949) were all formed to improve the educational system. High-caliber scientific educational establishments like the Indian Institute of Technology were founded by Pt Nehru. The "National Educational Research and Training Council (NCERT)" was established by the Central Government in 1961. This independent group provides state and federal governments with advice on creating and carrying out educational programs. Based on recommendations from the Kothari Commission (1964–1966), Indira Gandhi announced India's first National Policy on Education in 1968 with the aim of achieving "radical restructuring" of education and equal opportunity for all.

4. National Education Policy 1968

The Kothari Commission's recommendations served as the foundation for the 1968 National Education Policy. The head of the "First National Education Policy Committee" was Daulat Singh Kothari. It was established in 1964, and the government released the National Policy on Education in 1968 based on its recommendations.

Foundations of National Education

Review of Progress
Regularly assesses educational outcomes to ensure effectiveness.

Free and Compulsory Education
Ensures every child has access to education without cost.

Same Educational Structure
Establishes a uniform educational framework across the nation.

Teacher's Education and Training
Enhances teaching quality through continuous professional development.

Opportunity for Education to All
Provides equal educational opportunities regardless of background.

Language Development
Promotes linguistic skills to facilitate effective communication.
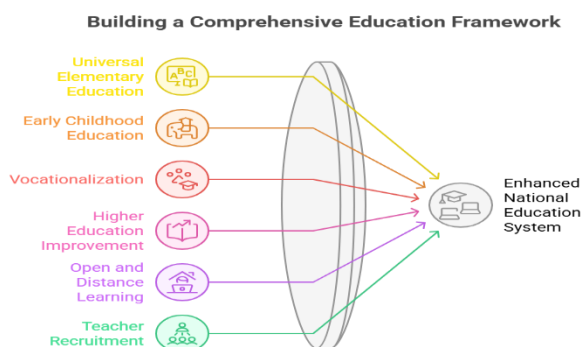
Figure 3 Foundation of National Education

5.   National Educational Policy 1986

When Indira Gandhi passed away, Rajiv Gandhi, then 40, became India's youngest prime minister. He proposed a new educational strategy in 1986 with the goal of lowering inequality and giving everyone, especially women and underrepresented groups, equal access to education. The policy's main objectives were to build a statewide 10+2+3 education system, decentralize education, and create district training institutes. It suggested reorganizing educational initiatives and guaranteeing students' access to necessities like food and hygienic surroundings. Primary education, which included all necessary topics, continued to be free and required. In order to make lifelong learning accessible, the strategy also sought to improve the Indira Gandhi National Open University, encourage open universities, and increase access to higher education. It placed a strong emphasis on early childhood education, vocational training, universal elementary education, and programs like the Indian Education Service and Operation Blackboard.

Building a Comprehensive Education Framework

Universal Elementary Education
Early Childhood Education
Vocationalization
Higher Education Improvement
Open and Distance Learning
Teacher Recruitment

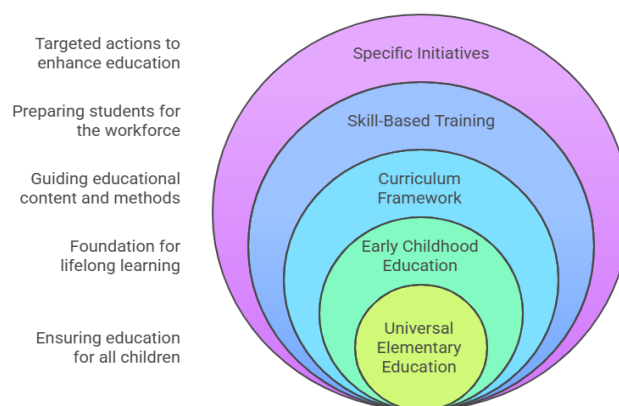Enhanced National Education System

Figure 4 Building a Comprehensive Education Framework

6.   Amendment National Educational Policy 1992

The 1986 National Policy on Education was modified by the Amended National Education Policy of 1992, also known as the Programme of Action (POA) 1992, which sought to carry out its objectives with a new strategy that prioritized equity, quality, and universal access to education.

The National Education Policy of 1986 was modified by the P.V. Narasimha Rao administration in 1992. NGOs were given the opportunity to step up in this area and establish new special schools where children may receive vocational training. Navodaya Vidyalayas' emphasis on quality growth was an endeavour to set an example for all other schools. Each state was required to establish at least one open university and to regulate them.

Targeted actions to enhance education — Specific Initiatives
Preparing students for the workforce — Skill-Based Training
Guiding educational content and methods — Curriculum Framework
Foundation for lifelong learning — Early Childhood Education
Ensuring education for all children — Universal Elementary Education

Figure 5 MajorAmendment National Educational Policy 1992

7. National Educational Policy 2020

India unveiled its first and most comprehensive education policy of the twenty-first century in 2020. The New Education Policy (NEP) 2020, the country's first education policy since 1986, is charged with addressing a number of issues in India's educational system. In every way, the NEP 2020 is a revolutionary text. From school to college, there have been numerous adjustments made to this educational system. The National Educational Policy 2020 aims to establish India as a major player on the world stage. The Ministry of Manpower Development has been renamed the Ministry Of Education with Cabinet approval.

The NEP-2020 guidelines were released by the Indian government's Ministry of Human Resource Development and are broken down into four sections:

1. School Education
2. High Secondary Education
3. Other key Areas for attention
4. Bringing it about

8. Indian Knowledge System Implementation

IKS offers important insights into design thinking, sustainable practices, problem-solving, and ethical frameworks—all of which are critical in tackling the complex difficulties that the modern world faces. The integration of IKS with NEP presents certain challenges. There is a lack of knowledge about the importance of IKS among stakeholders and the community. IKS has usually been passed down verbally through the centuries and exists in non-written forms. The creation and implementation of IKS-based courses and programs in educational institutions are made more difficult by this circumstance. Because there isn't a clear curriculum for IKS, instructors are left in the dark, and many stakeholders may think it's outdated or useless. IKS may be difficult for people who are not fluent in these languages because it is available in multiple languages. Furthermore, bias against IKS has been cultivated in the Indian educational system as a result of the colonial educational system. The integration of this system may be hampered by the Indian educational system's primary emphasis on the Western knowledge system. Furthermore, because IKS hasn't been widely adopted yet, there aren't enough teachers with the necessary qualifications to teach it.

Case Study
IKS Integration at Coimbatore's Chinmaya Vidyalaya,

One of the first schools in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, to actively incorporate Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) into its curriculum is Chinmaya Vidyalaya. The school, which is rooted in Swami Chinmay Ananda's teachings, prioritizes holistic development, Indian philosophy, and value-based education—all of which are in line with NEP 2020.

1. Implementation of IKS Practices
a. Integrating the Curriculum:

Sanskrit is presented early on as a means of accessing classical Indian ideas as well as a language.

Literature and moral science classes contain lessons from the Bhagavad Gita, Ramayana, and Panchatantra.

Yoga and Ayurvedic ideas are incorporated into daily activities in science and wellness education.

b. Ethical and Spiritual Education:

Chanting, meditations on Indian texts, and moral instruction are all part of the daily prayer gatherings.

Through participation in Seva (community service) activities, students strengthen their sense of duty, empathy, and environmental stewardship.

CONCLUSION

In order to revitalize India's educational environment, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020's integration of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) is a revolutionary step. The importance of India's ancient wisdom traditions is reaffirmed by this convergence, which also presents them as active, pertinent instruments for attaining holistic growth in contemporary days. NEP 2020 establishes an environment that makes it possible to effectively integrate IKS at all educational levels through curriculum reform, teacher preparation, multilingual education, and institutional support.

According to the conceptual framework, NEP 2020 is a driving force toward epistemic decolonization, substituting a value-based, transdisciplinary, and culturally grounded approach for fragmented learning. When properly executed, IKS integration can promote learners' intellectual, spiritual, mental, and physical development, resulting in the development of globally conscious but culturally grounded citizens.

But realizing this goal calls for consistent work in community involvement, resource creation, and policy

execution. In order to build a self-sufficient and enlightened country, "Bhartiya Shiksha" must acknowledge that genuine educational advancement must be anchored in identity, heritage, and inclusive knowledge systems.

REFERENCES

[1] National Education Policy 2020. Ministry of Human Resource Development. https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/NEP_Final_English_0.pdf

[2] Indian Knowledge Systems: The Root of Holistic Education. Indian Council of Philosophical Research.

[3] Reclaiming Indian Knowledge Traditions in Modern Curriculum. Journal of Bharatiya Shikshan Mandal, 5(2), 45–60.

[4] Holistic Education and Indian Knowledge Systems in NEP 2020. Indian Journal of Educational Reform, 12(3), 33–47.

[5] Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) Division Report. AICTE & MoE. https://iksindia.org/

[6] Proceedings of the Conference on Indian Knowledge Systems in Higher Education, 89–97.

[7] Baral, S. (2024). Integrating Indian Knowledge Systems for Holistic Development through NEP 2020. GOEIIRJ, 13(V Special), 415–428.

[8] Chowdhury, T., & Deb, J. P. (2024). A deep dive into Indian Knowledge Systems with the lens of NEP 2020. [Unpublished manuscript].

[9] Kumar, A., & Kishor, V. (2024). Integrating India's Traditional Wisdom: Exploring the Role of NEP 2020 in the Indian Knowledge System. Educational Quest, 15(3), 151–155.

[10] Jacob, R. (2024). Integrating Indian Knowledge Systems in Secondary Education: A Pathway to Holistic Development. [Manuscript].

[11] EPRA Journals. (2024). Integrating Indian Knowledge Systems into Modern Education: An Analysis of NEP 2020. EPRA International Journal, June issue.

[12] A Critical Review of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. (2025). IJRPR.

[13] Challenges of Indian Knowledge System in the Post COVID Education Paradigm. (2024). IJPREMS.

[14] Choudhary, M., Kelkar, S., & Mahajan, G. (2024). The Bhagavad Gita's Educational Philosophy: Nurturing Holistic Growth. Bhartiyam International Journal of Education & Research, 12(4)