

Ancient Wisdom for Modern Stress: Integrating IKS in Education for Mental Wellbeing

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ABSTRACT

Over the course of millennia, the Indian subcontinent has produced a huge, multidisciplinary corpus of classical and traditional knowledge known as Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS).

These systems combine scientific, philosophical, artistic, and spiritual perspectives to provide a comprehensive understanding of life, the cosmos, and human existence. In order to promote cognitive development, cultural identity, mental health, and sustainable living, this research examines the application and significance of IKS in modern higher education. Key elements including the Vedic mathematical tradition, classical arts, Ayurveda, and yoga are highlighted, and via empirical research and policy analysis, their educational and therapeutic benefits are demonstrated. Institutional frameworks and knowledge repositories are examined, as well as how IKS might be incorporated into postsecondary institutions through faculty training, curricular reform, and digital preservation. Critical analysis is done on issues including overcoming infrastructure constraints, avoiding dogmatism, and guaranteeing educational inclusion. The paper concludes by arguing that a careful incorporation of IKS into contemporary education can close the knowledge gap between ancient and modern wisdom, providing students with a more comprehensive, inclusive, and value-based educational experience.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Indian subcontinent has produced vast and varied collections of classical and traditional knowledge throughout thousands of years, which are known as Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS). Philosophical, scientific, mathematical, astronomical, medical (including Ayurvedic), artistic, linguistic, and spiritual disciplines are all included in these systems, which reflect a holistic and integrated approach to understanding the world and human existence (Rao, 2019). IKS is distinguished by its connection between the empirical and the metaphysical, demonstrating an enduring balance between rational inquiry and spiritual comprehension. An extensive framework for understanding life, the cosmos, and human existence was provided by Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS), which expertly blended scientific study with moral and spiritual principles (Chakrabarty, 2020). It is increasingly evident that Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) must be included into contemporary education, particularly in the quest for a more comprehensive, inclusive, and culturally grounded learning environment. In large part because of colonial legacies, India's contemporary educational system tends to prioritize Western scientific paradigms above the important contributions of its own intellectual traditions (Singh, 2020). Indian Knowledge Systems allude to a comprehensive and wide-ranging perspective on the world. They combine concepts from several fields, such as science, philosophy, and practical skills that have been used for hundreds of years in India (Biswas, 2021). The focus on Western notions of knowledge in the Indian educational system, notwithstanding its diversity, has diminished the presence of Indigenous systems in traditional higher education (Agrawal, 2017).

IKS's Applicability in Contemporary Higher Education

In order to effectively address the fragmentation that is commonly prevalent in modern higher education, Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) offers an interdisciplinary and holistic approach to education that emphasizes the linkages between many fields of knowledge. With its origins in ancient traditions such as the Gurukula system, which strongly emphasized experiential learning, moral behavior, and the pursuit of self-realization, IKS is quite consistent with the current aspirations for inclusive, sustainable, and ethically sound education around the world. By balancing scientific study with philosophical reflection, IKS fosters critical thinking, creativity, and a more holistic, integrative worldview (Sharma, 2020). Through the integration of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) into modern academics, educators can provide students with the abilities necessary to navigate and address complex global concerns such as social justice, environmental sustainability, and ethical governance (Kumar, 2021).

2. PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS OF INDIAN KNOWLEDGE SYSTEM

Ancient Indian philosophy is the foundation of the rich tradition of philosophical, spiritual, and practical wisdom found in Indian knowledge systems. These systems emphasize the interconnectedness of all things by examining a variety of life topics, including as self-realization, health, and metaphysics. These systems, which have their roots in the Vedas and Upanishads, have developed over centuries under the influence of thinkers like Madhvacharya, Ramanuja, and Shankaracharya. Different schools of philosophy provide different viewpoints on reality, awareness, and the self. These include Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Samkhya, Yoga, Mimamsa, and Vedanta (Radhakrishnan, 1923). At the core of Indian knowledge systems are fundamental concepts like Dharma, Karma, Samsara, Moksha, and Atman that guide individuals toward self-realization and spiritual emancipation. These ideas are the cornerstone of many philosophical traditions because they promote a holistic view of existence and equilibrium between the body, mind, and spirit (Nicholson, 2010). Yoga, Ayurveda, and Vedanta are examples of ancient Indian beliefs that have gained international relevance as interest in holistic health, mindfulness, and sustainability develops. These customs assist mental clarity, emotional equilibrium, and physical well-being by providing helpful advice for contemporary living (Frawley, 2005).

IKS Approaches for Mental Wellbeing in Education

- 1. Medicine and Health (Ayurveda):** By balancing the body, mind, and spirit, Ayurveda, a fundamental part of the Indian Knowledge System (IKS), encourages a comprehensive approach to health. It is a fundamental component of traditional Indian medicine and dates back more than 5,000 years to the ancient Vedic writings. Over 500,000 Ayurvedic practitioners are registered in India, according to the Ministry of AYUSH, demonstrating the practice's broad use and continued significance today (Ministry of AYUSH, 2023). Despite its ancient roots, Ayurveda still confronts numerous obstacles, including the necessity for scientific verification and the possibility of commercialization. A lot of work is being done to record and digitize Ayurvedic knowledge in order to overcome these problems and guarantee its survival for upcoming generations (UNESCO, 2022). Additionally, incorporating Ayurveda into current health paradigms offers a chance to provide comprehensive and sustainable health solutions that complement contemporary wellness trends and help solve global health issues. Through programs like the National AYUSH Mission, which advocates for a thorough and holistic approach to healthcare, Ayurveda is gradually being integrated into contemporary healthcare systems (Ministry of AYUSH, 2023).
- 2. Yoga and Psychology:** A cornerstone of the Indian Knowledge System (IKS), yoga offers a comprehensive strategy for mental, spiritual, and physical health. With more than 300 million practitioners worldwide, yoga has grown from its roots in the Vedas and Upanishads more than 5,000 years ago (International Yoga Federation, 2023). Specialized yoga programs have been established by the University Grants Commission (UGC) to prepare certified teachers and researchers (UGC, 2023). Through programs like the International Day of Yoga, which is celebrated on June 21 and in which more than 190 nations participate, the Ministry of AYUSH, which was founded in 2014, actively promotes yoga (Ministry of AYUSH, 2023). Research supports the therapeutic effects of yoga, especially in the treatment of chronic illnesses, stress, and anxiety (Sharma et al., 2020).



Fig 1: Holistic domain of Indian Knowledge system

3. **Arts and Aesthetics:** Indian classical art, which includes dance, music, and nrolme, is an essential component of the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) and reflects the profound philosophical and cultural heritage of the country. These artistic traditions have been handed down through the generations utilizing conventional teaching techniques and are strongly linked to spiritual and cultural narratives. Their preservation is greatly aided by organizations such as the Sangeet Natak Akademi (Ministry of Culture, 2023). Over the past ten years, nrolment in classical arts programs has increased by 20%, according to the Ministry of Culture (2023), suggesting that young people are becoming more interested in these subjects. Well-known establishments like the National School of Drama and other state-run academies still foster talent and offer venues for both conventional performance and artistic creativity. Many attempts are being made to archive and digitize Indian classical arts for future access and sustainability, despite challenges such as commercialization and the necessity for rigorous digital preservation (UNESCO, 2022).
4. **The Vedic Math System:** Because of its efficacy in enhancing cognitive and problem-solving capabilities, it has garnered increasing attention in contemporary education in recent years. According to research, pupils who use Vedic mathematics techniques typically perform faster and more accurately, especially on competitive exams (Sharma & Singh, 2021).

Implementation of Indigenous Knowledge Systems in Tertiary Institutions

1. **Curriculum Integration:** Higher education institutions may set up a specialist research center for Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) in order to promote innovative thinking and rigorous academic inquiry in traditional knowledge systems. Furthermore, providing approved degree programs in subjects like Vedic sciences and Indian classical arts will give students worthwhile chances to interact with TKI in a structured academic setting (Sharma, 2020). To establish IKS as an important and esteemed part of the higher education system, such curriculum development is necessary. Interdisciplinary courses that combine traditional Indian disciplines with contemporary academic topics can be introduced by universities as an efficient way to integrate Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) into higher education. (Patel, 2021).
2. **Institutional Policies and Frameworks:** In order to facilitate research, academic collaborations, and curriculum creation based on Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS), institutions may also create internal rules and frameworks. Both institutional and national policy changes are required for the incorporation of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) into higher education. Higher education institutions should be especially encouraged to integrate traditional knowledge systems into their curricula by the University Grants Commission's (UGC) recommendations and other national initiatives (Raj, 2019).

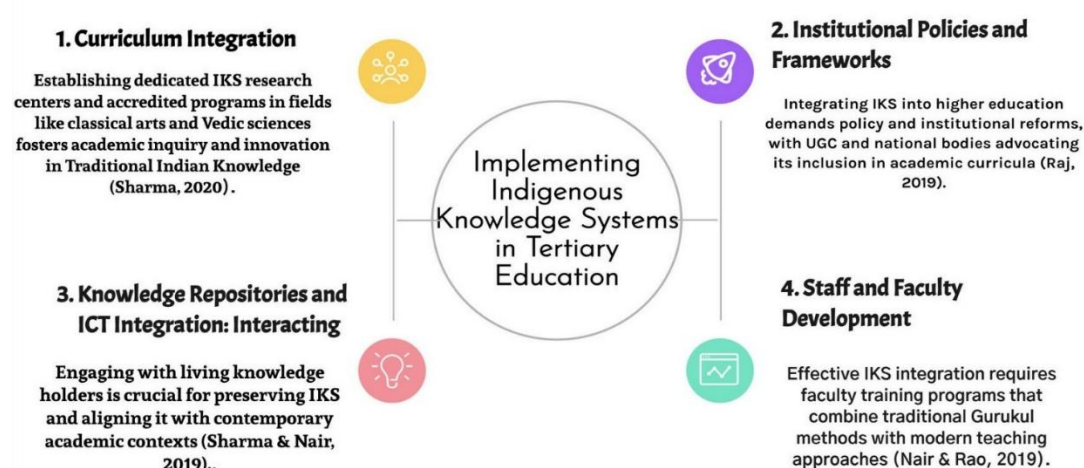


Fig 2: Implementing Indigenous Knowledge system in Tertiary education

3. **Knowledge Repositories and ICT Integration:** In order to preserve these systems and adapt them to modern settings, interaction with living knowledge holders is essential. This kind of cooperation guarantees that the use of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) is both historically grounded and pertinent to contemporary research (Sharma & Nair, 2019). Collaborations between higher education institutions and traditional knowledge holders, including

Ayurvedic practitioners, Vedic academics, and specialists in indigenous practices, can improve the legitimacy and scope of IKS education (Patel & Rao, 2020).

4. **Staff and Faculty Development:** Teachers must be properly trained to teach Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) alongside contemporary academic subjects in order to guarantee their successful integration. This entails developing faculty development programs that combine modern teaching strategies with more conventional pedagogical approaches, such Gurukul-based instruction (Nair & Rao, 2019).

Scientific Evidence and research

1. **Studies showing reduced Cortisol levels through Yoga and Pranayama in students:** Higher education students' physiological and logical health indices can both be improved and stress levels lowered by Mind-Body Physical Activity (MBPA). It emphasizes how crucial stress reduction and exercise are for young individuals (Strehli et al., 2020). A 10-week yoga program can significantly lower pupils' long-term cortisol levels, according to a study by Butzer et al., 2015. Additionally, it demonstrates changes in behavior, especially among students in the second grade (Butzer et al., 2015). Another study on university students demonstrates that regular yoga practice over a 12-week period can considerably lower oxidative stress markers like F2-isoprostane level, malondialdehyde (MDA), and nitric oxide (NO). Additionally, it boosts antioxidant defenses like GSH and GSH-Px. According to the findings, yoga is a useful tool for promoting both psychological and physical health (Lim et al., 2015).
2. **Mindfulness education improving grades and reducing anxiety:** Because of peer, parental, and academic pressure, students frequently experience increased levels of stress and anxiety. They require time for soothing therapies and relaxation. Mindfulness can be a helpful tool in this situation. According to Creswell (2016), "mindfulness is the practice of openly attending with awareness to one's present moment experience." Daily mindful awareness trainings were found to significantly enhance grades and classroom behavior in a study by Laura S. Bakosh et al. on the intervention of mindful awareness among elementary school pupils (Bakosh et al., 2016). In a different study, Bruin et al. evaluated the impact of a mindfulness training on international students at the University of Amsterdam. The findings demonstrated that it enhanced students' behavior, including their ability to be less critical of and reactive to their ideas, feelings, and emotions (Bruin et al., 2015). In order to help students cope with stress, anxiety, and depression, mindfulness should be included in the curriculum.

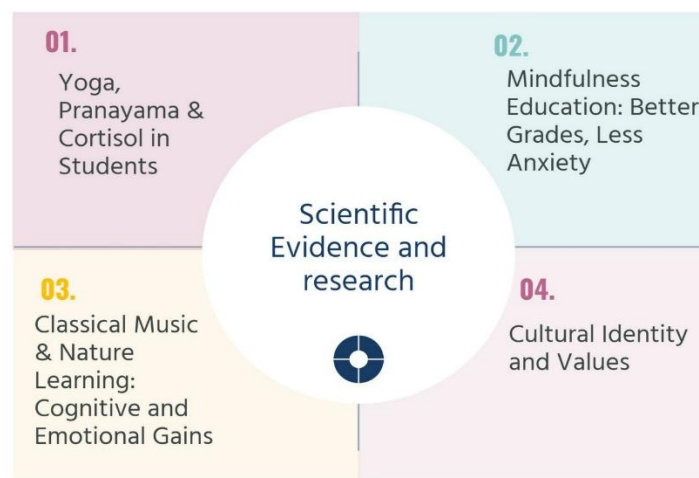


Fig 3: Scientific Evidence and research

3. **Cognitive and emotional benefits of classical music and nature-based learning:** Music listening has been demonstrated to improve mental and physical health as well as academic achievement. Cagla Gur conducted research on the effect of classical music on the cognitive content of children's drawings. According to Gur C. (2009), the findings demonstrated that children's cognitive drawing abilities are enhanced and that listening to classical music while drawing has a relaxing impact.
4. **Cultural Identity & Value-based Education:** Establishing a healthy cultural identity, self-esteem, and tolerance for diversity and other cultures requires introducing the Indian Knowledge System (IKS). Every youngster should be educated to have a sense of unity despite the great diversity of this nation (James K., 2006).

Challenges and Considerations

1. **Avoiding dogma: Present Indian Knowledge System (IKS) as universal, non-religious practices:** Understanding that the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) is not prejudiced against any particular religion is crucial.

It is an all-encompassing body of knowledge that incorporates contributions from other groups, cultures, faiths, and traditions. Dr. Ajaz Afzal Lone (2025) suggests that this should be handled carefully and incorporated into curricula in a way that is impartial and inclusive.

2. **Ensuring teacher training & authenticity:** The integration of the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) requires teachers who have received proper training. Many teachers' ignorance and inadequate abilities make it difficult for the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) to be successfully incorporated into regular classroom instruction. Curriculum development should have access to appropriate training initiatives, campaigns, projects, and resources (Mishra S et al., 2024).
3. **Balancing tradition with modern Pedagogy and inclusivity:** The relevance and worth of conventional knowledge in the contemporary environment are frequently questioned. It is important to make sure that traditional knowledge complements and enhances modern education rather than contradicting it (Nilu Rani, 2014; Chandratreya A et al., 2024).
4. **Lack of Resources and Infrastructure:** Some educational institutions could not have the infrastructure and resources necessary to integrate the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) into mainstream education (Muniyandi D.; Joshi N., 2025).

3. CONCLUSION

When properly incorporated, ancient Indian wisdom can offer strong resources for promoting emotional intelligence, mental toughness, and overall wellbeing. Philosophies, morality, spirituality, and intellectual growth are all fundamental components of ancient Indian wisdom. The Gurukula system, one of the first Indian educational systems, promoted the study of virtues including self-control, ethics, and discipline. Exercises and methods such as yoga, meditation, mindfulness (Dhyana), breath control (Pranayama), and others are encouraged by ancient Indian wisdom (Sharma, 2015). to foster wellbeing, emotional intelligence, and mental toughness. Psychological strength and individual and group well-being are improved when properly incorporated into contemporary living (Rao et al., 2011).

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