



Value-Based Education in Indian Knowledge Traditions

Jyoti

M.A., NET, Dept. of English

Jayesh

Research Scholar, Dept. of English

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18648723>

ARTICLE DETAILS

Research Paper

Accepted: 26-01-2026

Published: 10-02-2026

Keywords:

Value-Based Education, Indian Knowledge Traditions, IKS, Gurukul System, Dharma, Ethics and Moral Education,

ABSTRACT

It is a well-known fact and accepted globally that the Indian Knowledge System, since ancient times, has been known for its value-based system of learning. The Indian system of learning always focused on the development of character, spirituality, social obligations, and living in harmony with nature, as opposed to the modern system of learning, where the sole aim of the learning institution is to make the learner employable. The Indian system of learning always focused on the development of values like dharma (righteousness), satya (truth), ahimsa (non-violence), seva (service), and the like, and it is based on the Gurukul system of learning, as mentioned in the Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, and Natyashastra, among other texts. This research aims to explore the philosophical underpinnings of value-based learning in the Indian tradition, its models, its ethics, and its relevance in the present system of learning, especially in the light of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The Indian Knowledge Systems, as per the report, offer a complete system of learning, which incorporates social obligations, knowledge, and character.

Introduction

In the Indian tradition, the process of education was always regarded as a life-transforming experience, not only for the dissemination of knowledge, but also for moral awareness, spiritual awareness, and



character building. The word "vidya" not only means knowledge, but also enlightenment, leading to self-realization and appropriate social behavior. The process of education was regarded as an all-encompassing process, which attempted to integrate academic pursuits, moral development, social commitment, and spiritual development under the umbrella of Indian Knowledge System (IKS). The all-encompassing nature of the Indian tradition of education is quite different from the recent approaches, which emphasize only the marketable skills of the students, rather than their moral and humane qualities.

Indian knowledge education based on values The philosophical basis of the Indian tradition is provided by the Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, and Mahabharata. These provide a basis for ethics in terms of dharma, satya, ahimsa, and self-control, as well as a basis for metaphysical knowledge. Ethics was considered to be closely related to knowledge. Although knowledge, action, and devotion are integrated in Indian tradition through the Bhagavad Gita, self-knowledge as propounded by the Upanishads emphasized the need for introspection and integrity. Education was considered to be a way to produce a whole person who would be able to live in harmony with society as well as be able to take moral decisions.

The Gurukul system reflected the vision of value-based education, and the relationship between the teacher and the students provided the foundation for the educational process. Further, the educational process was residential, and it was marked by discipline, simplicity, and hands-on experience. Besides being the teacher, the teacher was also the moral guide who lived what he/she taught. Besides the educational process, the students were also provided with the values of self-discipline, humility, and service.

Besides, the value-driven education system offered by the Indian Knowledge Traditions also emphasized the importance of social responsibility and ecological awareness, apart from individual ethics. Living in harmony with nature was also emphasized in their rituals, and they considered it sacred. Being aware of all things and all people, and their interdependence, was also an integral part of the value-driven education system. These concepts are gaining importance in the present world, in the aftermath of the ecological upsets that occurred in the world, and the lack of ethics in society.

Globalization and the advancement in technology, while offering unheard-of benefits in the present age, are also causing unheard-of ethical and psychological upsets in the world. The formative and moral aspects of education are sometimes overlooked in the interest of education for financial gains. The necessity for educational theories that could encompass information and character building is also highlighted by the growing rates of social upsets, ecological upsets, and psychological imbalances in the



world. The necessity for value education in the context of the Indian Knowledge Traditions cannot be said to be merely sentimental.

The necessity of integrating Indian Knowledge System with the present-day education system has been identified by the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. Scholarly research is essential to understand the philosophical underpinning of different knowledge systems, which needs to be integrated with the present-day education system. The mechanisms also need to be critically examined in terms of equality and diversity.

The objective of the present essay is to explore the philosophical underpinning of the value-based education system of the Indian Knowledge Traditions. The present study also aims to explore the educational strategies and present-day relevance of the value-based education system of the Indian Knowledge Traditions.

Philosophical Foundations of Value-Based Education

Concept of Dharma

Indian philosophy emphasizes a lot on the concept of dharma. Dharma, as described in Mahabharata, means moral obligations and good behavior. The aim of education was to acquire a thorough knowledge of one's responsibility towards society and the universe.

Dharma, therefore, refers to context-dependent and wisdom-based ethics, rather than traditional morality. Education, therefore, made individuals responsible members of a complex society.

- Knowledge as Self-Realization
- Knowledge, as described in the Upanishads, is a way to achieve self-realization. The principle of Upanishads, described as the principle of "Tat Tvam Asi" or "Thou art That," symbolizes the oneness of the ego of a person and the universe.

Thus, education was a transformative process that helped learners become:

- To be conscious of oneself
- To have a clear comprehension of morals
- To surrender ego
- Compassion Knowledge was a waking process, not a process of accumulation.



Ethical Teachings in the Bhagavad Gita

The three aspects of knowledge, action, and devotion are incorporated in the Bhagavad Gita. It emphasizes:

- Selfless actions
- Emotional balance
- Discharge of responsibilities without attachment
- Sincerity in adversity

The psychological approach to ethical resilience, as discussed in this article, is of great use in the contemporary stress-based cultures.

Non-Violence and Compassion

The significance of "Ahimsa" or non-violence has been emphasized in the Indian tradition, especially in the philosophy of Jainism and Buddhism. The characters of Gautama Buddha emphasized the significance of moral restraint and compassion.

Empathy and respect for all living things were developed through value-based education.

The Gurukul System: Institutional Framework

The institutional framework for education in the Indian Knowledge System is unique in the form of the "Gurukul" system. The "Gurukul" system has been in existence for a long time and has been an integral part of the Vedic era. The "Gurukul" system is a socio-spiritual system, apart from being a system of education. The "Gurukul" system is a residential system, as distinguished from the modern institutionalized system of education. The "Guru" or teacher forms a part of this system.

Concept and Structure of the Gurukul

These two words, "guru" meaning teacher or spiritual guide, and "kula" meaning family or home, are put together to form the word "Gurukul." It, therefore, translates into the phrase "the teacher's family." In the midst of the hustle and bustle of the city and its distractions, there was the house of the guru where the educational process took place. It was located in the midst of nature, which acted as the metaphor for the educational philosophy.



The household of the guru comprised the disciples, who were also referred to as the shishyas. The process was extremely ethical and personal, as opposed to being transactional. The development of the student, morally, emotionally, and spiritually, was under the care of the guru, aside from the intellectual development. On the other hand, the students showed their respect and obedience to the guru by being humble and helpful. This formed the ethical base of the institutional structure.

Because of its small size, the Gurukul system of education was able to offer individualized care to its students. There were no examination classes. The students simply learned naturally because of their practice, observation, conversation, and participation.

Curriculum and Areas of Study

The subjects taught in Gurukul were diverse and included:

- Chanting of Veda passages
- Languages
- Philosophy
- Logic
- Astronomy
- Mathematics
- Political philosophy
- Ethics
- Usage of Ayurvedic medicine
- Physical training
- Martial arts

For instance, the Upanishads, which emphasized the importance of moral reasoning and self-awareness, were considered an integral part of philosophical studies. The topics varied depending on the student's capacity and their social status. While others might be interested in business, politics, and war, the Brahmacharis, or the celibate students, were only interested in studying the scriptures. Hence, it may be



concluded that the Gurukul system was a dynamic organization that could adapt itself in accordance with the changing needs of the society. **Pedagogical Methods**

The Gurukul system of teaching had its roots in the experiential and dialogic models of teaching. The following are the techniques that were used:

a) Oral Tradition (Shruti and Smriti)

Though the oral tradition of knowledge was imparted to the students, it involved the process of repeating and memorizing the knowledge. It helped the students to be self-disciplined and focused. There were generations of literary correctness through the oral tradition of repeating the knowledge.

b) Dialogue and Debate

Through the question-and-answer method, philosophical inquiry was promoted. The students were not passive receivers of knowledge; it was an interactive session with the teacher itself. The dialogic model of teaching promoted intellectual freedom.

c) Experiential Learning

The Gurukul system of education was not just about reading books. The students were assigned the duty of assisting in the preparation of the meal, maintaining the ashram, gathering firewood, and maintaining the animals.

d) Reflective Contemplation

There was a need for introspection and contemplation. Education was not just about becoming academically proficient; it was about becoming aware of oneself.

Moral and Ethical Discipline

The emphasis on morality in the Gurukul system of education was a notable aspect of this system of education. The need to abide by a list of dos and don'ts, which included controlling oneself, living a simple life, being celibate, and maintaining a proper diet, was a must for the students.

The Bhagavad Gita, which talks about the need to be selfless and detached, formed the basis of the moral code. The assumption here was that the essence of education lay in the development of qualities such as service (seva), non-violence (ahimsa), and honesty (satya).



This was reflected in the teacher. Thus, the process of moral learning was not just about what one learned, but also what one observed.

Social and Communal Dimensions

The social fabric also had the Gurukul system included in it. It was the responsibility of the students to return something to the society once they had completed their education. The very aim of the educational system was not just to enhance the individual, but also the society as a whole.

Let's, however, not forget the limitations of the past and put things into perspective. It should be noted that the Gurukul educational system, like all other systems of the time, had its share of gender and caste discriminations. There was exclusion, and even if there were time and place considerations, the Gurukul educational system should be viewed in the light of the democratic and egalitarian societies of today.

Relevance in Contemporary Context

There are several lessons that can be learned from the Gurukul model in the current educational literature, and they are:

- Tailored Mentoring
- General Progress
- Integration of knowledge and values
- Community-based learning

The basic principles of the ancient model, i.e., teacher-student relationship, value education, and general life skills, are extremely relevant, though the paradigm cannot be applied in its original form.

Core Values in Indian Knowledge Traditions

Fundamentally, the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) has been based on values. In the Indian tradition, the emphasis had always been on the ethical, spiritual, and social dimensions of knowledge, unlike the utilitarian approach. Knowledge (vidya), in the Indian tradition, had always been associated closely with ethics and responsible action, and not merely the academic pursuit of knowledge. The ethical foundation of the Indian educational tradition had been based on the values of dharma (righteousness), satya (truth), ahimsa (non-violence), seva (service), self-discipline, shraddha (loyal devotion), and lokasangraha (well-being of the world).



Dharma: Ethical Responsibility and Righteous Conduct

For the Indians, the most important concept was that of 'Dharma.' As per the Mahabharata, 'Dharma' is what sustains the world. 'Dharma' stands for responsibility, morals, justice, and righteousness. The basic idea behind the concept of education for the Indians was to incorporate the idea of 'Dharma' with reference to the family and the world. 'Dharma' needs intelligence with reference to 'Dharma' rather than morals. The problems associated with living a good life are exemplified through the moral dilemmas that the character 'Arjuna' is confronted with in the 'Bhagavad Gita.' The basic idea behind value education is to enable the individual to confront these moral dilemmas with equanimity.

Satya: Commitment to Truth

Among the Indian philosophers, the concept of the virtue of truth (satya) ranked the highest. Only truth succeeded, as the saying went: "Satyameva Jayate," as enunciated in the Upanishads. Truthfulness meant not only verbal integrity but also action and thought. Education with the aim of inculcating honesty, sincerity, and integrity. Children were actually encouraged to adopt the philosophy of truth through educational institutions. The pursuit of knowledge led to Brahman, or universal consciousness, the ultimate truth. Thus, moral and intellectual curiosity were intertwined.

Ahimsa: Non-Violence and Compassion

The moral base of the culture in India, especially in the religion of Buddhism and Jainism, is based on the principle of ahimsa, or non-violence. The contribution of the Gautama Buddha was in emphasizing the role of morality and compassion (karuna) in the development of the spirit. The principle of ahimsa does not only require a person to be non-violent, but it requires a person to be non-violent in thought and speech as well. In the field of education, the emphasis of this principle is the promotion of the values of tolerance, understanding, and the importance of diversity. The promotion of the co-existence of all creatures, the environment, and all people in a state of peace would be beneficial in the world in which we live today, which is based on violence and the destruction of the environment.

Seva: Service and Social Responsibility

The social aspect of Indian knowledge systems is supplemented by the emphasis laid on seva, or selfless service. Education was a necessity for the advancement of society and self-improvement. In the Gurukul system, service to the guru, family, and society formed a significant part of a student's life.



Lack of any selfish attachment or nishkama karma is advocated in the Bhagavad Gita. Such a mindset creates a sense of responsibility and humility. Indian education, with its inclusion of service and knowledge, led to the development of socially conscious persons.

Self-Discipline and Ethical Restraint

The virtue of Samyama, or self-control, is another important virtue. As per the "Yoga Sutras of Patanjali," the rule of ethics comprises Niyama, or observances, and Yama, or moral restraints. These are:

- Absence of violence
- Sincerity
- Non-stealing Contentment of Purity

It also provided the medium for moral education. The customs helped in the development of emotional control and self-will. Therefore, education helped in the development of the mind and the acquisition of self-control. This is also the development of emotional intelligence, as understood in modern psychology.

Shraddha: Faith and Devotion to Learning

Shraddha is the symbol of respect, dedication, and trust in the pursuit of knowledge. Shraddha created a simple and open attitude between the teacher and the students. The process of learning occurred in the spirit of willingness to change oneself, not in the spirit of being superior.

This ideology encouraged the spirit of learning and learning immersion. The process of learning occurred as a spiritual process, with the pursuit of knowledge being revered.

Lokasangraha: Welfare of the World

The Bhagavad Gita also encourages the ideology of 'Lokasangraha,' i.e., the welfare and stability of the world. It asks the people of the world to behave in such a manner so that the social peace and development are not disturbed. Thus, the process of education instilled the sense of civic responsibility among the people of the world.

This ideology encouraged the concept of interdependence of the society and the people in it. This ideology holds significance in the contemporary world with the ideas of ethical citizenship and development.



Ecological Consciousness

Indian Knowledge Traditions: The value system of the Indian Knowledge Traditions includes environmental values. Rivers, mountains, woods, and animals are considered sacred and are worshipped. Nature in itself is sacred.

These environmental values were not merely concepts, and they were practiced in day-to-day life. Instead of exploiting the natural resources, these values emphasized the conservation of the natural resources.

Indian Aesthetics and Moral Education

Rasa, or aesthetic feeling, is mentioned in the Natyashastra by Bharata Muni.

Art was an integral part of the process of the development of morality, apart from providing entertainment. Drama and performance provided the audience with the opportunity to witness:

- Empathy
- Heroism

Hence, tranquility and art were linked with the development of ethics

Environmental Ethics in Indian Knowledge Systems

The importance of harmony in the environment has been emphasized in the ancient Indian knowledge system:

- Sacred Rivers
- Trees were revered
- Respected animals

The Earth has been referred to as the mother in the Atharva Veda. Environmentally friendly living has been a direct result of this knowledge of the environment.

In the context of the current state of the climate catastrophe, this is quite relevant.

****Comparison with Modern Education****

- Traditional Indian Education



- Modern Education
- Holistic growth
- Focus on skills
- Moral education is essential.
- Ethics are frequently optional.
- A teacher serving as a moral mentor
- Instructor as teacher
- The spiritual aspect Material and secular emphasis
- Economic productivity is given priority in modern systems.
- Indian traditions place a high emphasis on moral citizenship.

National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and IKS

NEP 2020 highlights:

- Integration of Knowledge Systems from India
- Moral reasoning
- Learning across disciplines
- Curriculum that is based on values

In modern society, this approach seeks to revive historic values in education.

Critiques and Challenges

Indian knowledge traditions provide rich information, and this is where its value can be seen. However, there are some drawbacks to this as well.

- Caste-based discrimination has been a part of history.
- There has been gender-based discrimination as well.



- Thus, there is a need for an inclusive approach.
- Also, there is a need to uphold constitutional values and equality.

Contemporary Relevance

Indian values-based education can be relevant to modern society in a number of ways.

- Indian values-based education can address the current moral crisis in society.
- Indian values-based education can address current issues related to mental health.
- Indian values-based education can address current issues related to the environment.
- Indian values-based education can address current issues related to society.
- Indian values-based education can address current issues related to becoming responsible global

Conclusion

Indian knowledge education based on values Traditions comprise a whole philosophy of social, moral, spiritual, and intellectual values. Education in India, as propounded in Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, and other ancient scriptures, was for self-realization and social integration. Re-look at Indian Knowledge Traditions provides a balanced view in a world of moral ambiguity and technical advancements. Re-interpretation of knowledge traditions must be democratic and inclusive. Indian knowledge traditions provide eternal wisdom for a moral future, not for the past.

References :

- Bhattacharya, S. (2016). *The Indian knowledge system: Concepts and practices*. Routledge India.
- Bharata Muni. (2003). *The Nāṭyaśāstra* (M. Ghosh, Trans.). Asiatic Society. (Original work composed ca. 200 BCE–200 CE)
- Dasgupta, S. (1975). *A history of Indian philosophy* (Vol. 1). Motilal Banarsidass. (Original work published 1922)
- Aurobindo, S. (1990). *The human cycle*. Sri Aurobindo Ashram. (Original work published 1949)
- Government of India. (2020). *National Education Policy 2020*. Ministry of Education. <https://www.education.gov.in>



- Krishna, V. R. (2019). Value-based education in Indian tradition: Relevance and challenges. *Journal of Indian Philosophy and Education*, 12(2), 45–58.
- Patanjali. (2009). *The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* (E. Bryant, Trans.). North Point Press.
- Radhakrishnan, S. (1999). *Indian philosophy* (Vols. 1–2). Oxford University Press. (Original work published 1923)
- Radhakrishnan, S. (2008). *The principal Upanishads*. HarperCollins. (Original work published 1953)
- Sharma, R. N. (2018). Indian knowledge system and value-based education: A holistic approach. *International Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Studies*, 5(4), 23–31.
- Tilak, B. G. (2011). *Srimad Bhagavad Gita Rahasya*. Lokmanya Tilak Trust. (Original work published 1915)