



## Indian Knowledge System and Inclusive Education

**Prashant Ranjan Dutt**

Assistant Professor, Teachers' Training College, Affiliated To Tilka Manjhi Bhagalpur University,  
Bhagalpur, Bihar, India, Email ID: prashantranjandutt31@gmail.com

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### ABSTRACT

Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) includes domains like Ayurveda, Yoga, Vedanta, Vedic sciences, and ritual-philosophical traditions, which emphasize holistic wellbeing (body–mind–spirit) rather than purely medical “fixing” of impairment. In this framework, disability is often seen less as a moral curse and more as one life condition among many, shaped by karma, environment, and social response. Ayurveda and Yoga, as parts of IKS, contribute non-invasive, low-cost techniques for improving physical functioning, pain management, and mental wellbeing among children and adults with disabilities. In Indian-context inclusive education, IKS can inform pedagogy that values family, community, and cultural narratives (stories, rituals, local knowledge) as resources for children with disabilities. In education, 'Mainstreaming' means placing students or children with special needs in regular classes with normal students. The goal is to provide opportunities for socialization and access to the general curriculum. Established in October 2020 under India's Ministry of Education, the IKS division promotes research, faculty training, and curriculum integration per the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. NEP 2020 promotes the integration of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) across school and higher education curricula to foster cultural pride, holistic development, and interdisciplinary learning. The NEP 2020 policy recognizes children with special needs and believes in integrating them into the mainstream



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society. It broadly supports with the objectives of The Rights of Persons and Disabilities (RPWD) Act, 2016.

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## Introduction

Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) refer to the ancient, holistic body of knowledge developed in India over millennia, encompassing philosophy, sciences, arts, medicine, and governance, rooted in Vedic traditions. This system emphasizes interconnectedness, sustainability, and ethical living, transmitted systematically across generations through texts like the *Vedas*, *Upanishads*, and *Upvedas*.

Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) offer a rich, often under-utilized resource for thinking about disability—not just as “deficit” but as part of human diversity embedded in cosmology, ethics, medicine, and pedagogy.

## What IKS contributes to disability?

IKS includes domains like Ayurveda, Yoga, Vedanta, Vedic sciences, and ritual-philosophical traditions, which emphasize holistic wellbeing (body–mind–spirit) rather than purely medical “fixing” of impairment. In this framework, disability is often seen less as a moral curse and more as one life condition among many, shaped by karma, environment, and social response.

## Ancient texts and views on disability

Scholar's re-reading epics (e.g., *Mahābhārata*, *Rāmāyaṇa*) argue that figures like *Mantharā* or *Śambarā* demonstrate that persons with bodily differences were already present in high-status social roles, even if interpreters later moralized or stereotyped them. This suggests that Indian tradition contains both inclusive imagery and later stigmatizing readings, so a critical-reconstructive IKS lens can help challenge albinism in contemporary classrooms.

## Health, therapy, and wellbeing

Ayurveda and Yoga, as parts of IKS, contribute non-invasive, low-cost techniques for improving physical functioning, pain management, and mental wellbeing among children and adults with disabilities. Studies show that integrating IKS-based practices (breath work, gentle *āsanas*, Ayurvedic diet and lifestyle) with modern rehabilitation can support holistic participation rather than only “normalization.”



## **Inclusive education and teacher practice**

In Indian-context inclusive education, IKS can inform pedagogy that values family, community, and cultural narratives (stories, rituals, local knowledge) as resources for children with disabilities. For teachers, this means designing curriculum and classroom activities that draw on Indian literature, folklore, and philosophical ideas of “unity in diversity” to foreground equal dignity and multiple ways of knowing and being.

Inclusive education in India aims to ensure all children, including those with disabilities, learn together in mainstream schools. It draws from policies emphasizing equity and access for children with special needs (CwSN).

### **Key Policies**

The Right to Education (RTE) Act 2009 mandates free education for children aged 6-14, including options like home-based education for severe disabilities. The RPWD Act 2016 requires schools to provide reasonable accommodations, trained staff, and accessible infrastructure up to age 18. NEP 2020 promotes a whole-school approach with special educators, resource centers, and teacher training.

### **Major Programs**

*Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan* integrates inclusive provisions like aids, resource rooms, and co-curricular activities across school levels. Earlier initiatives, such as the 2005 Action Plan, focused on early identification, community involvement, and teacher education.

### **Enrollment Data**

As per UDISE+ 2021-22, about 2.27 million CwSN are enrolled from pre-primary to Class XII.

### **Challenges**

Barriers include policy-implementation gaps, rural access issues (78% of population rural), inadequate teacher training, and poverty. Success requires parent-teacher awareness and multi-sectoral linkages.

### **Core Principles**

IKS integrates *gyana* (theoretical knowledge), *vigyana* (applied science), and *jeevan darshan* (life philosophy), derived from observation, experimentation, and analysis. It promotes a holistic worldview, such as "*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*" (the world is one family), influencing fields from Ayurveda and yoga



to mathematics and environmental practices. Modern relevance includes sustainable solutions for health, ecology, and technology.

### **Government Initiative**

Established in October 2020 under India's Ministry of Education, the IKS division promotes research, faculty training, and curriculum integration per the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. It supports credits for ancient Indian sciences in higher education and received doubled funding to ₹20 crore in 2022-2023. States like Madhya Pradesh have incorporated epics like Ramayana into programs via Indian Knowledge Tradition Centres.

### **Educational Ties**

Given your interest in Indian educational philosophy, IKS revives *gurukul* models for holistic, inclusive learning, aligning with thinkers like Vivekananda who fused Vedanta with modern education for character-building and social welfare. NEP 2020 integrates IKS to empower diverse learners, including *divyang* (persons with disabilities), echoing ancient examples like *Ashtavakra's* empowerment through knowledge. This supports teacher training and curriculum design for inclusion.

### **Relevance of Inclusive Education**

Building on your focus in inclusive education, NEP leverages IKS for *divyang* empowerment via personalized *gurukul*-inspired models and yoga/Ayurveda adaptations, promoting equity in curriculum design. States like Madhya Pradesh exemplify this through IKS centers in school.

Mainstream refers to the prevailing current of thought, opinion, and activity in a society or group. In education, 'Mainstreaming' means placing students or children with special needs in regular classes with normal students. The goal is to provide opportunities for socialization and access to the general curriculum. Overall, mainstreaming aims to create a supportive educational framework. Mainstreaming promotes equal access to education for all students. Mainstreaming is particularly beneficial for children with special needs. Mainstreaming also benefits the other normal children it opens the mind and lines of communication between those students with disabilities and their peers. All students become more sensitive to the fact that disabled students may need extra assistance in the classroom. Students without disabilities or general students who engaged in an inclusive physical education program reported increases in self-concept, tolerance and better understanding of other people. Mainstreaming enhances



the higher academic achievements, better social skills, cognitive skills and overall personality of children with special needs (CWSN).

### **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020**

India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasizes inclusive education for children with disabilities. NEP 2020 mandates special educators trained in cross disability support, assistive devices and technology tools for students with disabilities. Schools must provide accessible infrastructure, Indian Sign Language and other things between regular or special schools. Funds support for modifications like ramps, toilets, and priority for scholarships, early childhood care and Braille or large print materials. Teacher training includes disability awareness, with PARAKH assessments for holistic evaluation. The education system must aim to benefit India's children so that every child got opportunity to learn. The main purpose is to spread education in the isolated and farthest places in India. The recommendation of the NEP is the proposal to establish Special Educational Zones (SEZs) in regions with substantial population belonging to Socio Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs) and in related aspiring cities.

### **How is IKS integrated into NEP 2020 Curriculums?**

NEP 2020 promotes the integration of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) across school and higher education curricula to foster cultural pride, holistic development, and interdisciplinary learning. This involves embedding ancient wisdom from Vedas, Upanishads, and traditional sciences like Ayurveda alongside modern subjects, starting from foundational stages.

### **School Curriculum**

IKS content is infused into the National Curriculum Framework for Foundational Stage (ages 3-8), emphasizing holistic growth through stories, arts, and values from Indian heritage. From Grade 6, vocational education incorporates IKS-based skills like yoga, crafts, and environmental practices, with flexibility for multilingualism and local traditions. Experiential learning, such as internships in traditional arts, builds practical wisdom.

### **Higher Education**

Universities offer elective courses and research credits on IKS, with the IKS Division funding chairs, fellowships, and MOOCs on platforms like SWAYAM. Teacher training programs embed IKS pedagogy



to create culturally responsive educators. Challenges include standardizing frameworks, but it aligns with NEP's 50% Gross Enrolment Ratio goal by 2035.

### **Policy and future directions**

Government-supported IKS initiatives (e.g., MoE/AICTE-led IKS cell) are beginning to explore how traditional knowledge can be integrated with scientific and social-justice approaches to disability. Moving forward, several scholars argue that IKS-based research—when combined with Critical Disability Studies—can help shift India from a charity-welfare model of disability toward a rights-based, culturally grounded inclusion framework.

NEP 2020 promotes digital literacy online learning platforms and smart classroom systems. The policy encourages blended and online learning programs making education more easy, flexible and accessible. The initiatives in training of teachers are to effectively integrate technology. DIKSHA is important digital resources. Technology is leveraged to bridge gaps between education and inclusive education. National Education Policy 2020 focuses Artificial Learning, Machine Learning and other emerging technologies to improve teaching and learning. DIKSHA, SWAYAM and National Digital Education Architecture (NDEAR) are some notable initiatives. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is revolutionizing India's education system by integrating technology. NEP prioritizes access, equity and inclusion for disadvantaged groups, including SC/ST, minorities and differently-abled students. Multilingual approaches are important for promoting local languages and mother tongues to enhance learning outcomes. Vocational training and emphasis on skill development for socio-economic inclusion is also key features of NEP 2020. In addition, the Government of India will constitute a Gender Inclusion Fund to build nation's capacity to provide equitable quality education for all girls as well as transgender students. The NEP 2020 policy recognizes children with special needs and believes in integrating them into the mainstream society. It broadly supports with the objectives of The Rights of Persons and Disabilities (RPWD) Act, 2016.

### **CONCLUSION:**

Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) and inclusive education converge to foster holistic, culturally rooted learning that honors India's diverse traditions while ensuring equity for all learners, including those with disabilities. This synthesis draws from ancient wisdom like those of Vivekananda and Krishnamurti, aligning with modern policies such as NEP 2020 to promote social justice and cognitive diversity.



IKS enriches inclusive education by embedding indigenous epistemologies, such as yoga, Ayurveda, and Vedic methodologies, into curricula, making learning accessible and relevant for marginalized groups. It counters Western-centric biases, enhancing critical thinking and emotional well-being for students with disabilities through experiential, non-competitive approaches. Teacher training programs grounded in IKS emphasize empathy and cultural sensitivity, vital for inclusive classrooms.

### **Policy and Practical Outcomes**

NEP 2020 mandates IKS in textbooks and courses, with NCERT integrating topics across classes 3-12 to reflect diverse knowledge traditions and support equitable access. Universities now offer IKS electives, bridging tradition with technology like AI for disability-inclusive tools, fostering innovation without cultural erasure. Challenges like superficial implementation are addressed via structured reforms and digital experiential learning.

Ultimately, IKS transforms inclusive education into a culturally attuned framework that builds national pride, sustainability, and global competence, producing confident, holistic learners prepared for a diverse world. This approach ensures education reflects India's intellectual heritage while advancing disability rights and social inclusion.

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