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## Integration of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) in Higher Education: Opportunities, Challenges, and Implications for Nation Building

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### ABSTRACT

Indian higher education continues to carry a profound paradox. A civilisation responsible for foundational contributions to mathematics, grammar, medicine, astronomy, and logic has, for nearly two centuries, largely relied on intellectual frameworks inherited from its colonial rulers. The National Education Policy 2020 represents one of the most ambitious attempts since independence to address this epistemic disconnect by integrating Indian Knowledge Systems into the mainstream of higher education. This paper offers a balanced examination of both the opportunities and the substantial challenges involved in this integration. On the positive side, IKS holds considerable potential to enrich curricula through interdisciplinary engagement, align traditional knowledge practices with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, support student mental health through contemplative traditions, and strengthen economic self-reliance in line with the Atmanirbhar Bharat vision. However, formidable obstacles remain, including widespread faculty unpreparedness, inadequate infrastructural support, the persistent risk of political instrumentalisation, and the limited peer-reviewed validation of several traditional claims. Drawing upon frameworks of epistemic justice and decolonial theory, the paper argues that meaningful integration requires rigorous curricular redesign, consistent intellectual scrutiny, and a truly inclusive



representation of India's diverse knowledge traditions encompassing not only classical Sanskrit scholarship but also Buddhist, Jain, Islamic, Dalit, and tribal knowledge systems. India's aspiration to become a global knowledge leader will ultimately depend not on assertions of past greatness, but on the quality, rigour, and honesty of the scholarly work produced in thoughtful dialogue with its own intellectual heritage.

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## 1. Introduction

There is a tension running through Indian higher education that has never been properly resolved. The same civilisation that gave the world the concept of zero, developed grammatical theory centuries before comparable Western work, built systematic schools of logic and medicine, and charted celestial bodies with remarkable accuracy, has spent roughly two centuries educating its people through intellectual frameworks shaped by its colonial rulers. This is not merely historical irony. It has concrete consequences for what Indian universities treat as legitimate knowledge and how graduates understand their own intellectual heritage.

Indian Knowledge Systems represent a vast and internally diverse tradition. They include the Nyaya school's systematic logic, the mathematical traditions of Ganita and the Sulbasutras, the linguistic science of Vyakarana, the astronomical work of Jyotisha, the medical frameworks of Ayurveda, the governance philosophy of the Arthashastra, and the consciousness studies of Yoga and Vedanta. These were not scattered folk practices. They were developed within institutional settings, debated and revised across centuries, and drew scholars from across Asia and the Mediterranean. Equally central are the epistemological contributions of Buddhist and Jain philosophical traditions, the scientific synthesis produced by Islamic scholars within Indian intellectual culture, and the ecological and agricultural knowledge of tribal and Dalit communities across the subcontinent. This diversity is not peripheral to IKS. It is part of what IKS fundamentally is.

The colonial education policy of 1835 did not simply introduce English-medium instruction. It systematically removed indigenous epistemologies from formal institutions, redirected resources away from existing knowledge networks, and trained successive generations to measure intellectual authority by reference to external European centres. Seven decades after independence, the effects remain structurally embedded. The language of global academic publishing is Western. The journals that confer



credibility are located in the global North. Most Indian university curricula still treat IKS as optional cultural enrichment rather than rigorous scholarly territory.

NEP 2020 is the most decisive policy intervention against this inheritance since independence. The University Grants Commission followed in March 2023 with guidelines requiring all undergraduate and postgraduate students to complete IKS courses covering at least five percent of their total required credits, with at least half connecting directly to their main discipline. Yet policy mandates do not automatically produce epistemological transformation. The gap between what a policy declares and what actually happens in classrooms is exactly where this paper focuses.

This paper pursues three objectives. First, it examines the real opportunities that IKS integration offers at the level of curriculum, pedagogy, and national development. Second, it identifies and analyses the structural, political, and epistemic challenges that complicate that integration. Third, it theorises the relationship between IKS integration and nation-building, paying careful attention to the difference between epistemic self-determination and cultural homogenization.

**Table 1: Key Policy Milestones in IKS Integration**

Year	Policy / Event	What It Means for IKS
1835	Macaulay's Minute	Indigenous epistemologies have been formally removed from institutions. Western frameworks became the default.
2020	NEP 2020	First national policy to mandate IKS integration across all levels of higher education.
2023	UGC Guidelines	Minimum five per cent IKS credit requirement for every UG and PG student.
2023	IIT Kanpur IKS Centre	A leading institution operationalises the mandate with a dedicated interdisciplinary IKS centre.

*Source: Government of India (2020); UGC (2023); AICTE (2022)*

## 2. Methodology

This study adopts a systematic review methodology with thematic synthesis, following the framework established by Thomas and Harden (2008) for qualitative evidence synthesis in policy-relevant research. The scholarship on Indian Knowledge Systems in higher education is scattered across



disciplines, institutional reports, and theoretical traditions, and a systematic approach was necessary to bring coherence to that diversity without flattening genuinely varied findings. Sources were gathered from academic databases and institutional repositories between January and April 2025, using search terms covering IKS curriculum integration, epistemic sovereignty, and decolonization in higher education. Peer-reviewed articles, official UGC, AICTE, and NITI Aayog documents, and published book chapters from 2000 to 2025 were included. Opinion pieces without evidence and sources unavailable for full-text review were excluded. Of approximately sixty sources identified, fifty-two were retained after quality assessment. These were organised into three evidence tiers covering empirical peer-reviewed studies, official policy documents, and theoretical frameworks. Thematic synthesis moved from line-by-line coding of individual findings toward broader analytical themes, organised finally into the opportunity and challenge domains examined in the sections that follow.

### 3. Review of Literature

Scholarship on IKS in higher education has grown considerably since NEP 2020. Das (2024) argues that IKS integration strengthens students' understanding of indigenous intellectual traditions and builds cultural confidence. Raghuvanshi (2021) suggests that NEP 2020 provides an opportunity to reduce excessive dependence on Western frameworks by broadening the epistemological base of formal education. Chand and Das (2022) discuss the relevance of Vedic Mathematics for improving mathematical thinking, while Kalita and Kalita (2024) highlight the value of Yoga-based practices for student mental and emotional well-being. Studies on traditional ecological knowledge have further connected indigenous practices to sustainable development goals.

At the policy level, Mishra et al. (2024) note that NEP 2020 marks a significant shift toward recognising indigenous knowledge but also raise concerns about implementation capacity and faculty preparedness. Sharma and Das (2021) identify the lack of trained faculty and limited institutional support as the primary obstacles to effective integration. Critical scholars have raised questions about representation and academic rigour. Kumar (2020) and Nambissan (2021) caution that IKS integration risks reducing India's diverse intellectual traditions to a narrow cultural narrative unless Buddhist, Jain, Islamic, tribal, Dalit, and regional traditions are consistently foregrounded alongside classical Sanskrit sources.



### 3.1 Research Gap

Although the existing literature offers useful insights into Indian Knowledge Systems and their educational relevance, several important gaps remain. Most available scholarship concentrates on the benefits of IKS revival while giving little attention to the practical difficulties of integration. A balanced examination of both opportunities and challenges within the same analytical frame is largely missing from the current body of work. A large portion of the literature is either policy-oriented or conceptual in nature. Issues such as faculty readiness, infrastructural inequality, validation of knowledge claims, and the risk of cultural exclusion have not been examined together in any sufficiently integrated way. Many studies also discuss IKS from a broad cultural perspective without engaging simultaneously with questions of epistemic justice, decolonisation, and nation-building. Comprehensive analyses that connect curriculum reform, knowledge production, institutional challenges, and national development within a single framework are notably absent. This study attempts to address these gaps by providing a systematic and balanced review that holds all these dimensions together.

## 4. Conceptual Framework

### 4.1 Epistemic Justice and Decolonial Theory

Miranda Fricker's concept of epistemic injustice describes the structural condition in which entire intellectual traditions are rendered invisible by dominant academic frameworks. Applied to IKS, it names the collective marginalisation that colonial and postcolonial education has produced. Shiv Visvanathan's cognitive justice extends this by arguing that different ways of knowing have a right to coexist and engage as equals. Walter D. Mignolo's epistemological disobedience argues that decolonisation requires actively delinking from the assumption that knowledge produced in particular geographic centres is universal, while knowledge from elsewhere is merely local or traditional.

### 4.2 Critical Policy Analysis

Stephen Ball's policy sociology framework treats policy documents as political texts shaped by competing interests, implemented in ways that often reproduce the inequalities they claim to address. Applied to NEP 2020, this framework asks whose interests are served, what is included and what is left out, and who defines what counts as IKS. Michael Apple adds that curricular content selection is never purely technical. It always reflects whose knowledge is treated as worthy of formal transmission and reproduces particular social arrangements in doing so.



### 4.3 Epistemic Sovereignty and Nation Building

This paper distinguishes between cultural nationalism, which uses IKS to build a homogeneous national identity, and epistemic self-determination, which argues that a genuinely independent nation should develop the capacity to evaluate and contribute to global knowledge by drawing on its own heritage. The first argument is politically motivated. The second is academically defensible, and it is the version this paper defends.

## 5. Opportunities

### 5.1 Curriculum Enrichment through Interdisciplinary Engagement

The most immediately defensible case for IKS integration lies in its potential to genuinely enrich existing curricula. The mathematical work in the Sulbasutras and in Brahmagupta's writings offers material for the history and philosophy of mathematics well beyond Europe-centred accounts. The Nyaya school's formal treatment of valid knowledge sources and inference provides material relevant to philosophy, cognitive science, and artificial intelligence. The Arthashastra's frameworks for economics and governance remain analytically sophisticated. Vedic mathematical procedures, taught with transparency about their scope and limitations, can support algorithmic thinking in STEM contexts. The value of this enrichment depends on whether the material receives the same critical scrutiny as everything else in the curriculum. IKS traditions that can withstand that scrutiny should be included. Those who can should not be included on cultural grounds alone.

### 5.2 Decolonizing the Curriculum

Beyond enrichment, IKS integration serves a broader corrective function. Decolonising the curriculum does not mean rejecting Western knowledge. That would simply mirror the exclusion it seeks to correct. It means creating conditions where different knowledge traditions engage as genuine equals, and where Indian intellectual contributions to any domain receive the same methodological seriousness that Western contributions receive as a matter of course. There are frameworks within IKS, in logic, ecological management, preventive medicine, and cognitive science, that the global academy would genuinely benefit from engaging. A decolonising project that centres only on Sanskrit-medium, upper-caste, Hindu traditions has not solved the problem. It has replaced one form of exclusion with another. The full diversity of India's intellectual heritage, including Buddhist, Jain, Islamic, Dalit, tribal, and regional traditions, must be consistently foregrounded and not treated as a footnote.



### **Case Study: IIT Kanpur IKS Centre (2023)**

The IKS Study Centre at IIT Kanpur, established following the UGC mandate, shows what serious integration can look like in a research-intensive institution. Faculty examine traditional IKS claims in metallurgy, computational linguistics, and pharmacology using modern laboratory methods rather than accepting them on authority. Teaching is discipline-specific: ancient Indian logic for computer science students, traditional materials science for engineering students. The Centre publishes in indexed journals and clearly distinguishes between claims backed by evidence and those that remain unproven. That intellectual honesty is precisely what credible IKS integration requires. The model has real limits, though. It demands substantial resources and faculty equally at ease with traditional knowledge and modern disciplinary methods, a combination that remains rare. Most institutions, particularly those in smaller towns or tribal regions, would struggle to replicate it without dedicated funding and sustained faculty development

### **5.3 Alignment with Global Sustainability Goals**

IKS connects directly to pressing global challenges. The Ayurvedic concept of Ritucharya aligns diet and lifestyle with seasonal cycles, carrying preventive value that modern public health is only beginning to recognise. India also holds one of the richest records of community-managed water harvesting in the world. The stepwells of Rajasthan, the johad tanks of Haryana, and the kuhl canals of Himachal Pradesh were functional engineering responses to unpredictable rainfall, yet water management education continues to ignore them. The Zabo system of Nagaland integrates cultivation, water harvesting, and animal husbandry within a single terraced structure with documented benefits for soil and watershed health. These are exactly the locally grounded adaptation strategies global researchers are actively seeking.

### **5.4 Building India's Knowledge Production Capacity**

Decolonisation clears the ground. Epistemic self-determination builds on it. A nation that removes colonial frameworks without constructing credible alternatives has only done half the necessary work. Traditional Indian knowledge in pharmacology, ecological agriculture, and water engineering carries significant unextracted intellectual and economic value. When Indian researchers publish peer-reviewed work on IKS-derived formulations or on classical Nyaya logic, they contribute original knowledge to global discourse on terms that acknowledge their own intellectual inheritance. For this to happen at scale, the knowledge must be formally documented, legally protected, and developed through



research that meets international scholarly standards. Self-determination without rigour produces assertion rather than scholarship.

### 5.5 Student Well-being and Holistic Development

Given the well-documented mental health challenges in contemporary higher education, IKS-based contemplative traditions offer practically significant tools. Indian traditions have developed tested frameworks for understanding the relationship between mind, body, and environment. Integrating practices from Yoga and Vedanta traditions into student support programmes represents evidence-informed practice, provided they are taught honestly about their origins and the current state of supporting research. This is a domain where the opportunity is genuine and the evidence, while still developing, is credible enough to warrant serious institutional attention rather than either uncritical enthusiasm or reflexive dismissal.

**Table 2: Opportunities in IKS Integration**

Opportunity	IKS Traditions Involved	What It Can Deliver
<b>Curriculum Enrichment</b>	Vedic Mathematics, Nyaya, Arthashastra	Richer STEM and humanities learning; non-Eurocentric history of ideas
<b>Decolonising Knowledge</b>	All streams, including non-Sanskrit traditions	Epistemic pluralism; greater intellectual confidence among students
<b>SDG Alignment</b>	Ayurveda, Traditional Ecology, Yoga	Practical contribution to SDGs 3, 4, and 13
<b>Knowledge Production Capacity</b>	All IKS domains in formal education	Reduced external dependence; indigenous knowledge economy
<b>Student Well-being</b>	Yoga, Vedanta, contemplative traditions	Evidence-informed holistic development programs
<b>Inclusive Diversity</b>	Buddhist, Jain, Islamic, Dalit, Tribal	Genuine pluralism; prevention of cultural monopolization

*Source: Authors' synthesis from reviewed literature.*



## 6. Challenges

### 6.1 Faculty Unpreparedness

The most immediately documented challenge is that most faculty teaching in Indian higher education were trained in disciplines built around Western frameworks. They did not study IKS formally at any stage. They may have limited familiarity with primary IKS sources and quite reasonably feel uncertain about teaching material outside their trained expertise. The problem goes beyond language, though Sanskrit and regional language competence are often required to engage primary sources meaningfully. The deeper issue is the absence of scholars genuinely expert at the intersection of IKS and specific disciplinary fields. The UGC acknowledged this gap in its 2023 guidelines, but one-time orientation workshops will not close a gap that took a century of colonial education to create.

### 6.2 Structural and Institutional Barriers

Institutions outside the small elite tier are severely under-resourced. IKS integration requires not just new courses but a genuine restructuring of institutional culture, curriculum design, and resource allocation. There is no standardised national framework specifying what IKS integration looks like across different disciplines and types of institutions. A student at IIT Kanpur receives a fundamentally different IKS education than a student at a rural degree college in Jharkhand, and this inequality is itself a form of structural injustice that the policy has not yet addressed in any meaningful way.

### 6.3 The Risk of Politicization

Questions about cultural identity and historical narrative are actively contested in contemporary Indian public life, and IKS policy does not exist outside these contests. The critical question is whose IKS gets placed at the centre of the curriculum. India's intellectual heritage is far more diverse than its dominant public representation suggests. If IKS integration defaults to a curriculum dominated by upper-caste, Hindu, Sanskrit-medium knowledge, this is not integration. It is cultural monopolization in new vocabulary, and it reproduces precisely the epistemic exclusion that a serious decolonising project would seek to undo. Safeguards cannot depend on the goodwill of individual institutions. They must be structurally built into the framework.

### 6.4 Scientific Validation Deficit

Not all traditional knowledge is equally well validated. Integrating IKS into formal curricula carries a responsibility to distinguish clearly between what has been empirically supported, what is



theoretically plausible and worth investigating, and what is not backed by credible peer-reviewed evidence. Many claims in certain branches of Ayurvedic pharmacology and traditional cosmological frameworks fall into the third category. Including them without appropriate framing risks normalising insufficiently tested claims within the academy, which would damage the credibility of IKS integration as a whole. This is the same standard that should apply to any knowledge claim entering a formal curriculum.

### 6.5 Digital Divide and Infrastructure

A substantial portion of IKS material exists in manuscript form, in languages requiring specialised training, and in collections inaccessible to most faculty and students. Digitization has made progress, but the gap between elite metropolitan institutions and rural and tribal area colleges is very wide. The institutions serving students who might benefit most from reconnection with their local intellectual traditions are often the least equipped to deliver that reconnection in any meaningful depth.

### 6.6 Global Recognition and Graduate Employability

Most global accreditation bodies do not yet recognise IKS-oriented degrees. Research in IKS-focused journals does not yet carry citation networks and impact profiles that determine international academic standing. For students making rational assessments about their educational investment, the risk associated with heavily IKS-oriented programmes is real. If IKS integration comes at the cost of internationally recognised disciplinary training, it may constrain the very students it claims to empower. This concern must be addressed in programme design rather than dismissed as residual colonial thinking.

**Table 3: Challenges, Root Causes, and Evidence**

Challenge	Root Cause	Evidence
<b>Faculty Unpreparedness</b>	Colonial training; no IKS in formal education	UGC (2023); Sharma & Das (2021)
<b>Structural Barriers</b>	Under-resourcing; no standardised framework	Mishra et al. (2024); Balasubramanian (2021)
<b>Politicisation Risk</b>	IKS conflated with cultural nationalism	Apple (2004); Nambissan (2021); Kumar (2020)



Challenge	Root Cause	Evidence
<b>Validation Deficit</b>	Insufficient peer-reviewed research on IKS claims	Baragi & Ganer (2025)
<b>Digital Divide</b>	Manuscript access barriers; rural institutions are under-resourced	Singh & Pandey (2024); NITI Aayog (2023)
<b>Global Recognition Gap</b>	Non-alignment with accreditation norms	Tilak (2021); Pandit (2025)

*Source: Authors' synthesis from reviewed literature.*

## 7. Implications for Nation Building

### 7.1 Knowledge Sovereignty

A nation's capacity to participate as an equal in global intellectual life depends on whether it produces knowledge or mainly consumes knowledge produced elsewhere. For much of the post-independence period, India has measured its intellectual output against standards set by institutions in North America and Western Europe. IKS integration pursued through serious peer-reviewed research offers a concrete pathway toward changing this. When Indian researchers publish original work on traditional formulations, ancient water engineering, or classical Nyaya logic, they contribute to global discourse on terms that acknowledge their own intellectual inheritance. Knowledge sovereignty is not a claim to superiority. It is a claim to participate as an equal rather than as a dependent.

### 7.2 Cultural Confidence and National Identity

There is a well-documented relationship between the intellectual frameworks that shape a person's education and the sense of agency they carry into public life. Students who have never encountered their own civilizational heritage within a formal academic setting, except perhaps as folklore, may develop what the decolonial literature describes as an epistemic inferiority complex. A curriculum that teaches Indian logic, medicine, water engineering, and ecological management as rigorous academic subjects produces a different kind of graduate: one who can engage with global frameworks from a position of intellectual confidence rather than deference. A democratic and self-determining nation needs exactly this kind of citizen.



### 7.3 Innovation and Economic Development

The economic argument for IKS integration is typically aspirational in tone, but the evidence base is more substantial than critics acknowledge. Traditional pharmacological knowledge, when subjected to clinical trials and proper documentation, can support patentable formulations. Indigenous water management technologies offer scalable climate adaptation models at low cost. The agricultural knowledge of tribal communities contains observations about soil health, pest management, and seasonal patterns that modern agronomy is only now recovering through expensive research. DST-funded IKS research centres and CSIR's traditional knowledge digital library are early steps in building this pipeline. Sustained investment would give Atmanirbhar Bharat a concrete institutional meaning beyond rhetoric.

### 7.4 Social Inclusion and Democratic Citizenship

The nation-building value of IKS integration depends entirely on whose IKS is being integrated. A curriculum built exclusively around upper-caste, Sanskrit-medium, Hindu traditions does not build an inclusive national identity. It reinforces existing hierarchies within a framework that presents itself as transformative. The intellectual traditions of tribal communities, the Bhakti movement's contribution to egalitarian thought, the Dalit heritage articulated by figures like B.R. Ambedkar, and the pluralistic frameworks of Jain, Buddhist, and Islamic scholarship are not peripheral. They are constitutive of what India's intellectual heritage actually is. Students from marginalised communities who see their traditions treated with scholarly seriousness are more likely to engage fully with higher education and participate confidently in national life.

**Table 4: Implications for Nation Building**

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Key Contribution</b>	<b>Outcome for Nation Building</b>
<b>Knowledge Sovereignty</b>	Peer-reviewed IKS research in global discourse	India participates as an intellectual equal
<b>Cultural Confidence</b>	Civilisational heritage is taught as a rigorous subject	Graduates with intellectual self-assurance
<b>Innovation and Economic Development</b>	IKS-derived formulations and technologies	Commercially viable indigenous innovations



Dimension	Key Contribution	Outcome for Nation Building
<b>Social Inclusion</b>	Tribal, Dalit, Buddhist, Jain, and Islamic traditions are recognised	Marginalised communities included in the national intellectual identity

*Source: Authors' synthesis from reviewed literature.*

## 8. Limitations of This Review

Several factors limit this review's scope. Published IKS studies are concentrated in a small number of states and elite institutions, meaning tribal universities, smaller regional colleges, and north-eastern institutions are substantially underrepresented. A considerable body of IKS scholarship exists in Hindi, Sanskrit, Tamil, and other regional languages that this review could not access systematically. The quality of studies in the reviewed corpus is also uneven, with some publications showing limited methodological transparency and small sample sizes. Finally, NEP 2020 and the UGC guidelines of 2023 were still in early implementation phases during the period covered by this review, and many impact claims remain prospective rather than empirically demonstrated. Future research should prioritise multilingual reviews, longitudinal studies, and systematic assessments that include under-resourced and geographically peripheral institutions.

## 9. Recommendations

### 9.1 Adopt a Tiered Integration Model

The current flat five per cent credit requirement is pedagogically blunt. A more effective approach would distinguish between a mandatory foundational course for all students, elective advanced courses for those with a deeper interest, and research-level specialisation tracks at the graduate level. This allows universal exposure without forcing uniform depth and creates pathways for the serious scholars whose peer-reviewed work will eventually establish IKS's credibility in international discourse.

### 9.2 Establish Evidence-Based Inclusion Protocols

Cross-disciplinary review panels, including both IKS specialists and disciplinary scientists, should evaluate IKS content proposals against explicit epistemic standards. Research centres under NEP 2020 should produce peer-reviewed output before their findings enter the curriculum. This protects



academic credibility while providing a transparent pathway for validated traditional knowledge to reach students.

### **9.3 Ensure Genuinely Inclusive Representation**

Any national IKS curriculum must include the knowledge traditions of tribal communities, the Dalit intellectual heritage of the Bhakti and reform movements, and the contributions of Islamic, Buddhist, and Jain scholarly traditions. The Ministry of Tribal Affairs, tribal universities, and community knowledge holders should be formal partners in curriculum development, not consultants brought in after decisions are already made.

### **9.4 Build a Five-Year Faculty Development Pipeline**

Dedicated IKS fellowships funded by UGC and DST for doctoral and postdoctoral researchers, a national network of faculty development centres, and partnerships with existing traditional knowledge institutions are the minimum requirements. This pipeline will take five to ten years to produce results that matter, and the policy framework should reflect that honest timeline.

### **9.5 Develop International Partnerships**

Institutions in South Africa, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and Hawaii have developed indigenous knowledge recovery methodologies that are comparable in character to India's IKS initiative. These partnerships offer access to tested approaches, a global comparative framework, and citation networks that can connect Indian IKS scholarship to internationally indexed journals and therefore to genuine academic recognition.

### **9.6 Build Safeguards Against Politicisation**

Transparent selection processes, review panels that include scholars from minority religious and linguistic communities, clear guidelines distinguishing academic study from religious instruction, and accessible grievance mechanisms for students and faculty are all necessary structural protections. Without them, the risk of IKS integration becoming a vehicle for cultural assertion rather than scholarly inquiry is real and entirely predictable.

**Table 5: Recommendations and Implementing Agencies**

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Lead Agency</b>	<b>Expected Outcome</b>
<b>Tiered Integration Model</b>	UGC, Universities	Universal exposure; graduate research pathways
<b>Evidence-Based Inclusion Protocols</b>	UGC, DST, Research Centres	Academic credibility: a pathway for validated IKS knowledge
<b>Genuinely Inclusive Representation</b>	UGC, Tribal Affairs Ministry	Full diversity represented; monopolization prevented
<b>Five-Year Faculty Pipeline</b>	UGC, DST, Universities	Sustained expertise; IKS taught with real rigour
<b>International Partnerships</b>	ICCR, Universities, MEA	Global recognition; stronger citation networks
<b>Anti-Politicization Safeguards</b>	Academic bodies, Faculty associations	Academic integrity protected; minority voices included

*Source: Authors' recommendations based on systematic review.*

## 10. Conclusion

The integration of Indian Knowledge Systems into higher education is not a matter of adding course titles or meeting a credit percentage requirement. It is a project of intellectual, institutional, and political complexity that forces real questions about what counts as valid knowledge, who decides that, and what genuine intellectual independence means for a nation still working through the long consequences of its colonial past.

The opportunities are real. India's classical traditions, when taught with rigour and honesty about what has been validated and what remains speculative, can genuinely enrich higher education. The gains are not merely symbolic. They are intellectual, economic, and developmental in ways that matter for students, institutions, and the nation's long-term capacity to produce knowledge that counts in global discourse.



The challenges are equally real and must be engaged directly. Faculty unpreparedness, structural under-resourcing, the persistent risk of political misuse, the validation deficit for many traditional claims, infrastructural inequalities, and the global recognition problem are not minor implementation difficulties. They are fundamental tensions that will determine whether IKS integration produces genuine transformation or attaches fashionable vocabulary to unchanged institutions.

What the present moment demands is rigorous curricular redesign, sustained investment in faculty development, structural safeguards against cultural monopolisation, and the patient building of scholarly work that can hold its own in international academic discourse. India's aspiration to contribute meaningfully to global knowledge will be advanced only by the quality, rigour, and intellectual honesty of what it produces in genuine dialogue with its own traditions; whether the institutional courage and sustained investment needed to realise that aspiration will actually be forthcoming remains the defining question that this generation of Indian academics and policymakers must answer.

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