INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES AND INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES
(Peer-reviewed, Refereed, Indexed & Open Access Journal)
DOI : 03.2021-11278686 ISSN : 2582-8568 IMPACT FACTOR : 8.428 (SJIF 2026)

Indian Knowledge Tradition in NEP 2020

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DOI No. 03.2021-11278686 **DOI Link ::** https://doi-ds.org/doilink/11.2026-21671586/IRJHIS2611011

Abstract:

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 represents a significant transformation in the Indian education system, emphasizing holistic development, multidisciplinary learning, Indian languages, cultural rootedness, critical thinking, creativity, ethics, and lifelong learning. One of the important dimensions of the policy is the recognition and integration of the Indian Knowledge Tradition (IKT) into contemporary education. Indian Knowledge Tradition encompasses a wide range of intellectual, scientific, philosophical, artistic, linguistic, medical, ecological, technological, and social knowledge systems that have evolved in the Indian subcontinent over centuries. It includes the knowledge contained in the Vedas, Upanishads, Buddhist and Jain traditions, Indian philosophical schools, Ayurveda, Yoga, mathematics, astronomy, linguistics, literature, architecture, arts, agriculture, environmental practices, and diverse forms of indigenous and community knowledge. The present research paper examines the conceptual relationship between NEP 2020 and Indian Knowledge Tradition and analyses its significance for contemporary education. The study is descriptive and analytical in nature and is based primarily on secondary sources, including policy documents, books, academic literature, institutional reports, and scholarly studies. The paper explores the possibilities of integrating Indian knowledge into curriculum development, teaching-learning processes, teacher education, higher education, research, innovation, and community engagement. It argues that the meaningful integration of Indian Knowledge Tradition should not be limited to the celebration of cultural heritage but should promote critical inquiry, evidence-based understanding, interdisciplinary learning, ethical development, and contextual knowledge. The paper further identifies challenges such as inadequate teacher preparation, limited learning resources, lack of systematic documentation, linguistic barriers, and the possibility of uncritical presentation of traditional claims. Suggestions are provided for curriculum development, teacher training, digital documentation, interdisciplinary research, and community participation. The paper concludes that NEP 2020 provides a valuable policy framework for reconnecting Indian education with its intellectual and cultural heritage while maintaining scientific temper, inclusivity, academic rigor, and global relevance.

Keywords: *Indian Knowledge Tradition, NEP 2020, Indian Education, Multidisciplinary Education, Indian Languages, Holistic Learning*

1. Introduction:

Education is one of the most important instruments through which a society preserves its knowledge, develops human capabilities, transmits values, and prepares individuals to respond to changing social and economic conditions. In India, education has historically been associated with the holistic development of the individual rather than merely the acquisition of occupational skills. The Indian educational tradition developed through diverse institutions, intellectual schools, teachers, learners, communities, and knowledge practices. Ancient centres such as Takshashila, Nalanda, Vikramashila, and Valabhi became significant centres of learning and intellectual exchange. The Indian educational heritage included philosophical inquiry, language studies, mathematics, astronomy, medicine, arts, ethics, logic, political thought, agriculture, environmental knowledge, and spiritual traditions. This broad intellectual heritage constitutes an important part of what may be understood as the Indian Knowledge Tradition.

The Indian Knowledge Tradition is not a single, homogeneous system of knowledge. It represents a plural and evolving collection of knowledge systems developed by different communities and intellectual traditions. The Vedic and Upanishadic traditions contributed philosophical and educational ideas, while Buddhist and Jain traditions developed distinctive approaches to learning, ethics, reasoning, and monastic education. The Nyaya tradition made important contributions to logic and epistemology, while Paninian grammar represents a highly sophisticated linguistic tradition. Indian mathematicians such as Aryabhata and Brahmagupta contributed significantly to mathematics and astronomy. Ayurveda developed systematic approaches to health and medicine, while Yoga provided a philosophical and practical framework concerned with physical, mental, and ethical development. Alongside these classical traditions, Indian communities developed rich forms of local and indigenous knowledge relating to agriculture, water management, biodiversity, handicrafts, architecture, food practices, and environmental conservation.

The colonial transformation of education significantly changed the structure, language, objectives, and institutional organization of education in India. Western models of education became increasingly influential, while several indigenous knowledge traditions received comparatively less attention within formal educational institutions. After independence, Indian education policy attempted to balance modernization, scientific development, democratic citizenship, social justice, and national development. Nevertheless, the question of how Indian intellectual traditions could be meaningfully connected with modern education remained important.

The National Education Policy 2020 marks a significant development in this context. The policy seeks to transform education by emphasizing holistic development, multidisciplinary learning, critical thinking, creativity, experiential learning, vocational education, Indian languages, ethics, constitutional values, and cultural awareness. It recognizes the importance of India's rich cultural and

intellectual heritage and encourages students to become familiar with Indian traditions, knowledge systems, languages, arts, and cultural practices. The policy therefore creates an important framework for bringing Indian Knowledge Tradition into contemporary education.

The significance of Indian Knowledge Tradition under NEP 2020 should not, however, be understood merely in terms of cultural revival. Its educational relevance lies in the possibility of connecting traditional knowledge with contemporary questions and modern disciplines. For example, the history of Indian mathematics can be integrated with mathematics education and the history of science. Traditional water-management systems can be studied through environmental science, geography, engineering, and local history. Indian philosophical traditions can contribute to discussions of ethics, logic, consciousness, and human values. Similarly, Indian languages and literature can enrich linguistic and cultural studies.

The integration of Indian Knowledge Tradition also supports the policy's emphasis on multidisciplinary and experiential learning. Students can investigate local knowledge practices through fieldwork, interviews, documentation, project work, and community engagement. Such activities can strengthen research skills, communication, observation, critical thinking, and social responsibility. In teacher education, Indian educational philosophies and traditional pedagogical practices can be studied critically and compared with contemporary theories of learning.

At the same time, the integration of traditional knowledge requires academic caution. Every traditional claim cannot automatically be treated as scientifically established knowledge. Historical, philosophical, cultural, and scientific claims should be examined through appropriate sources, evidence, context, and disciplinary methods. An academically responsible approach should distinguish between cultural belief, historical knowledge, philosophical insight, traditional practice, and scientifically validated evidence. Such an approach can ensure that Indian Knowledge Tradition becomes a meaningful component of modern education rather than an uncritical reproduction of the past.

The digital age provides new opportunities for preserving and disseminating Indian knowledge. Digitization of manuscripts, oral histories, traditional art forms, local ecological practices, and regional literature can make these resources accessible to students and researchers. Artificial intelligence, language technologies, digital archives, and multilingual educational platforms can further support translation, preservation, indexing, and dissemination.

Therefore, the present paper examines the place and educational significance of Indian Knowledge Tradition within NEP 2020. It focuses on curriculum, teaching-learning processes, teacher education, higher education, research, innovation, Indian languages, local knowledge, and future implementation. The paper also identifies challenges and provides suggestions for ensuring that Indian Knowledge Tradition contributes to an inclusive, evidence-based, multidisciplinary, and globally

relevant education system.

2. Review of Literature:

The literature concerning Indian education and Indian Knowledge Tradition demonstrates that India's intellectual heritage is extensive, diverse, and multidisciplinary. Historical studies of Indian education indicate that learning was traditionally connected with philosophical inquiry, moral development, social responsibilities, practical knowledge, and the pursuit of understanding. Ancient educational institutions and centres of learning supported the study of diverse subjects and encouraged intellectual debate. The teacher-student relationship was an important component of several educational traditions, although its form and accessibility varied across historical periods and communities.

Studies of Indian philosophy provide significant insights into the intellectual foundations of Indian approaches to knowledge. The Upanishadic tradition emphasizes inquiry and dialogue concerning fundamental questions of existence and knowledge. Buddhist and Jain traditions developed distinctive approaches to ethics, reasoning, and learning. Nyaya philosophy contributed to systematic discussions of logic, inference, perception, and valid knowledge. These traditions indicate that questioning, reasoning, dialogue, and reflection have long been important components of Indian intellectual life.

The literature on Indian mathematics and astronomy highlights contributions associated with scholars such as Aryabhata, Brahmagupta, Bhaskara, and others. Research on the development of the decimal place-value system, mathematical procedures, astronomical calculations, and related knowledge has demonstrated the historical significance of Indian contributions. However, scholarly literature also emphasizes the importance of examining such contributions within their historical context and distinguishing historically documented achievements from later interpretations or exaggerated claims.

Research on Ayurveda and Yoga represents another major area of Indian knowledge. Ayurveda developed a systematic traditional approach to health, while Yoga contains philosophical, ethical, and practical dimensions. Contemporary scholarship has examined these traditions from historical, philosophical, cultural, and scientific perspectives. Their inclusion in education can provide opportunities for interdisciplinary learning, provided that traditional claims and modern scientific evidence are appropriately distinguished.

The National Education Policy 2020 has generated extensive academic and policy discussion concerning holistic education, multidisciplinary learning, Indian languages, vocational education, cultural knowledge, teacher education, and the internationalization of Indian education. The policy emphasizes the importance of connecting education with India's rich cultural heritage while simultaneously promoting scientific temper, innovation, critical thinking, and global competencies.

Recent institutional initiatives related to Indian Knowledge Systems have further strengthened the academic discussion. Higher education institutions have increasingly explored courses, workshops, research programmes, and digital resources related to Indian knowledge. These initiatives indicate a growing institutional recognition that Indian knowledge can contribute to contemporary education and research.

The literature also highlights several challenges. These include the limited availability of high-quality teaching materials, shortage of trained teachers, inadequate documentation of local knowledge, linguistic barriers, fragmented research, and the risk of presenting traditional knowledge without sufficient historical or scientific examination. Consequently, scholars increasingly argue for an interdisciplinary and evidence-based approach.

Overall, the reviewed literature suggests that Indian Knowledge Tradition can make an important contribution to NEP 2020, particularly in the areas of holistic education, values, multidisciplinary learning, Indian languages, local knowledge, research, and cultural understanding. However, meaningful integration requires systematic curriculum development, teacher preparation, scholarly research, documentation, and critical evaluation.

3. Research Methodology:

The present study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design. The purpose of the study is to examine the conceptual and educational relationship between Indian Knowledge Tradition and the National Education Policy 2020. Since the study primarily focuses on policy provisions, conceptual perspectives, historical knowledge, educational implications, and implementation possibilities, secondary sources have been used as the principal basis of analysis. The methodology is designed to provide a systematic understanding of the subject rather than to measure the views of a particular population through primary survey data.

The major sources consulted for the study include the National Education Policy 2020, government publications, University Grants Commission documents, National Council of Educational Research and Training publications, books on Indian philosophy and education, scholarly works on Indian mathematics and astronomy, research literature on Indian educational traditions, and relevant institutional reports. Preference has been given to authoritative policy and academic sources while interpreting historical and educational claims.

Document analysis has been employed as the major methodological technique. The selected documents were examined to identify references to Indian knowledge, cultural heritage, Indian languages, multidisciplinary education, values, experiential learning, teacher education, higher education, research, and innovation. The information obtained from these documents was organized thematically so that the relationship between policy objectives and Indian Knowledge Tradition could be examined systematically.

For analytical purposes, the study was organized into four major dimensions. The first dimension is curriculum and knowledge, which examines how Indian philosophy, mathematics, science, medicine, literature, art, culture, and local knowledge can be incorporated into educational programmes. The second dimension is teaching-learning, which focuses on dialogue, experiential learning, project-based learning, fieldwork, debate, observation, and community-based learning. The third dimension concerns teachers and institutions, particularly teacher preparation, institutional capacity, academic resources, and professional development. The fourth dimension concerns research and innovation, including documentation, digitization, interdisciplinary research, validation, and contemporary applications of traditional knowledge.

A critical approach has been adopted throughout the study. Traditional knowledge has not been considered scientifically valid merely because it is ancient or culturally respected. Historical claims are considered in relation to available evidence, while scientific claims require appropriate scientific validation. This distinction is important for maintaining academic integrity. The study therefore attempts to establish a balanced relationship between respect for India's intellectual heritage and the principles of evidence-based inquiry.

The analysis also considers the inclusive nature of Indian Knowledge Tradition. India contains multiple linguistic, religious, regional, philosophical, tribal, folk, and community-based traditions. Therefore, the study does not restrict Indian knowledge to any single textual or cultural tradition. Local and community knowledge, women's contributions, indigenous practices, regional literature, arts, crafts, agriculture, and environmental knowledge are also considered relevant.

The study has certain limitations. It is based primarily on secondary sources and does not include empirical data collected directly from teachers, students, institutions, or knowledge practitioners. Therefore, its findings should be understood as conceptual and analytical rather than statistically generalizable. Future empirical research can extend this study through surveys, interviews, case studies, classroom observations, curriculum analysis, and comparative institutional research.

Despite these limitations, the methodology provides a suitable framework for understanding the relationship between NEP 2020 and Indian Knowledge Tradition. It enables the researcher to identify policy opportunities, educational applications, implementation challenges, and future directions. The analytical approach also ensures that cultural heritage is examined within the broader objectives of contemporary education, including scientific temper, critical thinking, inclusion, innovation, and global competence.

4. Explanation and Analysis:

The integration of Indian Knowledge Tradition into NEP 2020 can first be understood through the policy's emphasis on holistic education. Holistic education aims to develop intellectual, emotional, social, physical, ethical, and creative dimensions of the learner. Several Indian educational and

philosophical traditions have similarly emphasized the development of the whole person. Concepts related to self-discipline, reflection, ethical conduct, social responsibility, and harmony with nature can provide meaningful contexts for contemporary education.

The second major area is multidisciplinary education. Indian intellectual traditions frequently involved interaction between different forms of knowledge. Mathematics was connected with astronomy, language with philosophy, medicine with natural observations, and art with architecture and cultural practices. NEP 2020 encourages students to move beyond rigid disciplinary boundaries. Indian Knowledge Tradition can therefore provide contextual examples for implementing multidisciplinary education.

For instance, Indian mathematics can be taught through a combination of mathematics, history, and philosophy of science. Students can investigate the development of numerical systems, mathematical algorithms, astronomical calculations, and historical texts. Such learning can help students understand that scientific knowledge develops through interactions among different civilizations and historical contexts.

Indian environmental knowledge is another important area. Traditional communities developed diverse systems for water conservation, agriculture, biodiversity management, forest use, and local climate adaptation. These practices can be studied through environmental science, geography, sociology, economics, and engineering. A student project on a traditional pond or irrigation system, for example, can examine its history, construction, ecological significance, present condition, and possibilities for conservation.

Indian languages constitute another important component. Language carries cultural memory, intellectual traditions, literature, and local knowledge. NEP 2020 places significant emphasis on Indian languages and multilingual education. Access to knowledge through Indian languages can improve cultural understanding and educational participation. Digital translation, multilingual repositories, e-books, dictionaries, audio resources, and online lectures can make Indian knowledge more accessible to learners.

Teaching-learning processes can also benefit from selected elements of Indian pedagogical traditions. Dialogue, questioning, discussion, debate, memorization, observation, practice, and reflection were important components of different historical learning traditions. Modern pedagogy also values active learning, inquiry-based learning, discussion, project work, and experiential learning. Rather than reproducing historical teaching practices mechanically, their educational principles can be reinterpreted in contemporary classrooms.

Value education represents another important area of convergence. Indian philosophical traditions contain discussions concerning truth, non-violence, compassion, self-control, duty, service, justice, coexistence, and responsibility. These values can contribute to contemporary education when

connected with real-life experiences. Community service, environmental projects, reflective writing, collaborative activities, and ethical case studies can help students understand values in practice.

Indian arts and cultural traditions can also contribute to holistic education. Classical music, dance, theatre, painting, sculpture, architecture, folk arts, crafts, storytelling, and regional cultural practices can be incorporated into educational activities. Such integration can enhance creativity, cultural appreciation, aesthetic sensitivity, and communication skills. It can also help preserve cultural practices that may otherwise decline due to rapid social transformation.

Teacher education is a particularly important component of implementation. Teachers need adequate knowledge and pedagogical skills to present Indian Knowledge Tradition accurately and critically. B.Ed. and other teacher education programmes can include modules on Indian educational thought, philosophy, language, mathematics, science, arts, environmental knowledge, and local traditions. Teacher trainees can undertake field-based projects involving local history, community knowledge, traditional crafts, and educational heritage.

Higher education institutions can establish interdisciplinary research centres focusing on Indian Knowledge Tradition. Historians, philosophers, educationists, scientists, linguists, social scientists, technologists, and practitioners can work together to examine traditional knowledge from multiple perspectives. Such research can include manuscript studies, digital humanities, scientific testing of traditional practices, translation, documentation, and contemporary applications.

Digital technology offers substantial opportunities. A digital Indian Knowledge repository can contain manuscripts, oral histories, photographs, recordings, maps, traditional designs, regional literature, and research publications. Artificial intelligence can assist in translation, indexing, classification, and search. However, digital systems should be supported by expert verification because inaccurate or decontextualized information can easily spread through digital platforms.

Indian Knowledge Tradition can also contribute to innovation and entrepreneurship. Traditional handicrafts, textiles, food practices, architecture, cultural tourism, ecological knowledge, and regional arts can be connected with modern design, technology, management, and marketing. Educational institutions can encourage students to develop sustainable enterprises based on local knowledge while respecting community ownership and intellectual property.

The integration of Indian Knowledge Tradition should also strengthen research skills. Students should not merely memorize facts about ancient scholars or traditions. They should investigate primary and secondary sources, compare interpretations, examine evidence, identify limitations, and formulate research questions. Such an approach will transform Indian Knowledge Tradition from a content area into an opportunity for developing critical inquiry.

Inclusivity is another essential consideration. Indian Knowledge Tradition includes diverse regional, linguistic, social, tribal, folk, and classical traditions. A balanced educational approach should

represent this diversity rather than presenting one tradition as the complete representation of Indian knowledge. Contributions from women, indigenous communities, regional intellectual traditions, artisans, farmers, and local knowledge holders should also receive appropriate attention.

The overall analysis indicates that NEP 2020 provides a favourable policy environment for integrating Indian Knowledge Tradition into contemporary education. Its relevance extends beyond cultural preservation to curriculum innovation, teacher education, multidisciplinary learning, research, sustainability, values, language development, and entrepreneurship. The most productive approach is therefore one that combines cultural rootedness with critical thinking, scientific temper, inclusivity, and global engagement.

5. Suggestions:

The first and most important suggestion is the development of structured, age-appropriate, and academically rigorous curriculum materials on Indian Knowledge Tradition. At the school level, students can be introduced to local history, Indian scientific contributions, literature, arts, environmental practices, languages, and cultural traditions through activities and projects. At the higher education level, interdisciplinary elective and foundation courses can be developed. Curriculum should emphasize understanding, inquiry, application, and analysis rather than simple memorization.

The second suggestion is to strengthen teacher education and professional development. Teachers should receive training in the historical background, major themes, sources, and pedagogical possibilities of Indian Knowledge Tradition. Workshops, certificate programmes, online courses, seminars, and faculty development programmes can be organized for teachers. B.Ed. programmes should include appropriate modules so that future teachers can confidently integrate Indian knowledge into classroom practice.

The third suggestion is the preparation of reliable learning resources. Universities, research institutions, and subject experts should collaborate to prepare textbooks, teacher handbooks, digital modules, translations, sourcebooks, and audiovisual resources. The materials should clearly distinguish historical evidence, philosophical interpretation, traditional practice, and scientifically validated knowledge.

The fourth suggestion is to promote local and community-based knowledge. Educational institutions can document local agricultural practices, water-management systems, folk arts, traditional crafts, oral histories, medicinal knowledge, architecture, food traditions, and ecological practices. Students can undertake field projects involving interviews, observation, documentation, and analysis. Community members should be acknowledged as knowledge holders and their consent and intellectual rights should be respected.

The fifth suggestion is to use digital technology for preservation and dissemination. Digital archives can preserve manuscripts, photographs, oral histories, music, folk traditions, local languages,

and traditional practices. Multilingual digital resources can make Indian Knowledge Tradition accessible to students across different regions. Artificial intelligence may assist with translation and information retrieval, but expert verification should remain an essential part of the process.

The sixth suggestion is to promote interdisciplinary research. Indian Knowledge Tradition should not be restricted to departments of history, Sanskrit, philosophy, or cultural studies. Departments of science, technology, medicine, education, management, environmental studies, social sciences, and humanities can collaborate on research projects. Contemporary problems such as climate change, water management, sustainable agriculture, biodiversity, language preservation, and community development can be examined through the combined use of traditional and modern knowledge.

The seventh suggestion concerns assessment. Learning about Indian Knowledge Tradition should be assessed through projects, presentations, portfolios, field studies, reflective writing, discussions, and research assignments. Such assessment methods can evaluate students' understanding, analytical skills, creativity, communication, and ability to apply knowledge.

The eighth suggestion is to ensure inclusivity and critical scholarship. Indian Knowledge Tradition should be presented as a diverse and evolving collection of traditions. Curriculum developers should avoid exaggerated claims and should encourage students to ask questions about evidence, historical context, social conditions, and contemporary relevance. This approach will help create academically responsible learners who appreciate India's heritage without abandoning scientific inquiry.

6. Future Implementation:

The future implementation of Indian Knowledge Tradition under NEP 2020 requires coordinated action at national, state, institutional, and classroom levels. National agencies can develop broad academic frameworks and quality standards, while states and educational institutions can adapt them to regional languages, histories, cultural traditions, and local needs. Implementation should be gradual, evidence-based, and supported by adequate academic and financial resources.

A major future initiative could be the creation of comprehensive multilingual digital repositories of Indian knowledge. Such repositories can include manuscripts, translations, scholarly publications, oral traditions, folk knowledge, photographs, maps, educational videos, and regional literature. Each resource should contain information regarding its source, historical context, language, authorship or community, and verification status. This would increase the reliability and accessibility of Indian knowledge resources.

Teacher education should become a central component of future implementation. Universities and teacher education institutions can develop specialized professional development programmes for educators. Teacher trainees can undertake action research and field projects on local educational

heritage, community knowledge, traditional learning practices, and regional cultural resources. Such activities can connect teacher education with real educational and community contexts.

Future implementation should also establish stronger connections between schools and universities. Universities can provide academic expertise and learning resources to schools, while schools can contribute local knowledge and field-based information. Collaborative projects can create a continuous relationship between research, teacher education, curriculum development, and school education.

Research quality must remain central to future development. Traditional knowledge claims should be studied using appropriate historical, philosophical, social scientific, or scientific methods depending on the nature of the claim. The objective should not be to prove that everything traditional is correct, nor to dismiss traditional knowledge simply because it is old. Instead, researchers should identify what can be historically documented, philosophically interpreted, scientifically tested, socially understood, or practically applied.

Innovation and entrepreneurship can provide another future direction. Educational institutions can establish innovation centres that connect traditional crafts, local materials, indigenous practices, cultural tourism, sustainable agriculture, Indian languages, and traditional design with modern technology and entrepreneurship. Students can develop innovative solutions while ensuring that local communities benefit from the commercialization of their knowledge.

Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms should also be developed. Institutions can assess the number of courses offered, teachers trained, research projects undertaken, digital resources developed, student projects completed, community collaborations established, and publications produced. More importantly, the learning outcomes of students should be evaluated to determine whether exposure to Indian Knowledge Tradition improves critical thinking, cultural awareness, research skills, ethical reasoning, creativity, and problem-solving.

Future implementation should also promote international academic engagement. Indian universities can collaborate with international institutions to conduct comparative studies of knowledge traditions, history of science, indigenous knowledge, language, philosophy, education, and sustainability. Such collaboration can help position Indian Knowledge Tradition within global scholarship rather than treating it as an isolated national subject.

Ultimately, the future objective should not be to create a separate educational system based exclusively on traditional knowledge. Rather, the objective should be to create a dynamic educational framework in which Indian knowledge interacts constructively with contemporary science, technology, humanities, social sciences, and global scholarship. Such an approach would fulfil the broader vision of NEP 2020 by creating an education system that is rooted in Indian culture, open to global knowledge, scientifically responsible, inclusive, innovative, and oriented towards the holistic

development of learners.

7. Conclusion:

The National Education Policy 2020 provides an important framework for reconnecting contemporary Indian education with the country's rich intellectual and cultural heritage. Indian Knowledge Tradition offers valuable resources for holistic education, multidisciplinary learning, value development, Indian language promotion, local knowledge, research, environmental awareness, creativity, and innovation. Its integration can help learners understand India's intellectual contributions while developing a deeper connection with their social and cultural contexts. However, successful implementation requires more than simply adding traditional topics to the curriculum. It requires academically rigorous resources, trained teachers, interdisciplinary research, digital preservation, community participation, and evidence-based interpretation. Indian Knowledge Tradition should therefore be approached neither as unquestionable knowledge nor merely as historical heritage, but as a diverse body of intellectual and practical traditions that can be critically examined and meaningfully connected with contemporary educational needs. In this manner, NEP 2020 can facilitate an education system that is culturally rooted, scientifically responsible, globally relevant, and committed to holistic human development.

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