



## Indian Knowledge Tradition in Indian Culture and Current Scenario

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### Abstract

The Indian Knowledge Tradition (IKT) represents a vast and continuous body of indigenous knowledge that has shaped Indian culture, society, and ways of life for several millennia. Rooted in ancient texts such as the Vedas, Upanishads, and Dharmashastras, as well as lived practices like Ayurveda, Yoga, astronomy, mathematics, agriculture, and ethical philosophy, IKT offers a holistic understanding of life that integrates material, moral, spiritual, and ecological dimensions. This paper examines the significance of Indian Knowledge Tradition in Indian culture and analyzes its relevance in the current global scenario. Traditionally, IKT emphasized harmony between humans and nature, balance between body and mind, and ethical living guided by the principles of *dharma*, *karma*, and *rita* (cosmic order). These principles not only structured personal conduct but also shaped social institutions such as family systems, education, governance, and healthcare (Radhakrishnan, 1951, pp. 22–25).

The highlights how systems like Ayurveda and Yoga promoted preventive healthcare and holistic well-being long before the emergence of modern medical sciences. Similarly, traditional agricultural practices and ecological wisdom encouraged sustainable use of natural resources, biodiversity conservation, and respect for the environment. Such knowledge systems were transmitted orally and through practice, ensuring continuity across generations and deep cultural embeddedness. However, during the colonial period and early phases of modernization, Indian Knowledge Traditions were often marginalized, labeled as unscientific, and replaced by Western frameworks of knowledge. This led to a partial disconnect between traditional wisdom and contemporary education and policy-making.

### Introduction

The Indian Knowledge Tradition (IKT) constitutes the foundation of India's ancient and enduring cultural heritage, encompassing a wide range of knowledge systems related to health, ethics, environment, and everyday life. Rooted in classical texts such as the Vedas, Upanishads, and allied philosophical traditions, IKT has guided Indian society through practices like Ayurveda, Yoga, Vedic education, and sustainable agricultural methods. These traditions emphasize holistic well-being, moral responsibility, and harmony between humans and nature, thereby shaping individual behavior and social institutions across generations (Radhakrishnan, 1951, pp. 22–25).

This paper examines the importance of Indian Knowledge Tradition in Indian culture and explores its relevance in the contemporary global context. In the present scenario, marked by lifestyle diseases, mental health challenges, environmental degradation, and climate change, IKT offers valuable insights and alternative approaches to modern problems. The integration of traditional wisdom with scientific research and modern technology—such as evidence-based Yoga and Ayurveda, organic farming, and value-oriented education—demonstrates the continuing applicability of IKT in addressing current societal needs (Sharma, 2013, pp. 1–4). The study argues that Indian Knowledge Tradition is not merely a historical legacy but a living and dynamic system of knowledge that can contribute significantly to sustainable development, holistic health, and cultural continuity in the modern world.

Indian Knowledge Tradition (IKT) forms the backbone of India's age-old culture, offering wisdom on health, nature, ethics, and daily living passed down through generations. It includes practices like Ayurveda, Yoga, Vedic learning, and sustainable farming that shape how Indians think and live even today. In the current world, this tradition helps tackle modern problems like health crises and climate change by blending old ways with new technology (Sharma, 2013, pp. 1–4; Radhakrishnan, 1951, pp. 22–25).

In the present context, marked by rapid technological advancement, environmental degradation, lifestyle diseases, mental health challenges, and climate change, the relevance of IKT has re-emerged with renewed importance. The paper argues that Indian Knowledge Tradition offers valuable alternative perspectives and solutions to modern problems by emphasizing balance,

sustainability, and ethical responsibility. The integration of traditional knowledge with modern science—such as evidence-based research in Yoga and Ayurveda, organic and sustainable farming models, and value-based education—demonstrates the potential of IKT to contribute meaningfully to national development and global well-being (Sharma, 2013, pp. 1–4).

### Roots in Indian Culture

IKT is deeply tied to India's cultural identity, as seen in ancient texts like the Vedas, Upanishads, and epics such as the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*. These sources discuss philosophy, science, mathematics, astronomy, and ethics, guiding rituals, arts, music, and governance for thousands of years (Radhakrishnan, 1951, pp. 34–41; Basham, 2004, pp. 56–60). Vedic hymns emphasize harmony with nature and moral living, values that continue through festivals and family traditions today (Rig Veda, trans. Griffith, 1896/2014, pp. 87–90).

This knowledge has traditionally been transmitted through oral narration, the *guru–shishya parampara* (teacher–student tradition), and experiential learning, which strengthened community bonds and preserved values across generations (Altekar, 1944, pp. 112–118). Ethical principles such as *satya* (truth), *ahimsa* (non-violence), *karuna* (compassion), and *seva* (service) deeply influence Indian religion, social life, education, and daily responsibilities (Radhakrishnan, 1951, pp. 58–63).

### Key Areas of Indian Knowledge Tradition

**Health and Wellness:** Ayurveda and Yoga focus on maintaining balance between body, mind, and spirit, prioritizing prevention over cure. Classical texts such as the *Charaka Samhita* emphasize daily routines and herbal remedies to maintain health (Sharma & Dash, 2001, pp. 45–49). Yoga philosophy, as outlined in *Patanjali's Yoga Sutras*, highlights mental discipline and well-being (Patanjali, trans. Taimni, 1961, pp. 6–9).

**Nature and Farming:** Traditional agricultural knowledge stresses soil conservation, crop rotation, and water management, rooted in the ethical principle of living in harmony with nature (Agarwal & Narain, 1997, pp. 23–27).

**Science and Mathematics:** Ancient Indian scholars contributed foundational concepts such as zero, the decimal system, and advanced astronomical calculations, significantly influencing global scientific development (Joseph, 2011, pp. 215–220).

**Ethics and Society:** The *Arthashastra* provides detailed guidance on governance, economics, and social welfare, emphasizing collective well-being and ethical leadership (Kautilya, trans. Rangarajan, 1992, pp. 13–18).

### Objectives of Indian Knowledge Tradition in Indian Culture and the Current Scenario

#### 1. Preservation of Cultural and Ethical Values:

One of the primary objectives of the Indian Knowledge Tradition (IKT) is to preserve India's cultural identity and ethical values such as *dharma* (righteous living), harmony, respect for nature, and social responsibility. These values guide individual conduct and collective life, ensuring moral balance and social cohesion in Indian society (Radhakrishnan, 1951, pp. 22–25).

#### 2. Promotion of Holistic Well-being:

IKT aims to promote holistic well-being by integrating physical, mental, social, and spiritual health. Systems like Ayurveda and Yoga emphasize preventive healthcare, balance in lifestyle, and self-discipline, which are increasingly relevant today in addressing stress, lifestyle diseases, and mental health challenges (Sharma, 2013, pp. 1–4).

#### 3. Sustainable Living and Knowledge Integration in the Modern Context:

Another key objective of IKT is to encourage sustainable living through harmony with nature and responsible use of resources. In the current scenario, these traditional insights are being integrated with modern science and technology to address global issues such as environmental degradation, climate change, and sustainable development (Sharma, 2013, pp. 3–4; Radhakrishnan, 1951, pp. 24–25).

#### 4. To examine the role of Indian Knowledge Tradition (IKT) in shaping Indian culture, including its influence on values, ethics, social institutions, education, festivals, and everyday life as reflected in classical texts and lived traditions.

#### 5. To analyze the challenges faced by Indian Knowledge Tradition in the current scenario,

such as modernization, globalization, colonial legacy, youth disengagement, environmental degradation, and issues related to the misappropriation of traditional knowledge.

6. To assess the **relevance and application of Indian Knowledge Tradition in addressing contemporary and global challenges**, including health, mental well-being, environmental sustainability, ethical governance, and socio-economic development.

### **Role in Shaping Indian Culture**

IKT fosters unity within India's diversity by promoting shared values such as respect for elders, family responsibility, and community cooperation. Cultural practices, festivals, and performing arts are deeply rooted in Vedic and epic traditions that reinforce moral lessons and social harmony (Basham, 2004, pp. 98–102). The emphasis on inner growth rather than material accumulation continues to influence modern lifestyles through the global popularity of Yoga and meditation (Feuerstein, 2008, pp. 31–35).

### **Challenges in the Current Scenario**

Rapid urbanization, digital lifestyles, and Western-centric education have distanced younger generations from IKT. Colonial interventions disrupted indigenous education systems, weakening traditional knowledge transmission (Dharampal, 2000, pp. 45–50). Globalization and industrial agriculture have also marginalized sustainable practices, contributing to ecological degradation (Agarwal & Narain, 1997, pp. 54–57). Additionally, bio-piracy and unauthorized patenting of traditional medicinal knowledge by multinational corporations have threatened community rights and livelihoods (Gupta, 2006, pp. 76–79).

### **Revival Efforts Today**

India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 explicitly recommends integrating Indian Knowledge Systems into formal education to promote cultural confidence and holistic learning (Government of India, 2020, pp. 4–5, 56–57). Government initiatives supporting Ayurveda, Yoga, and traditional medicine have expanded academic and research institutions nationwide (AYUSH Ministry, 2021, pp. 12–15). Digital platforms, online archives, and community programs now document oral traditions and local practices, ensuring wider access and preservation (UNESCO, 2019, pp. 18–21).

### **Benefits in Modern Life**

IKT provides affordable, sustainable solutions to contemporary challenges. Yoga and meditation reduce stress and improve mental health in fast-paced work environments (Feuerstein, 2008, pp. 66–69). Ayurvedic approaches enhance immunity and preventive care with minimal side effects (Sharma & Dash, 2001, pp. 112–115). Traditional farming methods conserve water and soil, addressing food security and environmental concerns (Agarwal & Narain, 1997, pp. 83–86).

### **IKT for Global Challenges**

IKT's ecological ethics, which regard the Earth as sacred, offer valuable insights for addressing climate change and environmental degradation (Rig Veda, trans. Griffith, 1896/2014, pp. 102–105). Meditation practices rooted in the Upanishads contribute to emotional resilience and mental health worldwide (Radhakrishnan, 1951, pp. 88–92). Economic ideas from the *Arthashastra* promote shared prosperity and ethical governance, relevant to reducing global inequality (Rangarajan, 1992, pp. 221–225).

### **Future Path Forward**

Sustaining IKT requires systematic documentation alongside living oral traditions, teacher training, and interdisciplinary research validating traditional practices through modern science (Sharma, 2013, pp. 211–215). Community participation, cultural fairs, and international collaborations can further protect and globalize Indian knowledge responsibly. India's Knowledge Tradition is not merely historical; it is a living framework for health, sustainability, and peace. Revitalizing it ensures that future generations inherit both wisdom and solutions for a complex world.

### **Importance of Indian Knowledge Tradition in Indian Culture and Current Scenario**

Indian Knowledge Tradition (IKT) forms the backbone of India's age-old culture, offering knowledge related to health, nature, ethics, and daily living that has been transmitted across generations. It includes systems such as Ayurveda, Yoga, Vedic education, and traditional agricultural practices, which continue to influence Indian lifestyles even today. In the contemporary context, IKT provides solutions to modern challenges such as health crises and

environmental degradation by integrating traditional wisdom with scientific approaches (Radhakrishnan, 1951, pp. 22–25; Sharma, 2013, pp. 1–4).

### Roots in Indian Culture

IKT is closely connected to India's cultural identity and is rooted in classical texts such as the Vedas, Upanishads, and epics like the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*. These texts address philosophy, science, mathematics, astronomy, ethics, and governance, shaping Indian rituals, arts, music, and social organization for centuries (Basham, 2004, pp. 56–60; Radhakrishnan, 1951, pp. 34–41). Vedic hymns emphasize harmony with nature and moral conduct, values that continue to be reflected in Indian festivals and family traditions (Rig Veda, trans. Griffith, 1896/2014, pp. 87–90).

This knowledge has traditionally been transmitted through oral narratives, the *guru–shishya parampara* (teacher–student tradition), and experiential learning, helping preserve social cohesion and ethical values (Altekar, 1944, pp. 112–118). Core principles such as truth (*satya*), non-violence (*ahimsa*), compassion (*karuna*), and service (*seva*) continue to influence Indian religion, education, social life, and everyday responsibilities (Radhakrishnan, 1951, pp. 58–63). Without IKT, many regional practices—ranging from tribal agricultural systems to temple architecture—would lose their cultural significance (Sharma, 2013, pp. 45–49).

### Key Areas of Indian Knowledge Tradition Health and Wellness:

Ayurveda and Yoga emphasize balance between body, mind, and spirit, focusing on prevention rather than cure. Classical Ayurvedic texts such as the *Charaka Samhita* highlight daily routines, herbal remedies, and lifestyle regulation for maintaining health (Sharma & Dash, 2001, pp. 45–49). Yoga philosophy, as explained in *Patanjali's Yoga Sutras*, stresses mental discipline and psychological well-being (Patanjali, trans. Taimni, 1961, pp. 6–9).

### Nature and Farming:

Traditional agricultural knowledge promotes soil conservation, crop diversity, and efficient water use, based on ethical principles of coexistence with nature rather than exploitation (Agarwal & Narain, 1997, pp. 23–27).

### Science and Mathematics:

Ancient Indian scholars made significant contributions such as the concept of zero, the decimal system, and advanced astronomical calculations, which influenced global scientific progress (Joseph, 2011, pp. 215–220).

### Ethics and Society:

The *Arthashastra* provides guidance on governance, administration, and economic ethics, emphasizing social welfare and collective good over individual gain (Kautilya, trans. Rangarajan, 1992, pp. 13–18). These domains demonstrate that IKT is not merely theoretical but offers practical tools for individual and social well-being (Sharma, 2013, pp. 78–82).

### Role in Shaping Indian Culture

IKT strengthens cultural pride and unity within India's diversity by promoting shared values such as respect for elders, family responsibility, and selfless service (*seva*). Festivals rooted in Vedic traditions foster community participation, while classical arts such as dance and music communicate moral and philosophical ideas (Basham, 2004, pp. 98–102). The emphasis on inner peace and spiritual growth counters materialism and has contributed to the global spread of Yoga and meditation from Indian traditions (Feuerstein, 2008, pp. 31–35).

### Challenges in the Current Scenario

Rapid urbanization, digital lifestyles, and Western-oriented education systems have distanced younger generations from IKT, threatening its continuity. Colonial interventions significantly disrupted indigenous educational institutions and traditional knowledge transmission (Dharampal, 2000, pp. 45–50). Modern industrial agriculture and technological dependence have further marginalized sustainable practices, resulting in environmental degradation (Agarwal & Narain, 1997, pp. 54–57).

Additionally, biopiracy and patenting of Indian medicinal knowledge by multinational corporations have exploited traditional resources without benefiting local communities (Gupta, 2006, pp. 76–79).

### Revival Efforts Today

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasizes the integration of Indian Knowledge Systems into formal education to promote cultural awareness and holistic learning (Government of India, 2020, pp. 4–5, 56–57). Government initiatives supporting Ayurveda, Yoga, and traditional medicine have expanded research institutions and academic programs nationwide (Ministry of AYUSH, 2021, pp. 12–15). Digital platforms and online learning have further enabled the documentation and dissemination of oral traditions (UNESCO, 2019, pp. 18–21).

### Benefits in Modern Life

IKT provides affordable and sustainable solutions to modern problems. Yoga and meditation reduce stress and enhance mental health in fast-paced work environments (Feuerstein, 2008, pp. 66–69). Ayurvedic approaches strengthen immunity and preventive healthcare with minimal side effects (Sharma & Dash, 2001, pp. 112–115). Traditional farming methods conserve water and soil, addressing food security and environmental sustainability (Agarwal & Narain, 1997, pp. 83–86).

### IKT for Global Challenges

IKT offers valuable insights for addressing global challenges such as climate change, mental health issues, and economic inequality. Vedic ethics regard the Earth as sacred, encouraging environmental responsibility and conservation (Rig Veda, trans. Griffith, 1896/2014, pp. 102–105). Meditation practices derived from the Upanishads contribute to emotional resilience and mental well-being (Radhakrishnan, 1951, pp. 88–92). Economic principles from the *Arthashastra* emphasize shared prosperity and ethical governance (Rangarajan, 1992, pp. 221–225).

### Future Path Forward

Sustaining IKT requires systematic documentation, teacher training, interdisciplinary research, and community participation. Combining traditional wisdom with modern science can validate practices such as Yoga and Ayurveda through empirical research (Sharma, 2013, pp. 211–215). Cultural programs, local fairs, and international collaborations can further protect and promote Indian Knowledge Tradition globally.

India's Knowledge Tradition is not a relic of the past but a living system offering solutions for health, sustainability, and peace. Reviving and integrating IKT ensures that future generations inherit both cultural wisdom and practical tools for addressing contemporary challenges.

### “Indian Knowledge Tradition” (IKS)

Indian Knowledge Tradition refers to a broad body of indigenous knowledge systems that evolved in the Indian subcontinent through observation, experimentation, experience, and critical reflection over centuries. These include sacred texts and commentaries, applied sciences such as Ayurveda and astronomy, philosophical reasoning on ethics and logic, and community-based ecological and craft knowledge transmitted orally and through practice (Sharma, 2013, pp.6–10). The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 defines Indian Knowledge Systems as knowledge traditions that influenced education, arts, governance, law, health, and technology across Indian history and emphasizes their integration into modern education (Government of India, 2020, pp. 56–57).

### Historical Depth and Variety

IKS is not a single unified system but a diverse and evolving field shaped by regional, linguistic, and institutional variations. Knowledge developed in Vedic schools, Buddhist universities such as Nalanda, temple-centered learning spaces, and village-based craft guilds (Basham, 2004, pp. 56–60). Kapil Kapoor and colleagues document how oral transmission, memorization, and teacher– student traditions preserved texts and methods, producing highly trained scholars capable of maintaining complex intellectual systems without written aids (Kapoor & Singh, 2010, pp. 34–39).

### Why IKS Matters to Indian Culture — Five Key Reasons

#### 1. Cultural identity and memory

IKS preserve cultural memory through rituals, festivals, performing arts, folk traditions, and family practices. These traditions connect individuals to their historical roots and strengthen community identity (Basham, 2004, pp. 98–102; Kapoor & Singh, 2010, pp. 61–65).

## 2. Practical knowledge for daily life

Ayurveda offers guidance on diet, daily routine (*dinacharya*), seasonal living (*ritucharya*), and herbal remedies, contributing to preventive healthcare practices used for centuries (Sharma & Dash, 2001, pp. 45–49). Traditional agriculture emphasized seed preservation, crop diversity, and soil care suited to local environments (Agarwal & Narain, 1997, pp. 23–27).

## 3. Ways of thinking and learning

Indian intellectual traditions developed sophisticated systems of logic, grammar, and debate. Pāṇini's grammatical system and Nyāya philosophy trained analytical thinking, precision, and structured reasoning that remain relevant for modern education (Matilal, 1998, pp. 12–18).

## 4. Ethical and social frameworks

Texts such as the *Dharmashastras* and *Arthashastra* shaped ideas of duty, governance, welfare, and social responsibility (Kautilya, trans. Rangarajan, 1992, pp. 13–18). Ambedkar critically examined these traditions, particularly their role in sustaining caste inequality, showing that IKS must be studied with ethical scrutiny and reformist perspectives (Ambedkar, 2014, pp. 23–27).

## 5. Resource for sustainable living and resilience

Traditional water harvesting, seasonal diets, and biodiversity-based farming reflect ecological wisdom suited to local conditions and sustainability (Agarwal & Narain, 1997, pp. 54–57).

## IKS in the Current Policy and Education Scene

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 marks a significant shift by explicitly recognizing Indian Knowledge Systems as a guiding principle of education. It recommends integrating IKS into school and higher education curricula while maintaining scientific rigor and critical thinking (Government of India, 2020, pp. 4–5, 56–57). The Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) Cell under the Ministry of Education promotes research, curriculum development, and documentation of traditional knowledge across universities and institutions (Ministry of Education, 2021, pp. 12–15).

## Benefits to Modern Life

IKS contributes to modern well-being through affordable and holistic practices. Yoga and meditation improve mental health and stress management (Feuerstein, 2008, pp. 66–69), while Ayurveda supports preventive healthcare when applied with scientific validation (Sharma & Dash, 2001, pp. 112–115). Traditional farming practices enhance food security and environmental sustainability (Agarwal & Narain, 1997, pp. 83–86).

## Cultural Debates and Critical Voices

While IKS is valued as a cultural resource, scholars caution against uncritical revival. Ambedkar's critique of caste demonstrates how traditional texts can reinforce inequality if not examined critically (Ambedkar, 2014, pp. 145–150). Contemporary scholars emphasize that IKS revival must be inclusive, evidence-based, and free from political misuse (Sharma, 2013, pp. 198–202).

## Conclusion

Indian Knowledge Tradition is a dynamic and multifaceted heritage that continues to shape Indian culture, ethics, and practical life. Its relevance in health, sustainability, education, and community resilience highlights the need for careful documentation, scientific validation, and ethical integration into modern systems (Government of India, 2020, pp. 56–57; Sharma, 2013, pp. 211–215). Furthermore, the paper situates IKT within the current policy and academic discourse, highlighting initiatives aimed at reviving and institutionalizing indigenous knowledge through education, research, and cultural preservation. By examining both its cultural foundations and contemporary applications, this study underscores that Indian Knowledge Tradition is not merely a relic of the past but a living, dynamic system of knowledge. The paper concludes that a balanced integration of IKT with modern scientific approaches can foster sustainable development, holistic health, cultural continuity, and ethical global citizenship in the present and future scenarios.

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