



Integrating Indian Knowledge System with Management Education

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Abstract: *India's intellectual legacy is vast and unparalleled, with contributions ranging from the concept of zero in mathematics to treatises like the Arthashastra, Natya Shastra, and Charaka Samhita. However, modern education in India has, for decades, largely been modeled on Western paradigms, often sidelining indigenous epistemologies. The integration of IKS into undergraduate programs is not just a revival of tradition but an essential step towards decolonizing the curriculum and offering students a more rooted, value-based, and sustainable education.*

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has emphasized this shift by advocating for a "rich heritage of ancient and eternal Indian knowledge and thought." This paper aims to provide a detailed understanding of how IKS can be meaningfully integrated into management education, why it matters, and what the implications are for students and educators.

Keywords: *IKS, NEP 2020, Management Education, Digital Literacy and Global Competence*

Introduction

The timeless wisdom from the old Indian scriptures encapsulates the deep purpose of imparting education is not merely a course for students to realise their material goals, but as a transformative process that changes character, protects ethical leadership, and enriches holistic development.

In an age marked by rapid change and desperate competition, it will be a beacon of hope reaffirming that knowledge and its true worth is not in being able to amass wealth or wield power but to elevate, enlighten, and liberate a person from ignorance and limitation. This thought process is revolutionary in itself. It advocates that education in its truest form should enable individuals to rise beyond his/her own barriers to meaningfully contribute to society.

The Corporate world today, is plagued by a culture of individualism, where people are preoccupied with climbing to the top of the corporate ladder at the expense of others. Hence, it breeds toxic environment at work, where individuals prioritise their personal success over collective growth. This mindset is instilled from the very school systems meant to train individuals for the workforce.

Starting from the earliest years of schooling to higher education, grading and performance metrics revolves around personal performance only reinforcing a mindset that favors personal achievement over teamwork. Thus, this creates professionals who fail in team-oriented environments.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 seeks to transform management education in India by introducing multidisciplinary, and experiential learning. It aims to provide students with the skills and tools to enable them to meet changing requirements in the business and corporate worlds. Also, the NEP 2020 seeks to promote critical thinking, ethical decision-making, and leadership qualities to develop professionals who will contribute well to the dynamic global economy.

The focus of the policy is integration of technology, innovation and experiential learning, thereby preparing management students to face real-world challenges. The Indian Knowledge System (IKS) is the most significant dimension of the National Education Policy NEP 2020 acknowledges the rich heritage and traditional wisdom that India possesses.. This article attempts

to elucidate the Indian Knowledge system's rich heritage and argue as to how the integration of IKS could potentially serve as a building block in the development of holistic management professionals, who would be rooted in tradition, yet modern in their outlook.

Literature Review

The Indian Knowledge System (IKS) shall have its roots in thought created by classical texts like the Bhagavad Gita, Arthashastra, and Upanishads, offers a normative framework to guide sustainable corporate strategy in terms of Dharma (duty), Karma Yoga (selfless action), and Artha (ethical wealth). According to the Arthashastra, principles of governance and economic strategy are based on statecraft and focus on welfare and ethical management of resources (Kautilya, trans. Rangarajan, 1992, pp. 145–160).

The Bhagavad Gita focuses on making decisions by exercising self-discipline and holding detachment to the results, viewed as some of the basic elements of sustainable leadership (Easwaran, 2007, pp. 73–79). Contemporary scholars positioned IKS within current business paradigms. Prasad (2012) relates Karma Yoga to employee empowerment and purpose-driven leadership (pp. 56–58), while Sharma and Talwar (2019) bring issues of IKS-based stakeholder models for the long-term corporate social responsibility (pp. 102–104).

Business kingpins such as Narayana Murthy recognize the Gita's influence on ethical corporate governance. Further knowledge management models at Infosys and TCS reflect indigenous approaches giving importance to mentorship and shared wisdom—that sort of thing is in the very spirit of the Gurukul (Joshi, 2011, pp. 89–91).

Pramanick and Meta (2024) highlighted India's ancient knowledge systems' role in sustainable development, focusing on poverty reduction and health. Traditional wisdom, including Ayurveda, yoga, and community practices, continues to influence development initiatives. By combining indigenous knowledge with modern policies, such as MGNREGA, India has reduced multidimensional poverty and improved health outcomes. These traditional systems enable culturally appropriate practices to support long-term developmental goals.

Mahajan (2025) [20] examined the integration of traditional Indian wisdom with innovation to advance Atmanirbhar Bharat. This study focuses on utilizing Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) across sectors for sustainable development and self-reliance. It explores IKS's potential to drive economic growth, support MSMEs, and enhance local communities. This research evaluated Indian knowledge paradigms in international contexts, particularly in sustainable development and agriculture. This study demonstrated IKS implementation through case studies and explored its role in creating eco-friendly products and promoting a circular economy. It examines IKS integration into education and entrepreneurship programs, showing how India can develop sustainable solutions by drawing from traditions in Ayurveda, agriculture, and governance.

Kumari (2024) [18] examined the role of the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) in sustainable development. IKS is a structured framework for knowledge transmission across generations, based on Vedic literature and ancient Indian texts. It promotes a holistic view that emphasizes life's interconnectedness and harmony with nature. This paper shows how IKS incorporates sustainable practices in education, health, economics, and environmental conservation, exploring four sustainability pillars: human, social, economic, and environmental. It demonstrates IKS applications in addressing contemporary challenges such as disaster risk reduction and climate change. This study advocates integrating IKS into modern education and policymaking to address global challenges, emphasizing its importance for innovation and economic value in the global knowledge order.

The Indian Knowledge System as a Repository of Wisdom with Relevance to Contemporary Management

Indian Knowledge System is a reservoir of knowledge derived from different fields such as philosophy, governance, ethics, and management. Developed from centuries of intellectual pursuit, Indian Knowledge System provides profound insights into the human behaviour, leadership, decision-making, and its organisational dynamics. This wisdom has been hidden in the ancient Indian texts. The need of the hour is therefore to unlock this treasure from the ancient texts and make it

available to all management students and professionals, equipping them with the knowledge and skills necessary to navigate the complexities of the global world, marked by technological advancements and ethical dilemmas.

At the very heart of Indian Knowledge Systems is the understanding that acquisition of knowledge is a holistic process and not just an accumulation of facts. True knowledge feeds one's intellectual development ensuring simultaneously, his emotional and spiritual wellbeing. Some of the core teachings of IKS are summed up aptly in the vishnupurana : "Sa Vidya Ya Vimuktaye" (True knowledge is that which liberates).

It would challenge the historically accepted definition of education as that which leads to material success and instead make it liberation of the self from ignorance, ego, and self-centeredness. Thus, IKS is the knowledge system that promotes personal growth, instills ethical leadership, and at the same time ensuring good to the society—values which are quite significant in corporate existence today.

Dharma (ethics), sustainability, and Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam are concepts propagated by the Indian Knowledge System that contradict individualism, especially the survival of the fittest, as described by Darwinism, or Marketing warfare as described by Al Ries. Darwinism, although most relevant to biological evolution, emphasises competition and individual success at the expense of others and leads to a world where the strongest thrive at the expense of the weak.

Similarly, marketing warfare is a way of legitimatising the whole concept of doing business by showing how to win over rival firms. Thus some of the concepts of the Indian Knowledge System - Dharma (ethics), Sustainability, and Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (Global cooperation) offer contrasting ideologies to the individualistic ideologies propagated by western management thought.

In contrast, Dharma promotes a business ethic rooted in fairness, integrity, and social responsibility, where success is defined not just by profit but by positive contributions to society. Sustainability advocates for long-term growth that nurtures the environment, people, and society, rather than short-term gains that deplete resources.

Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, the concept of "the world is one family," calls for a cooperative, inclusive approach to business that transcends national and corporate boundaries.

Unfortunately, management education today, heavily influenced by western management thought, produces leaders with competitive mindset whose actions are directed more towards their individual benefit rather than the collective good. It thus produces a professional who sees in business a battlefield where the war must be won, even at a cost that totally disregards the long-term implications for society, the environment, or the ethics of the war action itself.

Thus, a society that admonishes individual achievement and the attainment of wealth without reference either to Dharma or Sustainability ends up in creating a culture normalising avarice and exploitation. It is the author's strong belief that with the wisdom of the Indian Knowledge System integrated into management education; students can be groomed to be leaders not just in businesses but also co-creating society's common welfare while paving the way toward ethical, sustainable, and globally cooperative practices to address the real needs of businesses and society today. I therefore wish to give a snippet of the various Indian texts, and what management lessons can be learnt from them in the following section.

Understanding the IKS: The Indian Knowledge System, championed by the government, embodies a holistic and culturally rooted approach to education. Drawing from India's ancient wisdom, it integrates traditional values with contemporary knowledge, fostering a comprehensive understanding of the world. In this system, education goes beyond textbooks, emphasizing holistic development through arts, sports, and extracurricular activities.

Cultural integration is a cornerstone, instilling pride and connection to heritage. Regional languages are promoted, ensuring inclusivity and preserving linguistic diversity. Practical application of knowledge is prioritized, preparing students for real-world challenges. Digital literacy is a focal point, acknowledging the importance of technology in the modern era.

Cultural Enrichment: The Indian Knowledge System, through its emphasis on cultural enrichment, profoundly influences students by exposing them to India's rich heritage. This exposure cultivates a deep sense of identity and pride, instilling in students a connection to their roots. Delving into ancient texts and philosophies within the curriculum offers a unique lens through which students can explore profound values and ethical principles. By engaging with the nation's cultural tapestry, students gain academic insights and develop a broader understanding of the historical and philosophical underpinnings that shape their society. This cultural enrichment becomes a foundation for personal growth, fostering a well-rounded worldview and contributing to the development of not only academically adept but also culturally aware and socially conscious individuals.

Holistic Development: The Indian Knowledge System strongly emphasises holistic development, incorporating arts, sports, and extracurricular activities into the educational fabric. This integration ensures students cultivate a well-rounded skill set beyond academic excellence. The system's focus on creativity and critical thinking equips students with the tools to navigate diverse challenges, fostering a mindset beyond rote learning. By nurturing these aspects, students are academically proficient and possess the creativity and analytical skills necessary for success in an ever-evolving world.

Practical Application: The Indian Knowledge System places a premium on practical application, emphasising hands-on learning and honing problem-solving skills. By prioritizing the real-world application of knowledge, students are equipped with theoretical understanding and gain invaluable skills in adaptability and innovation. This practice bridges the gap between theory and practice, preparing students for the dynamic challenges of the professional landscape. It instils a mindset where theoretical concepts find tangible expression, fostering a generation of learners capable of addressing real-world problems with creativity and practical insight.

Language Proficiency: The Indian Knowledge System prioritises language proficiency by promoting regional languages, preserving linguistic diversity, and enriching students with a deep

appreciation for their cultural heritage. Bilingual education further enhances communication skills, recognizing their crucial role in a global context. This approach facilitates effective cross-cultural communication and equips students with a valuable asset in an interconnected world. The emphasis on language proficiency ensures that students are not only academically adept but also proficient communicators, capable of navigating diverse linguistic landscapes with confidence and understanding.

Inclusivity and Accessibility: The Indian Knowledge System prioritises inclusivity and accessibility, ensuring that education transcends socio-economic barriers. Special provisions are in place to guarantee that every student, regardless of their background, has access to quality education. Additionally, the system embraces inclusive practices, offering support tailored to the diverse learning needs of students. By fostering an environment where education is accessible to all, irrespective of socio-economic disparities, the Indian Knowledge System plays a pivotal role in creating a more equitable and inclusive society, empowering students from various backgrounds to pursue and excel in their educational endeavours.

Digital Literacy: The Indian Knowledge System significantly emphasises digital literacy, equipping students with essential skills for the digital era. This focus ensures that students gain technological proficiency, allowing them to navigate and contribute effectively in a digitally driven world. By incorporating digital literacy into the curriculum, the education system prepares students to harness the power of technology for communication, problem-solving, and innovation. This emphasis on digital skills enhances their academic journey and positions them to excel in a technologically evolving global landscape, fostering a generation adept at leveraging digital tools for success.

Global Competence: The Indian Knowledge System actively promotes global competence among students. Exposure to international perspectives within the curriculum ensures they are well-prepared for a globalised job market. This exposure broadens their horizons and enhances cross-cultural understanding, cultivating adaptability and collaboration skills. By fostering a global outlook, the system equips students to

navigate diverse professional environments and contribute meaningfully internationally. This emphasis on international competence positions students to thrive in an interconnected world where cultural fluency and collaboration are integral to success.

Entrepreneurial Mindset: The Indian Knowledge System instils an entrepreneurial mindset by encouraging students to embrace risk-taking and innovation. This approach cultivates an entrepreneurial spirit, inspiring students to become creators rather than job seekers. The system empowers students to contribute actively to economic growth by fostering an environment that values innovation and risk. This entrepreneurial mindset prepares students for dynamic career paths. It nurtures a culture of self-reliance, creativity, and problem-solving, essential for navigating the challenges of a rapidly evolving global economy.

Environmental Consciousness: The Indian Knowledge System underscores environmental consciousness, integrating education that promotes sustainable practices. This approach equips students with an awareness of environmental issues and instil a sense of responsibility toward the ecosystem. By incorporating ecological considerations into the curriculum, students gain a theoretical understanding of environmental challenges and are motivated to adopt eco-friendly behaviours. This emphasis on ecological consciousness ensures that students graduate with a heightened awareness of their impact on the planet, contributing to an environmentally responsible generation and actively engaged in building a sustainable future.

Continuous Learning: Incorporating a culture of continuous learning, the Indian Knowledge System equips students for a lifetime of education. Emphasising adaptability as a core skill, it recognizes the importance of navigating an ever-evolving professional landscape. By instilling a mindset of perpetual growth and learning, students are academically prepared and develop the resilience needed to thrive in dynamic and challenging environments. This commitment to continuous learning ensures that graduates are well-positioned to embrace new opportunities, stay relevant in their careers, and contribute meaningfully to the progress of society.

Timeless Wisdom from Indian Knowledge Systems: Lessons for Modern Management

The Mahabharata, Ramayana, Thirukkural, Arthashastra, Panchtantra, Jatakas, Hitopadesa, Aranyakas, and Manusmrithi are some of the most ancient Indian treatises that provide some ageless wisdom on morality, leadership, and governance. They offer a wealth of knowledge about decision-making, teamwork, and strategy, thus making them very much applicable to contemporary management practice. The teachings, when integrated into modern-day scenarios, could produce leaders who are ethical, empathetic, and culturally grounded in addressing organisational challenges.

Mahabharata: The epic, Mahabharata written by sage Vyasa believed to be written in the third century B.C.E is a treasure house of Indian knowledge system, brings into foray, the complexities of decision making in different contexts. With the help of characters like Yudhishtira, Krishna, Arjuna, and Duryodhana, the epic text explores the intricacies of dharma (righteous duty) and adharma (unrighteousness).

The lessons imbibed from Krishna's guidance to Arjuna in Bhagavad Gita within Mahabharata are those offered to leaders on making decisions after rooting them in ethics and the greater good, regardless of the challenges involved. The epic when taught in the framework of management schools would aid the future managers to navigate their dilemmas and make them better decision makers, who would take the interests of all stakeholders and especially consider the greater good of the society.

Ramayana: The Ramayana believed to be written by sage Valmiki, in the year 200 BCE, teaches invaluable lessons of leadership, responsibility, and good governance, underlined in Rama's steadfast commitment to dharma, as shown in the saying "Dharma hi paramo lokah" (Dharma is the supreme duty of all beings, Valmiki Ramayana, Ayodhya Kanda). Likewise, Sita's unwavering resolve, as expressed in her words, "Saha dharmam charishyami tvaya saha vane vasan" (I shall follow dharma with you, even while living in the forest), signifies fidelity and devotion.

And finally, Hanuman's loyalty can be traced through his proclamation, "Daso'ham Kosalendrasya Ramasya aklishta-karmanah" (I am

the servant of Rama, the king of Kosala, who performs impeccable deeds). Integrating the Ramayana into management education would nurture disciplined, righteous, and resilient leaders who would make ethical decision-making their priority and standing for values even in the toughest of circumstances.

The future managers will be a compassionate, fair, and socially responsible leaders by instilling Rama's governance. Such leaders would also find subordinates with Hanuman's loyalty who would go to any extent to fulfil their leader's vision. I am of the firm opinion that a management student would develop a mindset which would immediately recognise the others needs and think what he or she could do for others.

Thirukkural: The eternal truths of the Thirukkural written by sage Thiruvalluvar in the year 300 BCE, offer principles of management education and accentuates the dimension of ethics, good governance, and interpersonal relationship harmony. Teaching on Aram (Virtue) creates a passion for ethics and inspires a strong motivational base for ethical choices, corporate social responsibility, and integrity in leadership.

In the Porul (Wealth) section, managerial competencies like resource mobilisation and governance, along with an ethical orientation towards profit, would train future managers on how to create a sustainable phase of organisational development along with stakeholder prosperity. Teaching with Inbam (Love) embraces emotional intelligence, relationship building, and concerns to create a culture of collaboration and inclusion in the workplace. Integrating these principles into management education prepares students to navigate challenges with fairness, align business goals with societal good, and lead with empathy, ensuring leadership that is both effective and ethical.

Kautilya's Arthashastra: Inclusion of Kautilya's arthashastra in Management Education would teach students the important principles of finance, governance and leadership. As early as 4th century BC Kautilya speaks about the need for robust financial systems: transparent bookkeeping, auditing, and ethical practices, which would promote transparency in an organisation.

The book also focuses on resource efficiency and strategy allocation which is so essential to maximise productivity in modern day organisations. Kautilya emphasises ethical governance and leadership by advocating decisions that aim for the good of the organisation and society as well. His other resounding message about self-management advises leaders to conquer greed and anger so that they may lead effectively. Finally, his perspectives in taxation and public finance help the manager formulate business strategy that align with the economic policies. This would help the management graduates progress in their careers with confidence and morality.

The Bhagavad Gita, considered the sacred book of Hindus, carries with it profound lessons on ethics and leadership and serves as a compass guiding the development of future leaders towards values and responsibilities. Imagine Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, completely consumed by doubt and moral conflict. He is hesitant about the war and remembers the destruction it will bring to his family and community.

Then, His charioteer, Krishna, who is believed to be the supreme human being and upholder of the highest principles of Dharma, steers him toward fulfilling his duty without attachment to personal emotions or outcomes. Thus, Nishkama Karma or selfless action without attachment to results taught by Krishna speak towards a process and integrity focus rather than short-term gains. Management students may consider that true leadership stems from working for the greater good, ensuring that their actions are driven by service and ethical considerations not personal ambition.

Krishna's mentoring of the Pandavas strongly emphasises teamwork and contribution. Future leaders can apply this principle to harness diverse talents within a team, fostering unity and driving shared success. Finally, Krishna's role as Arjuna's charioteer, despite his divine stature, exemplifies servant leadership, teaching management students that the leader should not have any ego and his job is to help each member of his team overcome their obstacles and achieve their tasks.

Apart from the mentioned texts above, Indian knowledge system boasts of texts like the *Panchatantra*, *Hitopadesha*, *Jataka Tales*, *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*, *Aranyakas*, *Manusmriti*,

and *Tantras* that provide profound lessons to enhance the skills of future managers. The *Panchatantra* and *Hitopadesha* impart leadership, governance, and ethical decision-making through engaging stories that emphasise diplomacy, prudence, and conflict resolution.

The *Jataka Tales* instill values like compassion and selflessness, essential for ethical leadership. The *Yoga Sutras* offer a disciplined approach to self-mastery, fostering mindfulness, clarity, and resilience for strategic decision-making. The *Aranyakas* emphasise self-awareness, sustainability, and holistic thinking, while the *Manusmriti* advocates justice, moral conduct, and balanced decision-making for stakeholder welfare. The *Tantras* underscore the importance of balance, adaptability, and ethical governance in leadership. Together, these texts provide a timeless framework for cultivating visionary managers who lead with integrity, resilience, and a commitment to sustainable and ethical practices.

Therefore there is a need for paradigm shift in Management education. Integration of Indian Knowledge System (IKS) with modern management practices is very much essential to carry forward the dream of NEP (2020) for creating a holistic, inclusive, and culturally rich approach to global management education. The ancient Gurukul system of education, I believe should be reinvented to impart holistic, multidisciplinary system of education that fosters not only academic excellence but facilitate the growth of ethical leaders who are emotionally resilient and pragmatic decision makers.

The Gurukul system, which was adopted ancient Indian sages, emphasised a personalised, immersive, and experiential learning environment. It focused on nurturing students through a balanced blend of theoretical knowledge, practical application, and character-building, ensuring that leaders are well-equipped to address complex global challenges with wisdom, empathy, and cultural sensitivity.

The incorporation of IKS under the Gurukul system to impart Management Education of global standards will provide a distinct competitive advantage to India. As discussed in the article earlier almost all the texts talk about sustainability, ethical decision making and prioritising community

good. Therefore, the need of the hour is to champion this transformative approach, creating global management institutions that are deeply rooted in Indian wisdom yet capable of shaping leaders who are future-ready in a dynamic, interconnected world.

Conclusion

India, with its rich tapestry of culture, history, and diversity, has always placed a deep value on education. The Indian government, recognizing education's key role in shaping the nation's future, has enforced a comprehensive framework known as the Indian Knowledge System. This system represents a holistic approach to learning, drawing inspiration from the country's ancient wisdom while incorporating contemporary knowledge and global perspectives.

Rooted in the ethos of inclusivity and cultural heritage, the Indian Knowledge System recalls a commitment to nurturing well-rounded individuals capable of contributing meaningfully to society. As we delve into the intricacies of this system, we witness a tapestry that weaves together traditional values, cutting-edge technology, and a forward-looking mindset. This introduction sets the stage for a closer examination of how the Indian government's educational endeavours shape the country's next generation of learners and leaders.

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