



Schools of Indian Philosophy: Vedantic Philosophy, National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and Indian Knowledge System (IKS)

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Abstract

This research paper explores the pedagogical implications of traditional Indian philosophical thought, focusing specifically on the Vedantic school and its alignment with contemporary educational frameworks. In an era dominated by rapid technological advancement and materialistic values, modern education often struggles to balance holistic human development with utilitarian skill acquisition. To address this gap, the study examines the core principles of Vedantic philosophy such as non-duality (*Advaita*), the universality of consciousness (*Vasudhaiva Kuṭumbakam*), and the divinity of the human soul and integrates them with the vision of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the Indian Knowledge System (IKS). The paper investigates how the traditional tripartite methodology of *śravaṇa* (listening), *manana* (reflection), and *nididhyāsana* (realization/internalization) serves as a robust precursor to modern experiential learning and critical thinking. Furthermore, it analyzes the synthesis of *parā vidyā* (spiritual knowledge) and *aparā vidyā* (material science) as a solution for achieving holistic student development. By examining curricular designs that incorporate Upanishadic ethics, Bhagavad Gītā leadership principles, and mindfulness practices, the study highlights how Vedantic pedagogy effectively addresses contemporary challenges such as student stress, ethical erosion, and the fragmentation of knowledge. Ultimately, this paper posits that integrating Vedanta through NEP 2020 and IKS transforms education into a vehicle for inner transformation and global sustainability, positioning India as a fountainhead of value-oriented, humane, and sustainable learning frameworks.

Keywords: Vedantic Philosophy, National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, Indian Knowledge System (IKS), Experiential Learning (*Nididhyāsana*), Holistic Education, Spiritual and Material Knowledge (*Parā* and *Aparā Vidyā*).

1. Introduction

Indian philosophy is one of the oldest and richest philosophical traditions in the world, offering profound analysis of the ultimate truths of life and human development. Traditional Indian philosophies are broadly classified into *Āstika* (orthodox/Vedic) and *Nāstika* (heterodox/non-Vedic) schools. Among all these traditions, Vedantic philosophy holds a supreme position, as it is based on the "essence of the Vedas" (*Upaniṣads*, *Brahma Sūtras*, and *Bhagavad Gītā*).

In the contemporary Indian educational landscape, the integration of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) has made the educational implications of traditional Indian philosophy, especially Vedanta, highly relevant. This research paper presents an analysis of the fundamental principles, objectives of education, curriculum, and teaching methodology of Vedantic philosophy within the perspective of NEP 2020 and IKS. The National Education Policy 2020 explicitly emphasizes that modern learning must be deeply rooted in India's civilizational ethos while fostering global citizenship. Under NEP 2020, the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) is integrated

as an essential curricular component, bridging ancient wisdom and modern scientific inquiry. At the heart of this integration lies Vedantic philosophy encompassing *Advaita*, *Viśiṣṭādvaita*, and *Dvaita* which posits that a singular consciousness pervades the universe ("*Sarvaṁ khalvidam brahma*"). This principle supports environmental sustainability (*Vasudhaiva Kuṭumbakam*) and the inherent divinity of the human soul. Furthermore, Vedanta and IKS champion the harmonious synthesis of *parā vidyā* (spiritual realization) and *aparā vidyā* (material and empirical sciences), establishing a blueprint for balanced human progress.

Aligning with Swami Vivekananda's assertion that "*Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man*," Vedantic pedagogy treats education as an internal awakening rather than mere information accumulation. The curriculum combines spiritual ethics from the *Upaniṣads* and leadership frameworks from the *Bhagavad Gītā* with practical disciplines such as mathematics, astronomy, and vocational arts. Methodologically, Vedanta champions the tripartite process of *śravaṇa* (authentic listening), *manana* (critical

reflection), and *nididhyāsana* (experiential realization), serving as a direct precursor to modern experiential and inquiry-based learning. By weaving these timeless principles into NEP 2020, contemporary educational frameworks successfully foster mental well-being, character building, and holistic growth, creating a sustainable, value-oriented society.

2. Review of Literature

To establish the rigor, philosophical background, and contemporary relevance of the research work, a review of key prior studies and research literature is presented below:

- **Radhakrishnan, S. (1947/2008):** In his renowned works *Indian Philosophy* and *The Principal Upanishads*, he clarified that Vedantic philosophy is not merely a sectarian dogma, but a universal science of human consciousness whose primary objective is to awaken the inner soul of humanity.
- **Altekar, A. S. (1965):** In his book *Education in Ancient India*, Altekar detailed the *Gurukula* system, the methods of *śravaṇa-manaṇa-nididhyāsana* (listening, reflection, and realization), and value-based education, which form the foundational bedrock of modern experiential learning.
- **Swami Vivekananda (1998):** Vivekananda's insights on education emphasize that "*Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man*," presenting a harmonious synthesis of Western modernity and Indian spiritual Vedanta.
- **Chattopadhyaya, D. P. (2000):** In his treatise *Indian Philosophy and Culture*, he analyzed the logical and scientific aspects of traditional Indian philosophy, demonstrating how Vedantic principles serve as robust foundations for modern human values and ethical education.
- **Majumdar, S. (2015):** In his research paper titled *Education and Values: Insights from Indian Philosophy*, Majumdar highlighted how education grounded in Vedantic philosophy fosters stress management, mental stability, and self-discipline among students.
- **Ministry of Education, Government of India (2020):** The policy document of the National Education Policy 2020 strongly recommends the mandatory integration of the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) into school and higher education to connect students with their cultural roots while equipping them to face global challenges.
- **Singh, R. P. (2021):** In *NEP 2020 and Indian Knowledge Systems: Prospects and Challenges*, the author evaluated the strategic necessities and practical outcomes of incorporating traditional philosophical tenets (especially Vedanta and the *Upanishads*) into contemporary educational frameworks.
- **Sharma, R. N. (2013):** In his book *Philosophical and Sociological Foundations of Indian and Western Education*, he analyzed how the values of ancient Indian philosophy assist in character building and the promotion of mental health in the modern era.

3. Conceptual Foundation of National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and Indian Knowledge System (IKS)

The National Education Policy 2020 explicitly emphasizes that the education system must not only be rooted in India's ideological and cultural landscape but must also develop a global citizenship perspective in students.

- **Role of IKS:** Under NEP 2020, the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) has been made an essential component of the curriculum. It incorporates scientific and

philosophical elements ranging from tribal knowledge to the Vedas, Upanishads, and Vedantic philosophy that establish a balance between nature and human consciousness.

- **Holistic Education:** The goal of NEP 2020 is to provide multidisciplinary and holistic education, which aligns with the ancient Indian *Gurukula* tradition and the Vedantic ideal of "all-round development."

4. Fundamental Principles of Vedantic Philosophy and IKS

The core principles of Vedantic philosophy (specifically *Advaita*, *Viśiṣṭādvaita*, and *Dvaita*) serve as the main pillars of IKS:

- **Vasudhaiva Kuṭumbakam and Universality:** Vedanta posits that the same consciousness pervades the entire universe ("*Sarvaṁ khalvidam brahma*"). This principle fosters environmental sustainability and global fraternity, which are also primary objectives of IKS.
- **Divinity and Autonomy of the Soul:** Human beings are not merely a combination of body and mind; rather, their intrinsic soul is immortal and inherently knowledgeable (*jñāna-svarūpa*).
- **Coordination of Parā and Aparā Vidyā:** Both IKS and Vedanta emphasize that true education requires a balance between physical/material science (*aparā vidyā*) and spiritual/self-realization knowledge (*parā vidyā*).

5. Objectives of Education: The Convergence of Vedanta, NEP 2020, and IKS

A deep harmony exists between the educational objectives of traditional Vedantic philosophy and NEP 2020:

- **Manifestation of Perfection:** As Swami Vivekananda stated, "*Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man*." This perspective is reflected in NEP 2020's emphasis on identifying and developing each student's unique capabilities.
- **Value-Based and Character Building:** NEP 2020 advocates for the development of constitutional values alongside Indian cultural values (such as truth, non-violence, service, and *niṣkāma karma*), which are directly inspired by Vedanta and the *Karma Yoga* of the *Gītā*.
- **Cognitive and Spiritual Development:** Education is not merely the accumulation of information; rather, the ultimate goal of education is the calming of mental modifications (*citta-vṛtti-nirodha*) and the development of higher consciousness.

6. Curriculum Structure: Integration of Vedanta and IKS

Under NEP 2020, the school and higher education curricula are incorporating the following dimensions of Vedantic philosophy through IKS:

- **Spiritual and Philosophical Curriculum (Parā Vidyā):**
 - Ethical and philosophical values from the Upanishads.
 - Principles of management, leadership, and duty (*kartavya-bodha*) from the Bhagavad *Gītā*.
 - Courses on yoga, meditation, and mental well-being.
- **Practical and Scientific Curriculum (Aparā Vidyā):**
 - Ancient Indian science, mathematics, astronomy, and Ayurveda.
 - Environmental studies emphasizing respect for nature, which is rooted in IKS and Vedanta.

- Integrating vocational education (*skill development*) with arts, crafts, and folk culture.

7. Teaching Methodology and Pedagogy

The traditional teaching methodology of Vedantic philosophy lays a robust foundation for modern student-centric, experiential, and inquiry-based learning, which has been prominently embraced in the pedagogical structure of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. In the Vedantic educational framework, knowledge is not merely imposed upon the student by the teacher, but is viewed as a process of internal awakening.

A). Traditional Pedagogical Methods

- **Śravaṇa, Manaṇa, and Nididhyāsana:** This is the threefold Vedantic teaching methodology:
 - **Śravaṇa:** The student attentively listens to and receives knowledge in authentic sources and the close presence of the teacher.
 - **Manaṇa:** Critical thinking, intellectual analysis, and the resolution of doubts regarding the acquired knowledge, serving as the core basis of modern "Critical Thinking."
 - **Nididhyāsana:** The ultimate form of experiential learning where logically understood knowledge is internalized and practiced by the student in daily conduct and living.
- **Guru-Śiṣya Dialogue and Dialectical Method (Upaniṣadic Style):** Similar to the Upaniṣads, this method is based on dialogue and inquiry, where the teacher acts purely as a facilitator or guide, allowing students to independently ask questions and discover truth.
- **Self-Study and Practice (Svādhyāya and Abhyāsa):** Students acquire mental control and concentration through self-study and continuous practice aligned with their individual capacity.

B). Educational Implications for Modern Education and NEP 2020

- **Rejection of Rote Learning and Experiential Learning:** Akin to the Vedantic method of *nididhyāsana*, NEP 2020 strongly opposes rote learning and emphasizes "learning by doing" and activity-based instruction.
- **Holistic and Multidisciplinary Pedagogy:** To balance students' intellectual, emotional, and spiritual capacities in the modern classroom, Vedantic principles such as yoga, mindfulness, and moral values are incorporated into instructional practices.
- **Stress Management and Mental Health:** In today's competitive and stressful educational environment, meditation, mindfulness, and self-discipline techniques rooted in Vedantic philosophy serve as effective tools to strengthen student mental well-being.
- **Holistic Assessment:** Replacing conventional summative examinations with continuous evaluation of students' moral, social, behavioral, and skill development, fully aligning with Vedanta's objective of building a "complete human being."

8. Conclusion: Synthesizing Ancient Vedanta with Modern Educational Transformation

The study of traditional Indian philosophy especially the Vedantic school is not merely a repetition of the past; rather,

it offers dynamic, enduring solutions to the complex ethical, psychological, and pedagogical challenges of modern education. In an era where educational frameworks frequently tilt toward hyper-materialism, mechanistic skill acquisition, and intense academic competition, the integration of Vedantic wisdom restores a vital balance between intellectual achievement and spiritual maturity. When Vedantic principles are systematically woven into the curriculum, pedagogical methodologies, and overarching objectives through the visionary architecture of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the Indian Knowledge System (IKS), the entire educational paradigm transcends conventional limitations to become deeply relevant, intensely humane, and profoundly effective.

9. Educational Conclusion: Synthesizing Ancient Vedanta with Modern Educational Transformation

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At its core, Vedanta teaches that education is not an external imposition of data, but the inner manifestation of perfection already latent within the human individual. By fusing this timeless perspective with NEP 2020, contemporary institutions can successfully bridge the historical artificial divide between *parā vidyā* (higher, spiritual realization) and *aparā vidyā* (empirical, material sciences). This holistic integration ensures that scientific and technological proficiency is consistently guided by moral restraint, ecological consciousness, and social responsibility. The ancient tripartite methodology of *śravaṇa* (authentic listening), *manaṇa* (critical reflection), and *nididhyāsana* (experiential realization) provides a robust psychological and pedagogical blueprint that transforms rote memorization into active, inquiry-driven, and transformative learning. Furthermore, the integration of Vedantic practices such as mindfulness, yoga, and self-discipline directly addresses modern student epidemics, including chronic stress, alienation, and emotional fragility. By nurturing a balanced intellect and a calm, focused consciousness, these practices foster mental well-being and genuine character building.

Reinforced by the profound Vedantic declarations of *Vasudhaiva Kuṭumbakam* (the world is one family) and *Sarve bhavantu sukhinah* (may all be happy, may all be free from illness), this comprehensive educational framework transcends narrow national boundaries to champion global fraternity and environmental sustainability. Ultimately, operationalizing Vedantic philosophy through NEP 2020 and IKS is fully capable of establishing India as a confident global knowledge superpower. More importantly, it re-establishes education as a sacred instrument for societal transformation successfully cultivating a moral, emotionally sensitive,

intellectually vibrant, and truly sustainable global society for generations to come.

10. Implementation of Vedantic Principles through NEP 2020 and IKS

The practical implementation of Vedantic philosophy within the modern educational ecosystem, as envisioned by the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the Indian Knowledge System (IKS), requires a structured, multi-tiered approach bridging traditional wisdom with contemporary pedagogy.

At the foundational curriculum level, institutions are integrating spiritual texts like the *Upaniṣads* and the *Bhagavad Gītā* into humanities, leadership, and ethics modules. This ensures that the acquisition of material science (*aparā vidyā*) remains anchored in moral and existential awareness (*parā vidyā*). Pedagogically, traditional methodologies are translated into modern learning frameworks. The ancient tripartite process of *śravaṇa* (attentive reception), *manana* (critical reflection), and *nididhyāsana* (experiential realization) directly replaces rote memorization with inquiry-driven, experiential learning and active problem-solving. To foster holistic student development, classrooms operationalize Vedantic mindfulness, yoga, and self-discipline practices to combat modern student stress and emotional volatility. Furthermore, continuous, holistic evaluation replaces rigid summative testing, assessing students across behavioral, social, and ethical dimensions. By systematically executing these strategies, educational institutions successfully translate ancient philosophical ideals into actionable, scalable practices that cultivate intellectually competent, emotionally balanced, and globally responsible citizens.

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