

Unveiling the Global Significance of the Indian Knowledge System and Empowering Yoga Practices

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Abstract: *The profound impact of Indian knowledge, culture, philosophy, and spirituality on a global scale cannot be overstated. The Indian Knowledge System (IKS), enshrined in texts like Vedas and Upanishads, serves as a treasure trove of wisdom that demands preservation, documentation, and dissemination. Even in our contemporary world, science - based practices and insights from IKS remain remarkably pertinent. The holistic utilization of IKS necessitates its decolonization, steered by effective Indian leadership. While embracing the timeless wisdom of our heritage, we must also confront our societal challenges, striving to forge a future that harmoniously amalgamates ancient wisdom with modern complexities. Notably, IKS suggests solutions to various global issues. The New Education Policy sets a roadmap for the integration of IKS into higher education. Yogic practices, encompassing Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana, and Samadhi, constitute the quintessence of IKS. Practicing Yoga fosters inner joy, holistic well - being, tranquillity, and a profound connection between an individual's inner consciousness and the external universe. The adoption of Yogic practices empowers students to bridge the gap between the traditional and modern educational paradigms. This engagement with ancient wisdom cultivates a holistic scientific temperament that fuels multidisciplinary research and innovation, promoting holistic health and contentment. In conclusion, the integration of IKS, coupled with Yoga practices, should be seamlessly woven into mainstream education.*

Keywords: Yoga, Indian Knowledge System, Global Impact, Decolonization, Holistic Education

1. Introduction

The foundation of personal growth lies in sturdy roots, prompting a comprehensive grasp of the traditional Indian Knowledge System (IKS). Cāṇakya, in his Arthaśāstra, classifies IKS into four domains: [1]

- 1) Ānvīkṣikī – Encompassing contemporary science, including logic and philosophy
- 2) Trayī – Pertaining to traditional knowledge, particularly the Vedas
- 3) Vārttā – Focusing on wealth creation through agriculture and commerce
- 4) Daṇḍanīti – Addressing politics and public administration

The classical literature of IKS is often classified as chaturdaśa - vidyā - sthānas (14), comprising: [2]

- 1) The 4 Vedas (R̥gveda, Yajurveda, Sāmaveda, Atharvaṇaveda)
- 2) The 6 Vedāṅgas (Śikṣā, Kalpa, Vyākaraṇa, Chhandas, Niruktam, and Jyotiṣa)
- 3) Itihāsa (Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata) and Purāṇa (Viṣṇupurāṇa, Bhāgavata, etc.)
- 4) Dharmaśāstra (Manusmṛti, Yājñavalkya - smṛti, Parāśara - smṛti, etc.)
- 5) Darśana (Six orthodox and six heterodox systems)
- 6) Nyāya (Logic and Epistemology)

Learning about traditional IKS is imperative. Evidence from Ayurveda, ancient ship construction techniques, knowledge of aviation, architectural expertise in the Indus Valley Civilization, and political science from ancient India all

illustrate its breadth. The IKS aims to introduce Indian knowledge across all life domains to students in a relatable, appreciable manner that encourages further exploration. Within this context, Yoga practices play a pivotal role, in fostering health, happiness, and harmony in the lives of practitioners.

Indian Knowledge System (IKS)

Indian civilization has consistently given paramount importance to knowledge, boasting an astonishingly extensive collection of intellectual texts and the world's largest repository of manuscripts. It's a tradition rich in texts, thinkers, and schools spanning numerous knowledge domains. [3] The Mundakopanisad classifies the entire organized knowledge into two categories: Para Vidya and Aparā Vidya (Mundakopanisad, 1.1.4). The former deals with knowledge of the ultimate principle, Paramatma or Brahman, i. e., the metaphysical domain. while the latter relates to knowledge secondary to comprehending Aksara - Brahman, i. e., worldly knowledge. This distinction delineates Jnana and Vijnana, representing knowledge of facts in the perceptible world. [4] Across time, various domains of knowledge have evolved into distinct disciplines, referred to as Vidya, and crafts, known as Kala. The spectrum of Indian disciplinary formations encompasses a wide array, including philosophy, architecture, grammar, mathematics, astronomy, metrics, sociology (Dharmasastra), economy and polity (Arthaśāstra), ethics (Nitishastra), geography, logic, military science, weaponry, agriculture, mining, trade and commerce, metallurgy, shipbuilding, medicine, poetics, biology, and veterinary science. These areas each have an enduring lineage of texts. [5]

Volume 12 Issue 8, August 2023

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The IKS actively fosters interdisciplinary research, preservation, and dissemination of knowledge, advocating for the propagation of India's rich heritage and traditional knowledge in fields spanning Arts and Literature, Agriculture, Basic Sciences, Engineering and Technology, Architecture, Management, and Economics. The IKS encompasses 18 major Vidyas, theoretical disciplines, and 64 Kalas, vocational disciplines or crafts. The 18 Vidyas comprise the four Vedas, the four subsidiary Vedas (Ayurveda – medicine, Dhanurveda – weaponry, Gandharvaveda – music, and Silpa – architecture), Purana, Nyaya, Mimamsa, Dharmasastra, and Vedanga. These Vidyas, along with the six auxiliary sciences - phonetics, grammar, meter, astronomy, ritual, and philology - formed the foundation of the 18 sciences in ancient India. As for applied sciences, various lists enumerate 64 disciplines.^[5]

The distinct Vidya dedicated to discussing principles, theories, and experiential prescriptions is referred to as Dandaniti, one of the four Vidyas, alongside Ānvīkṣikī, Trayī, and Vārtā. Kautilya's Arthaśāstra 1.2.1 outlines this four - fold division. Each Vidya has a lineage of masters who propagated multiple schools of thought, ensuring the continuity and expansion of IKS. Dandaniti's celebrated masters or Acaryas include Brhaspati, Śukra, Uśanas, Bhīṣma, Kauṭilya, Kāmandaka, among others.

Global Importance of the Indian Knowledge System (IKS)

The IKS offers solutions to numerous global challenges. Mathematical concepts such as Pascal's triangles, binary Math principles, and algorithms are prevalent in IKS. Exposing students to both traditional and contemporary concepts aligns them with their cultural heritage, broadens their intellectual horizons, and boosts their confidence. In Srimad Bhagavad Gita 4.33, 37 - 38, Lord Krishna conveys to Arjuna that knowledge acts as a profound purifier and liberator of the self. The IKS has a robust tradition of science and technology. Ancient India was a haven for sages, seers, scholars, and scientists.^[6] Research indicates that India contributed significantly to science and technology, from producing the finest steel to teaching the world mathematics, centuries before modern laboratories were established. The theories and techniques from IKS have laid the groundwork for modern science and technology. The IKS flows like the Ganga, unbroken from the Vedas (Upanishads) to Sri Aurobindo, with knowledge always at the heart of inquiry.

Yoga Practices

The core Yoga practices encompass Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana, and Samadhi. These Yoga practices encapsulate the essence of IKS. The practice of Yoga cultivates inner joy, health, and peace, and deepens the connection between an individual's consciousness and the external world.

Relevance of IKS and Yoga Practices on a Global Scale

The aspiration is for a truly global IKS inclusive of Yoga practices, celebrating contributions and merits from all cultures. The IKS and Yoga practices transcend specific religions. They are the heritage of every Indian, irrespective of their faith. Similar to how Newtonian laws are not

confined to Christianity and Einstein's relativity theory isn't limited to Judaism, the scientific discoveries of IKS and Yoga practices are unbound by faiths.^[7] The significance of IKS and Yoga practices parallels Europe's utilization of classical Greek thought to emerge from the Dark Ages. To progress and complement modern knowledge, turning to IKS and Yoga practices is essential.

2. Conclusion

Given the worldwide relevance of IKS and Yoga practices, integrating them into mainstream education is a recommended step forward.

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