# From Tradition to Innovation: Integrating Indian Knowledge Systems into Art Education under NEP 2020

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#### **Abstract:**

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 envisions a holistic transformation of education in India by emphasizing creativity, critical thinking, and cultural rootedness. Art education is placed at the heart of this transformation as a medium to foster imagination, identity, and holistic development. Within this context, Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) offer an innovative pathway for art pedagogy by linking traditional practices, aesthetics, and philosophies with modern educational needs. This paper explores the integration of IKS into art education under NEP 2020, highlighting its potential to bridge tradition and innovation. Drawing on literature review, policy analysis, and cultural theory, the paper identifies challenges such as lack of trained educators and institutional frameworks, while also underscoring the transformative potential of IKS in strengthening cultural identity, fostering creativity, and ensuring inclusive education.

**Keywords:** Art Education, NEP 2020, Indian Knowledge Systems, Holistic Pedagogy, Cultural Heritage

#### **Review of Literature:**

Scholars have extensively studied the intersections of indigenous traditions, art, and education. Singh (2009) highlights the philosophical and aesthetic underpinnings of Indian art, arguing for their relevance in pedagogy. Radhakrishnan (2010) emphasizes the deep connection between Indian philosophy and the arts, suggesting that education should cultivate cultural consciousness. Kapur (2011) calls for integrating indigenous knowledge into curricula, viewing art as a key vehicle of cultural transmission. Joshi (2015) explores the role of art education in identity formation and creativity. Mishra (2018) discusses IKS in higher education, underlining policy implications for holistic learning. Nair (2019) examines the role of rituals and traditions in sustaining indigenous knowledge through art. UNESCO (2006) provides an international framework where arts are central to intercultural dialogue and creativity. Chakrabarty (2021) analyses NEP 2020 as a policy emphasizing IKS, while Raina (2002) stresses the importance of creativity rooted in tradition. The NEP (2020) itself is a landmark policy that encourages multidisciplinary and culturally grounded education. Together, these works confirm that IKS, when linked with art education, can bridge tradition and innovation while promoting holistic learning.

#### **Statement of the Problem:**

Although NEP 2020 has recognized the importance of integrating Indian Knowledge Systems into education, its implementation in art education remains uneven and underexplored. Art education is often treated as peripheral to mainstream subjects, limiting its scope to extracurricular activities rather than integrating it into core pedagogy. The dominance of Western frameworks in art curricula has overshadowed indigenous traditions, leading to erosion of cultural practices and aesthetic knowledge. Furthermore, the absence of adequately trained teachers, lack of curriculum frameworks, and institutional constraints hinder the meaningful adoption of IKS in art education. This creates a significant gap between the policy's transformative vision and classroom realities.

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#### Significance of the Study:

This study is significant because it highlights how art education, when enriched with Indian Knowledge Systems, can become a transformative tool for cultural preservation and innovation in India's education system. By analyzing NEP 2020 in light of IKS, the study contributes to debates on decolonizing pedagogy, preserving cultural heritage, and fostering creativity among learners. It also provides insights for policymakers, educators, and curriculum developers seeking to integrate indigenous traditions into art education. Ultimately, the research emphasizes that art education is not merely about creativity but also about nurturing cultural identity and holistic growth in line with NEP 2020.

## **Objectives of the Study:**

- To analyze the role of art education in NEP 2020 with reference to Indian Knowledge Systems.
- To examine how IKS can be integrated into art curricula for holistic learning.
- To identify challenges in implementing IKS-based art pedagogy.
- To highlight opportunities for bridging tradition and innovation through art education.

#### **Research Questions:**

- How does NEP 2020 envision the role of art education in India?
- What role do Indian Knowledge Systems play in enriching art education?
- What challenges exist in implementing IKS-based art pedagogy?
- How can art education under NEP 2020 balance tradition and innovation?

#### **Methodology:**

This research adopts a qualitative approach, using secondary sources such as policy documents, academic texts, and journal articles. Content analysis is employed to examine NEP 2020's vision of art education, while thematic analysis is applied to literature on IKS and pedagogy. The methodology is exploratory, aiming to generate conceptual understanding rather than statistical data. Case-based evidence from institutions practicing IKS-oriented art education adds further insights.

#### **Research Design:**

The research design is descriptive and analytical, focusing on document and literature analysis. It examines how NEP 2020 conceptualizes art education, how IKS can be incorporated into pedagogical frameworks, and what challenges exist in practice. The design ensures comprehensive coverage of theoretical, cultural, and policy dimensions.

#### **Data Collection:**

Data is drawn from secondary sources such as NEP 2020, NCERT reports, academic books, peer-reviewed journals, and international guidelines like UNESCO's Road Map for Arts Education. Case studies of Indian institutions integrating IKS into art-based curricula are also examined.

#### **Introduction:**

Education in India has always been closely tied to its cultural and philosophical foundations. From the gurukul system of ancient India to the modern universities of today, Indian education has evolved significantly, reflecting shifts in knowledge, pedagogy, and social needs. Yet, one recurring theme across centuries has been the role of art and culture in shaping human development. Art education in particular is not just about skill or creativity; it is deeply linked with how individuals perceive themselves, their society, and their cultural heritage. The

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National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, recognizing this, places art education at the core of holistic and experiential learning. It emphasizes not only creativity and innovation but also rootedness in India's traditions through the incorporation of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS). The concept of Indian Knowledge Systems refers to the vast repository of indigenous wisdom, practices, and philosophies developed in India over millennia. These include literature, performing and visual arts, architecture, crafts, oral traditions, music, yoga, Ayurveda, and spiritual philosophies. IKS represents not just a set of practices but a worldview—one that values interconnectedness, sustainability, creativity, and holistic growth. In the context of art education, IKS offers rich possibilities: teaching students about aesthetics through classical dance, exploring mathematical patterns in rangoli or kolam, understanding symbolism in temple architecture, or using storytelling traditions like katha and bhaona as pedagogical tools. However, in the colonial and postcolonial period, education in India largely adopted Western frameworks. Art education became marginal, often reduced to extracurricular activities rather than a core subject. Curricula privileged Western art forms and techniques, while indigenous forms were considered either "folk" or "craft" and placed in a secondary position. This imbalance led to a gradual

erosion of local traditions within formal education. With globalization and rapid modernization, this gap widened, resulting in a younger generation that often remained disconnected from their cultural heritage. NEP 2020, therefore, represents a timely and significant intervention. It envisions a paradigm shift, calling for multidisciplinary education, creativity, critical thinking, and rootedness in Indian culture. For the first time in decades, policy documents explicitly advocate integrating Indian Knowledge Systems into mainstream education. The inclusion of IKS in the NEP is not just symbolic but strategic—it acknowledges that sustainable and meaningful learning requires bridging tradition and modernity. For art education, this means placing indigenous artistic traditions at the heart of pedagogy while also encouraging innovation and contemporary expression. Art education under NEP 2020 is conceptualized as an essential tool for holistic development. It is not confined to producing artists but aimed at developing imagination, empathy, cultural sensitivity, and critical inquiry. For example, introducing children to the rhythms of tabla or the geometry of mandalas is not only about learning music or drawing but also about cognitive development, mathematical reasoning, and aesthetic appreciation. Similarly, theatre traditions like Yakshagana or Ankiya Bhaona can be used to teach history, ethics, and teamwork, while mural painting traditions can enrich environmental education by depicting the relationship between humans and nature. The integration of IKS into art education also serves the broader purpose of decolonizing education. For centuries, colonial and postcolonial systems privileged Western epistemologies while marginalizing indigenous knowledge. This created a sense of cultural alienation among learners. By embedding IKS within art education, NEP 2020 attempts to restore dignity to indigenous practices and validate them as legitimate knowledge systems. This decolonizing process is crucial for identity formation among students, helping them take pride in their heritage while engaging critically with modern challenges.

At the same time, NEP 2020 does not view tradition as static. Rather, it calls for a dialogue between tradition and innovation. The integration of IKS into art education should not mean freezing practices in the past but allowing them to evolve in response to contemporary realities. For instance, digital technology can be used to preserve, document, and reinterpret traditional art forms, making them accessible to younger generations. Collaborative projects between traditional artisans and modern designers can create new forms of art that are both rooted and global. In this way, art education becomes a dynamic site where culture is preserved, questioned, and reinvented. Yet, the path to implementation is not without challenges. Many teachers lack adequate training in indigenous art forms or in integrating IKS into pedagogy. Institutional frameworks are still largely oriented toward standardized testing and academic subjects, leaving little room for creative experimentation. Resources such as textbooks, digital archives, or training modules on IKS in art education remain scarce. Furthermore, there is a danger of tokenism—where IKS is superficially added to curricula

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without genuine engagement with its depth and diversity. Addressing these challenges requires systemic change, including teacher training, curriculum reform, and institutional support. This research paper, therefore, seeks to explore how IKS can be meaningfully integrated into art education under NEP 2020. It examines both the opportunities and challenges, emphasizing the transformative potential of such integration. The study highlights how art education, enriched with IKS, can contribute to three major outcomes:

Cultural Preservation – ensuring that India's rich artistic traditions are passed on to future generations in meaningful ways.

Creativity and Innovation - using traditional forms as inspiration for new artistic expressions and interdisciplinary learning.

**Holistic Development** – fostering empathy, identity, and critical thinking through culturally rooted pedagogy.

By situating the discussion within the broader framework of NEP 2020, the paper underscores the importance of aligning policy vision with educational practice. It argues that art education is not peripheral but central to achieving the goals of NEP 2020: creating learners who are creative, rooted in culture, globally aware, and capable of lifelong learning. Ultimately, the integration of Indian Knowledge Systems into art education represents a unique opportunity for India. It allows the country to draw from its deep cultural reservoir while preparing students for a globalized, knowledge-driven world. If implemented thoughtfully, this integration can ensure that Indian education is not merely a follower of global trends but a contributor to new, inclusive, and holistic models of learning. The stakes are high: art education infused with IKS has the power to shape not just individual learners but the cultural and intellectual fabric of the nation itself.

## **Conclusion:**

The integration of Indian Knowledge Systems into art education under NEP 2020 represents a powerful shift from tradition to innovation. By aligning indigenous practices with modern pedagogy, India has the opportunity to create a culturally rooted yet forward-looking education system. While challenges such as teacher training, curriculum design, and institutional support remain, the potential benefits are immense: preservation of heritage, promotion of creativity, and holistic development. The study concludes that art education, enriched with IKS, can serve as a transformative medium of learning, bridging the past with the future.

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