

The Relevance and Need for Inclusion of Indian Knowledge Systems in Modern Legal Education

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Abstract

Indian Legal System refers to ancient, indigenous and traditional way of learning and covers fields such as mathematics, medicine, architecture, yoga, agriculture, literature, politics and governance. Moreover, it also acknowledges traditional community customs and tribal knowledge. Since the social and intellectual context in which law is developed is always present, this breadth is especially crucial for legal education. Language, social structure, political authority, economic life, religion, morality, and human concepts all influence ideas of justice. Students should be encouraged to enquire about how knowledge was created, who had access to it, whose voices were silenced, how texts were interpreted, and how historical organisations actually functioned. This method turns IKS into a topic of legal-historical and jurisprudential inquiry. In this light, this paper enquires into the state of legal education in India with respect to inclusion of Indian Knowledge System in Indian Legal education, the relevance and necessity of the same.

Key Words: Decolonisation, Indianisation, Indian Knowledge System, Jurisprudence, Legal Education, NEP 2020.

Introduction:

India's rich cultural tapestry has been a result of an evolutionary cultural progress which has evolved over thousands of years which influenced global outlook in arts, science, philosophy and spirituality and they are collectively called as Indian Knowledge System (IKS) (Kumar, 2025). The phrase IKS is expansive and cannot be confined to a single tradition, a particular area or even attributed to a single period. But rather is a systematic body of knowledge generated, applied and transmitted over generations in the Indian Subcontinent (Kumar M. , 2024). However, as a result of the establishment of the British style of education in India and changes in the source and mode of imparting education lead to the loss of significant IKS based systems and traditional knowledge which was observed by the government, leading to inclusion of this domain in forthcoming educational policies under National Education Policy, 2020 (Ms. Pradnya Bapurao Abhyankar, 2025). The Indian knowledge system can be defined as a collection of knowledge, practices, tradition and beliefs which has been originated from the Indian subcontinent (Dubey, 2025). The Indian Knowledge System can be interpreted as a form of traditional knowledge which indigenous people have transmitted from one generation in older past to another generation in the new present (Taibor Rahaman Khan, 2020). The key feature of the Indian Knowledge System lies in its emphasis on the interconnectedness and interdependence of all beings and the universe (Dr. Priyanka Wandhe, 2024).

Today, this traditional set of Indian Knowledge Systems is facing the challenge of being dynamic and relevant in a fast progressive world (Sain, 2025). As a result, the "National Education Policy 2020" integrates the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) into curriculum frameworks to foster a holistic, engaging education that deepens students' and teachers' understanding of India's rich heritage and human knowledge (Sakshi Singh, 2025). This is because such holistic

inclusion in modern educational pedagogy might enhance the contemporary modern education by providing diverse perspectives through traditional disciplines including Vedanta, Ayurveda, and Vedic Mathematics etc (Dr. Papiya Upadhyay, 2025). Further, such inclusion of Indian Knowledge System in Modern Educational development will lead towards cultural revival, Holistic learning, Environmental sustainability, Innovation, Entrepreneurship and inclusivity that validate the knowledge of rural and tribal communities (Devi, 2024).

In line with the same this paper discusses how relevance of including the IKS system in Indian Legal Education alongwith the existing legal education framework. Even though strictly legal education in India is concentrated on Indian Legal System – both substantive and procedural statute based law and principles which is applicable, but with respect to jurisprudential research, always, there has been a large amount concentration on Western jurisprudential thought rather than promoting the Indian school of thoughts. Therefore, this paper analyses the scope for such inclusion of Indian Knowledge System in modern legal education and analyse a survey taken among Academicians, Parents, Students and other stakeholders on their views on inclusion of Indian Knowledge System framework in Indian legal education.

Relevance of Indian Knowledge System in Modern Education System:

Works like the Vedas, Upanishads, and the writings of thinkers like Chanakya and Patanjali are considered as a part of a large corpus of works which laid the foundation for the ancient Indian Knowledge System (IKS), which places a strong emphasis on interconnected learning for intellectual, moral, and spiritual development (Subash Giri, 2025). Further, prominent schools of philosophy in India, such as Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Samkhya, and Mimamsa, contribute to the intellectual foundation of IKS through their deeper understanding in empirical observations and logical reasoning, shaping both spiritual practices and scientific inquiries (Bhatt, 2025). In the light of andragogy perspective, while developing teaching methodologies for Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS), it is crucial to tap into India's rich chronological heritage of knowledge transmission, incorporating traditional methods and approaches to create effective and culturally relevant pedagogies (Dr. Anjusha Gawande, 2025). As a result, the National Education Policy of 2020 proposes to include the Indian Knowledge System as a part of modern educational system and curriculum in India (Dr. Preeti Joshi, 2025).

By incorporating ancient wisdom into modern pedagogy to foster critical thinking, value development, and sustainability, India's 2020 National Education Policy leverages the restoration of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) as a decolonizing approach to reshape learners' connection with indigenous intellectual traditions (S Sachinkumar, 2026). The Indian education system is of Macaulay Origin and still, we are following it and thus, in the age of vast information systems and following this education system we have lost our culturally based knowledge and heritage (Dr. Naresh Chandal, 2024). Inclusion of Indian Knowledge System in higher education seems relevant and necessary since it builds as noted earlier a diverse perspective to problem solving and ethical frameworks (Shirvalkar, 2024). Such relevance of Indian Knowledge System in Modern Education System builds up character, Ethics, creativity, critical thinking and emotional intelligence (Khamrai, 2026). NEP 2020 advocates for the comprehensive integration of Indian Knowledge Systems into higher education by encouraging universities to establish dedicated courses, departments, and research centers, while fostering multidisciplinary programs and national initiatives that critically examine and innovate upon traditional knowledge using modern academic methodologies (Singh, 2026). This environment offers fertile ground for the incorporation of IKS, as traditional knowledge often spans multiple domains, including ecology, agriculture, spirituality, and governance in Higher Education (Rumeeta Sharma, 2025).

Role of Indian Knowledge System in Indian Legal Education:

As noted earlier, integrating IKS into higher education is not only a matter of preserving cultural heritage but also of enriching students' intellectual and personal development (Dr Shradha B Jain, 2025). Law is not an exception to this inclusion of Indian Knowledge System and there is a necessity and scope to include Indian Knowledge System in Indian Legal Education. Especially, in the stream of jurisprudence there has been “hegemony” of Western thoughts over Indian school of thoughts. Jurisprudence is derived from the Latin word “Jurisprudentia” which literally means “Knowledge of Law” (Priyam, 2020). Even though predominantly the Indian Legal Education is focused on Indian

Legal System, statutes, substantive and procedural laws, yet the jurisprudential thoughts are focused on Western School of thoughts.

In Colonial era, India was used as a mere “colonial laboratory” to examine and test the Western Jurisprudence and impose the same using legal education as a tool to control the Indian masses (Likhovski, 2021). The Indian legal system is largely predicated upon common law, much like other former British colonies (Kaushik, 2024). The concept of Dharma as a core philosophical work enunciated with other large corpus of categories of works including Vedic texts, Smritis, Shrutis, Puranas, Itihasas, Upanishads, etc act as a core fundamental unit for Indian Knowledge System based philosophical grounding for Indian Legal and jurisprudential thoughts (Khairnar, 2025). The Colonial narratives on Indian legal thoughts were distorted and adapted through fluid application and interpretation in accordance to the necessity for colonial governance and implementation of Western legal and philosophical thoughts. This was further evident since under Lord Hastings and Lord Macaulay, the colonial masters tried to adapt and translate Hindu and Muslim texts for Western adaptation without philosophical and interpretative depth by Orientalist scholars like Nathaniel Halhed and Henry Colebrooke leading to a distorted corpus of texts and further the government sponsored imparting of Western legal education in India (Derrett, 1961). Scholars including PV Kane and Dr S. Radhakrishnan, known for their definitive works and commentaries on Indian Legal and Philosophical thoughts argued for the decolonization of Western narratives of jurisprudence and philosophical thoughts which but largely remained on relevance with philosophical field and never reached legal education system (Champaklal, 2026).

The necessity of inclusion of Indian Knowledge System lies in the fact that the letter and spirit of law in India is not limited to the monistic system of state law as maintained by Western jurisprudence in accordance with methodological postulates of legal positivism (Sondhi, 2024).

Therefore, it is necessary to have diverse perspectives including application of legal principles and jurisprudence through Indian Knowledge Systems, which suits the social and religious fabric of India. For example, a lay man in India or a person who has no idea on the theory of Legal positivism might not understand the technicalities of this western concept of “Law is the command of sovereign backed by sanction” as noted by John Austin (Bisht, 2024). But, if we use the Indian Knowledge System and explain it through a simpler logical and practical illustration based idea, it might lead to a better effective understanding. In this case of Positivism, if the concept of Abul Fazal’s theory of Badshahat is used it might be better to understand given the social, traditional, historical and faith based narratives and fabric of India. Abul Fazal’s Badshahat portrays the emperor as a supreme, divine authority who holds ultimate legislative, executive, and judicial sovereignty by virtue of being God’s direct agent on Earth, drawing upon a synthesized blend of Indian, Iranian, Arabic, Mongol, Turkish, and Islamic traditions (Sivanu, 2023).

Further, the Indian Knowledge System is considered as a fundamental foundational area for various legal subject matters including Family Law. For example, laws including the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 in which Saptapadi which is a part of Indian traditional setup being legalized as an essential of marriage and coparcenary system which is a part of Dharmashastra (Khairnar, 2025). Also, there is a very rich relevance of Indian Knowledge System with respect to tradition of governance as well which is intrinsically connected to legal systems through principles of Dharma, ethical leadership, decentralisation and public welfare as grounded in works like the Arthashastra and epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata (Salve, 2026). In this lieu, the incorporation of Indian Knowledge System is necessary and will lead to an effective implementation of Legal thoughts in modern legal education system for the improvement of quality legal education.

Determining the need for inclusion of Indian Knowledge System in Modern Legal Education:

In lieu of this research, we undertook a survey by collecting samples across India from Students, Teachers, Parents and Other stakeholders. The reason for specifically selecting these stakeholder are because that the teachers, students and parents are the core fundamental pillar of any education system since, the factors including communication, trust, and collaboration among the three parties to create a supportive learning environment (McIntosh, 2023). As a result hence, we have chosen Mixed sampling method to both restrict the sample under quota sampling method by identifying specific population strata and also followed a simple random sampling where samples were collected randomly (Radhakrishnan, 2024) since we needed diverse perspectives as well on this subject matters and hence added “others”

as an option to include other stakeholders as well. We would be analysing the results of the survey question by question. A total of 13 questions were asked to the participants in the survey conducted through google forms and we got a total of 51 responses from across the student, teacher, parent and other stakeholders.

The first question was to rate the knowledge level of the participants with respect to Indian Knowledge and out of 5 the highest average was 3.10, indicating a very middle ground with respect to the dissemination of knowledge amongst commoners in the domain of Indian Knowledge System. The highest number of votes were in favour of point 4 out of 5 which was 25.5% and the second place was secured by point 3 with 21.6%.

The second question was regarding self identification of the participants. Out of 51 samples, 60.8% of participants were students, 19.6% were academicians, 15.7% were other stakeholders and 3.9% were parents as indicated in Fig.1.

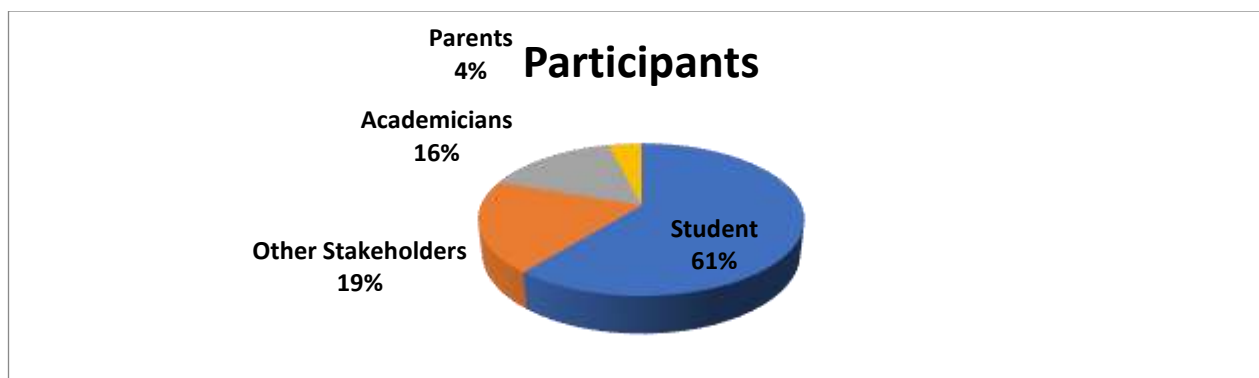


Fig.1

With respect to the third question it was relating to the specific place where the participants belongs and the same has been represented in Fig.2.

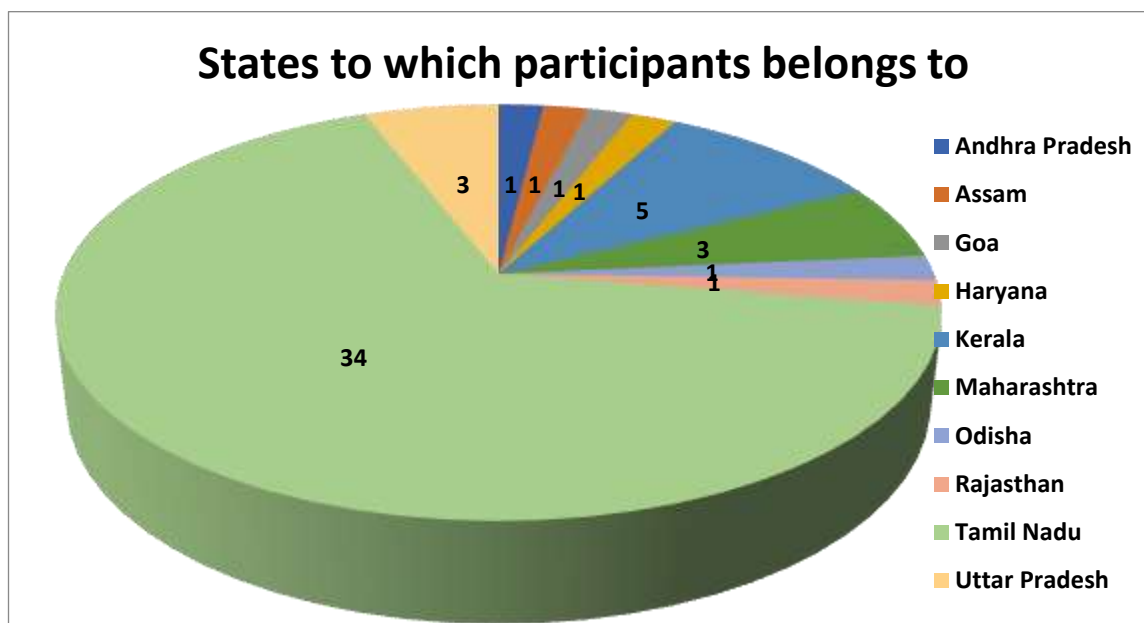


Fig.2

The highest number of participants were from the State of Tamil Nadu (34 participants) followed by Kerala (5 participants). Kerala was followed by the states of Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra which had three participants each. Further there were one participant from the states of Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Goa, Haryana, Odisha and Rajasthan.

The fourth question asked in the survey was “Are you of the opinion that the Indian Legal Education System is more focused on Western model of Legal Study and Jurisprudence?”. The objective of this question specifically was because most of the syllabus in Law schools across India emphasis on Legal education through Western jurisprudence rather than inclusion of Indian Knowledge System. 90.2% of the participants were of the affirmative opinion to this question whereas, 9.8% of the participants gave a negative response to this question as shown in Fig.3.

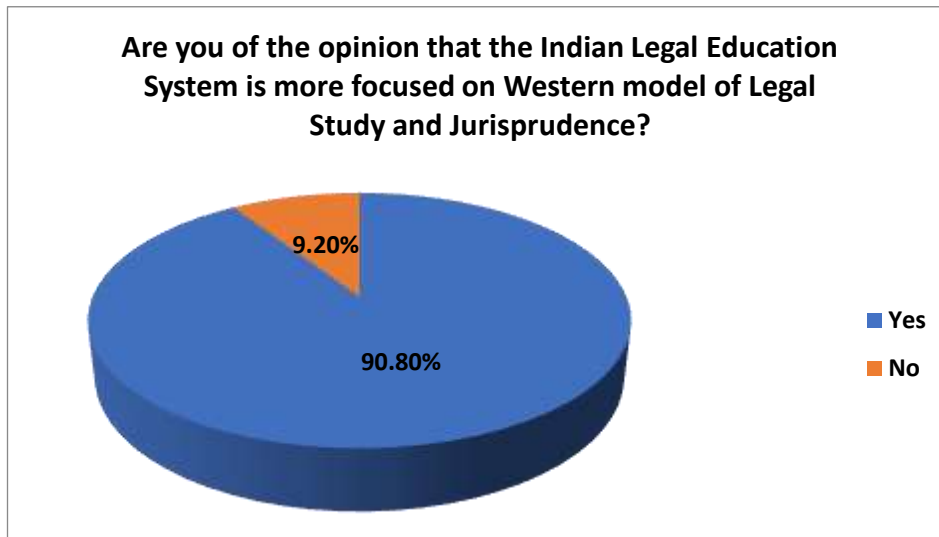


Fig.3

The Indian legal system is a palimpsest, where all the most important statutory law is written over a social frame that ignores a large number of indigenous philosophical foundations of justice (Pandey, 2026). The Colonial legal system was primarily focused on mechanisms for territorial control, economic exploitation, and cultural assimilation (Menon, 2026) and as a result the legal education system and especially jurisprudence were found to be concentrated with Western legal thoughts rather than concentrating on other streams of thought including Indian or Asian. This was confirmed through this question with an overwhelming number of participants accepting the fact that Western model of study and jurisprudential legal thought are focused more in Indian Legal Education System than the Indian Knowledge System.

The fifth question asked was “Do you believe that there is a need for including Indian Knowledge System in Indian Legal Education widely through the syllabus?” to which 76.5% responded “Yes” and 23.5% of participants responded “No” as represented in Fig.4. This question was posed before the participants since the core fundamental reason in this research was to identify the need for inclusion of Indian Knowledge System in Indian Legal Education System.

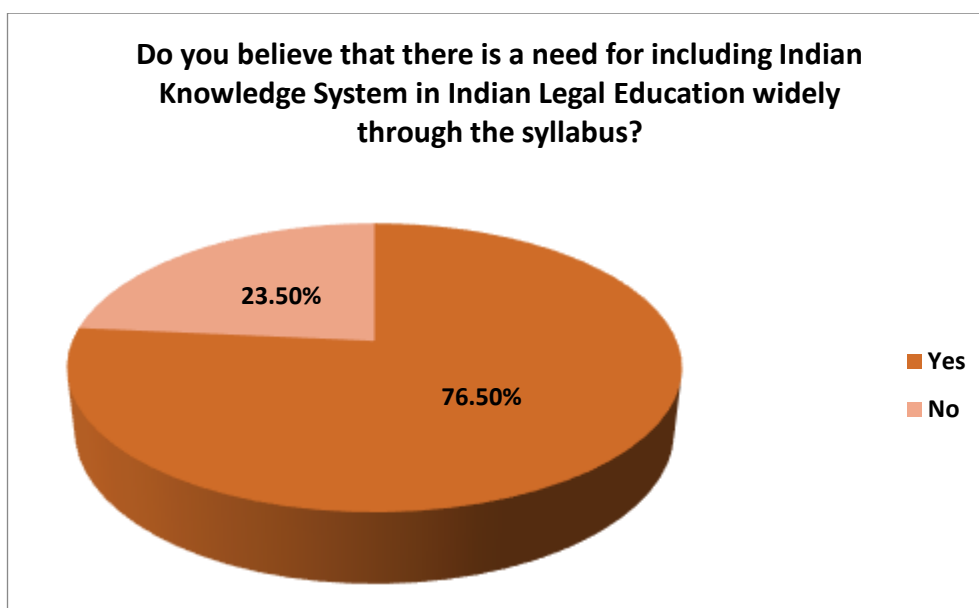


Fig.4

As noted earlier, the Western jurisprudence has its own limitations including trying to “divorce” law from morality its dependence on legal positivism, and its emphasis on individual rights at the expense of communal responsibilities

which might frequently cause friction when adopted in non Western societies (Tiwari, 2026). As a result there is a need to include Indian Knowledge System as well under the Indian Legal Education system which has been established since in a general parlance more than 76.50% of participants in this survey are in favour of the same.

The sixth question asked was “What will be the response of the student audience in your opinion due to the inclusion of Indian Knowledge System in Indian Legal Education?”. 33.3% of the participants opined that such inclusion will lead to improvement at application level learning while 31.4% of participants opined that such inclusion will be interesting to the student audience and 19.6% of participants believed that such inclusion will be sensitive and 15.7% opined that it will be boring to the audience as represented in Fig.5.

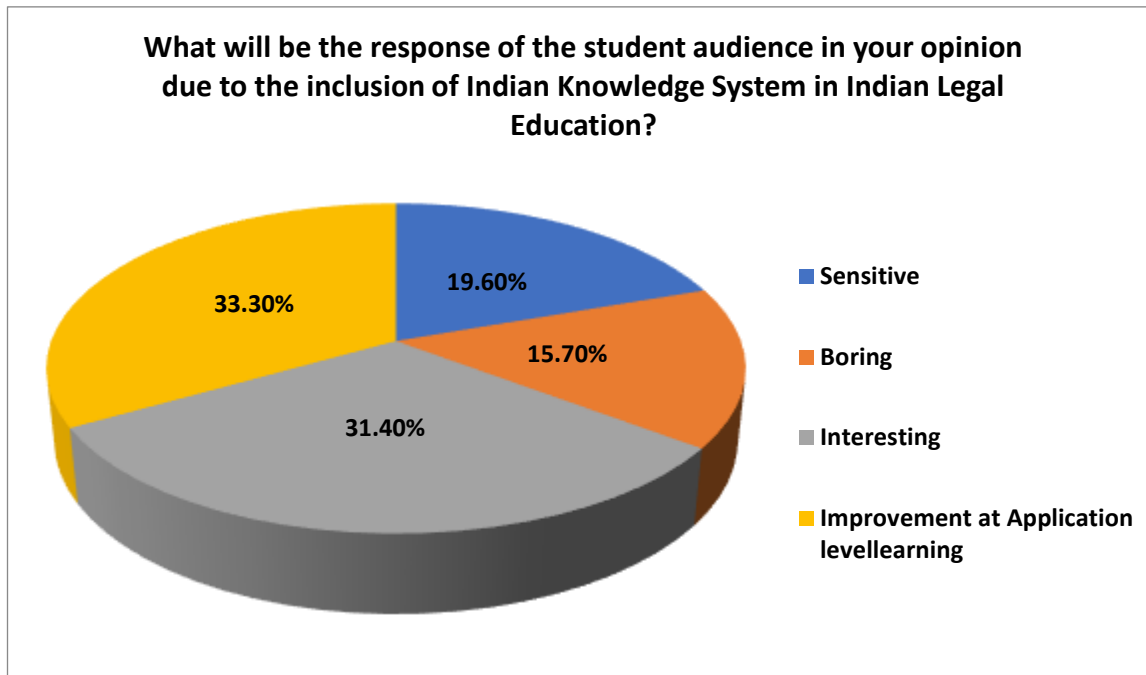


Fig.5

With respect to this question as shown earlier with respect to the example on how Positivism can be easily related to Indian theory of kingship under Badshahat concept of Abul Fazl, similarly, on application it will be easier to understand and also will be interesting. On the other hand, with respect to the concerns on sensitivity, it stems from the reason because the same Indian Knowledge Systems might also include social evils including the Varna System, Untouchability and discrimination on the basis of caste and gender.

The seventh question was “Do you believe that the inclusion of Indian Knowledge System in Indian Legal Education will help in achieving the Viksit Bharat vision for 2047?” which was one of the focal point in this research. Largely it has been accepted by researchers that inclusion of IKS in fields including medicine (through Ayurveda), Diplomacy (traditional models), engineering (usage of ancient architectural techniques) etc will lead to a competitive edge over Indian competitors leading the pathway to Viksit Bharat 2047 (Dr. Ashok Kumar Digal, 2025). Viksit Bharat 2047 refers to India’s dream of becoming a developed country by the year 2047 (Ayushi Pande, 2025). With respect to this question, 74.5% of participants responded affirmatively that the inclusion of IKS in legal education would lead to Viksit Bharat 2047 while 25.5% of participants voted that it won’t lead to Viksit Bharat 2047 as represented in Fig.6.

Do you believe that the inclusion of Indian Knowledge System in Indian Legal Education will help in achieving the Viksit Bharat vision for 2047?

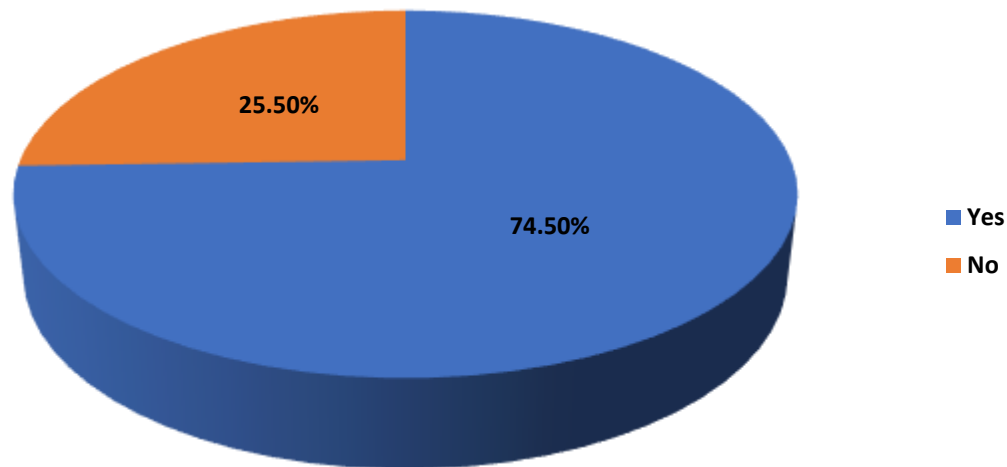


Fig.6

Since, inclusion of IKS leads to a better understanding of the legal jurisprudential foundation, it will lead to a better development of the legal students and their contributions to the legal fraternity and as a result such inclusion will lead to Viksit Bharat 2047.

The eighth question was “Do you believe that the relevance of Indian Knowledge Systems in Modern legal System has been largely ignored?”. 88.2% of the participants responded “Yes” and 11.8% of participants responded “No” as represented in Fig.7.

Do you believe that the relevance of Indian Knowledge Systems in Modern legal System has been largely ignored?

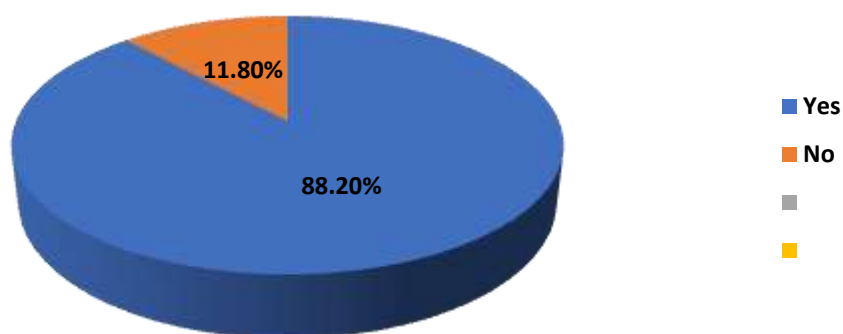


Fig.7

The ninth question was “Which form of sensitivity issues do you believe might arise if Indian Knowledge Systems are implemented in Indian Legal Education?”. As represented in Fig. 8, 17.6% of participants were of the opinion that issues related to caste might arise, 9.8% participants opined that religious issues might pop up, 23.5% of participants opined that issues related to gender might arise while a large majority of 49% of participants opined that largely intersectionality of all these issues might arise due to inclusion of Indian Knowledge System in Legal education system.

Which form of sensitivity issues do you believe might arise if Indian Knowledge Systems are implemented in Indian Legal Education?

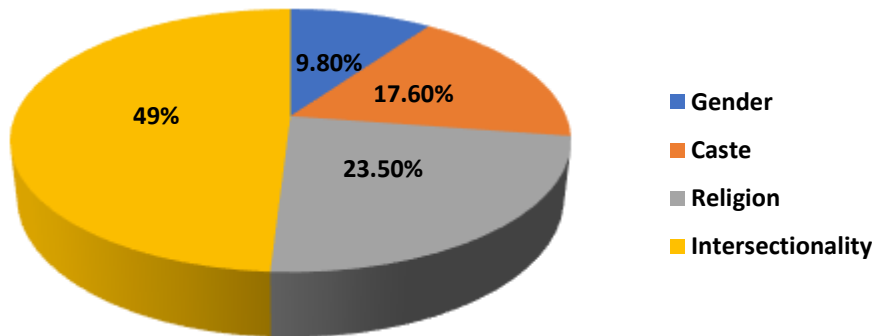


Fig.8

As a result, the tenth question was “Do you believe a secularised version of Indian Knowledge System will be better for a Modern Legal System?”. 78.4% of participants responded “Yes” and 21.6% of participants responded “No” as represented in Fig.9.

Do you believe a secularised version of Indian Knowledge System will be better for a Modern Legal System?

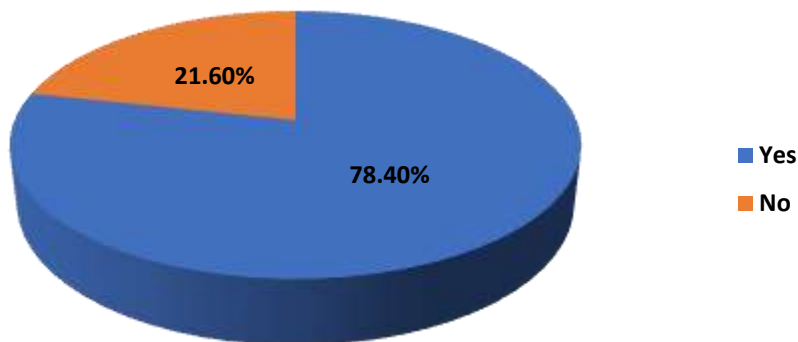


Fig.9

Therefore, in spite of such possibilities for problems in inclusion of Indian Knowledge System in Legal Education System, yet a secularised narrative of the Indian Knowledge System including Vedanta might lead to a better modern legal system.

The eleventh question was “Do you think decolonisation initiatives has not been effectively implemented with respect to Indian Legal Systems?”. 80% of participants responded “Yes” and 20% of participants responded “No” as represented in Fig.10.

Do you think decolonisation initiatives has not been effectively implemented with respect to Indian Legal Systems?

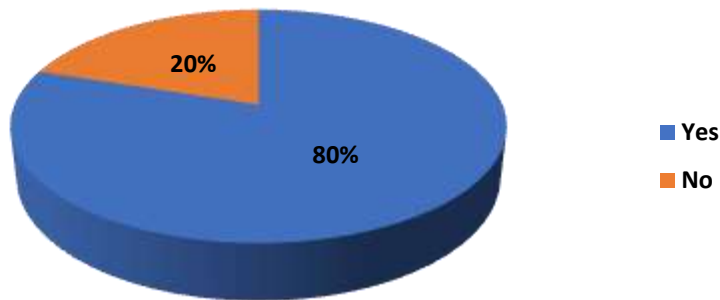


Fig.10

Even though the decolonisation initiatives were rolled out by the Union Parliament and Government of India in the Indian Legal System starting with the new three criminal laws which were named as Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinayam, 2023 were just Indian in name from the colonial law and they were just predominantly the same inside (Dr. Geetika Sood, 2026). As a result the participants believe that the decolonisation does not happens just by way of just “Indianizing” the title of the laws but, also develop and establish a new legal system by completely decolonizing the Colonial era legal systems which has been established by the colonial masters solely to rule and conquer as noted earlier.

The twelfth question was “Do you believe that other streams of study are rapidly approaching Decolonisation approaches while Legal Education Systems has rather been reluctant to do so?”. 78.4% of participants responded “Yes” and 21.6% of participants responded “No” as represented in Fig.11.

Do you believe that other streams of study are rapidly approaching Decolonisation approaches while Legal Education Systems has rather been reluctant to do so?

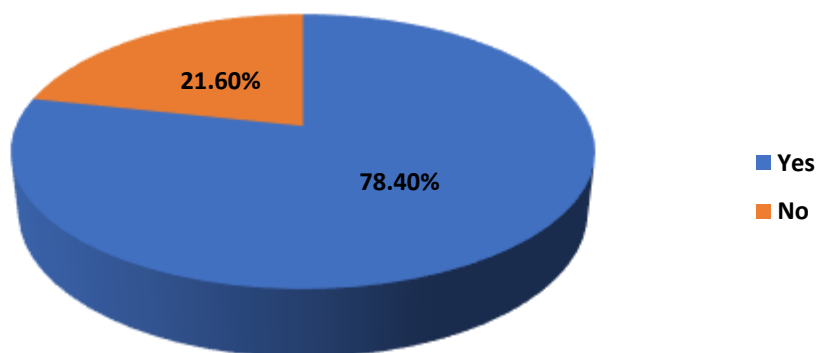


Fig.11

It is to contended herein that the other streams of study are rapidly approaching towards decolonisation and have started including Indian Knowledge System in their courses and syllabi. In Medical Sciences a separate stream for Indian stream has been recognised through the AYUSH framework including Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha, Homeopathy and Naturopathy (Pratima Vijayvargiya, 2026). In Engineering stream, concepts like that of Pramana which are the traditional Indian epistemological tools are integrated into their curriculum (Dr. Brainerd Prince, 2025). Even in the world of fashion technology studies innovation in traditional Indian textile industries like Khadi and Chikankari are promoted (Rajwinder Kaur, 2025). With respect to management studies through ethical values from

Ramayana, Mahabharatha, the Bhagavad Gita etc (Moudgil, 2024). Hence, when it comes to Indian Knowledge System integration in Indian Legal System it is more than a mere change of names but it should mean a much more expansive idea of ‘decolonising law’ referring not to particular legal enactments such as the criminal codes, but to the entire edifice of the modern state (Burra, 2024).

The thirteenth question was “Do you think that the present Modern Legal System will be ready to accept traditional knowledge acquired?”. 64.7% of participants responded “Yes” and 35.3% of participants responded “No” as represented in Fig.12.

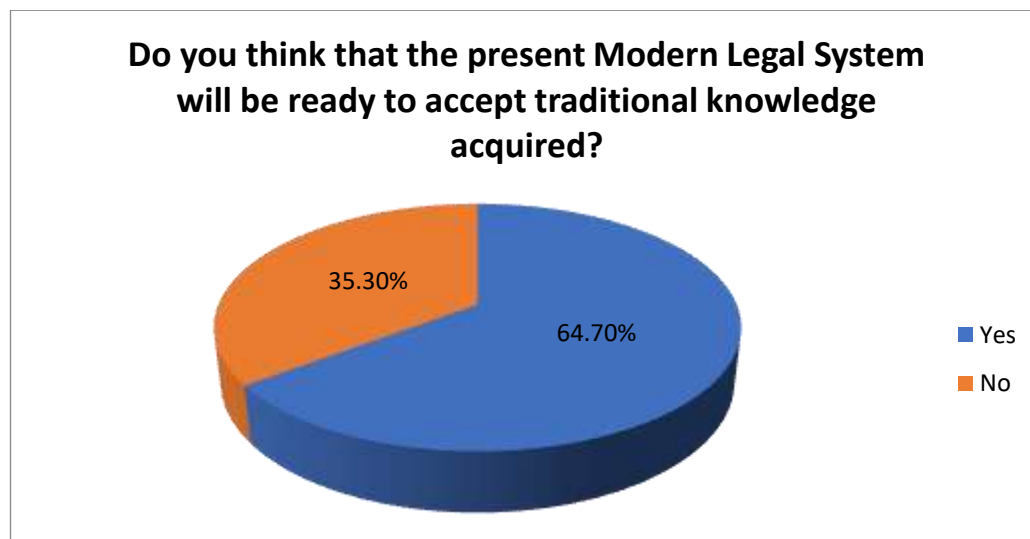


Fig.12

Analysing both the questions no.12 and 13, it gives us a joint conclusion that eventhough there are decolonisation approaches in legal stream as well, but there has been a reluctance from the part of legal stream to accept Indian Knowledge System eventhough large proportion of the participants is of the opinion that the modern legal system will be ready to accept Indian Knowledge System. There has been a lack of effective policy mandates from the Bar Council of India and Ministry of Legal Affairs with regards to implementation of Indian Knowledge Systems in Indian Legal Education (Yadav, 2025). This is indicated by the BCI revisal of Law Syllabus recommendations to law schools across India in the circular dated 20th May, 2024 () (Bar Council of India, 2024) where eventhough application to Indian cultural and socio – economic realities has been explored but yet inclusion of Indian Knowledge Systems has not been pondered over in the latest set of recommendations even long after other streams of educational courses including IKS in their curriculum.

Therefore, there has been a proved reluctance from the Modern Legal System to accept the traditional knowledge on one hand and on another hand application of Western model of legal thoughts in Indian ground reality has been included in 2024 circular after a very long delay indicating the same reluctance. Hence, it is concluded based on the analysis made in question 12 and 13 that there has been a larger reluctance from the Legal fraternity to welcome Indian Knowledge Systems in Legal education curriculum in India.

Conclusion:

India’s legal education has evolved from rote learning to a multidisciplinary, experiential system through successive reforms, starting with the Radhakrishnan Commission’s humanistic vision and culminating in the technology-driven National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and Bar Council of India (BCI) amendments (2022–2025) (T, 2025). Justice Pankaj Mithal, former Judge of Supreme Court of India, recently in an address stated that “We must now turn to the deeper roots of our legal tradition to understand how the modern constitution draws from a moral reservoir far older than its text... .. The concept of Justice in Indian tradition is not a recent invention. Long before the language of

modern jurisprudence took form, the sub-continent had developed a rich moral vocabulary around justice, duty, righteousness and governance” (Eslam, 2025).

It is interesting to note that the Supreme Court of India long before one of their decisions used in a way Indian Knowledge System through a folklore story of King Manu needhi Chozha and quoted “.....The king went through the same pain the cow had as he witnessed his son die and thereby, being just at all costs. The Judges of all the Courts, since its very inception, have always maintained this great tradition of the Chozha King and are rendering even justice to all concerned, whosoever he or she may be, irrespective of the fact whether they are rich or poor, and whether they occupy a high or a low status in the society” (National Lawyer’s Campaign for Judicial Transparency and Reforms and Ors. vs Hon’ble Shri J.S. Khehar, 2016). Therefore, the Hon’ble Supreme Court of India has themselves set up a standard to use such examples, for better clarification and application of legal principles as it is fit to the Indian social and cultural background. But, sadly as the survey conducted notes, the same has not been understood by the legal fraternity and those in “power” of determining the legal education standards across India. Therefore, it is pertinent that the inclusion of Indian Knowledge System would of course lead to a better outcome in India’s path towards “Viksit Bharat 2047” and legal fraternity through a new form of legal education free from the Colonial shackles could finally attain their “Freedom” and learn what their own country has taught for centuries. Yet as jokingly remarked by famous Bollywood actor Raj Kapoor in one of his film dialogues “What are law studies today? Henry the eighth had eight wives.....There is relation in demand and supply..A little bit of English and 50 marks for Hindi. Is it all important?” (Anand, 1948) and as a poignant reminder we are in a position to accept with great difficulty that the condition of legal education remains the same.

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