EDITORIAL

Indian Knowledge Systems and the Discipline of Critical Scholarship

Introducing Volume 1, Issue 1

Naval Singh Jain, Founding Editor-in-Chief

Abstract

This editorial introduces Volume 1, Issue 1 of Pajjoya, comprising five papers addressing the journal's founding sections: educational thought in Indian philosophical traditions, classical language pedagogy, curriculum design, empirical classroom research, and policy. Rather than advocating for the integration of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) into education, each paper subjects a specific claim in this domain to disciplined scrutiny against the best available textual, historical, or empirical evidence. Read together, the five papers argue that the genuine contributions of IKS to contemporary education are real but narrower than currently claimed, and that realising them responsibly requires holding the field to the same evidentiary standard expected of any other domain of scholarship. This editorial situates that shared method within the wider context of NEP 2020's IKS mandate and sets out the standard Pajjoya intends to uphold across future issues.

Keywords: Indian Knowledge Systems; NEP 2020; critical scholarship; educational policy; evidence-based pedagogy

Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) have moved, in the space of a few years, from the margins of academic discourse to the centre of national education policy. The National Education Policy 2020 named IKS as a resource to be integrated across schooling and higher education; a dedicated division was established within the All India Council for Technical Education; and university regulators now require credit-bearing coursework in the field. This is, by any measure, a significant institutional commitment. It is also, the five papers gathered in this inaugural issue argue collectively, a commitment that has outrun the scholarly infrastructure needed to support it responsibly.

Pajjoya was founded to help build that infrastructure. Its name is drawn from the Ardhamāgadhī Prakrit word for illumination — not the light of celebration, but the light that lets one see clearly, including what one would rather not. That is the spirit in which this first issue is offered.

The five papers gathered here address one thematic strand each of the journal's founding scope — philosophical foundations, classical language pedagogy, curriculum design, empirical classroom research, and policy. Read individually, each answers a specific, bounded research question. Read together, they make a single, cumulative argument that is larger than any one of them: that the most useful contribution scholarship can currently make to this field is not further advocacy for IKS integration, of which there is already a considerable and growing supply, but sustained, disciplined scrutiny of specific claims, specific mechanisms, and specific institutions.

The Shared Method

Each paper in this collection was built around the same working discipline, applied to a different object of study. Rather than beginning from the premise that a given tradition, practice, or policy is valuable and then illustrating that value, each paper treats value as a claim to be tested against the best available evidence — textual, historical, or empirical — and reports honestly where that evidence is strong, where it is thin, and where it does not yet exist.

This produces a body of work that is, by design, less comfortable to read than much of the current IKS-in-education literature, because it declines the two moves that make that literature comfortable: the assumption that ancient is a synonym for validated, and the assumption that any critique of implementation is necessarily a critique of the underlying tradition. Both assumptions are rejected throughout this issue, explicitly and repeatedly, not as a rhetorical posture but because neither assumption survives contact with the specific evidence each paper examines.

The Five Papers

The issue opens in **Śikṣā-Darśana** with an examination of what the Jain doctrine of anekāntavāda can and cannot contribute to contemporary pedagogies of critical thinking and perspective-taking. The paper finds a genuine, structurally specific correspondence between the doctrine's linguistic and taxonomic layers and constructs already validated in educational psychology, while warning that a loosely popularised version of the same doctrine risks licensing exactly the false-balance pedagogy that contemporary research on classroom controversy identifies as harmful.

Bhāṣā-Śikṣaṇa turns to the claims made for Sanskrit study, testing the popular assertion that Sanskrit confers general cognitive benefits against the empirical literature on bilingualism, metalinguistic awareness, and classical-language transfer. It finds a real but narrow evidentiary basis, concentrated in lexical and morphological transfer to cognate Indo-Aryan languages, and finds the broader claims of domain-general cognitive enhancement unsupported, drawing a direct methodological lesson from the far more rigorously tested case of Latin instruction in Europe.

Pāṭhyakrama examines the guru-śiṣya paramparā as a potential model for NEP 2020's competency-based curriculum reform. It finds a genuine structural correspondence between the tradition's implicit pedagogy and cognitive apprenticeship theory, one capable of addressing the fragmentation risk long identified in competency-based education, while insisting, on the basis of the historical scholarship, that this pedagogical correspondence cannot be adopted without confronting the tradition's documented history of caste-restricted access.

Kakṣā-Anusandhāna takes up the empirical question directly, conducting a scoping review of what the international and Indian research literature actually

shows about school-based yoga and children's attention, executive function, and behaviour. It finds a real but modest, domain-specific signal, consistently smaller and more provisional than the confident claims common in Indian classroom and policy discourse, and identifies the two Indian randomised trials in this literature that meet the field's own higher methodological standards.

Nīti-Vimarśa closes the issue by turning from the substance of IKS claims to the governance of IKS institutions, examining the rapid expansion of IKS centres, courses, and credit requirements under NEP 2020 against the quality-assurance mechanisms meant to accompany them. It identifies a specific, structural gap between the evidentiary standard the University Grants Commission has itself set and the content-level review mechanism needed to enforce it, and proposes concrete reforms rather than a general verdict on the field.

Why This Matters Now

The stakes of getting this right are not merely academic. Curricular decisions made under NEP 2020's IKS mandate now reach millions of students, and the credibility of Indian Knowledge Systems as a serious field of contemporary scholarship — a credibility many of its most careful practitioners have worked for decades to build — is put at risk each time an inadequately vetted claim reaches a compulsory syllabus and becomes, fairly or not, the public face of the entire field. The scholars and institutions doing rigorous work in this space have the most to gain from exactly the kind of scrutiny this issue attempts, and the most to lose from its absence.

None of the five papers concludes that Indian Knowledge Systems should retreat from Indian education. Each concludes, in its own domain, that the tradition's genuine contributions are real, specific, and in most cases narrower than currently claimed, and that realising them responsibly requires the same evidentiary discipline any other field of knowledge is expected to meet. That is the argument this issue makes as a whole, and the standard Pajjoya intends to hold to as it continues: not less IKS, and not IKS without qualification, but IKS held to the standard its own best scholarship already aspires to.

References

Ministry of Education, Government of India. (2020). National Education Policy 2020. New Delhi: Government of India.