

**Relevance of Ancient Indian Education Systems in Teacher Education in the context of NEP 2020****Santosh Mohalik<sup>1</sup>, Subash Giri<sup>2</sup>; & Dr. Narayan Prasad Behera<sup>3</sup>**<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.1796705>**Review: 08/12/2025****Acceptance: 12/12/2025****Publication: 17/12/2025**

**Abstract:** This study explores the relevance of ancient Indian educational values in shaping modern teacher education within the framework of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. Ancient Indian education, rooted in the Guru–Shishya Parampara, emphasized holistic development, moral integrity, experiential learning, and lifelong self-realization. NEP 2020 reflects these philosophical principles by promoting multidisciplinary, value-based, and experiential learning, with a focus on teacher mentorship and ethical grounding. Using a qualitative, document-based approach, this study analyses secondary sources including ancient texts, research papers, and policy documents to identify key themes such as holistic development, integration of knowledge and values, and teacher-centered guidance. The findings indicate that integrating these traditional educational principles into contemporary teacher education can cultivate competent, reflective, and culturally grounded educators capable of fostering both academic excellence and moral development in students.

**Keywords:** Ancient Indian Education, Guru–Shishya Parampara, Holistic Development, Teacher Education, and NEP 2020

**Introduction:** Ancient knowledge represents a foundational and path-breaking concept in the history of education. Education in ancient India emphasized holistic development, moral integrity, and spiritual enlightenment. The *Gurukul* system focused not only on the acquisition of knowledge (*jnana*) but also on the cultivation of character, discipline, and self-realization. Learners lived with their teachers (*gurus*), fostering experiential learning, close relationships, and respect for nature and human values (Das, 2025; Roy & Paul, 2024). Teacher education has always been central to ensuring educational quality, with teachers regarded as moral and intellectual guides shaping learners' attitudes and worldviews. Therefore, developing pedagogical competence alongside ethical and cultural sensitivity remains crucial for preparing effective and value-oriented educators (Mishra & Aithal, 2023).

The Ancient Indian Education System was deeply rooted in the *Guru–Shishya Parampara*, where close teacher–student relationships nurtured intellectual, moral, and spiritual growth. Education aimed at the all-round development of the learner, emphasizing discipline, ethical conduct, and experiential learning rather than rote memorization. It was value-based and integrative, combining study, reflection, and practical experience (Das, 2025; Roy & Paul, 2024). Major centers of learning such as Takshashila, Nalanda, and Vikramashila became world-renowned hubs of scholarship and intellectual exchange. Philosophical traditions such as Vedanta, Buddhism, and Jainism profoundly influenced educational thought, highlighting self-knowledge, ethical living, and liberation (*moksha*) as the ultimate aims of education. The system's emphasis on holistic growth, moral values, and experiential wisdom continues to offer timeless insights for modern teacher education (Mishra & Aithal, 2023; Roy & Paul, 2024).

In the contemporary context, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 redefines the purpose of education by integrating Indian ethos with global perspectives. It promotes multidisciplinary, value-based, and experiential learning aimed at holistic human development (Government of India, 2020). These principles resonate strongly with ancient Indian educational ideals that sought harmony between knowledge, values, and action. Revisiting

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and integrating such principles into teacher education is essential for fostering ethical awareness, cultural rootedness, and reflective practice among future teachers. Thus, the ancient Indian education system serves as a guiding framework for realizing NEP 2020's vision of producing competent, compassionate, and culturally grounded educators capable of addressing the challenges of the 21st century (Mishra & Aithal, 2023; Roy & Paul, 2024).

**Objectives:**

1. To study the philosophical foundation of the ancient Indian Education System.
2. To explore the provisions of NEP 2020 related to teacher education.
3. To study how ancient educational principles can be integrated into modern teacher education curriculum and practices.

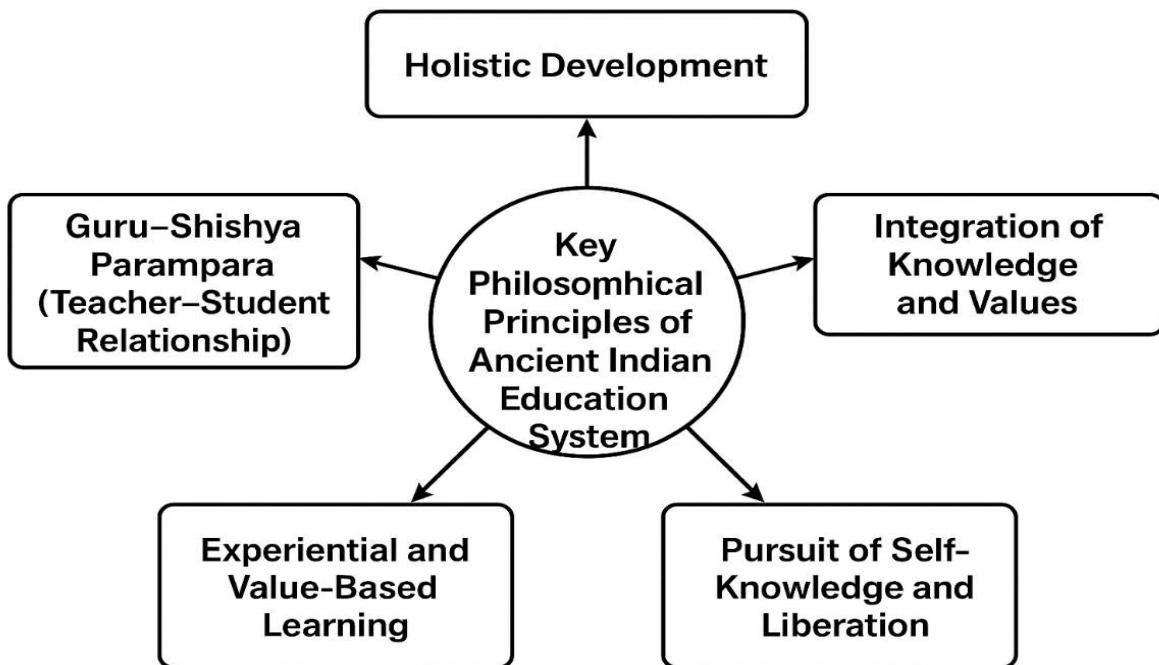
**Research Questions:**

1. What were the key philosophical principles underlying the ancient Indian Education System?
2. How does NEP 2020 reflect the philosophical essence of ancient Indian Educational thought?
3. What is the relevance of Ancient Indian Educational values in shaping the philosophy and practice of modern teacher education?

**Methodology:** This study employs a qualitative, document-based approach to examine the applicability of ancient Indian educational principles to modern teacher education within the context of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. It relies on secondary sources, including ancient texts, research papers, and policy documents collected from databases like Google Scholar and government portals. The information underwent thematic content analysis to identify key themes such as holistic development, moral education, and experiential learning, which were then compared with NEP 2020 provisions. The study focuses solely on conceptual and documentary analysis, intending to show how ancient educational thought can enhance contemporary teacher education.

**Analysis:** This analysis examines the relevance of ancient Indian educational principles for modern teacher education in the context of NEP 2020. Rooted in the *Guru-Shishya Parampara*, ancient education emphasized holistic development, moral growth, and integration of knowledge with values. NEP 2020 echoes these ideals through value-based, multidisciplinary, and experiential learning. Guided by three research questions—on the philosophical foundations of ancient education, their reflection in NEP 2020, and their relevance for contemporary teacher education—this study explores how traditional educational wisdom can inform curricula to cultivate ethical, reflective, and culturally grounded teachers.

**1. What were the key philosophical principles underlying the ancient Indian Education System?:** The ancient Indian education system focused on the holistic development of individuals—intellectually, morally, spiritually, and socially. Rooted in Vedic and Upanishadic traditions, it viewed education (*vidya*) as a means of self-realization and societal well-being. Core philosophical principles included wisdom (*jnana*), moral duty (*dharma*), and righteous action (*karma*). The *guru-shishya Parampara* emphasized personalized guidance, ethical learning, and character formation. The curriculum was interdisciplinary, covering philosophy, arts, sciences, and ethics, and promoted lifelong, experiential learning. Studying these principles helps integrate holistic, value-based approaches into contemporary education and teacher training under frameworks like NEP 2020.



- **Holistic Development:** A core idea of ancient Indian education was the overall growth of learners, including intellectual, physical, emotional, and spiritual aspects. Education was not just about acquiring knowledge (jnana), but also about fostering moral, social, and emotional development. The Gurukul system created an environment where students developed thinking skills, life skills, self-control, and ethical principles at the same time (Das, 2025; Roy & Paul, 2024).
- **Guru-Shishya Parampara (Teacher-Student Relationship):** The *Guru-Shishya Parampara* formed the foundation of teaching and learning. Knowledge was transmitted through close mentorship, observation, dialogue, and practical guidance. This model ensured individualized attention, moral guidance, and experiential learning, promoting a deep understanding of both academic content and ethical conduct.
- **Integration of Knowledge and Values:** Ancient education emphasized the inseparable link between knowledge and moral values. Subjects such as philosophy, literature, and sciences were taught alongside ethical teachings to cultivate righteous conduct, responsibility, and social awareness. Learning aimed to produce not just skilled individuals but socially responsible and spiritually aware citizens (Mishra & Aithal, 2023).
- **Experiential and Value-Based Learning:** Learning was primarily experiential, involving practical application, reflection, and community participation. Students engaged in daily routines, rituals, debates, and service-oriented tasks, which reinforced discipline, critical thinking, and real-world understanding. Education was value-based, aiming to instil virtues such as honesty, humility, compassion, and self-reliance.
- **Pursuit of Self-Knowledge and Liberation:** Philosophical schools like Vedanta, Buddhism, and Jainism emphasized *Atma-jnana* (self-knowledge) and *moksha* (liberation) as ultimate goals. Education was seen

as a means to realize one's potential, attain ethical and spiritual fulfilment, and contribute meaningfully to society.

The ancient Indian educational philosophy integrated **holistic development, close teacher-student mentorship, value-oriented knowledge, experiential learning, and spiritual self-realization**. These principles collectively aim at nurturing well-rounded, ethical, and competent individuals capable of contributing to society while achieving personal growth.

2. **How does NEP 2020 reflect the philosophical essence of ancient Indian Educational thought?:** NEP 2020 draws inspiration from the rich philosophical foundations of ancient Indian education, which emphasized the holistic development of learners, integration of knowledge and values, and lifelong learning. The policy seeks to blend traditional wisdom with modern educational practices, promoting interdisciplinary learning, ethical grounding, and personalized mentorship to nurture well-rounded individuals equipped for the challenges of the contemporary world.

- **Holistic Development of Learners:** NEP 2020 emphasizes the overall development of students—intellectual, moral, emotional, and physical—mirroring the ancient Indian belief that education should nurture well-rounded individuals rather than focus solely on academic achievement. Like the ancient system, the policy promotes life skills, critical thinking, creativity, and ethical values.
- **Integration of Knowledge and Values:** Ancient Indian education combined *vidya* (knowledge) with *dharma* (moral duty) and *karma* (righteous action). NEP 2020 reflects this by integrating ethics, experiential learning, and value-based education across subjects, fostering character building alongside cognitive skills.
- **Interdisciplinary and Experiential Learning:** The curriculum reforms under NEP 2020 encourage multidisciplinary and experiential learning, resonating with the ancient Indian approach where subjects like philosophy, science, arts, and spirituality were studied together in a practical, life-oriented manner.
- **Teacher-Centric Mentorship:** The *guru-shishya* tradition emphasized personalized guidance and moral mentorship. NEP 2020 similarly focuses on empowering teachers through training, autonomy, and mentorship roles, highlighting the pivotal role of educators in shaping learners' holistic development.
- **Lifelong and Value-Oriented Education:** Both ancient Indian education and NEP 2020 promote lifelong learning. The policy encourages continuous skill development, ethical reasoning, and adaptability, reflecting the timeless principle that education is an ongoing journey beyond formal schooling.

3. **What is the relevance of Ancient Indian Educational values in shaping the philosophy and practice of modern teacher education?**

Ancient Indian education emphasized holistic development, ethical living, and lifelong learning through the Gurukul system. Its values of mentorship, experiential learning, and integration of knowledge with ethics continue to influence modern teacher education, shaping educators who foster both academic and moral growth in students.

- **Integrated Progress and Character Formation:** Ancient Indian education, rooted in the Gurukul system, emphasized the comprehensive development of individuals—intellectually, morally,

emotionally, and spiritually. This approach aimed to cultivate well-rounded personalities capable of contributing positively to society. Modern teacher education draws inspiration from this holistic model, focusing not only on academic proficiency but also on nurturing ethical values, emotional intelligence, and social responsibility among educators and students alike.

- **Teacher as a Mentor and Guide:** The Guru-Shishya tradition underscored the role of the teacher as a mentor who provides personalized guidance, fostering a deep, respectful relationship with students. This mentorship model is increasingly relevant today, where educators are encouraged to act as facilitators of learning, guiding students through personalized learning journeys and supporting their overall development.
- **Value-Based Education:** Ancient Indian education seamlessly integrated knowledge (Vidya) with moral duty (Dharma) and righteous action (Karma). This integration ensured that education was not merely the acquisition of facts but also the cultivation of virtues. Contemporary teacher education programs emphasize value-based education, aiming to instill ethical principles and social consciousness in teachers, enabling them to impart these values to their students.
- **Experiential and Interdisciplinary Learning:** The Gurukula system promoted learning through direct experience, practical engagement, and interdisciplinary study, encompassing subjects like philosophy, science, arts, and spirituality. Modern teacher education embraces experiential learning methodologies, encouraging teachers to design curricula that are interactive, cross-disciplinary, and rooted in real-world contexts, thereby enhancing student engagement and understanding.
- **Lifelong Learning and Self-Reflection:** Ancient Indian education viewed learning as a lifelong pursuit, emphasizing self-reflection and continuous personal growth. This perspective aligns with contemporary views on professional development, where teachers are seen as lifelong learners who engage in ongoing reflection and learning to improve their practice and adapt to evolving educational needs.

**Conclusion:** Ancient Indian educational values—holistic development, teacher mentorship, value-based learning, experiential methods, and lifelong learning—remain highly relevant for modern teacher education. NEP 2020 reflects these timeless principles, emphasizing well-rounded, ethical, and reflective educators. Integrating this philosophical wisdom into contemporary teacher education can cultivate teachers who are not only academically competent but also capable of nurturing morally responsible, creative, and socially aware learners.

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