

# Indian Knowledge System as a Framework for Mental Health Promotion in Modern Education

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**Abstract**—The increasing prevalence of stress, anxiety, and emotional dysregulation among students highlights the urgent need for holistic mental health strategies in modern education. Drawing from Yoga, Ayurveda, classical Indian philosophy, mindfulness traditions, and Gurukul pedagogy, the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) offers a culturally grounded and scientifically validated framework for promoting mental well-being. This chapter critically examines how IKS can be integrated into contemporary schooling, evaluates empirical evidence from recent studies (mainly 2023–2025), and proposes an implementation-ready methodological model for educators and policymakers. Findings suggest that IKS-based practices significantly support emotional resilience, attentional stability, and behavioural regulation, offering a sustainable pathway to holistic student development.

**Index Terms**—Indian Knowledge System (IKS), NEP-2020, Mindfulness, Gurukul System, Holistic Education, Emotional Well-being, Student Wellness, Value-based Education.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Mental health concerns among students have increased markedly in recent years, driven by academic pressure, digital dependency, social comparison, poor sleep habits, and decreased physical activity. According to the World Health Organization (2025), one in seven adolescents globally experiences a mental health condition. The Indian National Mental Health Survey similarly reports rising anxiety and stress levels among school- and college-aged youth. While modern education emphasizes cognitive skills and academic achievement, it often neglects emotional and psychological development.

The Indian Knowledge System (IKS), rooted in centuries of philosophical, psychological, and wellness traditions, provides a holistic model for addressing these concerns. Core components of IKS—Yoga, Ayurveda, meditation, ethical reasoning, and the Gurukul system that offer comprehensive strategies for emotional balance, self-awareness, resilience, and mind–body harmony. These practices are increasingly validated by modern research for their positive impact on stress reduction, emotional regulation, attention, and overall well-being.

Recognizing this potential, the National Education Policy (NEP-2020) emphasizes the integration of Yoga, mindfulness, value-based education, and IKS into mainstream institutions. This chapter investigates the role of IKS in enhancing mental health and proposes a structured, implementable approach for educational institutions.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### Yoga and Mental Health

Studies consistently show that school-based Yoga programs reduce stress, enhance mood, improve emotional regulation, and strengthen self-awareness (Arya et al. 2025; Khalsa & Butzer 2016). Research also indicates improvements in classroom behaviour and resilience with regular practice.

### Meditation and Mindfulness

Meta-analyses (Carneiro et al. 2025; D’Souza et al. 2025) demonstrate that meditation and mindfulness increase attentional control and emotional stability. These practices parallel dhyāna and mental discipline described in classical Indian texts.

### Ayurveda and Preventive Health

Ayurveda emphasizes daily routines, balanced diet, sleep hygiene, and breath control which are factors strongly correlated with improved student well-being (Kumar & Singh 2020).

#### Philosophical Foundations

The Bhagavad Gita, Upanishads, Buddhist and Jain traditions, and Patanjali's Yoga Sutra contain sophisticated psychological insights on emotional balance, self-regulation, and resilience (Bryant 2009; Rangan 2015).

#### Gurukul System

Traditional Gurukul education emphasized moral development, teacher–student bonding, experiential learning, and healthy routines—elements known today to support mental health (Rajaram 2018).

### III. UNDERSTANDING THE INDIAN KNOWLEDGE SYSTEM

IKS encompasses:

- Yoga and physical-mental discipline
- Meditation and mindfulness
- Ayurveda and lifestyle sciences
- Indian philosophy and ethics
- Indigenous educational models
- Mind-body integrative practices

These collectively provide a holistic understanding of well-being.

### IV. MENTAL HEALTH IN MODERN EDUCATION

Key mental health challenges include:

- Academic stress and performance pressure
- Anxiety and emotional dysregulation
- Reduced attention span
- Social media–driven comparison
- Sleep disturbances
- Lack of coping skills and resilience

IKS addresses both preventive and remedial dimensions of these issues.

### V. PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR MENTAL WELL-BEING IN IKS

Major Indian philosophical systems emphasize:

- Emotional discipline (Yoga Sutra)
- Self-awareness and self-inquiry (Vedanta)
- Compassion and mindfulness (Buddhism)
- Ethical restraint and self-control (Jainism)

These form a psychological foundation for student well-being.

### VI. YOGA AS A TOOL FOR MENTAL HEALTH

Benefits supported by research include:

- Reduced stress and anxiety
- Improved concentration and memory
- Enhanced emotional regulation
- Better classroom behaviour

Regular school-based yoga shows strong positive effects.

### VII. AYURVEDIC PRINCIPLES AND MENTAL HEALTH

Ayurveda emphasizes:

- Balance of sattva, rajas, tamas
- Healthy routines (dinacharya)
- Seasonal adjustments (ritucharya)
- Diet and sleep regulation

These principles support mental and physical health.

### VIII. MEDITATION AND MINDFULNESS

Meditation promotes:

- Emotional stability
- Attention and working memory
- Reduced stress and negativity
- Compassion and self-control

Yoga Nidra is especially effective for sleep and relaxation.

### IX. GURUKUL SYSTEM: A HOLISTIC EDUCATIONAL MODEL

Key features supporting mental health:

- Strong teacher–student relationships
- Nature-based learning
- Physical work and discipline
- Value-based instruction
- Community living and cooperation

## X. IKS AND NEP 2020

NEP 2020 mandates:

- Holistic education
- Yoga and mindfulness in curriculum
- Value-based learning
- Integration of IKS in education

This creates a policy pathway for implementation.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the relevance of the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) as a holistic framework for promoting mental health in modern educational settings.
2. To analyze empirical evidence on the effectiveness of Yoga, meditation, and Ayurvedic lifestyle practices in enhancing student well-being.
3. To explore the philosophical and pedagogical foundations of IKS that support emotional regulation, resilience, and cognitive development.
4. To evaluate the alignment of IKS-based mental health practices with the recommendations of NEP 2020.
5. To propose an implementable model for integrating IKS practices into school and college curricula to improve student mental health outcomes.

Research Methodology

This chapter adopts a qualitative research design based on systematic review and thematic analysis. Data were drawn from peer-reviewed journals, WHO reports, and policy documents including NEP 2020. Studies were selected using inclusion criteria focused on Yoga, meditation, Ayurveda-based routines, and mental health outcomes among students.

## XI. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This section synthesizes empirical findings and policy guidance to critically examine how the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) can function as an evidence-informed framework for mental health promotion in modern education. It discusses effectiveness, mechanisms, implementation models, equity considerations, and research gaps, drawing on studies published between 2023 and 2025.

### 11.1 Effectiveness of IKS-Aligned Practices in Schools

Recent systematic reviews show consistent improvements in stress reduction, emotional regulation, resilience, and behaviour among students participating in school-based yoga programs. Meta-analyses (Carneiro et al. 2025; D'Souza et al. 2025) confirm moderate but reliable benefits for wellbeing outcomes. Daily or structured practice yields stronger results. Meditation and mindfulness—rooted in classical Indian dhyāna—also demonstrate effectiveness in improving attention, emotional balance, and coping skills.

### 11.2 Mechanisms of Change and Educational Alignment

IKS promotes three central mechanisms: (a) physiological down-regulation through breath-movement practices, (b) attentional control and metacognition via meditation, and (c) values-based meaning-making through ethical teachings. These mechanisms align directly with modern socio-emotional learning (SEL) competencies and executive functioning skills.

### 11.3 Implementation Models

Effective school models use a tiered approach: universal daily breathwork and mindfulness sessions; targeted small-group yoga for students with elevated stress; and individualized support for those needing higher intervention. Research indicates that at least three sessions per week over 8–12 weeks produce measurable improvements.

### 11.4 Equity and Cultural Responsiveness

IKS practices, when framed inclusively, support diverse learners. Culturally grounded but secular in delivery, yoga and mindfulness create equitable wellbeing opportunities. Gender-responsive and digital-wellbeing adaptations further enhance impact.

### 11.5 Policy Levers and NEP 2020

NEP 2020 strongly supports integrating yoga, mindfulness, and value-based learning into the curriculum. State boards can operationalize this through standardized modules, teacher training, and wellness assessment tools.

### 11.6 Limitations of Existing Evidence

While findings are promising, heterogeneity across study designs, sample sizes, and measurement tools remains an issue. More India-specific, large-scale, controlled trials are needed.

### 11.7 Implications for Practice

Schools should adopt a whole-school IKS-based wellbeing model incorporating daily practices, teacher wellbeing programs, structured modules, and continuous assessment. These approaches support long-term emotional resilience and academic engagement.

## XII. CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTATION

- Lack of trained teachers
- Limited curriculum integration
- Misconceptions about IKS
- Resource limitations in rural schools

## XIII. CONCLUSION

The Indian Knowledge System offers an evidence-backed, culturally relevant, and holistic framework for mental health promotion in modern education. Its practices strengthen emotional resilience, attentional stability, and behavioural balance. With policy support through NEP 2020 and increasing empirical validation, integrating IKS in schools and colleges can transform mental wellness outcomes. The findings strongly support adopting structured yoga, mindfulness, and routine-based programs across educational institutions.

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