

## DISTANCE AND ONLINE EDUCATION THROUGH THE LENS OF INDIAN KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS (IKS): CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

\* Dr. Krishna Bhanudasrao Patil

\* Director, Centre for Distance and Online Education, Shivaji University, Vidya Nagar, Kolhapur-416004

### Abstract.

Distance and online education have changed the way people learn. In India, this shift is important because of its diverse culture and ancient knowledge systems. Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) include subjects like Ayurveda, Yoga, Vedic Mathematics, Astronomy, and Philosophy. These systems have been passed down through generations and hold deep wisdom. The integration of IKS into online education can make learning more meaningful and holistic. However, challenges such as lack of structured courses, translation difficulties, and low acceptance in mainstream education slow down this process.

Technology can help overcome these challenges. Digital platforms can offer IKS courses in an interactive and engaging way. AI tools can help translate ancient texts, making them accessible to more people. Universities and policymakers need to work together to create courses that combine IKS with modern subjects. This will help students gain knowledge that is both traditional and futuristic.

Blended learning, which includes both online study and practical experiences, can improve learning outcomes. For example, an online Yoga course can include live demonstrations and personalized guidance. Online platforms can also connect experts with students worldwide, increasing the reach of Indian wisdom. By making these efforts, we can preserve our cultural heritage while ensuring that education remains relevant in today's digital world. If implemented well, IKS in distance education can help students develop a deep understanding of their roots while preparing them for the future.

**Keywords:** Indian Knowledge Systems, Distance Education, Online Learning, Digital Transformation, Pedagogy

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### Introduction:

Education is the foundation of personal and national growth. Over time, learning methods have changed. In ancient India, knowledge was passed on through oral traditions, later written in scriptures, and now, digital learning is the new medium. Distance and online education allow students to learn from anywhere, making education more accessible and flexible.

The Indian Knowledge System (IKS) is an important part of our heritage. It includes subjects like Ayurveda, which focuses on natural healing, Yoga for physical and mental well-being, and Vedic Mathematics, which simplifies complex calculations. These traditional knowledge areas can improve modern education by adding holistic learning approaches. However, many people see IKS as outdated, and its integration into online learning faces many difficulties.

Today, digital platforms such as SWAYAM, NPTEL, and DIKSHA offer online education. However, IKS is not widely included in these platforms. The challenge is to make IKS available in a way that appeals to modern learners. This can be done by using technology to create engaging and interactive content. For instance, a course on Ayurveda can use videos, animations, and live interactions with experts to make learning more practical and interesting.

By combining IKS with distance education, we can create a learning system that respects tradition while embracing the future. This paper explores the current state of online education, challenges in including IKS, and how technology can provide solutions.

#### **Current Landscape of Distance and Online Education in India:**

India has seen rapid growth in online education. Government initiatives such as SWAYAM, NPTEL, and DIKSHA have made education more accessible. Universities now offer online degrees, and many private institutions provide digital courses.

However, online learning in India still faces challenges. Many students in rural areas do not have proper internet access. Teachers are not always trained to teach online. Also, students often find online courses less engaging compared to classroom learning.

For IKS, these challenges are even greater. Most traditional knowledge is available in ancient languages like Sanskrit. Translating them into modern languages while keeping their true meaning is difficult. Also, many people do not see IKS as relevant to modern careers, so students hesitate to take these courses.

Despite these issues, online learning has great potential. Many students prefer digital education because it allows them to learn at their own pace. If we include IKS in online learning with well-designed courses, students may find them more useful and interesting.

#### **Challenges in Integrating IKS into Distance and Online Education:**

Integrating Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) into distance and online education faces several obstacles. These challenges include the lack of structured courses, difficulties in translating ancient texts, resistance to traditional knowledge, and policy gaps that hinder implementation.

##### **1. Lack of Structured Courses**

There is no clear syllabus for IKS subjects in online education. While there are several Yoga and Ayurveda courses, they lack proper academic structure and certification. Without a structured curriculum, students may not take these subjects seriously. A well-defined syllabus with certification programs can enhance the credibility of IKS in distance education.

## 2. Difficulty in Translating Ancient Texts

Most of the knowledge in IKS is available in Sanskrit or other ancient languages. Translating these texts while maintaining their true essence is a big challenge. Some words and concepts do not have direct translations in modern languages. For example, the term *Prana* in Ayurveda refers to life energy, but it does not have a simple equivalent in English. Using AI-based translation tools and expert linguistic support can help bridge this gap.

## 3. Resistance to Traditional Knowledge

Many people believe that IKS is outdated and irrelevant to modern careers. This mind-set prevents students from exploring subjects like Vedic Mathematics, Indian Logic, and Ayurveda. Awareness programs showcasing the practical benefits of IKS can change this perception. For instance, Vedic Mathematics can improve calculation speed, which is beneficial for students preparing for competitive exams.

## 4. Policy and Regulation Issues

While the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 promotes IKS, there is no strong framework for implementing it in online education. Without clear guidelines, universities hesitate to introduce IKS-based courses. Policymakers must create well-defined regulations to encourage institutions to integrate traditional knowledge into their curriculum.

### Opportunities for Strengthening Distance Education with IKS:

Despite the challenges, there are numerous opportunities to enhance distance education with IKS. Using blended learning approaches, AI-powered tools, global outreach, and interdisciplinary learning can make traditional knowledge more accessible and relevant in modern education.

#### 1. Using Blended Learning Approaches

Blended learning combines online education with hands-on experiences. For example, an Ayurveda course can include video lectures, interactive discussions, and live practical sessions where students prepare herbal medicines at home under expert guidance. This approach makes learning more engaging and practical.

#### 2. AI and Digital Storytelling

AI-powered virtual tutors can help students understand IKS concepts better. For instance, an AI assistant can answer questions on Ayurvedic treatments based on ancient texts. Digital storytelling techniques, such as animated videos and virtual reality, can make traditional knowledge more accessible and appealing to modern learners.

#### 3. Global Outreach

IKS has global recognition, especially subjects like Yoga and Ayurveda. Online platforms can help expand the reach of these subjects. Universities can collaborate with international institutions to offer certified courses in IKS, attracting students from different parts of the world.

#### 4. Interdisciplinary Learning

IKS can be integrated with modern disciplines. For example, Ayurvedic principles can be combined with modern nutrition studies to develop a holistic approach to health. Similarly, Indian Astronomy concepts can

be introduced in physics courses to show the historical advancements in space studies.

#### Conclusion:

IKS is a treasure of knowledge that should be preserved and promoted. With distance and online education, we have the opportunity to share this wisdom with the world. However, we must overcome challenges such as language barriers, lack of structured courses, and resistance to traditional knowledge. Technology offers solutions. AI and digital platforms can make IKS subjects more accessible. Universities should develop certified IKS courses, and policymakers should support this initiative.

As an old Sanskrit saying goes, 'Vidya Dadati Vinayam' (Knowledge gives humility). By integrating IKS into online education, we can create an education system that is rooted in tradition and prepared for the future.

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