

JOYFUL LEARNING THROUGH IKS: STORIES, GAMES, AND EXPERIENTIAL PRACTICES FROM BHARATIYA PARAMPARA

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Abstract:

The integration of the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) into modern education, as envisioned by the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, marks a paradigm shift from rote memorization toward a holistic, joyful, and culturally grounded learning experience. This research explores the pedagogical richness of Bharatiya Parampara, focusing on narrative pedagogy (Katha-Pravachana), toy-based and game-based learning, and experiential practices like Panchadi. By synthesizing ancient wisdom—such as the Panchkosh theory, Gurukul traditions, and Sanskrit Subhashitas—with 21st-century educational needs, this study demonstrates how indigenous practices foster cognitive, emotional, social, and spiritual development.

Key pedagogical interventions identified include the use of Funfables (Panchatantra, Jataka Tales) for moral and pragmatic wisdom, indigenous toys and games (Pallankuzhi, Kho-Kho, Moksha Patam) for strategic thinking and value-based learning, and the Panchadi process for structured experiential engagement. The study further highlights the pioneering work of Gijubhai Badheka, whose Bal-Mimamsa pedagogy champions child-centered, play-based learning that respects the child's humanity and fosters creative thinking. Additionally, the application of Sanskrit Subhashitas provides indigenous frameworks for sustainable resource management and ethical lifestyle practices. The findings suggest that revitalizing these traditional resources not only preserves India's intellectual heritage but also creates a more inclusive, engaging, and transformative environment that aligns with the needs of the contemporary learner.

Keywords: Indian Knowledge System, pedagogical interventions, pragmatic wisdom, contemporary learner.

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Introduction: Reclaiming the Joy of Learning

For decades, the Indian education system has been criticized for prioritizing **rote learning**, often disconnected from the country's diverse cultural roots. However, ancient Indian education was never merely about the acquisition of information; its ultimate aim was the "**complete realization and liberation of the self**". This philosophy of **Vidyā** (true knowledge) sought to transform the learner internally while ensuring social well-being.

The **NEP 2020** recognizes this by placing a strong emphasis on integrating IKS into the curriculum at all levels, particularly the **foundational and preparatory stages**. Joyful learning through IKS involves moving away from the "trauma" of information overload toward a **wholesome, creative, and enjoyable** present for children. This

approach utilizes local customs, folk stories, and traditional games to build a child's **identity and sense of belonging**.

Objectives:

Based on the sources provided, the objectives for a research paper on **Joyful learning through IKS: stories, games and experiential practices from Bharatiya Parampara** are as follows:

- **Examine the role of Bharatiya toys:** To investigate how traditional toys made from natural materials (like wood, clay, and jute) promote experiential and play-based learning in the classroom.
- **Explore the educational value of indigenous games:** To analyze how traditional Indian games (such as Kabaddi, Kho-Kho, and Pallankuzhi) foster cognitive, physical, social, and emotional development.
- **Investigate the practical application of IKS frameworks:** To determine how ancient concepts like the **Panchkosh theory** (holistic development) and the **Panchadi process** (five-step learning) can be practically integrated into modern teaching strategies.
- **Synthesize the philosophy of Gijubhai Badheka:** To explore how Badheka's child-centered, storytelling-focused **Bal-Mimamsa** pedagogy can be applied within contemporary reforms to reduce reliance on rote learning.

The Philosophical Foundation: Panchkosh and Holistic Growth:

Central to the Bharatiya approach to joyful learning is the **Panchkosh theory**, derived from the Taittiriya Upanishad. This framework views the child as a **whole being** consisting of five interlinked sheaths:

- **Annamaya Kosha:** Physical development and control of organs.
- **Pranamaya Kosha:** Pranic development, regulation of impulses, and life force energy.
- **Manomaya Kosha:** Mental development, including concentration and emotional balance.
- **Vigyanmaya Kosha:** Intellectual development, memory, perception, and judgment.
- **Anandamaya Kosha:** The inner self, characterized by love, joy, and creativity.

By nurturing these five layers, education becomes a **holistic process** rather than a fragmented academic exercise. Furthermore, the **Triguna theory** (Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas) provides a framework for understanding diverse student personalities, allowing teachers to adopt a more **personalized and empathetic approach** to instruction.

Narrative Pedagogy: The Power of Storytelling (Katha-Pravachana)

In India, storytelling is an **ancient pedagogical intelligence** used to encode principles of ethics, governance, and human conduct. Known as **Katha-Pravachana**, this narrative pedagogy fosters intellectual and moral growth through **participatory and reflective learning**.

1. Moral and Pragmatic Wisdom in Fables

In the Indian Knowledge System (IKS), storytelling is recognized not as a mere pastime but as **ancient pedagogical intelligence** known as **Katha-Pravachana**. This narrative pedagogy encodes complex principles of ethics, governance, and human conduct into relatable plots, allowing learners to "rehearse" judgment and choice through cognitive and emotional simulations.

1. Panchatantra & Hitopadesha: Curricula for Behavioral Wisdom

These collections serve as foundational tools for teaching **pragmatic wisdom** and the practical application of knowledge (*Laukikaprayojanam*).

- **Panchatantra:** Authored by Pandit Vishnu Sharma, these stories use animal fables to teach the importance of **honesty, integrity, kindness, and compassion**. They are designed to show children the direct **consequences of their actions** while encouraging them to use their **intelligence and wit** to navigate life's challenges.
- **Hitopadesha:** Written by Pandit Narayan Bhatt, this "advice that can help" utilizes bird and animal characters to explain the difference between good and bad behavior. It emphasizes the **value of friendship, patience, and concentration**, connecting abstract moral precepts to the everyday matters of life.

2. Jataka Tales: Depicting Buddhist Morality

The *Jataka Tales* consist of approximately 547 stories regarding the **previous births of Lord Gautama Buddha**. These narratives are specifically curated to depict **Buddhist morality** and ethical insights. By following the Buddha's journey through various incarnations, learners gain a deeper understanding of the virtues required for spiritual and moral growth.

3. Ramayana & Mahabharata: Timeless Role Models and Dharma

These great epics are considered **ethical literature** that explores the deepest moral cores of human life.

- **Timeless Role Models:** Characters such as **Ram, Sita, and Hanuman** endure as representations of morality. Ram, in particular, is presented as an **exemplar of ethical behavior**, providing a standard for duty and righteousness.
- **The Concept of Dharma:** Both epics explore the complexities of **Dharma** (contextual right action). The *Mahabharata* is noted for modeling **reflective inquiry**; rather than prescribing a single truth, it presents competing moral positions, forcing the learner to engage with moral ambiguity.
- **Relevance to Modern Leadership:** The moral dilemmas found in these texts remain highly relevant to **modern decision-making**. For instance, the **Bhagavad Gita** (a part of the *Mahabharata*) explores themes of duty and righteousness that are often used in contemporary leadership programs. A modern application includes reinterpreting **Arjuna's moral paralysis** on the battlefield as a metaphor for **managerial indecision** in high-stakes corporate environments.

By integrating these narratives into the curriculum, education moves from a simple knowledge-transfer system to a **knowledge-creating culture** where students are ethically grounded and culturally aware.

2. Gijubhai Badheka's Philosophy

Gijubhai Badheka's **Bal-Mimamsa** pedagogy represented a radical departure from the authoritarian, examination-centric colonial education system of the early 20th century. By reconceptualizing education as an organic and enjoyable process, Badheka placed the child's humanity and inherent abilities at the heart of the learning experience.

The Child-Centered Vision of *Divasvapna*:

Badheka's seminal work, *Divasvapna* (1932), serves as a critique of traditional education while advocating for learner autonomy, creativity, and emotional well-being.

- **Organic Progress:** He viewed childhood as a "sacred realm of wonder" where learning should progress naturally rather than being forced through a rigid curriculum.
- **Classroom Transformation:** In *Divasvapna*, Badheka demonstrates how a teacher can transform a classroom by abandoning traditional didactic methods in favour of an environment where children are encouraged to think critically and ask questions.
- **Teacher as Facilitator:** His model shifted the teacher's role from a strict leader to a compassionate guide or "facilitator" who helps children follow their natural instincts.

Narrative Pedagogy (*Katha-Shikshan*):

Known as *Katha-Shikshan*., Badheka's narrative pedagogy brought a revolutionary shift to language education by using India's rich oral traditions as "living lessons".

- **Beyond Dry Lectures:** Instead of moralizing through dry lectures, Badheka used folktales from the *Panchatantra*, *Jataka Tales*, and local traditions to teach ethics and practical wisdom.
- **Participatory Engagement:** His method was deeply interactive; rather than passively listening, children were encouraged to:
 - **Act out characters:** This dramatic play served as social learning, allowing children to naturally acquire empathy and cultural awareness.
 - **Create alternate endings:** By imagining different outcomes, students engaged in a "story workshop" technique that promoted **creative thinking** and personal expression.

Promoting Linguistic Fluency and Cognitive Growth

The practical application of storytelling in Badheka's pedagogy directly fostered advanced cognitive and linguistic skills:

- **Linguistic Fluency:** Active participation in storytelling and dramatization helped children achieve greater fluency in their mother tongue.
- **Creative Thinking:** The freedom to manipulate narratives and explore alternate scenarios encouraged children to take charge of their own learning and develop a **growth mindset**.
- **Holistic Engagement:** Badheka intuitively understood that children learn best when their "head, heart, and hands" are engaged simultaneously, using stories to spark imagination and midday projects to build social skills.

By indigenizing global progressive ideas (such as those of Maria Montessori) and planting them in Indian soil, Badheka created a "glocal" pedagogy that remains a foundational inspiration for modern reforms like NEP 2020.

The Wisdom of Play: Traditional Games and Toys

Play is as essential for a child's welfare as eating or sleeping, and **toy-based pedagogy** is a powerful tool to simplify abstract concepts.

1. Bharatiya Toys as Learning Resources

Indigenous toys made from **clay, wood, and jute** are not only eco-friendly but also culturally resonant caravans of India's past.

- **Cognitive Benefits:** Wooden puzzles and complex toys promote **strategic thinking and problem-solving**.
- **Psychomotor Skills:** Clay modeling and traditional handicrafts develop fine motor skills and **aesthetic awareness**.
- **Social-Emotional Growth:** Playing with dolls and figurines facilitates **empathy, role-playing, and cultural awareness**.

Recent data indicates that **80% of parents** believe indigenous toys have a more long-lasting and healthy impact on development compared to digital games, which are often linked to obesity and eye strain.

2. Indigenous Games (Bharatiya Khel)

Traditional games like **Kho-Kho, Kabaddi, Gilli-Danda, and Pallankuzhi** are vessels of culture that sharpen the mind and body.

- **Mathematical Thinking: Pallankuzhi** (a South Indian seed game) teaches counting and logic.
- **Moral and Spiritual Values: Snakes and Ladders** (originally *Moksha Patam*) was created to teach children that **virtues (ladders)** lift one up, while **vices (snakes)** lead to a downfall.
- **Strategic Teamwork:** Games like **Kabaddi** and **Kho-Kho** foster cooperation, leadership, and resilience within the **Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)**.

Experiential Practices: From Panchadi to Gurukul

Joyful learning is deeply rooted in **experiential and hands-on engagement**.

1. The Panchadi Learning Process

The **Panchadi** is a five-step teaching-learning process recommended for sequencing activities:

1. **Aditi:** Introduction of a new concept by connecting to existing knowledge.
2. **Bodh:** Developing conceptual understanding.
3. **Abhyas:** Strengthening skills through engaging practices.
4. **Prayog:** Applying learning in real-life situations.
5. **Prasar:** Communicating and spreading acquired knowledge.

2. Mentorship and the Guru-Shishya Bond

The ancient **Gurukul and Buddhist monastic systems** (like Nalanda and Takshashila) were based on **residential learning environments** that fostered close mentor-student relationships. This system prioritized

character formation over examinations, utilizing oral traditions to build memory and concentration. Today, this model inspires contemporary **mentorship frameworks** and personalized learning strategies.

Management and Lifestyle Wisdom: Sanskrit Subhashitas

The **Sanskrit Subhashitas** represent a "formulaic" method of expressing profound philosophical and practical knowledge using limited words. In the context of **Bharatiya Parampara**, these "well-said quotes" serve as indigenous proverbs that govern everyday management and lifestyle, particularly through the lens of resource sustainability and ethical consumption.

1. Micro-Resources: Time and Material

The sources emphasize that effective resource management begins with the smallest units of production. A key Subhashita (beginning with "*Kshanashah Kanashaschaiv*") highlights two fundamental micro-resources:

- **Time (Kshana):** Every micro-second is considered a resource for **knowledge**.
- **Material (Kana):** Every small particle or grain is a resource for **wealth**.

The philosophy warns that the wastage of a single moment (*kshana-tyage*) results in the loss of learning, while the wastage of a single particle (*kana-tyage*) results in the loss of potential wealth. This teaching instills a high level of **discipline and mindfulness** regarding the utilization of even the most minute assets.

2. The Florist Metaphor: Sustenance vs. Destruction

The point you mentioned regarding the florist is derived from the Subhashita "*Puspam Puspam Vichinvit Mulachedam Na Karayet*". This metaphor provides a clear distinction between two management styles:

- **The Florist (Mala-kar):** A florist picks flowers carefully from the plants while continuing to water them to ensure further growth and future production. This represents the **optimum utilization and rejuvenation** of resources.
- **The Charcoal Producer (Yaathangar-karakah):** In contrast, a charcoal producer cuts the entire tree from its base (*mulachedam*) to obtain material. While this provides an immediate yield, it destroys the source and prevents rejuvenation.

This ancient wisdom directly advocates for **business sustainability**; it teaches that every practice should attempt to rejuvenate the resource for further use rather than depleting it for short-term gain.

3. Philosophical Roots of Sustainability

This approach to management is grounded in the **Ishavasya Upanishad**, which states that everything in the universe belongs to a higher power, not to man. This leads to the attitude of "**idm na mama**" (**it is not mine**), which encourages consumption without greed.

- **Non-Greed:** By viewing resources as "owned by God," individuals are discouraged from being greedy and encouraged to distribute resources properly.
- **Ancient Precedence:** While modern global discourse on **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** gained prominence around 2015, the sources note that these principles have been deeply rooted in the Indian lifestyle for five thousand years.

4. Practical Management Synergy

Beyond the florist metaphor, Subhashitas also teach that desired output is not the result of a single factor but a **synergy of consistency and investment**. Managing resources requires an "apt combination of fixed cost and recurring cost" to achieve a proper, sustainable outcome. Furthermore, true leadership in this tradition is defined as "**Servant Leadership**," where a leader, like a tree, bares the "storms" of responsibility while passing the "fruits" of benefit to the team.

Contemporary Relevance and the Path Forward:

Integrating IKS is not about "cultural nostalgia" but about providing **design intelligence** for the 21st century.

1. Alignment with NEP 2020

The NEP 2020's focus on **multidisciplinary study, mother-tongue instruction, and competency-based learning** reflects ancient Indian pedagogical values. This "Vocal for Local" vision promotes national pride and ensures that education remains relevant to the child's immediate world.

2. Challenges and Implementation

Despite the clear benefits, several challenges remain:

Teacher Capacity: Successful integration requires **comprehensive teacher training** to move beyond rote methods.

Standardization vs. Flexibility: Balancing modern standardized assessments with the **flexible, nature-based practices** of IKS is complex.

Digital Balance: In a digital age, emphasizing **sensory experiences and direct nature contact** is vital to counter "nature deficit disorder" and screen-dominated childhoods.

Conclusion: A Transformative Educational Renaissance

Joyful learning through the Indian Knowledge System offers a balanced, human-centered approach that unites the "head, heart, and hand". By reintroducing Bharatiya toys, indigenous games, and narrative pedagogy, educators can create a learning environment where children are not "traumatized" by information but empowered by wisdom.

Revitalizing these ancient models in a contemporary context is not merely a restoration of the past, but an educational renaissance that prepares students to be globally competent, ethically grounded, and deeply connected to their heritage. As the Panchatantra reminds us: "What is heard, when reflected upon, becomes wisdom". In the 21st century, this timeless insight remains the cornerstone of a truly successful education system.

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