

Integrating Indian Knowledge Systems into Leadership Education and Training Programs

Mr. Shekhar Sardar ¹, Prof. Purabi Baishya ²

¹Research Scholar, Department of Education, Gauhati University

²Professor, Department of Education, Gauhati University

Abstract

Development of leadership skills plays a special role in the development of society and civilization. Leadership skills are developed in the new generation through the institutional education system and various training programs. However, presently, the influence of Western programs and ideas has become particularly pronounced in the development of leadership training and skills. This is different from Indian societal values, culture, tradition, and morality in terms of its materialistic focus. Ancient civilization and Indian Knowledge System (IKS) was not limited to only acquiring knowledge and increasing skills and financial gain; it integrated philosophy, spirituality, morality, a sense of responsibility, self-control, and social welfare. This approach not only gave priority to the development of the individual but also to the overall well-being of society. The National Education Policy 2020 (**Ministry of Education, 2020**) has laid special emphasis on the integration of the IKS with modern leadership development. Integrating Indian traditions into leadership and skill development programs is essential for the positive improvement of the current social situation and the development of greater human welfare. The research paper discusses in detail the concept of leadership according to the IKS and the essentials of assessment and skill development related to leadership skills, as well as the relevance and rationality of the IKS in the current situation. It has been discussed in detail how it is possible to integrate the IKS and the positive Traditional Knowledge Tradition In the contemporary context for leadership development.

Keywords: Indian Knowledge System (IKS) 1, Leadership Education 2, Value-Based Leadership 3, National Education Policy 2020 4, Ancient Indian Philosophy 5.

1. Introduction

Education plays an important role in the overall development of a society, e.g., intellectual, moral and cultural development. The role of those who lead the society is immense for its overall development, as well as in various social and business institutions which are closely associated with the society. Different training programmes, workshops, etc., help to develop leadership skills, but many current research studies show that the theories developed for leadership skills are mostly based on Western thought and values (**Raval et al, 2025, p. 42**). All these Western thoughts differ from Indian traditional thought and belief systems. Indian knowledge and culture have been rich since ancient times, focusing on the overall development of the individual, which helps in fostering not only the development of the individual

but also the overall positive development of the society. A leader with strong moral values will always move the entire society forward. According to Indian thought and tradition, education is not confined to the acquisition of knowledge only, but the main purpose of education is to develop the personality of the individual through the development of spirituality and morality, as well as his all-round development (Gaur et al., 2026, p. 646).

The Indian knowledge tradition and ancient education systems like the Vedic and Buddhist systems gave equal importance to both theoretical learning as well as moral and spiritual understanding. They also focused on action-based training and the development of leadership skills. Hence, renowned scriptures like the Bhagavad Gita and Arthashastra highlight the importance of building moral character, responsibility, and leadership qualities. Many religious and mythological literature also emphasize values like justice, ethics, sacrifice, and social welfare. These teachings positively influence individuals and guide them toward developing strong moral character. Various studies have indicated that the words of the Gita are deeply related to modern leadership theory and play a pivotal role in shaping the moral behaviour and character of the leader (Maruthi, 2024, p. 45).

In the context of the present time, it is essential to awaken morality and values through education for the overall development of society and the development of world humanity; therefore, it is also essential in leadership education and training. To maintain the Indian knowledge tradition and integrate morality and values in the development of leadership skills of the new generation, the Government of India is promoting the IKS in various fields of education. NEP-2020 has taken various steps to highlight the Indian knowledge tradition in the education system and curriculum to achieve this goal. In addition, it has been undertaken to use the IKS specifically in leadership skill development and training (Ministry of Education, 2020, p. 16). The IKS helps in developing self-control and discipline, empathy, an overall sense of responsibility, ethics, and values among the trainees, as well as in leadership education and training (Raval et al., 2025, p. 45). Therefore, IKS is playing a very important role in the formation of good leadership character and leadership training. It will be possible to transmit this knowledge tradition to the next generation through education and by adopting various government programs.

2. Methodology

This research paper adopts a qualitative and conceptual methodology to explore the integration of the Indian Knowledge System with modern Leadership education and practice. The Study mainly focuses on the philosophical framework and paradigms based on secondary data sources. Data collection was mainly done through an in-depth review of different studies on the Indian Knowledge System, the Bhagavad Gita, modern policy documents NEP 2020. A thematic analytical approach has been adapted to understand the present leadership concept and integrate the IKS with the present trends.

3. Objectives

1. To examine the role of IKS in promoting ethical and value-based leadership through education.
2. To analyse the relevance of Indian philosophical and educational traditions in modern leadership education and training programs.

3. To identify effective strategies for integrating IKS into leadership development programs in educational institutions.

The Role of IKS in Promoting Ethical and Value-Based Leadership

The role of good leadership is extremely important in the progress, stability, and human development of society. Education plays a special role in shaping this leadership behaviour and personality. Along with intellectual development, through education, the moral and human aspects of the individual are also developed, which helps the individual to gain a suitable position in their future life and in the social field. In the field of leadership development, various programs are currently being adopted through education, through which skills are developed, and leadership-like characteristics are formed in the new generation.

However, in the development of leadership skills, more emphasis is being given to technical skills and management techniques, which mainly give maximum priority to their own interests, while social and human responsibility, humanity, and sensitivity have been comparatively neglected. In such a context, the knowledge and theory of the IKS will be helpful in shaping the individual's philosophy of life and will be helpful in linking the individual's thinking power and leadership skills with moral and human values through education.

The IKS basically highlights the rich knowledge, culture, and tradition of Indian civilisation, which did not express leadership only as a matter of power or authority but linked it with responsibility, duty, and morality and gave priority to the all-round development of the individual as well as overall progress. According to Indian philosophy, the main goal of leadership is to promote the welfare of society. If this long-standing, traditional thought is spread through education, it will make the future generation interested in education as a matter of patriotism. In the ancient Indian education system, various religious books and moral lessons were included in the curriculum to shape the personality of the student (**Mookerji, 1947, p. xxi**).

The Indian Knowledge System promotes ethical leadership through Dharma (duty) and the Purusharthas (Dharma, Artha, Kama, and Moksha), which teach that wealth and desires should always follow moral values. When applied to leadership education, this approach helps prevent unethical profit-seeking. It also encourages overall personal growth, including emotional and spiritual development, not just intellectual ability.

Although the prevailing Western knowledge has gained dominance in the present education system, when human degradation has become evident, it is very necessary to integrate the Indian knowledge tradition. In the current situation, the IKS plays a credible role in the formation of good leadership and character in education. In the meantime, the National Education Policy by the Government of India has emphasised IKS, and it is being discussed in the administration and the work committees with the objective of integrating India's own policy, tradition, and culture.

The Relevance of Indian Philosophical and Educational Traditions in Modern Leadership Training

Contemporary leadership education is largely influenced by Western management theories, which emphasise profit maximisation, competitive advantage, and rapid achievement of goals. However, this type of approach may affect leadership burnout, ethical concerns, and lack of holistic perspective. In this context, Indian philosophical and educational traditions have gained significant relevance in modern training frameworks. In the Indian knowledge tradition, some special aspects were emphasised in the formation of the individual and leadership in ancient civilisations, which are highlighted below, and their importance in the current modern training and educational situation is discussed:

Education of selfless action (Nishkama Karma)

In ancient Indian education and in the formation of leadership character, the Bhagavad Gita was given special priority, where it is said that selfless action—that is, working without any individual interest—is emphasised. At present, in the field of modern management education and leadership, this knowledge of selfless action will help in the overall improvement of the mind and thinking of the students. According to recent studies on workplace mindfulness, practicing *Nishkama Karma* encourages performing duties without attachment to the outcome, which strongly supports mental peace, reduces performance anxiety, and prevents executive burnout (Basu et al., 2024, p. 4772). Only if a person wants to free himself from the toxic effects of ambition and the desire to achieve short-term profit during his student life and form an attitude towards overall welfare, can the power of conscience and consideration be awakened. In addition, the knowledge of IKS provides the person with the knowledge to maintain moral soundness even in various stressful situations and always guides the person in choosing the right path. This perspective addresses the increasing levels of stress and anxiety in modern corporate settings by encouraging leaders to value the process and quality of their work rather than focus only on immediate results.

Personality Formation, Emotional Intelligence, and Mental Strength

In various IKS books and ancient education systems, special emphasis was placed on building a good personality and building character strength. High mental responsibility and character strength, decision-making ability, etc., are essential characteristics of a leader. The knowledge of IKS will help in developing these character traits of leadership and building personality in the present time. Modern leadership programs are increasingly focusing on Emotional Intelligence. Ancient Indian education, especially Yoga and Vedanta, promoted self-awareness, mindfulness, and self-control. The traditional knowledge of IKS obtained through education and training will guide the person in every aspect of modern leadership, providing practical tools to manage interpersonal conflicts and lead with empathy.

Transformational and Servant Leadership

Although Western Management theories talk about Transformational leadership, the IKS has been discussing the formation of such a leadership personality since ancient times and has also shed light in detail on how such a personality can be formed through education. It is also said in the Bhagavad Gita that a leader should not only think about his own progress but should also show a positive attitude, compassion,

and cooperation towards all his subordinates and take everyone forward. This idea is very similar to what we now call servant leadership and matches the Indian concept of *Loka Sangraha*, meaning working for the good of everyone. Integration of *Dharma* and *Loka-Sangraha* provides a holistic framework that directly aligns with modern servant leadership, ensuring not only economic efficiency but societal harmony and stakeholder trust (Singh & Shabnam, 2025, p.2). In the contemporary context, such an ideal leader is very necessary in various organisations and social contexts who will encourage, inspire, and help build confidence in their subordinates or employees, which will not only help in the progress of the individual but also help in ensuring the success of the entire organisation.

Strategies for Integrating IKS into Leadership Development Programs

One of the means of developing good leadership and transmitting the Indian knowledge tradition among future generations is institutional education. For leadership development, various educational institutions and governments form various programs and projects through which the knowledge and tradition of IKS are transmitted. In the contemporary context, the formation of mental and moral leadership has become very necessary. The National Education Policy NEP-2020 has mentioned taking initiatives to increase awareness of it. The following are the possibilities of linking IKS with Leadership Development Programs and educational institutions:

Incorporating IKS in the curriculum

By including parts of IKS in the curriculum of educational institutions, it will be possible to make the new generation aware of Indian past culture and values. By linking Indian philosophy, philosophy of life, and social perspectives with the content of the curriculum, it is possible to transmit the knowledge of moral and social responsibility among the students. In addition, various ancient Indian texts, such as the Vedas, Upanishads, Vedanta, and Bhagavad Gita, will be helpful in building a good leadership character and developing leadership skills.

Use of Indian philosophical ideas in leadership training programs

By integrating the ideas and principles of the IKS with all the workshops and institutional initiatives taken to evaluate leadership skills, a sense of knowledge tradition and morality will be awakened in the minds of the trainees, and this knowledge and skills will play an effective role in their application in real situations. For example, ideas like 'Dharma', 'Karuna Yoga', and 'Loka sangraha' will help build the foundation of morality in leadership formation. The teachings of the Bhagavad Gita provide groundbreaking guidelines in developing leadership skills and help in character building and self-control of leadership. (Maruthi, 2024, p. 46)

Adoption of Morality and Character-Building Programs

For the development of leadership skills, the theoretical aspects of the IKS are not enough; in addition, the active participation and observation of students should be linked to practical and real situations. If students get the opportunity to participate, do social work, and involve themselves in various work-related or co-curricular activities based on real social situations, it will give rise to morality,

compassion, and ideals in their outlook and will help them in making decisions regarding their future life, leadership behaviour and performance.

Teacher Training and Faculty Development

In order to spread the knowledge and thought of the IKS among the students, it is essential to create this awareness and a clear idea about the ancient Indian knowledge tradition among those who teach leadership formation in education and training programs. The IKS should also be linked to the areas of training of teachers and the programs that are undertaken for their development.

Interdisciplinary Education System

In order to spread the IKS in an overall manner, the National Education Policy has already mentioned the Interdisciplinary Course. As a result, it has been said at the beginning that the programs organised for leadership development should also be linked to the Interdisciplinary perspective, as a result of which the Indian cultural knowledge tradition, combined with the knowledge and practice of philosophy, ethics, psychology, sociology, etc., will help build good leadership, strong moral character, and strong leadership.

Expansion of Research and Theoretical Discussion

In order to uncover the knowledge base of the IKS and develop the glory of the ancient knowledge tradition and integrate it into the scientific mindset of the present era, the practice and research of the IKS are very necessary. The practical application of the Indian knowledge tradition in the academic field and its application in the current social context will provide encouragement to the new generation and leadership, and will take forward the Indian past culture. Widespread and encouraging workshops, seminars, research publications, etc., based on the Indian Knowledge System and in academic fields will have a long-term impact.

4. Conclusion

The integration of the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) into leadership education and training programs is not only an exercise in cultural preservation but a necessary evolution in modern management pedagogy. Ethical crisis and leadership burnout are significantly increasing in the current global and corporate environment, with adapting western management paradigms and a focus on materialistic gains. Indian knowledge and value system offers a profound alternative which prioritises the holistic development of the individuals by balancing the intellectual capability with emotional intelligence, moral development, and spirituality, which are essential for an ideal leader. By integrating the spiritual teachings of the Bhagavad Gita—such as *Samatvam* (equanimity) and self-transcendence—into leadership practices, organizations can foster resilient, values-driven leaders who prioritize sustainable growth over short-term materialistic gains (Thakur & Rana, 2025, p. 738). By examining the ancient wisdom of texts like the Bhagavad Gita, this paper highlights how concepts such as Nishkama Karma (selfless action) and Dharma (righteous duty) can influence modern leadership practice. These principles integrate the modern practice of servant and transformational leadership with philosophical roots. National Education Policy

(NEP), 2020 specifically focuses on interdisciplinary curricula, character-building programs to promote and integrate IKS with modern leadership practice through education.

Ultimately, leadership is not only related to organisational benefit but also necessary for collective progress and welfare. Incorporating the rich and value-based traditions of the Indian Knowledge System into the educational curriculum, we can successfully cultivate a new generation of leaders who will not only be technically proficient and mentally resilient but also deeply rooted in ethics, empathy, and social responsibility.

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