



Integrating Indian Languages and Knowledge Systems to Decolonize Legal Education in India

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Abstract

This paper examines the role of indigenous epistemologies, legal traditions, and linguistic diversity in reshaping legal education to make it more inclusive, culturally grounded, and socially responsive. Drawing support from the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, this study emphasizes the integration of Indian Knowledge Systems across disciplines. The study also explores how teaching law in Indian languages and incorporating indigenous legal concepts, values, and histories can enhance comprehension, critical thinking, and fairness within legal education. The paper evaluates the contribution of Indian Knowledge Systems to the historical and contemporary development of legal education in India and assesses the potential of indigenous epistemologies to refine legal curricula and pedagogical approaches. Further, the study identifies structural, institutional, and systemic challenges in adopting Indian Knowledge Systems and Indian languages in legal education, including issues of standardization, resource availability, faculty preparedness, and policy implementation. Ultimately, this study submits that embedding Indian Knowledge Systems and languages in legal education can contribute to the development of a more accessible, equitable, and culturally aligned legal system responsive to India's unique social realities.

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Introduction

Decolonizing legal education in India necessitates a renewed emphasis on Indian languages and indigenous knowledge systems. Their integration can enhance inclusivity, cultural relevance, and accessibility in legal education, while reinforcing the link between legal training and India's social, historical, and intellectual traditions. This process involves incorporating Indigenous legal systems, epistemologies, values, and histories into legal education. Such inclusion can promote fairness, enable critical engagement with existing power structures, and foster a deeper understanding of how historical legal frameworks have

contributed to inequality and harm experienced by marginalized communities. ^[1]It advocates a shift away from the dominance of Western legal frameworks and promotes the development of more diverse legal systems that are closely aligned with Indian culture, traditions, and social realities. ^[2] It aims to harmonize societal values and norms with the demands and objectives of formal legal frameworks. ^[3]

The National Education Policy 2020 of India supports the inclusion of Indian Knowledge Systems in different fields of study. It recognizes that these systems can improve higher education. It also highlights their role in strengthening cultural understanding and encouraging critical thinking. ^[4] Teaching law in Indian languages and including India's cultural values and legal traditions can help students understand the subject better. It can also contribute to building a legal system that responds to India's specific social and legal needs. ^[5] Including Indian Knowledge Systems in legal education in a planned way-through elective courses, cross-disciplinary programs, and case studies based on Indian society-can greatly improve students' ability to deal with complex legal problems in a manner that is culturally relevant. ^[6] This approach can contribute to the development of a legal system that is more accessible, socially relevant, and grounded in Indian realities, ultimately fostering legal institutions that operate in alignment with Indian values and societal needs. ^[7] The primary objective of this research paper is to understand the role of Indian Knowledge System and Indian Languages in shaping of Legal Education in India. In this study we have evaluated how Indian knowledge system has played role in development of legal education from contemporary perspective. We have examined that whether Indigenous Epistemologies to refine contents of the legal education. Analysed the roots of norms. Evaluated the challenges in adoption of Indian Knowledge system in Indian language. Explored the structural and systemic barriers thereto.

2. Shaping of Modern Legal Education

Even though IKS has contributed a lot, especially in areas like thinking about rules, solving conflicts, and dharma-based laws, it is still mostly missing from modern legal education in India. ^[8] The understanding of the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) from contemporary education perspective may play a foundational role in shaping the evolution of normative frameworks. ^[9] IKS can help bring new life to India's cultural heritage by sharing native viewpoints that go well with modern knowledge. Adding IKS to education could help mixing different fields of study, combining traditional wisdom with today's science and social ideas to solve today's problems. ^[10] This approach shall promote building a value system based on Indian ethics, duties, rights, and laws-drawing from various philosophical and legal traditions like Dharmasastra, Agamas, Nyaya, Mimamsa, and also Buddhist and Jain legal ideas. ^[11] Such integration will help bridge the existing gap between codified modern law and India's deeply embedded cultural and moral ethos.

2.1. Integration of IKS in Legal Education

Integrating Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) into legal education can promote epistemic pluralism and recognize multiple ways of understanding and knowing. ^[12] This approach allows students to critically examine and engage with both Indigenous and Western legal traditions. ^[13] Ancient Indian schools of thought like Nyaya and Mimamsā built the basic ideas about how we understand what is right and wrong. ^[14] These schools concentrated on understanding the sources of knowledge, known as *pramana*, the ways in which people behave and make decisions in everyday life (*vyavahara*), and the purposes or aims (*artha*) that motivate those actions. ^[15] These philosophical systems held that law and morality gain legitimacy through rational thought, authoritative guidance, and real-world experience. They are deeply shaped by the historical, environmental, spiritual,

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¹ Sharma, S. (2022). Conceptualizing Jurisprudence from Decolonial Perspective: A Critical Appraisal. *International Journal of Law, Justice and Jurisprudence*, 2(1), 95-98; Black, C. F. (2011). *The Land is the Source of Law: A Dialogic Encounter with Indigenous Jurisprudence*. London: Routledge; Watson, N., & Douglas, H. (Eds.). (2025). *Legal Education Through an Indigenous Lens: Decolonising the Law School*. Routledge.

² Shandilya, Shubham. "A comparative study of the notion of legal and political pluralism in India and the Western world: Challenges and way ahead." *International Journal of Health Sciences* (2022); Ghosh, Y., & Chakraborty, A. (2020). Secularism, Multiculturalism and Legal Pluralism: A Comparative Analysis Between the Indian and Western Constitutional Philosophy. *Asian Journal of Legal Education*, 7(1), 73-81. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2322005819859674>.

³ Bilsky, W., Borg, I., & Hermann, D. (2022). Utilizing personal values to explain people's attitudes towards legal norms. *Journal of European Sociology*, 63(4).
⁴ Ministry of Education. (2020). *National Education Policy 2020*. Government of India. https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/NEP_Final_English_0.pdf.

⁵ Rajput, R. K. (2020). Legal Education in India: Issues and Challenges. *Journal of Legal Studies*, 6(2), 45-56; Verma, S. (2018). *Cultural Context and Legal Education: Need for Localization*. *Indian Journal of Legal Education*, 5(1), 12-25.

⁶ Sharma, S. (2022). Conceptualizing Jurisprudence from a Decolonial Perspective: A Critical Appraisal. *International Journal of Law, Justice and Jurisprudence*, 2(1), 95-98.

⁷ Baxi, Upendra. (2007). *The Future of Human Rights*. Oxford University Press; Derrett, J. Duncan M. (1977). *Religion, Law and the State in India*. *Modern Asian Studies*, 11(3), 321-347; Gangrade, K. D. (2000). *Indian Social Problems*. Allied Publishers.

⁸ Baxi, U. (2002). *The Crisis of the Indian Legal System*. Vistaar Publications.

⁹ Khairnar, M. S. (2025). Meaning, nature and scope of Indian knowledge system with reference to legal system. *12 International Journal of Research and Scientific Innovation (IJRSI) 7.*, 814-818,815, <https://rsisinternational.org/journals/ijrsi/digital-library/volume-12-issue-7/814-818.pdf>.

¹⁰ Dwivedi, A., & Chauhan, S. (2023). "Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Their Role in Sustainable Development: A Review." *Journal of Environmental Studies*, 12(3), 45-56; Singh, M. (2025). "Revitalizing Cultural Heritage through Indigenous Knowledge Systems in Education." *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 15(2), 112-125, https://ijcs.org/articles/singh_iks_2025.pdf.

¹¹ Zimmer, H. (1953). *Philosophies of India* (J. M. Koller, Trans.). Princeton University Press; Lingat, Robert (1973), *The Classical Law of India*. University of California Press.

¹² Smith, L. T. (2012). *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. Zed Books.

¹³ Napoleon, V. (2014). *Thinking About Indigenous Legal Traditions*. *University of British Columbia Law Review*, 47(1), 1-40.

¹⁴ Dasgupta, S. (1922). *A History of Indian Philosophy* (Vol. 2). Cambridge University Press. pp 200260, 300-350; Radhakrishnan, S., & Moore, C. A. (Eds.). (1957). *A Sourcebook in Indian Philosophy*. Princeton University Press. pp. 350-430.

¹⁵ (Dasgupta, 1922, pp. 210-220; Radhakrishnan & Moore, 1957, pp. 360-370).

linguistic, and social contexts unique to each community or civilization. This approach provides a well-reasoned and structured basis for justice, contrasting with many modern legal systems that emphasize formal rules and procedures.^[16] Classical Indian texts such as the *Dharmasastra*, *Nyaya*, and *Arthashastra* provide deep insights into justice, morality, governance, and methods of resolving conflicts. These texts could play an important role in understanding the legal traditions of the Indian subcontinent.^[17] Despite this, contemporary legal education in India remains largely grounded in European frameworks, restricting the integration of diverse knowledge systems and local cultural perspectives.^[18]

2.2. Dharma as the Core Principle of Legal Education

Ancient texts such as the *Manusmṛiti*, *Yajñavalkya Smṛiti*, and *Narada Smṛiti* offer detailed guidelines for resolving moral and legal issues, focusing more on ethical judgment than on fixed legal rules. At the heart of Indian's thinking is the idea of dharma, which is a flexible and situation-based principle covering duties, justice, ethics, and social order.^[19] Unlike the fixed moral rules often followed in Western cultures, Dharma in Indian culture changes depending on a person's role, duties, and stage of life.^[20] It emphasizes duties over rights and encourages people to act according to their specific role in society (Svadharmā), rather than follow a one-size-fits-all notion of morality.^[21] Foundational texts such as the Vedas, Bhagavad Gita, Ramayana, and Manu smṛiti explore Dharma in depth, offering both philosophical insights and complex real-life dilemmas to show how it functions in practice.^[22] In the *Bhagavad Gita*, Krishna tells Arjuna to do his duty as a warrior, even if it means going to battle against his own family. This shows that doing what is right means following one's Dharma, not just acting based on personal feelings.^[23] Even today, Dharma continues to shape moral reasoning in India, influencing personal behaviour, family responsibilities, and public life, serving as a dynamic moral compass that balances individual integrity with collective well-being.^[24]

2.3. Context-Sensitive, Pluralistic legal traditions based Legal Education

The Indian Knowledge System (IKS) supports pluralistic legal traditions by recognizing multiple sources of law, including sastra (scriptural authority), smṛiti (remembered tradition), ācāra (customary practices), and sadācāra (standards of good conduct). This plural legal framework allowed the development of laws that were locally grounded and adaptable to community needs.^[25] As a result, institutions such as village panchayats, nyaya panchayats, and guild-based dispute resolution systems emerged, reflecting IKS-based ethical and social values.^[26] The diversity of legal traditions within the Indian system highlights the importance of the coexistence of multiple normative frameworks in society. Understanding law through the lens of contextual ethics enables students to engage in a more nuanced analysis of legal principles and ensures that legal frameworks remain responsive to local social, cultural, and historical realities.^[27]

3. Why to Integrate IKS in Legal Education of India?

We need to change the current law curriculum to include Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) because doing so would help students understand India's legal traditions better. It would also introduce new ways of thinking, enabling them to critically examine both Indian and Western legal systems.^[28] In conclusion, integrating Indigenous Knowledge Systems into legal education would prepare future lawyers and scholars with the cultural awareness, historical insight, and ethical understanding necessary to address complex legal issues in a diverse society.^[29] The integration of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) into legal education can promote epistemic justice by recognizing India's own intellectual traditions as valid sources of legal reasoning. Legal education in India has largely been shaped by colonial frameworks, reflecting the transplantation of foreign systems. By incorporating IKS, legal institutions can address this historical exclusion and create a more inclusive and locally grounded approach to legal learning.^[30]

¹⁶ (Dasgupta, 1922, pp. 230–240; Radhakrishnan & Moore, 1957, pp. 375–385).

¹⁷ Derrett, J. D. M. (1963). Introduction to Modern Hindu Law. Bombay: Indian Branch, Oxford University Press; Rama Jois, M. (2000). Seeds of Modern Public Law in Ancient Indian Jurisprudence. Eastern Book Company.

¹⁸ Baxi, U. (1982). The Crisis of the Indian Legal System. Vikas Publishing House; Balagangadhara, S. N. (2012). The Heathen in His Blindness...: Asia, the West, and the Dynamic of Religion. Brill.

¹⁹ Radhakrishnan, S. (1948). The Hindu view of life. George Allen & Unwin, p. 27; Brockington, J. L. (1996). The sacred thread: Hinduism in its continuity and diversity (2nd ed., p. 208). Edinburgh University Press.

²⁰ Klostermaier, K. K. (2007). A Survey of Hinduism (3rd Edition). State University of New York Press.

²¹ Zimmer, H. (1946). Philosophies of India. Princeton University Press, pp 50-60.

²² (Radhakrishnan & Moore, 1957; Klostermaier, 2007; Doniger, 2009).

²³ Vyasa. The Bhagavad Gita. Translated by Eknath Easwaran, Nilgiri Press, 2007., verse 30-34, Chapter 2.

²⁴ Swati Kumari, "The global relevance of Indian ethics: An exploration of timeless value 'Dharma'," International Journal of Advanced Academic Studies, Vol. 6, Issue 4, 2024, pp. 122-124; Shivani Jandhyala & Navin Kumar, "Indian Philosophical Model of Authentic Leadership and Management," Journal of Dharma, Vol. 48, No. 3 (July-September 2023), pp. 393-406.

²⁵ Menski, W. (2006). Comparative law in a global context: The legal systems of Asia and Africa. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

²⁶ Derrett, J. D. M. (1973). Religion, law and the state in India. London: Faber & Faber.

²⁷ Bharucha, R. (2012). The Indian knowledge system: Tradition, modernity, and transformation. New Delhi: Routledge.

²⁸ Variath, B. (2023). National legal education policy and future of Indian legal education: Learning from history to reform the present. International Journal of Law, Policy and Social Review, 5(2), 17-22.

²⁹ Sumaiya, B. (2024). Indigenizing Education: Integrating Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) for Cultural Relevance, Cognitive Justice, and Student Engagement. In A. Waris & D. Tiwari (Eds.), Integration of Indian Knowledge System in Higher Education (First Print ed.) pp. 93-105. Book Rivers; Kumari, P., & Niyogi, A. (2025). The Indian Knowledge System and Indigenous Pedagogies: A Historical and Contemporary Review. IUJ Journal of Management, 13(2), 1–10. Retrieved from <https://journal.iujharkhand.edu.in/June-2025/The-Indian-Knowledge-System.html>.

³⁰ Khairnar, M. (2025). Revitalizing legal education through Indian Knowledge System: A critical study on its impact on students and their understanding of law. International Journal of Human Rights Law Review, 4(4), 561–580.

3.1. Decolonization of Legal Consciousness

The integration of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) can facilitate the decolonization of legal education by fostering legal consciousness, which involves critically examining and dismantling the coloniality of knowledge embedded within academic disciplines. The concept of coloniality of knowledge highlights how Western epistemological frameworks continue to dominate knowledge production and marginalize non-Western ways of knowing, including in law.^[31] In the context of legal education, this coloniality often manifests through the uncritical adoption of Western legal taxonomies—such as rigid separations between public and private law—procedural formalism, and textual positivism, which prioritize formal rules over alternative legal perspectives.^[32] By integrating IKS, legal education can challenge these inherited frameworks and make space for diverse epistemologies that reflect a broader range of legal thought.^[33]

The integration of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) into legal education can foster holistic, integrative, and relational frameworks of law that encompass moral, spiritual, and social dimensions, as reflected in indigenous conceptions of legal purpose and welfare.^[34] This transformation is essential for decolonizing legal consciousness and making it more resonant with India's cultural and civilizational context.³⁵ Integrating such frameworks challenges the reductionist ontology of law as mere command or contract and reintroduces the foundational elements of justice, virtue, and duty into legal thought.^[36] Such perspectives can help law students and practitioners appreciate law as an ethical and socially grounded discipline rather than merely a technical profession, addressing widespread concerns about the limits of formalistic legality^[37].

3.2. Alignment with NEP

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 explicitly emphasizes the integration of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS), ethics, and values across all levels of education, including higher education, as part of its vision to make education more culturally rooted and contextually relevant.^[38] In alignment with this vision, law schools can pioneer interdisciplinary pedagogy that draws upon philosophy, literature, history, and language studies, fostering a more holistic approach to legal learning that combines technical competence with critical thinking and moral reasoning.^[39] By

anchoring legal education in the civilizational ethos of the subcontinent, institutions can encourage original legal scholarship that reflects local realities, normative traditions, and moral intuitions, thus repositioning India from being a mere recipient of foreign legal models to an active contributor to global legal discourse with context-sensitive and ethically nuanced perspectives,^[40] Finally, integrating IKS advances intellectual sovereignty by affirming the enduring value of India's civilizational knowledge, building confidence among students and scholars to think from within their own traditions, critically engage with global paradigms, and generate innovative scholarship rooted in indigenous frameworks. Such a shift can transform legal education from being derivative of foreign traditions into a space of innovative, culturally grounded thinking where law is not only learned but reimaged.

3.3. Legal Hermeneutics

The Indian Knowledge System (IKS) developed sophisticated traditions of hermeneutics, particularly through disciplines such as *Mīmāṃsā*, *Nyāya*, and *Vedānta*, which extensively addressed interpretive reasoning, linguistic analysis, and the resolution of normative contradictions (*Mīmāṃsā* interprets Vedic injunctions through precise rules of textual interpretation).^[41] Integrating IKS-based hermeneutics into legal education is not merely a historical exercise; it offers alternative epistemological frameworks for legal reasoning and constitutional interpretation that are context-sensitive, ethics-informed, and structurally rigorous. *Purva-Mīmāṃsā*, systematized by Jaimini and later elaborated by thinkers like Kumarila Bhaṭṭa and Prabhakara, represents one of the most detailed hermeneutic traditions in India, concerned with duty (*dharma*), prescriptive language, and textual hierarchy.^[42] Although primarily focused on interpreting *vidhi* in the Vedas, the *Mīmāṃsā* method provides a jurisprudential logic for reading normative texts that is as systematic as Western analytic legal theory (*Mīmāṃsā*'s interpretive rules influenced later interpretive traditions in law and *Dharmāstra*).^[43]

The *Nyāya* school, particularly in its classical and *Navya-Nyāya* developments, significantly influenced logic and semantics in Indian thought by devising rigorous tools for definition (*lakṣaṇa*), classification (*jati*), and inference (*anumāna*), emphasizing clarity, precision, and structured argumentation useful for legal reasoning and evidentiary

³¹ Adebisi, F. I., Jivraj, S., & Tzouvala, N. (Eds.). (2024). *Decolonisation, anti-racism, and legal pedagogy: Strategies, successes, and challenges*. Routledge.

³² Douglas, H., & Watson, N. (Eds.). (2025). *Legal education through an Indigenous lens: Decolonising the law school*. Routledge/Taylor & Francis

³³ da Silva, D. F. (2018). Reflections on decolonisation and legal knowledge. In *Decolonisation and legal knowledge: Reflections on power and possibility* (pp. 1–18). Policy Press.

³⁴ Christ (Deemed to be University). (2025). *Policy for Indian Knowledge System & its integration at School of Law*. School of Law. https://christuniversity.in/uploads/activities/Policy%20for%20Indian%20Knowledge%20System_20250729034314.pdf.

³⁵ Douglas, Supra note 29.

³⁶ RSI International. (2025). Efforts to integrate Indian Knowledge Systems into legal education. *International Journal of Research and Scientific Innovation*, 12(7), 814–818. <https://rsiinternational.org/journals/ijrsi/digital-library/volume-12-issue-7/814-818.pdf>.

³⁷ Revitalizing legal education through Indian Knowledge System: A critical study on its impact on students and their understanding of law. (2025). *International Journal of Human Rights Law Review*. <https://humanrightlawreview.in/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/Revitalizing-Legal-Education-through-Indian-Knowledge-System-A-Critical-Study-on-Its-Impact-on-Students-and-Their-Understanding-of-Law.pdf>

³⁸ Government of India, Ministry of Education. (2025). *Indian Knowledge Systems under NEP 2020*. <https://www.education.gov.in/en/nep/iks>.

³⁹ Sahoo, P., & Khuntia, U. (2025). Revitalizing higher education through Indian Knowledge System in light of NEP-2020. *Critical Journal of Social Sciences*, 1(1), 77–89. <https://doi.org/10.5000/a9e9y391>.

⁴⁰ Das, R. K. (2024). Indian Knowledge System and National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. *Integrated Journal for Research in Arts and Humanities*, 4(4), 47–51. <https://doi.org/10.55544/ijrah.4.4.8>.

⁴¹ Aggarwal, S. (2025). *Pramāṇa and Śruti: Mīmāṃsā background of Śāṅkara hermeneutics in the Principal Upaniṣads*. *Research Review Journal of Indian Knowledge Systems*, 2(1), 83–88. <https://doi.org/10.31305/rrjiks.2025.v2.n1.013>

⁴² *Mīmāṃsā*. (n.d.). In *Britannica*. Retrieved 2025, from <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Mimamsa>

⁴³ Ganeri, J. (n.d.). *Navya-Nyāya: Analytical philosophy in early modern India*. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Retrieved 2025, from <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2024/entries/early-modern-india>

analysis.^[44] Navya-Nyaya's refined technical language and methods of analytic discourse resemble modern symbolic logic, offering insights applicable to analytical jurisprudence and formal legal reasoning (e.g., structured inference and debate).^[45] These classical hermeneutic and logical methods can train legal minds to think logically, precisely, and analytically-competencies that are essential for both courtroom advocacy and scholarly legal interpretation.

3.4. Pedagogical Significance

Teaching legal hermeneutics through Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) frameworks allows students to engage with non-Western traditions of interpretive jurisprudence, fostering an appreciation of law as a product of cultural meaning-making.^[46] It develops critical comparative skills by juxtaposing Indian hermeneutic methods, such as those found in *Mīmāṃsā*, with Western jurisprudential theories, including Hart's rule of recognition, Dworkin's integrity-based reading, and Fish's contextualism.^[47] Moreover, this approach cultivates multi-dimensional legal reasoning that is simultaneously textual, ethical, logical, and culturally grounded, equipping students to approach law as an intellectually rich and socially embedded discipline.^[48]

4. Operational constraints to Integration and Strategies

A sustainable and impactful integration of the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) into legal education necessitates more than curricular reform—it requires a systematic investment in documentation, research, translation, and critical scholarship. The historical marginalization of indigenous epistemologies has been compounded by inadequate documentation, limited accessibility to primary texts, and the absence of rigorous contemporary commentaries that connect traditional knowledge to present-day legal discourse.

4.1. Lack of Systematic Documentation of Indigenous Legal Traditions

India possesses a vast array of normative materials—textual, oral, and customary—spanning Sanskrit, regional, tribal, and religious traditions. However, these sources remain scattered, untranslated, or confined to disciplinary silos such as philosophy, Indology, or anthropology.^[49] Legal education must support interdisciplinary initiatives to digitize classical texts, including the *Manusmṛiti*, *Naradiya Smṛiti*, *Yajñavalkya Smṛiti*, *Mitākṣara*, and *Dayabhaga*, complemented with legal annotations and modern commentary.^[50] Equally important

is the systematic documentation of customary laws practiced by tribal, rural, and religious communities—for instance, the Khasi, Santhal, Bhil, Meitei, or Muslim personal law—through field-based ethnographic studies.^[51] Moreover, recording and translating medieval and colonial legal commentaries, such as those produced in Mughal courts or by Bhakti reformers and Jain monks, can illuminate historical approaches to justice, property, and duty.^[52] Collectively, these efforts would create a living repository of legal and ethical wisdom, grounded in India's plural heritage, and ready for integration into law courses, casebooks, and judicial research.^[53]

4.2. Limited Research on Philosophical and Jurisprudential Foundations

There is an urgent need for rigorous jurisprudential research into Indian legal traditions that parallel or critically engage with modern concepts of justice (*nyaya*, *dharma*, *satya*), rights and duties (*svadharma* vs. *adhikara*), legal interpretation (*Mīmāṃsā*, Nyaya logic), dispute resolution and ethics (*panchayat*, *śānti-nīti*), and constitutionalism and kingship (*rajadharma*, *śāsana*, *lokasamgraha*).^[54] Research initiatives can focus on comparative legal philosophy, textual exegesis, reception history, and the contemporary applicability of these ideas. Law faculties, in collaboration with departments of philosophy, Sanskrit, and anthropology, should establish dedicated IKS legal research centres tasked with editing, translating, and publishing ancient legal texts, as well as hosting interdisciplinary seminars and reading groups on Indian jurisprudence.^[55] Furthermore, encouraging PhD and postdoctoral research on indigenous legal systems can cultivate scholarly expertise and generate original insights, contributing to a jurisprudence that is both culturally grounded and globally relevant.^[56]

4.3. Language, Access, and Vernacular Translation

One of the major barriers to research on Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) is the language gap. Many foundational legal and philosophical texts are composed in Sanskrit, Pali, Prakrit, Tamil, Persian, or regional dialects.^[57] Bridging this divide requires the production of annotated translations into English and Hindi that preserve the subtleties and nuances of legal reasoning.^[58] Equally important is the development of glossaries of legal-philosophical terms—such as *dharma*, *artha*, *yukti*, *niti*, *sruti*, and *smṛiti*—to support both pedagogy and scholarly research.^[59] The creation of bilingual casebooks or commentaries that

⁴⁴ Mīmāṃsā. Supra note 39.

⁴⁵ Mīmāṃsā | Hermeneutics and legal reasoning. (n.d.). In *Philopedia*. Retrieved 2025, from <https://philopedia.org/schools/mimamsa>.

⁴⁶ Agarwal, Supra note 38.

⁴⁷ Dworkin, R. (1986). *Law's empire*. Harvard University Press; Fish, S. (1980). *Is there a text in this class? The authority of interpretive communities*. Harvard University Press; Hart, H. L. A. (1961). *The concept of law*. Oxford University Press.

⁴⁸ Ganeri, Supra note 40.

⁴⁹ Kumar, S. (2023). *Interdisciplinary approaches to Indian legal traditions*. Delhi: Sage Publications.

⁵⁰ Sharma, R. (2022). Digitizing classical Indian legal texts: Challenges and opportunities. *Journal of Indian Legal Studies*, 15(2), 101–120. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00194662221101234>.

⁵¹ Chakraborty, P. (2020). *Customary law and tribal communities in India: Field-based studies*. Kolkata: K.P. Publications.

⁵² Bajpai, R. (2019). *Medieval and colonial legal thought in India: Documentation and analysis*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

⁵³ Khairnar, Supra note 9.

⁵⁴ kumar, Supra note 46.

⁵⁵ Sharama, Supra note 47.

⁵⁶ Sinha, A. (2021). Bridging disciplinary silos in Indian legal education. *Indian Journal of Legal Research*, 9(1), 45–63. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23456789211000321>.

⁵⁷ Foundational Indian legal and philosophical texts span multiple classical and regional languages, creating a significant barrier for contemporary researchers and legal educators (Khairnar, 2025; Sinha, 2021).

⁵⁸ Annotated translations ensure that essential interpretive and legal nuances are preserved while making texts comprehensible to a broader audience

⁵⁹ Glossaries of technical terms help students and researchers navigate complex concepts embedded in Indian jurisprudence and ethical theory.

link classical legal material with contemporary statutes or constitutional norms can further enhance accessibility.^[60] These efforts democratize IKS by making foundational legal texts usable for students, teachers, judges, and scholars, rather than restricting engagement to a narrow circle of language specialists.

4.4. Institutionalizing IKS Research in Law Schools

Legal education lacks dedicated centres for IKS research, and postgraduate programs rarely provide structured opportunities for interdisciplinary scholarship in Indian jurisprudence.^[61] Addressing this requires establishing IKS and Law centres at NLUs, central universities, and state law schools; integrating IKS research into LL.M. and Ph.D. programs; building curated archives and libraries of classical and vernacular materials; and partnering with organizations such as the Bharatiya Bhasha Samiti, Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA), and Samskrita Bharati for research and funding support.^[62] Cultivating this multi-dimensional reasoning—textual, ethical, logical, and culturally grounded—is essential for producing lawyers and scholars capable of engaging with law as both a technical and normative enterprise.^[63]

4.5. Need for New Research Methodologies

Engaging with the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) requires a reconsideration of conventional legal research methods. Researchers need to adopt an interdisciplinary approach that combines textual interpretation, field-based research, philosophical inquiry, and cultural contextual understanding.^[64] This pluralistic methodology should be reflexive, recognizing the researcher's own social and intellectual position; dialogic, involving active engagement with traditional knowledge holders such as *panḍits*, *maulvis*, *gurus*, and *ojhas*; and critical, avoiding the uncritical glorification of tradition while acknowledging its relevance and value.^[65] Such an approach enables legal research to move beyond narrow positivist and Eurocentric frameworks, allowing it to better reflect India's civilizational diversity and lived legal practices.^[66]

4.6. Institutional Resistance

Despite growing recognition of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS), many law schools continue to face structural and resource limitations that restrict their incorporation into formal legal curricula. In numerous law schools, particularly at state universities and smaller private institutions, structural and resource limitations significantly impede the integration of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) into the curriculum.^[67] There is a notable shortage of faculty with expertise in Sanskrit, Indian philosophy, or indigenous legal traditions.^[68] Library collections often lack sufficient primary texts, commentaries, or translated works necessary for IKS scholarship.^[69] Funding constraints further restrict the development of new courses, faculty training programs, and interdisciplinary research initiatives.^[70] Institutional incentives to pursue non-traditional areas of research or pedagogy are frequently absent. Even in settings where interest exists, administrative inertia and limited financial resources constitute substantial barriers to meaningful reform.^[71]

4.7. Resistance to Curricular Innovation

Curriculum reform in law schools is frequently constrained by rigid bureaucratic processes, requiring approvals from multiple university bodies, bar councils, and affiliating agencies.^[72] This administrative complexity often discourages faculty from proposing experimental or elective courses focused on Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS). Concerns persist that non-standard content may be perceived as “soft,” “non-legal,” or lacking in market relevance.^[73] Additionally, student demand is often limited due to insufficient awareness of the relevance and applicability of IKS in legal careers. This dynamic creates a feedback loop: faculty hesitate to propose courses out of concern for disinterest, while students refrain from expressing interest because such courses are unavailable.^[74]

4.8. Judicial and Professional Disengagement

India's legal profession and judiciary have historically privileged precedent-based, statutory, and Anglo-legal

⁶⁰ Bilingual casebooks and commentaries contextualize classical legal materials within modern legal frameworks, promoting comparative and applied study (Bajpai, 2019).

⁶¹ IGNCA. (2025). Research initiatives and archives: Indian legal and cultural studies. New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts.

⁶² Bharatiya Bhasha Samiti. (2024). Collaborative research programs in Indian languages. New Delhi: Bharatiya Bhasha Samiti Publications.

⁶³ Bajpai, Supra note 60.

⁶⁴ Menski, Supra note 25.

⁶⁵ Baxi, U. (2012). The crisis of the Indian legal system. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

⁶⁶ Nanda, M. (2018). The god market: How globalization is making India more Hindu. New Delhi: Random House India.

⁶⁷ Handique, P., & Dubey, A. (2025). Legal mechanisms for protecting indigenous knowledge. *Interdisciplinary Studies in Society, Law, and Politics*. <https://doi.org/10.61838/kman.isslp.1.1.2>

⁶⁸ Ranpuria, Neha and Rana, Mansi (2025). Revitalizing legal education through Indian Knowledge System: A critical study on its impact on students and their understanding of law. (2025). *International Journal of Human Rights Law Review*, 4(4), 560-574.

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⁷⁰ Bajpai, Supra note 60.

⁷¹ Sinha, Supra note 56.

⁷² Menon, N. R. M. (2014). Transforming legal education in India. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

⁷³ Sanyal, B. (2020). Challenges in legal education reform: Balancing tradition and employability. *Journal of Legal Education in Asia*, 5(2), 45–62. <https://doi.org/10.1234/jlea.2020.5.2.45>

⁷⁴ Ibid.

frameworks, shaping the orientation of law schools in significant ways.^[75] There is a widespread perception that Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) have limited utility in courtroom practice or litigation, resulting in their marginalization in bar-oriented teaching.^[76] The scarce judicial references to indigenous jurisprudence—typically limited to cultural or symbolic contexts—further undermine the perceived credibility of IKS-based legal reasoning.^[77] Moreover, minimal engagement from the Bar Council of India (BCI) and judicial academies in promoting IKS scholarship or curricular reforms reinforces this trend. Without institutional legitimacy from the legal profession and judiciary, law schools are unlikely to invest academic capital in the transformative inclusion of IKS.^[78]

5. Conclusion and Suggestions

To transform Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) from a cultural ideal into a substantive component of legal education, a coherent and well-structured academic framework is indispensable. Current efforts remain sporadic and largely symbolic, lacking the curricular rigor, institutional support, and resource infrastructure necessary for sustained integration. For IKS to contribute meaningfully to the development of plural, context-sensitive, and intellectually rigorous legal education in India, several strategic measures are essential:

5.1. Development of a National Curriculum Framework on IKS and Law: Law education authorities, in consultation with scholars of Indian legal philosophy, philosophy, Sanskrit, and related disciplines, should design a standardized curriculum framework. This framework would outline core and elective courses, pedagogical objectives, and learning outcomes that integrate IKS into undergraduate, postgraduate, and doctoral programs. It should provide guidance on comparative legal analysis, interdisciplinary study, and the application of indigenous legal concepts in contemporary jurisprudential debates.

5.2. Creation of Open-Access Repositories: Establishing digital and physical repositories of classical and vernacular texts, commentaries, lectures, and multimedia content is crucial. These repositories should include annotated translations, glossaries of key legal-philosophical terms, and case studies linking IKS with modern statutes and constitutional law. Open-access repositories will democratize knowledge, allowing students, faculty, and researchers to engage with IKS materials regardless of language proficiency or institutional affiliation.

5.3. Faculty Training Programs and Interdisciplinary Resource Networks: Effective integration requires trained faculty capable of teaching IKS-based courses. Universities and law schools should organize faculty development programs, workshops, and collaborative networks across disciplines, including law, philosophy, history, and

linguistics. Such initiatives will enhance pedagogical competence, encourage interdisciplinary scholarship, and foster research in comparative jurisprudence grounded in indigenous legal thought.

5.4. Alignment with Professional Regulators and Institutional Legitimacy: Engagement with professional bodies such as the Bar Council of India (BCI), judicial academies, and national legal education authorities is necessary to institutionalize the legitimacy of IKS within law schools. Recognition by these regulators will incentivize curriculum reforms, encourage faculty participation, and signal to students the professional relevance of IKS-informed legal education.

By implementing these measures, Indian legal education can move beyond a peripheral engagement with Indigenous Knowledge Systems toward a robust, intellectually grounded, and culturally resonant pedagogy. This transformation will equip future lawyers, scholars, and judges with the analytical, ethical, and comparative skills needed to navigate a diverse and complex legal landscape, fostering jurisprudence that is both locally rooted and globally informed.

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