

# Reconstructing Sociology Education in India: Integrating Indigenous Knowledge Systems Under the New Education Policy (NEP) 2020

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## **Abstract:**

The New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasizes the integration of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) and a multidisciplinary approach to higher education. However, sociology as a discipline in India continues to be dominated by Western theoretical frameworks, often overlooking indigenous social philosophies, oral traditions, and grassroots knowledge systems. This study explores the need for decolonizing sociology education in India by incorporating vernacular sociologies, indigenous methodologies, and community-driven knowledge into the curriculum.

Using survey-based research via Google Forms, data was collected from sociology students, educators, and researchers across India to analyze perceptions regarding the relevance of IKS, limitations of Western sociology, and challenges in curriculum reform. The findings reveal that while there is a growing awareness of the importance of Indian epistemologies, institutional resistance, lack of academic resources, and inadequate faculty training remain key challenges. Respondents emphasized the need for curriculum restructuring, field-based learning, and the inclusion of regional and marginalized knowledge systems in sociology education.

This study argues that NEP 2020 provides a unique opportunity to reconstruct sociology education by fostering an inclusive, locally relevant, and community-centered approach. The paper concludes with policy recommendations, including faculty capacity-building programs, funding for indigenous research, and a collaborative model between academia and grassroots knowledge producers. The findings contribute to the ongoing discourse on educational decolonization and knowledge democratization in India.

**Keywords:** New Education Policy, multidisciplinary approach, vernacular sociologies, Indian epistemologies, sociology education.

## **Introduction:**

This paper reveals the Indian knowledge system. The New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 represents a paradigm shift in Indian higher education by emphasizing multidisciplinary learning, decolonization of knowledge, and integration of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS). The policy envisions an inclusive, context-driven education model that moves beyond Western academic frameworks and promotes indigenous epistemologies, traditional knowledge, and local sociological narratives (Kumar, 2021). However, sociology as a discipline in India remains deeply influenced by Eurocentric theories, often

neglecting the intellectual traditions of Indian thinkers, folk traditions, and grassroots social philosophies (Deshpande, 2013).

Sociology in India has historically borrowed extensively from Western sociological traditions, with a strong emphasis on theorists such as Karl Marx, Émile Durkheim, and Max Weber (Patel, 2020). While these theories provide valuable analytical tools, they often fail to adequately capture India's caste dynamics, kinship structures, and social movements, which require a more indigenous lens (Jodhka, 2017). Scholars such as M. N. Srinivas, G. S. Ghurye, and A. R. Desai have attempted to Indianize sociology, but mainstream curricula continue to prioritize Western methodologies over locally rooted knowledge (Gupta, 2012).

The call for decolonizing Indian sociology is not new. Scholars like Shiv Visvanathan (1997) and Ashis Nandy (1983) have long argued that India's knowledge production has been shaped by colonial legacies, resulting in an epistemic dependency on Western social sciences. According to Nandy (1983), "modern social sciences in India have been complicit in erasing indigenous knowledge by privileging Western rationality over local traditions." Similarly, Deshpande (2013) critiques the dominance of Eurocentrism in Indian sociology, stating that "the exclusion of vernacular knowledge perpetuates an academic elitism that alienates local communities from their own knowledge systems."

The NEP 2020 provides an opportunity to correct this imbalance by promoting contextualized learning, vernacular knowledge, and interdisciplinary approaches (Kumar, 2021). For instance, the inclusion of Indian thinkers such as Kautilya, Ambedkar, Gandhi, Phule, and Periyar in sociology curricula would enable a more representative and culturally rooted understanding of Indian society (Patel, 2021). Moreover, indigenous research methods such as oral traditions, participatory action research (PAR), and ethnographic storytelling can offer alternative sociological insights that challenge Western positivism (Chakrabarti & Dhar, 2019).

Despite these possibilities, the implementation of IKS in sociology education faces multiple challenges, including institutional resistance, lack of trained faculty, and absence of standardized indigenous texts (Sundar, 2005). Addressing these challenges requires policy interventions, curriculum reforms, and collaborative knowledge production involving academia and grassroots communities (Jodhka, 2012).

### **Objectives:**

This research aims to explore the restructuring of sociology education in India through the integration of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) under NEP 2020. My major objectives are such as :-

1. To analyze the impact of NEP 2020 on sociology education in India
2. To identify the limitations of Western-centric sociology in the Indian context
3. To assess the challenges in integrating Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) into sociology curricula
4. To propose strategies and policy recommendations for an inclusive and decolonized sociology curriculum

### **Material and Methods:**

This research employs a survey-based approach using Google Forms to collect primary data from sociology students, educators, and researchers across India. The survey was designed to assess awareness, perceptions, and challenges related to integrating Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) into sociology curricula under NEP 2020. The questionnaire included both closed-ended and open-ended

questions, focusing on themes such as the limitations of Western-centric sociology, the relevance of Indian sociological traditions, and institutional challenges in implementing IKS. The responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics for quantitative data and thematic analysis for qualitative insights. Additionally, secondary data sources, including academic books, research papers, and government policy documents, were reviewed to contextualize the findings. The study ensures ethical considerations, including informed consent, data anonymity, and unbiased representation of participant perspectives. While the research provides valuable insights into the feasibility of IKS integration in sociology education, it is limited by its dependence on online responses, which may not capture all regional and institutional variations in India's sociology curriculum.

### **Sampling strategy:**

The study adopts a purposive sampling method, ensuring that respondents have relevant academic backgrounds in sociology. Participants were selected based on their engagement in higher education institutions, research, and teaching. The sample includes:-

- A. Undergraduate and postgraduate students (50%), representing the perspectives of learners exposed to the current sociology curriculum.
- B. University faculty members and educators (30%), offering insights into teaching methodologies and curriculum design challenges.
- C. Social science researchers and policymakers (20%), providing expertise on academic decolonization and knowledge system integration.

The survey was disseminated online through academic networks, university mailing lists, and social media platforms, allowing for diverse geographic representation across Indian universities. However, the study acknowledges limitations in access, as it primarily captures responses from individuals with internet availability, potentially underrepresenting voices from rural and marginalized institutions.

### **Data collection and Analysis:**

The study examines the integration of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) into sociology education under NEP 2020, focusing on awareness, challenges, and opportunities for curriculum reform. A Google Forms survey was conducted among sociology students, educators, and researchers, gathering both quantitative and qualitative responses. The majority of respondents (92.3%) were between 20-30 years old, predominantly female (84.6%), and affiliated with sociology programs at institutions such as Lucknow University. The survey results indicate that while some respondents (46.2%) are somewhat aware of IKS in sociology, a significant proportion (38.5%) have little to no knowledge, highlighting the need for greater exposure to indigenous perspectives.

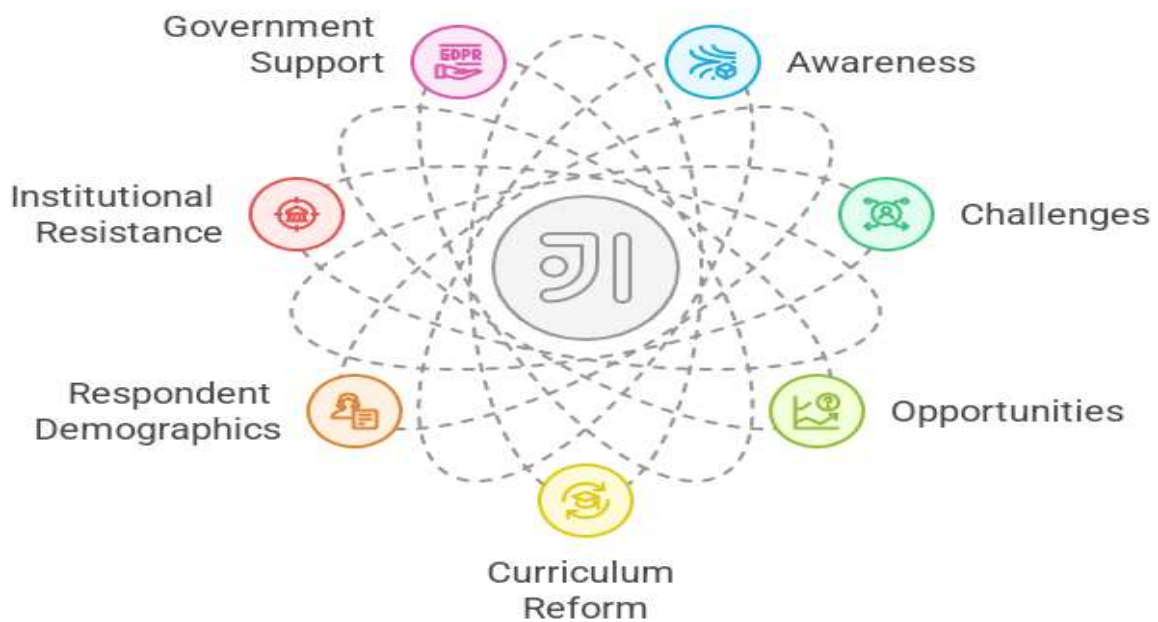
Most respondents (61.5%) strongly agreed that the sociology curriculum in India is heavily Western-centric, with only 7.7% disagreeing. Participants identified key Indian sociologists such as G.S. Ghurye, M.N. Srinivas, Radhakamal Mukherjee, Dipankar Gupta, and Sharmila Rege, whose contributions are often overlooked in mainstream curricula. The study also reveals a demand for greater emphasis on caste, kinship, folk traditions, and oral histories in sociology education. However, integrating IKS into sociology faces significant challenges, with 84.6% of respondents citing the lack of standardized academic resources as the biggest obstacle. Institutional resistance (30.8%), students' preference for globally recognized theories (38.5%), and lack of faculty training (30.8%) also pose considerable barriers to reform.

Despite these challenges, 76.9% of respondents agreed that incorporating IKS alongside Western theories would be beneficial, enriching sociology education through oral histories, participatory research, and indigenous governance models. In terms of curriculum reform, 38.5% emphasized the need to integrate indigenous research methodologies, while 23.1% supported bilingual textbooks to make sociology education more accessible and inclusive. Additionally, 46.2% of respondents identified the lack of government support as a key barrier to implementation, followed by faculty resistance (23.1%) and limited student interest in IKS (23.1%).

Participants ranked ethnographic fieldwork and participatory research (30.8%) as the most effective teaching method for integrating IKS, followed by case studies on Indian social movements (23.1%) and interactive seminars with indigenous scholars (23.1%). A significant portion (53.8%) expressed strong interest in enrolling in IKS-focused sociology courses, while 38.5% said they might consider it if structured effectively. Regarding the global impact of IKS integration, 69.2% believed it would strengthen India’s unique contribution to global sociology, though 30.8% were uncertain whether it might isolate Indian sociology from international discourse.

The study confirms that while interest in integrating IKS into sociology education is growing, major institutional and policy-level challenges persist. Standardized academic materials, faculty training, and active policy intervention are essential for meaningful reform. NEP 2020 provides a critical opportunity to decolonize sociology education in India, but its success will depend on collaboration between universities, policymakers, and researchers to institutionalize indigenous knowledge in academia(see figure no 01).

### Integrating Indigenous Knowledge in Sociology Education



**FIGURE NO- 01**

**Findings:**

The research study on integrating Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) into sociology education under NEP 2020 provides a comprehensive understanding of the awareness, challenges, and potential reforms required to decolonize sociology curricula in India. Based on survey responses, the study reveals that a significant portion of respondents recognize the Western dominance in sociology education, with 61.5% strongly agreeing that the curriculum is overly Eurocentric. However, awareness of IKS remains limited, as only 15.4% of participants had in-depth knowledge, while 38.5% had little or no awareness of indigenous sociological perspectives.

Participants identified key Indian sociologists, such as G.S. Ghurye, M.N. Srinivas, Radhakamal Mukherjee, and Sharmila Rege, whose works should be emphasized in Indian sociology education. Additionally, the concepts of caste, kinship, folk traditions, and oral histories were highlighted as areas requiring greater inclusion in the curriculum. The primary obstacles to integrating IKS were found to be the lack of standardized academic resources (84.6%), institutional resistance (30.8%), students' preference for globally recognized theories (38.5%), and faculty's lack of training in IKS (30.8%).

Despite these challenges, 76.9% of respondents supported incorporating IKS into sociology education, believing it would enhance contextual learning and foster critical engagement with India's socio-cultural realities. Proposed reforms included integrating indigenous research methodologies (38.5%), introducing bilingual/multilingual textbooks (23.1%), and focusing more on field-based, participatory research (23.1%). Additionally, 46.2% of respondents pointed to a lack of government support as a significant barrier, while 23.1% each cited faculty resistance and student disinterest.

The study also explored effective pedagogical strategies for integrating IKS into sociology education. Ethnographic fieldwork and participatory research were considered the most impactful methods (30.8%), followed by case studies on Indian social movements (23.1%) and interactive seminars with indigenous scholars (23.1%). A majority (53.8%) expressed strong interest in IKS-focused sociology courses, suggesting a demand for specialized programs that center indigenous knowledge and methodologies.

Regarding the global impact of incorporating IKS, 69.2% of respondents believed it would strengthen India's academic contributions, while 30.8% were unsure whether it might isolate Indian sociology from international discourse. This highlights the need for a balanced approach that integrates indigenous perspectives without undermining global academic recognition.

The study reveals that NEP 2020 presents a crucial opportunity to decolonize sociology education by integrating indigenous epistemologies, alternative research methodologies, and regionally diverse perspectives. However, its success depends on policy interventions, faculty training programs, and the development of standardized academic resources to support the institutionalization of Indigenous Knowledge Systems in higher education(see figure no 02).

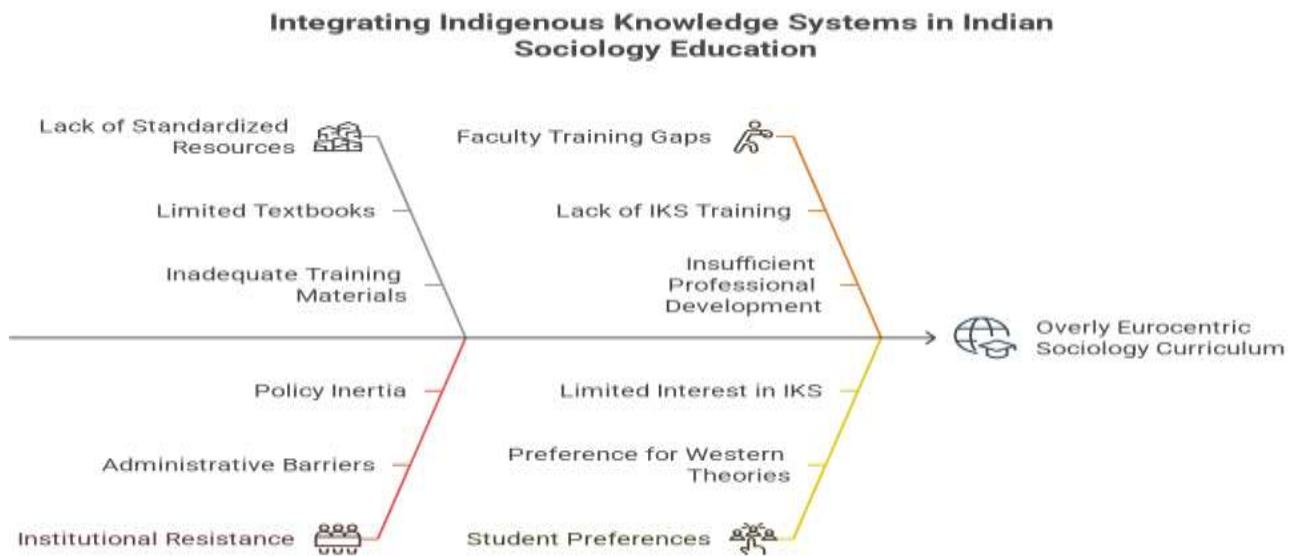
**Integrating Indigenous Knowledge in Sociology**



**FIGURE NO – 02**

**Results:**

The study highlights the strong recognition of Western dominance in Indian sociology education, with the majority of respondents agreeing that the curriculum is overly Eurocentric. However, awareness of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) remains limited, with only a small percentage having in-depth knowledge. Key Indian sociologists such as G.S. Ghurye, M.N. Srinivas, and Radhakamal Mukherjee were identified as scholars whose works should be emphasized, along with greater inclusion of concepts like caste, kinship, folk traditions, and oral histories. Major challenges to integrating IKS include the lack of standardized academic resources, institutional resistance, students’ preference for globally recognized theories, and faculty members’ lack of training. Despite these barriers, a significant majority supported incorporating IKS into sociology education, believing it would enhance contextual learning and foster critical engagement with India’s socio-cultural realities. Proposed reforms included integrating indigenous research methodologies, introducing bilingual or multilingual textbooks, and focusing more on field-based, participatory research. Ethnographic fieldwork and participatory research were considered the most effective teaching methods, followed by case studies on Indian social movements and interactive seminars with indigenous scholars. Many respondents expressed strong interest in enrolling in IKS-focused sociology courses, indicating a demand for specialized programs in this area. In terms of global academic recognition, a majority believed that integrating IKS would strengthen India’s contribution to global sociology, though some were uncertain about its impact on international discourse(see figure no 03). The study concludes that NEP 2020 presents a crucial opportunity to decolonize sociology education, but its success depends on policy interventions, faculty training, and the development of standardized academic resources to institutionalize Indigenous Knowledge Systems in higher education.



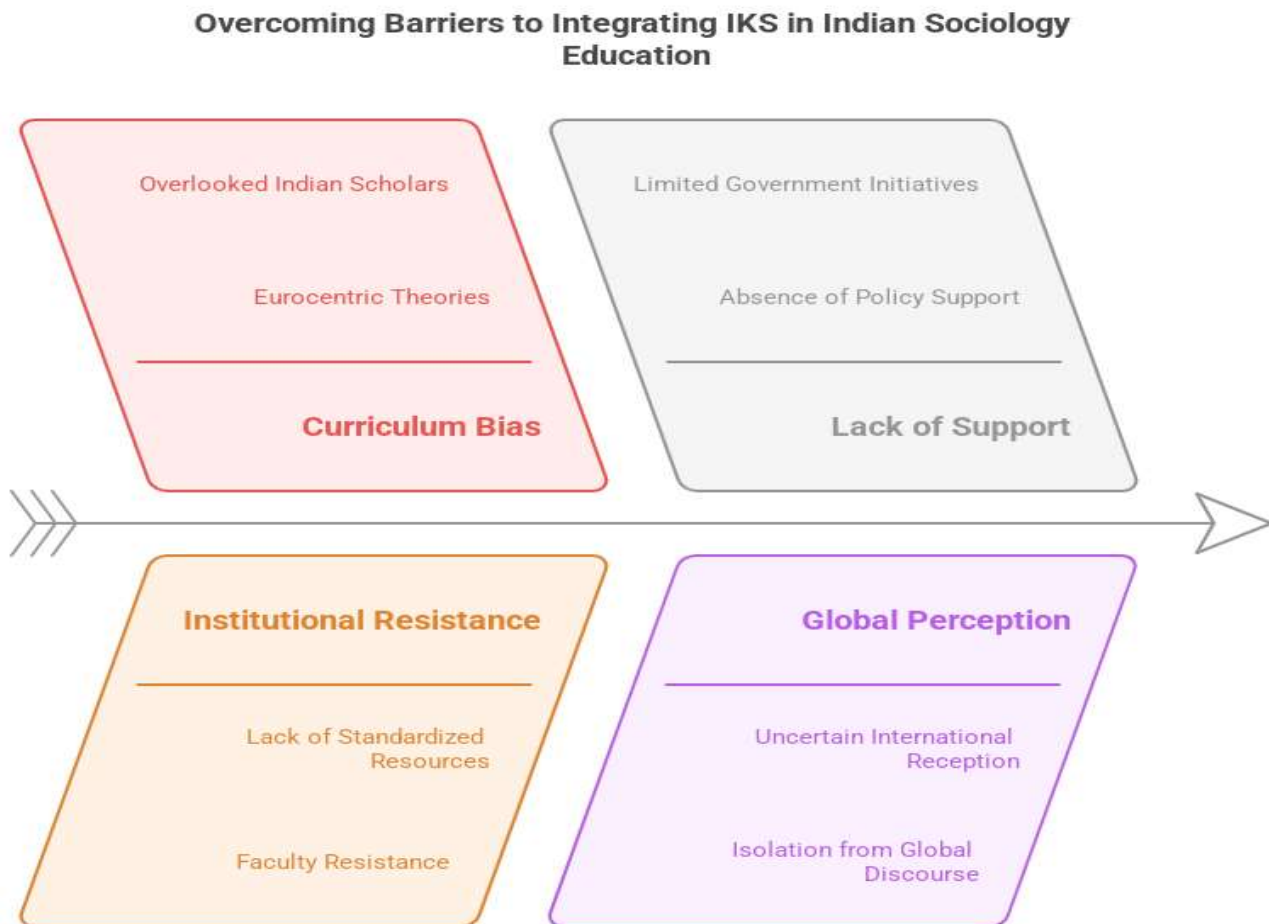
**FIGURE NO - 03**

**Conclusion:**

The study underscores the pressing need for restructuring sociology education in India by integrating Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) in line with the New Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The findings reveal that while there is a growing awareness of the dominance of Western frameworks in Indian sociology, the actual integration of indigenous perspectives remains limited. The majority of respondents acknowledged the Eurocentric bias in existing curricula, with sociology education heavily relying on Western theorists like Marx, Durkheim, and Weber, often overlooking Indian scholars such as G.S. Ghurye, M.N. Srinivas, Radhakamal Mukherjee, and Sharmila Rege. This lack of focus on indigenous social thought results in a disconnect between sociology education and India’s socio-cultural realities. Despite recognizing the importance of IKS, the study identifies multiple barriers to its integration in academia. The absence of standardized academic resources was seen as the most significant challenge, preventing the widespread adoption of indigenous perspectives in sociology curricula. Institutional resistance, faculty members' lack of training, and students’ preference for globally recognized theories further contribute to the slow progress in decolonizing the discipline. Additionally, the lack of government-backed initiatives and policy support has hindered the systematic inclusion of IKS in mainstream sociology education.

However, there is strong support for reform among students, educators, and researchers, with many believing that integrating IKS would enrich sociology education by making it more contextualized and relevant to Indian society. Respondents emphasized the need for curriculum reforms, including the introduction of indigenous research methodologies, bilingual/multilingual textbooks, and field-based participatory research. Teaching methods such as ethnographic fieldwork, case studies on Indian social movements, and interactive seminars with indigenous scholars were identified as effective approaches to incorporating IKS into academic learning. The demand for specialized sociology courses focusing on IKS was also evident, with a significant proportion of respondents expressing interest in enrolling in such programs.

The study also examines the global impact of integrating IKS into Indian sociology education. While the majority of respondents believed that incorporating indigenous knowledge systems would enhance India’s contribution to global sociology, a section remained uncertain about how it would be received internationally. This highlights the need for a balanced approach that integrates indigenous perspectives without completely isolating Indian sociology from international academic discourse(see figure no 04). Overall, the findings indicate that NEP 2020 provides a historic opportunity to decolonize sociology education in India, but its success depends on strategic policy interventions, faculty training programs, and the development of standardized academic resources. For meaningful implementation, collaboration is required between universities, policymakers, researchers, and indigenous communities to ensure that Indian sociological thought is given the academic recognition it deserves. The study calls for immediate efforts to institutionalize IKS in higher education, paving the way for a more inclusive, diverse, and contextually relevant sociology curriculum that reflects India's rich intellectual traditions.



**FIGURE NO - 04**

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