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Research Paper

Traditional Education System and Behavioural Changes of Secondary Level Students: A Study with Special Reference to Middle Assam in the Light of NEP-2020

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Abstract

The traditional education system in India has historically played a pivotal role in shaping the intellectual, moral, and cultural values of learners. Rooted in the Indian Knowledge System, it reinforces holistic development, moral discipline, and the integration of spiritual and practical knowledge. However, the contemporary educational environment shaped by globalization, digital technology, and evolving socio-economic conditions has introduced significant transformations in the learning experience and behaviour of students, particularly at the secondary level. This study aims to explore the conceptual foundations of the traditional education system and its relationship with the Indian Knowledge System. It examines how these foundations once influenced students' conduct, discipline, and social engagement. Furthermore, the research investigates the current behavioural patterns of secondary-level students in Middle Assam, identifying key changes in attitudes, learning approaches, and interpersonal relationships. Special attention is given to the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, whose philosophy advocates for flexibility, competency-based learning, and holistic development. By integrating historical perspectives with present-day observations, this paper provides an analytical comparison between past and current behavioural trends among students. The findings are expected to contribute to educational discourse, offering valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and researchers who aim to create a balanced, value-oriented, and adaptive learning environment in the rapidly changing educational landscape of India.

Keywords: Traditional Education System, Indian Knowledge System, Behavioural Change, Secondary Education, Middle Assam, NEP 2020, Holistic Development, Educational Policy, Student Behaviour.

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I. Introduction:

The traditional education system refers to the historically established and culturally embedded method of imparting knowledge, skills and values through structured and systematic instruction. "Education in India has historically emphasized discipline, respect and moral training through structured teaching" (Aggarwal,2019, p.42) It is characterized by a teacher-centered approach, a prescribed curriculum, and an emphasis on discipline, order, and respect for authority. Unlike contemporary learner-centered models, the traditional system places the teacher in a central role as the primary source of knowledge, moral guidance, and intellectual discipline. In the Indian context, the roots of traditional education can be traced back to the ancient Gurukul system, which functioned as both an educational and moral training institution. In a Gurukul, students (shishyas) lived with their teacher (guru) in a close-knit community where learning was not confined to academic subjects alone. The curriculum encompassed spiritual teachings, philosophy, mathematics, grammar, literature, arts, and sciences, along with physical training, agricultural knowledge, and household responsibilities. According to Radhakrishnan, "True education is training of the body and the mind and also the spirit". (Radhakrishnan, 2009,p.118) This holistic approach ensured the all-round development of the individual—physically, mentally, morally, and spiritually. The process of education was continuous, experiential, and deeply integrated with daily life, aiming to cultivate a balanced personality and a sense of duty toward society.

Key Features of Traditional Education System:

- 1. Teacher-Centric Model The teacher is considered the ultimate authority, not only in academics but also in shaping the character and moral compass of students.
- 2. Fixed Curriculum The syllabus is pre-designed, often with little scope for deviation, ensuring uniformity and stability in learning.
- 3. Rote Learning and Memorization Students are trained to memorize important texts, principles, and facts to preserve the cultural and intellectual heritage.
- 4. Value-Oriented Learning Moral instruction, respect for elders, and adherence to societal norms form an integral part of the education process.
- 5. Discipline and Order Punctuality, obedience, and self-control are emphasized to prepare students for responsible citizenship.

Strengths of the Traditional Education System:

Traditional education has played a crucial role in preserving cultural identity, transmitting accumulated wisdom from one generation to another, and maintaining social cohesion. It provides a strong moral foundation, instills discipline, and nurtures a sense of respect toward teachers, elders, and societal values. In rural and semi-urban areas, it continues to act as a stabilizing force, ensuring that students are grounded in their cultural roots even as they engage with modern ideas.

Limitations and Challenges:

Despite its strengths, the traditional education system is sometimes criticized for its rigidity and lack of adaptability. The overemphasis on memorization can limit creativity and critical thinking. The fixed curriculum may not adequately prepare students for rapidly changing socio-economic conditions or emerging technologies. Furthermore, the authoritative approach can restrict open dialogue and student autonomy, which are essential for fostering innovation and problem-solving skills.

Relevance in the Contemporary Context:

In the present era of globalization, technological advancement, and shifting economic demands, the traditional education system faces the challenge of staying relevant while retaining its core values. Educational reforms such as India's National Education Policy (NEP)-2020 seek to integrate the strengths of traditional methods—such as value-based learning, discipline, and cultural awareness—with modern, flexible, and skill-oriented approaches. The aim is to create a balanced system that prepares learners for both the moral responsibilities of life and the competitive demands of the modern workforce. In Assam, behavioural changes among students have been linked to curriculum reforms and socio—cultural factors (Phukan,2019,p.76) In the part of Middle Assam, where cultural traditions remain strong, traditional education continues to shape student behavior, social relationships, and attitudes towards learning. At the same time, exposure to modern pedagogies, digital tools, and global perspectives is gradually transforming students' outlook. Understanding the nature and scope of traditional education is therefore essential for evaluating how it influences behavioral changes, particularly in the secondary education level, and how it interacts with contemporary educational reforms. The NEP-2020 reflects a holistic philosophy by combining traditional values with skill-based approaches (Das,2021,p.21)

Traditional Education System and Indian Knowledge System:

The Indian Knowledge System (IKS) represents the vast repository of intellectual traditions, philosophical insights, scientific advancements, and cultural practices that have evolved over thousands of years in the Indian subcontinent. It encompasses not only academic disciplines such as mathematics, astronomy, linguistics, and medicine, but also moral philosophy, spiritual thought, and artistic expression. The traditional education system in India has historically functioned as the primary vehicle for the preservation, transmission, and enrichment of this knowledge across generations.

Historical Foundations of IKS in Traditional Education:

From the Vedic period to the medieval era, India's educational framework was built around the principle that learning should serve both individual development and societal welfare. The Gurukul system played a central role in transmitting the Vedas, Upanishads, epics, Puranas, and other foundational texts. Instruction was largely oral, with students memorizing verses, interpreting meanings, and applying principles in practical life. The teacher (guru) was entrusted with the responsibility of not only imparting academic knowledge but also guiding students toward ethical living and spiritual growth. IKS was not restricted to religious or philosophical studies. Ancient Universities such as Takshashila, Nalanda, and Vikramashila offered structured education in diverse fields including grammar (Vyakarana), logic (Nyaya), Ayurveda, political science (Arthashastra), metallurgy, fine arts, and military strategy. These institutions attracted learners from across Asia, showcasing India's intellectual

leadership in the ancient world. Rote learning, through effective for preservation of knowledge, often limits creativity and critical thinking (Sharma,2012,p.53)

Core Principles of Indian Knowledge System:

- 1. Holistic Learning-Education integrated spiritual, moral, intellectual, and physical development.
- 2. Experiential Approach Knowledge was to be experienced, practiced, and lived, rather than merely studied.
- 3. Value-Centric Philosophy Ethics, dharma (duty), and the pursuit of truth were seen as inseparable from intellectual growth.
- 4. Interdisciplinary Nature Subjects were interconnected; for example, mathematics was applied in architecture, astronomy, and music.
- 5. Preservation of Cultural Identity Education served as a medium to preserve language, traditions, and collective memory.

Integration of IKS with the Traditional Education System:

In practice, the traditional education system acted as a guardian of IKS by maintaining a curriculum deeply embedded in the socio-cultural fabric of Indian society. Sanskrit, the primary medium of scholarly discourse, enabled students to access ancient texts in their original form. Pedagogical methods emphasized dialogue (shastrartha), self-discipline, and lifelong learning. Knowledge was not commodified but seen as a sacred trust to be used for the betterment of humanity. Even vocational skills were imparted in accordance with IKS principles. For example, artisans learned their craft through apprenticeships within societies, applying traditional scientific and artistic knowledge passed down through generations. Agricultural practices, healthcare systems like Ayurveda, and ecological wisdom were embedded within daily teaching and community life.

Contemporary Relevance and Challenges:

In the modern era, globalization and rapid technological changes have led to a decline in the visibility and application of IKS within mainstream education. The dominance of Western pedagogical frameworks, along with the prioritization of STEM-oriented (STEM: Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) curricula, has sometimes overshadowed indigenous perspectives. However, recent initiatives, including the National Education Policy (NEP)-2020, emphasize the integration of IKS into formal education. This includes incorporating regional history, traditional sciences, classical languages, and ethical education into school and university curricula. By blending traditional education with IKS, educators can offer a uniquely Indian model of holistic learning that is both globally relevant and locally rooted. Such integration not only strengthens cultural identity but also equips students with critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and ethical awareness. In regions like Middle Assam, where oral traditions, folk knowledge, and community-based learning still hold significance, the revival and contextual application of IKS can enrich the educational experience and positively influence student behavior.

Behavioural Change of Secondary Level Students in the Present Scenario:

The behaviour of secondary level students reflects a dynamic interplay between developmental changes, societal influences, and educational environments. Adolescence, which generally coincides with the secondary school years, is a critical stage of human growth marked by physical maturity, cognitive development, and emotional transitions. Students in this age group begin to form their individual identities, challenge established norms, and expand their social interactions beyond the family sphere. In the present scenario, these behavioural patterns are being shaped by unprecedented shifts in technology, culture, education, and lifestyle.

The drastic deterioration of behaviour among the students of secondary school education may be seen by referring to the latest phenomenon of Assam. As for example in July 2024 a student of class nine killed the Principal of a coaching institute in Sivsagar district of Assam during the class hours. In September 2024 a class nine student of Darrang district in Assam died after he was assaulted by small group of students from class IX and X of the same school during school hours. In the same month a young girl reading in class-XI allegedly killed her own mother in Guwahati, Assam. These are few examples which have shocked the civilised society. It is the real demand of time to address the issue with remedial measures at the earliest.

Factors Influencing Behavioural Change in the Present Context:

In today's context, several external and internal factors are influencing behavioural changes among secondary level students:

- a) **Technological Advancements**-The widespread use of smartphones, social media platforms, and online gaming has significantly altered communication patterns, attention spans, and leisure activities. While technology provides access to vast learning resources, it also brings distractions, cyber risks, and reduced face-to-face interaction.
- b) Educational Reforms and Curriculum Changes-With the introduction of competency-based and skill-oriented curricula, students are exposed to more interactive and flexible learning approaches.

- c) Family Structure and Parenting Styles- Changing family dynamics, including the rise of nuclear families, dual-income households, and parental migration for employment, affect the emotional and moral support available to students.
- d) **Socio-Cultural Influences** Globalization, media exposure, and changing cultural values are broadening students' worldviews but also leading to shifts in attitudes towards authority, tradition, and lifestyle choices.
- e) **Peer Pressure and Competition** Competitive academic environments and societal expectations regarding career success can lead to stress, anxiety, and behavioural changes such as over-ambition, withdrawal, or unhealthy coping strategies.

Positive and Negative Dimensions of Behavioural Change:

Behavioural changes are not inherently problematic; in fact, they often represent growth. Positive outcomes include increased confidence, better problem-solving skills, adaptability and creativity. On the other hand, negative trends such as indiscipline, reduced attention spans, excessive screen dependency, and weakened social skills have become areas of concern for parents and educators.

Present Scenario of Middle Assam:

In semi-urban and rural areas such as Middle Assam, the behavioural changes in students are influenced by a unique blend of traditional values and modern exposure. While respect for elders, community participation, and cultural rootedness remain strong, younger generations are increasingly influenced by digital media, urban lifestyles, and aspirational career choices. The transition from traditional classroom settings to more technology integrated education, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic, has further accelerated these changes.

Summary of Data Collected:

To achieve the factual data of behavioural change in Nagaon and Morigaon districts a survey has been conducted by taking response from the four stakeholders of Education System, i.e. Students, Teachers, Parents and the Office Bearers of Assam Education Services. Certain schools have been selected from different demography and geographical area. Six students of the secondary level from each school have been selected depending on different caste and community for their response. The parents of the same six students also been interviewed with six teachers who teach in the secondary level. The records of responses of each stakeholder are like as follows: Students –

Knowledge of Mental health and coping behaviour

Good	Average	Below average
23%	51%	26%

The data shows that student's understanding of mental health and coping behaviour is varied. About 23% of the students demonstrated good understanding, while 51% of the students are reflected only an average level of awareness. 26% of students do not have any idea of the Mental Health and Coping behaviour. It indicates that there is a significant gap which may hinder effective integration of mental health education in school.

Civic Sense (family and society)

Good	Average	Below average
33%	18%	49%

In terms of civic sense related to their family and society, it may be reflected that 33% of the students showed a good level of awareness, 18% reflected only an average understanding. 49% of students do not have the Civicsense. This suggests a gap between students and social community-oriented values that needs to be addressed.

Use of android phone (social media)

Frequently user	Occasional users	Non users
21%	26%	53%

Regarding the use of android phones and social media, only 21% students were found to be in frequent users ,26% were found to be in occasional users, while 53% reflected in nonusers. This shows that varied level of engagement with digital technology among the students. May be because of the students belong to rural and semi-urban area the percentage of non-user is higher which can be recognised as good sign.

Emotional quotient

High EQ	Low EQ
59%	41%

In terms of emotional quotient only 59% of students were to be found in high EQ while 41% students may reflect in low EQ. It shows that the diversity in emotional skills and coping ability among students.

Awareness of surroundings

Aware Un aware No Idea	8		
110100	Aware	Un aware	No Idea

50%	25%	25%

In terms of awareness of surroundings only 50% were aware, while 25% of students are unaware. 25% of students do not have any idea of the issue. In other words a section of students had no clear idea about their surroundings.

Parents -

Knowledge of Behaviour sense

Aware	Unaware	No idea
31%	42%	27%

Regarding to parents' knowledge of behaviour sense only 31% are aware of it, while 42% are unaware of it. And 27% of parents have no idea about the inculcation of behaviour to their respective students. Parents are considered as the first teachers of the children. If they are not aware of the behavioural change of their kids it will be difficult to think of the improvements.

Awareness on school curriculum

Aware	Unaware	No idea
8%	68%	24%

Regarding the school curriculum it is found that only 8% of parents are aware about it, while 68% are unaware about it. 24% of parents could not reply anything about it. It indicates that many parents do not have sufficient knowledge about what is being taught to their children.

Awareness on NEP2020

Aware	Unaware	No idea
5%	66%	29%

In terms of awareness on NEP-2020 only 5% of parents know about the latest education reforms of India, while 66% are found to be unaware. 29% of parents could not reply anything about it. It indicates a significant lack of parental involvement aligning with the new educational reforms.

Emotional quotient

High EQ	Low EQ
72%	28%

Regarding the emotional quotient, only 72 % are aware, while 28% are unaware of it. It may reflect that although many parents recognize a crucial role of emotional skills in children's shaping behaviour, still a section lack of understanding about it.

Teachers-

Behavioral Change

Benavioral Change	
Aware	Unaware
76%	24%

In terms of behavioral change only 72% of teachers are aware of it, while 24% of teachers are unaware of it. It indicates that most of teachers were recognized the importance of behavioral change still a lesser section is lack understanding of it which may create the problem of students' improvement.

Knowledge on NEP-2020

Aware	Unaware
55%	45%

Data shows that regarding the knowledge on NEP-2020, 55% of teachers are aware, while 45% of teachers are unaware. It is really a matter of concern that in Nagaon and Morigaon district of Middle Assam one section of teachers not even aware of NEP-2020.

Pedagogical practices and value education

8-8		
Use	Unuse	No idea
55%	29%	16%

In the case of using pedagogical practices and value education 55% teachers are reported to have of these approaches while teaching, while 29% are non-user of them. 16% teachers have no idea about it. This is also a matter of serious concern for the improvement of the students.

Knowledge on curriculum

Aware	Unaware
61%	39%

In terms of knowledge on curriculum 61% teachers are aware, while 39% teachers are unaware. This shows that although a large section of teachers is familiar with the curriculum, still one section lacks adequate understanding of it, which may affect in teaching and implementation. All teachers should have the thorough idea on the curriculum.

Emotional Quotient

High EQ	Low EQ
74%	26%

Regarding the emotional quotient 74% of teachers have high understanding level, while 26% teachers have low understanding level. It shows that although a fair number of teachers possess strong emotional awareness and understandings of their students, a small section face challenges in this area for which they fail to mould the behaviour of the students.



Pictorial Data of the Field Survey Nagaon & Morigaon districts of Middle Assam

The above data received from the field survey of the two districts of Middle Assam i.e. Nagaon and Morigaon shows that certain steps needed to be taken for the improvement of overall behavioural pattern of secondary level students. Proper strategies and output of research needed in this regard. The effective implementation of NEP-2020 is much needed in all levels.

Significance of NEP-2020 on Behavioural Change of the Students:

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 marks a significant transformation in the Indian Education System, aiming to blend traditional values with modern needs. The philosophy underlying NEP-2020 is rooted in the holistic development of learners, encouraging creativity, critical thinking, moral awareness, and lifelong learning. Unlike the earlier system, which largely emphasized rote memorization and examination performance, the NEP-2020 stresses competency-based education, learner-centered pedagogy, and inclusiveness. This shift has a direct influence on the behavioural patterns of secondary-level students. At its core, NEP-2020 reflects the vision

of an education system that is both globally competitive and deeply connected to India's cultural and philosophical heritage. It emphasizes the Indian Knowledge System, ethics, and values, alongside modern scientific and technological skills. This dual emphasis provides students with a sense of identity and cultural rootedness while preparing them for the demands of a rapidly changing world.

Behaviourally, this approach encourages respect for diversity, adaptability, and resilience in students. One of the major contributions of NEP-2020 to student behaviour is its focus on experiential and inquiry-based learning. When students actively participate in the learning process through projects, discussions, and critical reflections, they develop confidence, communication skills, and collaborative attitudes. Such methods also nurture curiosity and responsibility, moving students away from passive learning habits. These behavioural shifts are crucial for preparing them to face real-life challenges with independence and creativity.

Moreover, NEP-2020 lays stress on multilingualism and vocational skills, which directly impact student attitudes towards inclusivity and practical knowledge. Exposure to multiple languages enhances empathy, tolerance, and appreciation for diverse cultures. Similarly, vocational education instils dignity of labour, self-reliance, and pragmatic problem-solving behaviour in students. These elements bring a positive orientation towards work, society, and personal responsibility. Another significant aspect is the emphasis on values, ethics, and holistic well-being. NEP-2020 encourages the integration of moral reasoning, environmental awareness, and mental health education into curricula. As a result, secondary-level students are not only acquiring academic knowledge but also developing behavioural traits such as compassion, discipline, respect for nature, and emotional balance.

This is especially important in the present scenario, where students are exposed to rapid social and technological changes. The policy also stresses flexibility and autonomy in learning choices. This reduces stress, examination pressure, and rigid subject boundaries. Behaviourally, it empowers students to take ownership of their learning, improves decision-making skills, and promotes intrinsic motivation. Students are likely to become more self-disciplined, innovative, and focused when given opportunities to follow their interests and aptitudes.

In the context of Assam and other regions of India, the NEP-2020 also attempts to integrate local knowledge systems, art forms, and cultural practices within the curriculum. This ensures that students do not lose touch with their immediate environment and traditions. Behaviourally, it nurtures a sense of belonging, pride, and responsibility towards the community It also counters alienation that students sometimes feel in an education system disconnected from their lived realities.

So, it can be said, philosophy of NEP-2020 has the potential to bring about significant behavioural changes among secondary-level students. By promoting holistic education, ethical grounding, inclusivity, and flexibility, it prepares students to be not only competent professionals but also responsible citizens. The emphasis on both tradition and modernity reflects a balanced vision, shaping student behaviour towards creativity, cooperation, resilience, and moral awareness.

II. Conclusion

The journey of education is a journey of human development. As this study has shown, behavioural change is not an automatic outcome of academic instruction; it requires conscious, value-driven, and student-centered education. The traditional system provided discipline and moral strength, while NEP-2020 offers flexibility, inclusivity, and innovation. The combination of the two is capable of creating a generation of students who are not only knowledgeable but also wise, not only skilled but also ethical, and not only ambitious but also socially responsible. For the regions like Assam, where cultural richness and modern challenges coexist, the role of education becomes even more significant. If implemented effectively, NEP-2020 has the potential to bring about a silent revolution in student behaviour, preparing them to be the torch-bearers of a just, compassionate, and progressive society. The study concludes that education is not limited to intellectual achievement; it is a behavioural, cultural, and moral journey. The success of NEP-2020 lies in its ability to combine the wisdom of traditional education with the dynamism of modern learning, thereby ensuring that students emerge as well-rounded individuals ready to face life's challenges.

Suggestions: Based on the findings of this study, following suggestions can be made to strengthen the role of education in shaping student behaviour:

- 1. **Teacher Training and Capacity Building**: Teachers must be adequately trained in new pedagogical methods, especially experiential and inquiry-based learning. Value education, counselling, and behavioural management should be part of teacher education programs.
- 2. **Integration of Values and Ethics in Curriculum:** Moral and ethical education should not remain theoretical but must be connected with real-life activities like community service, environmental projects, and cultural participation.
- 3. **Use of Local and Regional Knowledge:** In Assam, local traditions, folklore, and ecological knowledge should be systematically included in the curriculum to foster a sense of identity and responsibility among students.
- 4. **Balanced Use of Technology:** While digital platforms should be promoted, students must also be educated about responsible use of technology to prevent addiction and misuse.

- 5. Student-Centered Learning Approaches: Schools should create opportunities for group work, debates, project-based activities, and vocational training to ensure active participation and behavioural growth.
- Strengthening Emotional and Mental Health Support: Counselling facilities, stress management programs, and extracurricular activities should be integrated into schools to enhance emotional resilience.
- Parental and Community Involvement: Behavioural change cannot be achieved by schools alone. Parents and communities should actively collaborate with schools to guide students in ethical and disciplined living.

Recommendations:

In addition to the above suggestions, some policy-level and practical recommendations are necessary to ensure long-term behavioural transformation:

- Policy Implementation at Ground Level -The government should ensure that NEP 2020 reforms reach rural and semi-urban schools with adequate resources, teacher appointments, and infrastructure.
- Continuous Professional Development- Regular workshops, training programs, and knowledge-sharing platforms should be arranged for teachers to keep them updated with evolving educational strategies.
- Assessment Reforms- Examination systems should move beyond marks and grades to include behavioural indicators such as leadership, creativity, social service, and teamwork.
- Research and Monitoring- Continuous research on behavioural changes among students should be encouraged, with data collected from diverse regions to measure the real impact of NEP 2020.
- Promotion of Multilingualism and Cultural Identity- Language policies under NEP should be practically supported by providing textbooks and digital resources in local languages, which will help students connect emotionally with their education.
- Holistic Co-Curricular Programs- Sports, arts, and cultural activities should be integrated into the mainstream curriculum rather than being treated as optional. These contribute greatly to behavioural balance, teamwork, and creativity.

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Ethics Statement:

The questionnaire for data collections have been approved by ICSSR. The collection of primary data was approved by the Primary Research Committee of Nagaon University and the participants provided written informed consent.

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