

PREFACE

The landscape of Indian education is undergoing a profound transformation, one that seeks to reconcile the wisdom of the past with the aspirations of the future. This book, *Cultural Roots and Educational Reforms: The NEP–IKS Connection*, is born from this spirit of synthesis—where the traditional knowledge systems of India meet the modern objectives of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

The chapters in this volume explore the rich intersection of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) with educational reforms envisioned by NEP. Each contribution offers a unique lens through which to examine how India's ancient philosophies, pedagogies, and cultural practices can be meaningfully integrated into contemporary educational frameworks. Whether it is reimagining classrooms through traditional ecological wisdom, exploring policy synergies with global frameworks, or delving into the medicinal and scientific heritage of India, this compilation captures the breadth and depth of IKS's relevance today.

Our intent in bringing this book together is twofold: first, to document and disseminate scholarly research that validates the relevance of IKS in modern education; and second, to inspire educators, researchers, and policymakers to embrace a more holistic, inclusive, and culturally rooted approach to learning. We believe that embedding cultural context in education enhances not only academic understanding but also fosters ethical, environmental, and social consciousness in learners.

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Zoological Insights From Ancient Indian Texts

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Introduction

The Indian subcontinent possesses one of the world's richest repositories of ancient knowledge systems, with textual traditions spanning several millennia. These ancient texts, ranging from the Vedas (composed approximately 1500-500 BCE) to later scientific treatises, contain remarkable insights into the natural world, including sophisticated observations and classifications of animals. This chapter explores the zoological knowledge embedded within these ancient Indian texts, revealing how our ancestors developed complex understandings of animal life that in many instances presaged modern scientific discoveries. By examining these historical perspectives on animals—their classification, behavior, medicinal properties, and ethical treatment—we can appreciate the profound ecological wisdom that permeated Indian thought long before the formalization of zoology as a scientific discipline in the West.

The ancient Indian perspective on animals was multifaceted, viewing them simultaneously through scientific, symbolic, and ethical lenses. Animals were not merely objects of utility or scientific curiosity but were integrated into a comprehensive worldview that recognized the interconnectedness of all life forms. This holistic approach to understanding animal life offers valuable insights that complement and sometimes challenge contemporary scientific paradigms. As we navigate the environmental challenges of the modern world, these ancient perspectives on biodiversity, conservation, and the ethical treatment of animals hold renewed relevance.

The following sections delve into various aspects of zoological knowledge preserved in ancient Indian texts, from taxonomic classifications to ethological observations, medicinal applications, and conservation ethics. Together, they paint a portrait of a civilization that maintained a sophisticated, nuanced relationship with the animal world—one that balanced pragmatic knowledge with profound respect for all living beings.