



# THE PALLAVAN REVIEW

EDUCATION IN AN AGE OF  
AUGMENTED INTELLIGENCE:  
CULTURE, COMMUNITY AND CONTINUITY

ANNUAL EDITION 2025

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# INTRODUCTION

Education in our time stands at a crossroads. The world is changing with extraordinary speed: technology reshapes how we think and connect, societies wrestle with questions of identity and inclusion, health systems are being reimagined, and young people navigate increasingly complex emotional landscapes. In such a moment, education cannot remain static. It must become reflective, humane, adaptive, and deeply rooted in values.

This 2025 collection from Pallavan Learning Systems brings together voices that engage with this evolving landscape, not from a place of reaction, but from a place of inquiry and conviction. Each article explores a dimension of learning that extends beyond the classroom walls: the environments we create, the technologies we adopt, the cultures we preserve, the teachers we empower, the adolescents we guide, the communities we nurture, and the inner qualities we cultivate.

Across these pages, education is seen not merely as instruction, but as formation. We encounter the idea of an enabling environment that holds the learner with care and intention. We explore artificial intelligence not as a spectacle of innovation, but as a tool for inclusion. We are reminded of the enduring power of reading—within homes, classrooms, and communities to shape imagination and identity. We witness how second chances, when supported with structure and mentorship, can transform lives.

The collection also invites deeper reflection. It engages with the turbulence of adolescence in a digital age, reimagines well-being through a ‘w’holistic lens, and foregrounds teacher agency as central to meaningful reform. It articulates frameworks such as Skills, Processes and Watermarks, which shift the focus from content acquisition to character formation and reflective growth. It examines Bhutan’s integration of aesthetics and technology as a model for uniting truth, beauty, and ethical innovation. It honours the enduring light of Atiśa Dīpaṃkara Śrījñāna, reminding us that compassion remains the most vital foundation of all learning. And it closes by urging us to see heritage not as nostalgia, but as living continuity—an anchor in an era of rapid change.

Threaded throughout is a wholistic vision of education, one that recognises the interconnected development of the Cerebral, Emotional, Physical, Social, and Spiritual dimensions of the human being. The articles do not offer quick solutions; rather, they offer lenses, frameworks, stories, and provocations. They call educators, leaders, parents, and learners to pause, reflect, and reimagine what meaningful education might look like in a complex world.

This collection is both a record of reflection and a statement of intent. It affirms that education must cultivate not only competence, but conscience; not only skill, but sensitivity; not only achievement, but purpose. In doing so, it reaffirms a belief central to the work of Pallavan Learning Systems: that learning, at its best, enables individuals to actualise their potential and evolve into Persons of Substance.

# ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

*Choki Wangchuk, Pallavan Learning Systems*

Establishing a robust enabling environment is fundamental for any educational learning process, framework or curriculum to achieve its intended vision, establishing a robust enabling environment is fundamental. This environment refers not only to the physical infrastructure, such as the architectural design of schools, but also to the broader conditions that nurture learning. At its core, such an environment ensures safety, comfort, and inclusivity—key prerequisites for meaningful learning and ‘w’holistic development, particularly for young learners. Educational institutions must prioritise creating spaces that inspire creativity, promote engagement, and facilitate connection and dialogue among learners and educators. For example, thoughtfully designed spaces, integrating natural elements like light and open areas, can enhance focus, spark imagination, and foster a sense of belonging. Schools must strive to create environments that are not only functional but also uplifting and reflective of the learning philosophy they aim to implement.

Creating a supportive learning environment requires a comprehensive approach that extends beyond physical safety to include social and emotional development. An enabling environment comprises several interconnected

elements: people, community linkages, systems and policies, resources, and infrastructure (architecture and technology). Together, these factors build a foundation that supports learning while safeguarding the well-being of all participants and encouraging collaboration, empathy, and mutual respect. For instance, incorporating advanced technologies in classrooms can facilitate access to diverse educational resources, while clear systems and policies ensure operational efficiency and build a culture of trust and accountability.

## **People:**

The successful implementation of a learning process or curriculum relies on the collaborative efforts of the entire school community, which includes school leaders, teachers, learners, administrative staff, parents, and community members. Each group plays a crucial role in creating a learning environment that supports the curriculum and actively engages students. Collaborative planning among school leaders, teachers, and staff ensures that the curriculum is aligned with the needs of both learners and the broader community. This alignment is further strengthened by providing

teachers and administrative staff with resources such as professional development opportunities, technology, and other learning tools to implement the learning process and curriculum effectively.

The involvement of parents and community members is equally significant. By sharing their expertise, volunteering resources, and providing constructive feedback, they help create a supportive environment that enhances student success. Furthermore, the contributions of support staff, who bring compassion and reliability to their roles, ensure that both learners and educators have the tools and assistance they need to thrive. Recognising that everyone within the school community contributes to the learning process creates an inclusive and dynamic environment that supports both academic success and 'w'holistic development.

### **Community:**

Creating community linkages is essential for fostering an environment where learners can thrive and reach their potential. These linkages support learners' cognitive, social, emotional, physical, and spiritual growth through collaborative learning opportunities. Engaging the community can help learners develop empathy, responsibility, and resilience, providing a sense of belonging and purpose.

Effective community linkages can be established through Parent-Teacher Meetings (PTMs), community service projects, mentoring programmes, community cultural events, internship or apprenticeship opportunities, alumni networks, and building relationships with local governments. These community linkages create a supportive environment

that encourages personal growth, responsibility, and a sense of interconnectedness, ultimately contributing to learners' development and success.



*Photo by Wonderlane on Unsplash*

### **Systems and Policies**

To effectively implement a curriculum or learning framework, clear systems and policies at both national and school levels are essential. These policies provide the framework for the daily operation of schools, ensuring a safe, supportive, and effective learning environment. Key policy areas include:

**Academic Policies:** Governing the learning framework, curriculum, grading system, assessments, academic integrity, and support services.

**Welfare Policies:** Ensuring the physical and emotional well-being of learners, including health and safety, discipline, and anti-bullying measures.

**Financial Policies:** Managing budgeting, accounting, fundraising, fees, and scholarships.

**Personnel Policies:** Defining staff roles, recruitment, professional development, and performance appraisal.

Administrative Policies: Establishing school structure, decision-making processes, and communication protocols.

Additionally, policies may cover specific programmes, such as inclusion, technology integration, and sustainability. Well-designed systems and policies ensure the smooth functioning of schools, contributing to the overall success and growth of learners and the school community.

### **Resources:**

Creating an enabling learning environment for effective curriculum implementation requires schools to have access to a comprehensive range of resources that support both teaching and learning. These resources include well-equipped classrooms, libraries, and laboratories, alongside a variety of teaching materials such as textbooks, digital resources, and manipulatives that facilitate diverse learning styles and enhance engagement.

Schools must provide critical support services such as counselling and special education training to address the diverse needs of all learners. Schools should also have administrative support systems in place to efficiently manage resources, track progress, and offer additional assistance to students who may require extra help.

Adequate funding and well-managed resources are necessary for creating an environment that promotes student engagement, motivation, and academic success. By investing in these resources and ensuring their effective utilisation, schools can establish a learning environment that fosters the successful

implementation of the curriculum and supports the 'w'holistic development of every learner.



*Photo by Priscilla Du Preez on Unsplash*

### **Infrastructure:**

A well-designed and properly equipped school infrastructure is fundamental in creating an environment that not only supports the effective implementation of the curriculum but also promotes the overall development and success of learners. The physical environment plays a pivotal role in facilitating learning, with every aspect of the school's design contributing to the educational experience. School buildings must prioritise comfort, safety, and accessibility to ensure that all students, staff, and visitors can thrive within the space. Classrooms should be designed to allow for natural light and proper ventilation, creating a positive and conducive atmosphere that enhances focus and learning.

Incorporating technology is equally vital, with schools needing to provide adequate resources such as computers, audio-visual equipment, and reliable internet connectivity to integrate digital learning tools effectively. Furthermore, classroom furniture and equipment should be ergonomically designed to ensure comfort, safety, and functionality.

This includes considerations for size, weight, and the needs of diverse learners.

In addition to indoor learning spaces, outdoor areas such as playgrounds, sports facilities, and open spaces are essential for promoting physical activity, a healthy lifestyle, and social interaction among students. These spaces provide opportunities for physical education,

recreation, and the development of teamwork and leadership skills.

By fostering seamless integration of key elements—people, community linkages, systems and policies, resources, and infrastructure—we can cultivate an enabling environment that consistently nurtures the learning journey, enabling individuals to actualise their potential.



# ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN INDIA

*Kreeti Goswami, Pallavan Learning Systems*

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is reshaping education globally, offering innovative solutions to enhance accessibility and inclusivity. In India, where socio-economic diversity, linguistic variations, and varied learning needs pose unique challenges, AI has the potential to create an equitable learning environment. The Indian EdTech market is expected to reach \$10.4 billion by 2025, driven by the growing adoption of AI and digital learning platforms. According to a KPMG report, AI-powered learning platforms have demonstrated a 20–30% increase in student engagement and retention rates compared to traditional methods.



*Credit: The Indian School*

India faces a considerable teacher shortage, with a student-teacher ratio of 24:1—higher than UNESCO's

recommended 15:1 ratio. UNESCO also recognises AI-driven solutions as a means to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. The UNESCO State of Education Report for India, 2022 highlights the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020's focus on AI literacy, encompassing both technological and human dimensions. The human dimension stresses awareness of AI's limitations and risks. The report identifies the drawbacks of a one-size-fits-all approach and emphasises the need for intelligent tutoring systems capable of real-time learning assessment.

In 2020, the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Intel to develop an AI curriculum framework for students in grades 8–10. CBSE has also collaborated with various corporations to equip students with technical skills, including data analysis and computational thinking.

## AI's Role in Inclusive Education

### Personalised Learning Plans

AI enables individualised learning experiences by analysing students' learning patterns, strengths, and weaknesses. It helps educators track progress and tailor content to learners' needs. Given India's high student-teacher ratio, AI-driven personalised learning ensures that students advance at their own pace, easing the burden on teachers.

### Assistive Technologies

AI-powered tools like speech-to-text and text-to-speech software support students with visual and hearing impairments. Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) devices help non-verbal students and those with speech disorders communicate effectively, enhancing their learning experience.

### Inclusive Content Creation and Accessibility

AI can generate diverse, culturally sensitive educational content suited to India's multilingual and multicultural context. It can create region-specific illustrations, audio materials, and interactive lessons, making learning more engaging and accessible.

Several India-based companies have developed AI-powered translation tools to improve accessibility:

Project Udaan translates textbooks and study materials into 15 Indian languages.

Devnagri is an AI-powered human translation platform supporting 22 Indian and 10 international languages.

Read Along, an AI-driven app, helps develop reading skills in multiple Indian languages.

### Addressing Language Barriers

India's linguistic diversity presents a challenge to uniform education. AI-powered translation tools and speech-to-text systems help break these barriers by providing real-time translations and transcriptions in regional languages, ensuring students can learn in their preferred language.



*Credit: Istock*

### Bridging Socio-Economic Divides

AI-driven platforms enhance education equity by offering affordable, scalable learning solutions. Government initiatives like PM eVIDYA and Diksha use AI to deliver educational content to students in remote and underserved areas, bridging socio-economic and geographical disparities.

## Challenges in Implementing AI in Inclusive Education

### Digital Divide

Many students, particularly in rural areas, lack access to devices, reliable internet, or even electricity, limiting AI-driven education. Addressing these infrastructural gaps is crucial to ensuring AI reaches all learners.

### Bias in AI Systems

AI models are only as good as the data they are trained on. If AI tools lack diverse linguistic and cultural representation, they may reinforce biases and exclude certain groups. Ensuring fairness in AI algorithms is critical for true inclusivity.

### One-Size-Fits-All Approach

Many AI solutions are designed for global markets and may not be suitable for India's educational landscape. The lack of localisation can result in tools that do not align with the country's curricula and cultural contexts.

### Quality and Affordability of AI Tools

Advanced AI tools offer promising solutions but are often expensive, making them inaccessible to underfunded schools and economically disadvantaged students. Low-cost alternatives frequently lack the quality needed for effective learning outcomes.

### Fragmented Policy Framework

India currently lacks a cohesive policy for AI integration in education. Fragmented efforts and the absence of standardised

guidelines hinder the scalability and effectiveness of AI-driven initiatives.



*Credit: Varthana*

## Conclusion

AI has the potential to revolutionise inclusive education in India by offering personalised learning, assistive technologies, and multilingual support. It can bridge socio-economic and geographical gaps, making quality education accessible to all. However, its successful implementation requires addressing challenges such as the digital divide, algorithmic bias, affordability, and policy fragmentation. A collaborative effort among policymakers, educators, and technology developers is essential to harness AI's full potential in creating a truly inclusive education system.

## Resources:

KPMG India. EdTech Market Report 2023.

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Nair, A. "Need for Leveraging AI in India's Education Sector", The Hindustan Times, March 2024

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# Creative Approaches to Spark a Lifelong Love of Reading

*Sunaina Narang, Pallavan Learning Systems*

Reading is not merely a skill; it is a fundamental gateway to knowledge, imagination, and critical thinking. The ability to read fluently and with comprehension empowers students to explore new ideas, engage with different cultures, and develop both empathy and independent thought. However, fostering a genuine love for reading is about more than just teaching literacy skills—it requires creating an environment where books are a source of joy, curiosity, and inspiration. In today’s fast-paced, digital-driven world, engaging students in reading has become more challenging, as many children gravitate towards screens and interactive content over traditional books.

As educators, the challenge is to harness the very technology that often competes for students’ attention and use it to enhance reading experiences rather than diminish them. The integration of digital tools into the classroom can make reading more interactive, accessible, and enjoyable. From personalised book recommendations and gamified reading challenges to immersive storytelling through augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR), technology provides teachers with powerful resources to

captivate young readers and nurture their lifelong passion for books.

This article explores a variety of creative approaches that teachers can use to foster a love of reading in their students. It highlights the benefits of personalised reading experiences, interactive storytelling, and digital libraries while also examining the role of gamification, online book clubs, and parent involvement. By combining traditional methods with innovative digital solutions, teachers can create a dynamic and engaging reading culture that not only enhances literacy skills but also instills a lifelong appreciation for books and learning.



*Photo by Ar//sh Mohammed on [Unsplash](#)*

## 1. Personalised Reading Experiences

To encourage a love of reading, teachers can personalise reading experiences for their students. Every reader has different interests, and tailoring book recommendations to suit individual preferences can enhance engagement. AI-powered reading platforms such as Epic!, Blinkist, and Kindle Unlimited analyse a reader's preferences and suggest books accordingly, ensuring that every student finds something engaging.

Teachers can also implement a "Reading Passport" activity where students set their own reading goals and track progress. This personalised approach makes reading feel rewarding and goal-oriented.

## 2. Interactive Storytelling and Audiobooks

Technology has transformed storytelling into an interactive and immersive experience. Digital storytelling platforms like Storybird and Book Creator allow students to not only read but also contribute to stories by adding illustrations, audio, and animations. These platforms make reading a more engaging, hands-on activity.



Photo by Jukka Aalho on [Unsplash](#)

Audiobooks have emerged as an effective tool to foster a love for literature,

particularly for reluctant readers or those with learning difficulties. Platforms such as Audible, Libby, and Storynory provide access to a wide range of narrated books, bringing stories to life with dramatic performances, sound effects, and music. Teachers can incorporate audiobooks into lessons to enhance comprehension skills, expand vocabulary, and cultivate an appreciation for storytelling.

## 3. Incorporating Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR)

Emerging technologies such as augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) are transforming how students experience stories. AR-integrated books, such as those offered by Wonderscope and Quiver, allow readers to interact with characters and scenes in a multidimensional space, enhancing comprehension and engagement.



Photo by Liam Charmer on [Unsplash](#)

VR technology, through platforms like Google Expeditions and Oculus Education, enables students to explore story settings in an immersive environment. Imagine reading *The Jungle Book* and then stepping into a virtual jungle to experience the surroundings firsthand. These applications make reading more exciting and memorable.

#### 4. Gamification of Reading

Gamification incorporates game elements into reading to increase motivation and engagement. Digital reading apps like Reading Eggs, Rivet, and Biblionarium use badges, leaderboards, and challenges to encourage consistent reading habits.

For instance, reading challenges—where students earn points for finishing books or reaching milestones—can turn reading into an enjoyable competition. Teachers can introduce classroom leaderboards and reward students for their reading achievements, fostering a sense of accomplishment and motivation.

#### 5. Book Clubs and Online Reading Communities

Social interaction plays a significant role in cultivating a love for reading. Teachers can encourage participation in online reading communities where students can share insights, discuss themes, and engage in live discussions with authors.



Photo by Susan Q Yin on [Unsplash](#)

Websites like Goodreads, The StoryGraph, and Bookopolis provide spaces for students to explore new books, write reviews, and interact with fellow readers. Virtual book clubs, hosted via platforms such as Zoom and Discord, allow students to discuss books with

peers, making reading a social activity rather than a solitary one.

#### 6. Role of E-books and Digital Libraries

The accessibility of e-books has revolutionised reading habits. With digital libraries such as Project Gutenberg, Open Library, and Worldreader, students can access thousands of books instantly. This ease of access ensures that reading opportunities are available to all, even in resource-limited environments.

E-readers such as Kindle and Kobo offer customisable reading experiences, allowing students to adjust font size, background colour, and lighting for their comfort. These features make reading more inclusive, particularly for students with visual impairments or dyslexia.

#### 7. Engaging Parents and Educators in the Process

Teachers can collaborate with parents to reinforce reading habits at home. Encouraging shared reading experiences, where parents read aloud to their children, significantly impacts language and cognitive development.

Educators can introduce creative strategies such as “Book Tasting” events, where students sample different genres before selecting their next read. Schools can also implement “Drop Everything and Read” (DEAR) sessions, where students and teachers pause daily activities to engage in reading for pleasure.

#### 8. Writing as an Extension of Reading

Encouraging creative writing alongside reading nurtures a deeper appreciation for literature. Digital platforms like

Wattpad, Sweek, and NaNoWriMo Young Writers Program allow students to become storytellers themselves, giving them a sense of ownership over narratives.

Writing prompts, fan fiction communities, and poetry challenges can inspire students to explore their creativity. When students see their own words shaping stories, they develop a stronger connection to literature.

### **9. Encouraging Reading Across the Curriculum**

Reading should not be limited to literature classes. Teachers can incorporate subject-specific reading materials into science, history, and geography lessons to help students see the value of reading across disciplines. Using digital resources like Newsela for current events, CommonLit for diverse texts, and TED-Ed for video-based discussions can enhance reading comprehension in various subjects.



*Copyright: The Indian Public School*

### **Conclusion**

Fostering a lifelong love of reading requires a blend of traditional and innovative approaches. While classic books remain invaluable, integrating technology into reading experiences can make literature more accessible, interactive, and engaging for students.

By leveraging personalised reading experiences, interactive storytelling, AR/VR applications, gamification, and digital libraries, teachers can transform reading from a passive activity into an exciting adventure. Engaging parents, educators, and communities in the process ensures that students develop a sustained love for books.

In an era dominated by digital content, the key is not to view technology as a distraction but as a powerful tool to enhance and enrich the reading experience. By doing so, educators can ignite a passion for books that lasts a lifetime.



# ADOLESCENCE IN FLUX: REFLECTIONS AND RESPONSES TO KRISHNA KUMAR'S “UNCHARTED WATERS”

*Sunaina Narang, Pallavan Learning Systems*

In his contemplative essay “*Adolescence Becoming Uncharted Waters Now*”, educationist Krishna Kumar reflects on the shifting nature of adolescence, offering a quiet yet urgent meditation on how this life stage—once navigated with community support, cultural rituals, and adult guidance—has become marked by disorientation, emotional volatility, and social detachment.

Kumar’s reflections resonate with many. Educators speak of the increasing challenges of connecting with students whose inner worlds are dominated by screens and silent anxieties. Parents admit to feeling unequipped in the face of rapidly evolving digital cultures. Mental health professionals, meanwhile, see daily confirmation of Kumar’s observations: adolescents struggling with identity, self-worth, and isolation.

What has been lost, Kumar suggests, is not just a set of traditions or values, but

the social scaffolding that once supported young people as they transitioned into adulthood. Where there were once rites of passage, intergenerational bonds, and shared communal expectations, today there is exposure without preparation—information without interpretation. Adolescents are now confronting adult dilemmas at an age when their emotional and cognitive faculties are still in formation.

Many of the challenges young people face are amplified by the very structures designed to serve them. Modern schooling, with its narrow focus on exams and economic competitiveness, does little to acknowledge or nurture the emotional and social growth that adolescence demands. At home, family life is often hurried and transactional, as parents grapple with economic pressures and the demands of a digitally saturated world. In communities, public spaces for youth expression and exploration are

shrinking. And in the digital realm, adolescents are navigating an overwhelming torrent of content, often without guidance or discernment.

So how do we respond? What should change, and where should we begin?



Image courtesy: Gemini

The first step is to reframe our understanding of what education ought to be. We must move beyond a utilitarian view that sees schools as factories for producing employable adults. Education must return to being a humane enterprise—one that helps young people make sense of themselves and the world. This means creating space within schools for dialogue, self-expression, ethical questioning, and emotional exploration. It means reorienting the curriculum to include life skills, relationships, mental health, and digital responsibility—not as add-ons, but as core to the learning experience.

Teachers must be empowered not just as content-deliverers but as mentors and listeners. Professional development must include training in adolescent psychology, trauma-informed pedagogy, and socio-emotional learning. Schools should become communities where students feel seen and heard, where learning is connected to real life, and where confusion is not punished, but explored.

Within families, a conscious effort must be made to reintroduce conversation and presence. Adolescents today do not lack entertainment; they lack meaningful engagement. Parents need support in the form of workshops, resources, and forums where they can share experiences and learn to parent with empathy in the digital age. Rather than shielding adolescents from difficult realities, families should help them interpret these realities with care and context.

At the community level, we must restore safe, inclusive, and enriching spaces where adolescents can gather, create, and be mentored. Public libraries, arts initiatives, youth centres, and sports clubs are not luxuries—they are lifelines. Programmes that connect young people with older generations, whether through storytelling, volunteering, or mentorship, can rebuild the intergenerational trust that has eroded in recent decades.



Image courtesy: Gemini

Digital literacy must also be transformed. Adolescents must not only learn how to use technology, but how to understand and shape it. Kumar's call aligns with a growing global movement toward a *biocentric* understanding of digital engagement—treating the internet not as a personal playground or marketplace, but as a shared ecological space that requires care, responsibility, and mutual respect. Schools and families can model this by encouraging mindful screen use, digital empathy, and community-oriented online participation.

Mental health support must become a non-negotiable element of adolescent life. Every school should have trained counsellors, peer-support systems, and safe avenues for students to talk about what they are experiencing—without fear of judgment or labelling. Governments and institutions must ensure that mental health services for adolescents are well-funded, accessible, and culturally sensitive.

Importantly, we must trust adolescents themselves as co-authors of solutions. Their voices should be welcomed in school governance, community planning, and social discourse. When young people

feel they have agency, that their ideas and actions matter, they develop resilience, clarity, and a sense of belonging.

Kumar's essay is not nostalgic—it is hopeful. He invites us to look clearly at what is changing, and to respond not with panic, but with compassion and imagination. Adolescence, he reminds us, is not a problem to be solved but a journey to be supported. If today's waters are uncharted, then let us not leave young people to drift alone. Let us accompany them—with patience, humility, and the willingness to rebuild the boats they will sail into the future.

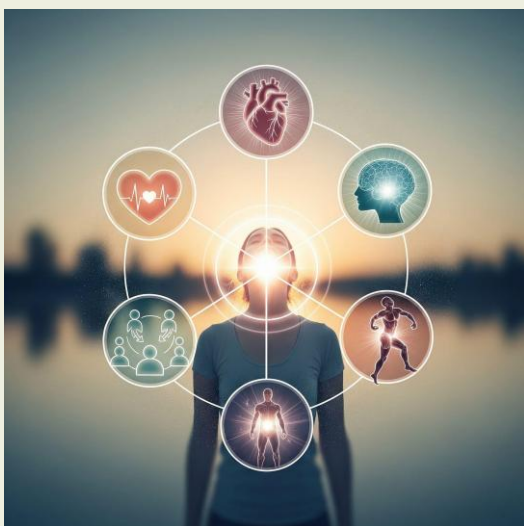


# A HOLISTIC PATH TO WELL-BEING

*Dr Issac Mathai Chairman, Managing & Medical Director, Founder, [www.soukya.com](http://www.soukya.com)*

## Reimaging Health through a Holistic Lens

Holistic health is not a modern invention—it is an ancient philosophy whose time has come again. It is an approach that views the individual as a whole, integrating the physical, emotional, mental, social, and spiritual dimensions of life. Unlike conventional medicine, which often focuses on treating symptoms in isolation, holistic healthcare addresses the root causes of ailments and aims to bring harmony and balance to the entire being.



Courtesy: Gemini

At SOUKYA, our International Holistic Health Centre, we follow this integrative

philosophy, blending time-tested traditional medical systems such as Ayurveda, Homeopathy, Naturopathy, and Yoga with evidence-based complementary therapies like Acupuncture, Reflexology, and Meditation. This approach empowers individuals to activate their innate healing capacities and take proactive steps toward sustained well-being.

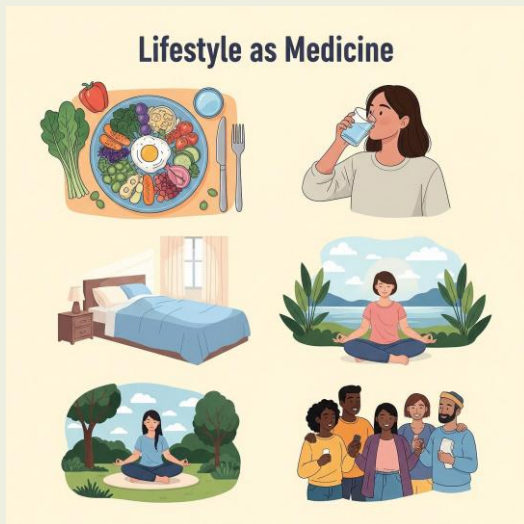
### The Foundations of Holistic Health

The cornerstone of holistic medicine is the belief that the body possesses an intrinsic ability to heal. Illness, therefore, is not just a set of symptoms to be suppressed but a message from the body indicating a deeper imbalance. A true healing journey begins when the whole person is understood and supported. This includes recognising the connections between the physical body, mental and emotional states, spiritual life and sense of purpose, lifestyle choices and social surroundings.

### Lifestyle as Medicine: The Dangers of an Unhealthy Lifestyle

A sedentary lifestyle, poor dietary habits, lack of sleep, constant stress, and toxic relationships create fertile ground for

chronic diseases such as hypertension, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and obesity. These lifestyle-related conditions are preventable, yet they remain the leading causes of mortality globally.



Courtesy: Gemini

### The Rewards of Healthy Living

Adopting a health-oriented lifestyle reaps rewards far beyond physical wellness. It leads to mental clarity, emotional balance, spiritual depth, and increased vitality. A holistic lifestyle integrates movement through yoga or regular walks, consumption of balanced, predominantly plant-based meals, proper hydration throughout the day, restorative sleep each night, practices that nurture mental well-being such as mindfulness or journaling, and fostering meaningful social connections. Scientific research confirms the profound impact of these choices. They not only reduce the risk of chronic diseases but also enhance quality of life and longevity.

### Spirituality and the Healing Journey

Spirituality is the silent force that binds all other dimensions of health. In ancient healing traditions, priests and shamans used prayer, rituals, herbs, and energy work to bring about healing. While modern medicine has advanced remarkably, it often neglects this vital dimension.

Fortunately, the World Health Organisation's 1948 definition of health—"a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity"—lays the foundation for a more inclusive model of healthcare that honours spiritual wellness.

### The Pathways to Healing

#### Healing the Body

Physical illnesses are often the most visible signs of imbalance. Healing begins by nourishing the body and correcting physiological dysfunctions. A person must begin by consuming whole, seasonal foods that are rich in nutrients. Adequate hydration aids detoxification and cellular repair. Sleep, ranging from seven to nine hours, helps restore balance and maintain hormonal health. Moderate movement through activities such as yoga or walking keeps the body active and agile. This is complemented by holistic therapies like Homeopathy, Ayurveda, and Naturopathy which address deeper imbalances and facilitate long-term recovery.

## **Healing the Mind**

Mental health is deeply influenced by how we process emotions and interact with others. Chronic stress, unresolved grief, anger, and fear can manifest in physical ailments. Healing the mind involves a deliberate process of introspection and support. By exploring one's personal history and recognising recurring emotional patterns, individuals can begin to understand the root causes of their distress. Strengthening emotional resilience may come through mindfulness, reflective writing, or therapy. Stress management is achieved through techniques such as breathing practices, yoga nidra, or visualisation. Releasing suppressed emotions through expressive arts or counselling allows for profound mental release. Introducing positive habits like affirmations and the practice of gratitude further nurtures mental strength and emotional flexibility.

## **Healing the Spirit**

A broken spirit often reveals itself through a sense of despair, disconnection, or loss of purpose. Healing the spirit rekindles a sense of meaning and nurtures inner peace. Spiritual healing begins with reconnecting to oneself through quiet reflection. Spending time in nature allows for a reset of perspective, while practices such as prayer and meditation deepen awareness and connection to the divine. Acts of forgiveness, both of self and others, are essential in unburdening the heart. Contemplative silence offers clarity and self-inquiry paves the path for deeper understanding of one's role and purpose in life. Through this inner exploration, the spirit regains its vitality and direction.

## **Mind-Body Disconnect in Conventional Medicine**

The prevailing biomedical model often compartmentalises the mind and body. Psychologists treat mental health, physicians treat the physical body, and spiritual concerns are left unaddressed. However, advances in psychoneuroimmunology reveal the intricate ways in which our emotions, thoughts, and spiritual beliefs influence immune function and disease progression.

Research shows that over 80% of chronic illnesses have psychosomatic origins. Anger, fear, guilt, sadness, and other unresolved emotional states weaken the body over time. Diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, arthritis, and even cancer may have roots in emotional trauma.

In my practice, we have seen time and again that patients begin to heal when they address inner conflicts. Archbishop Desmond Tutu, a revered guest at SOUKYA, spoke eloquently of forgiveness as a vital healing force. His life's work in post-apartheid South Africa stands as a testament to the transformational power of spiritual healing.

## **The Future of Medicine: A Holistic Integration**

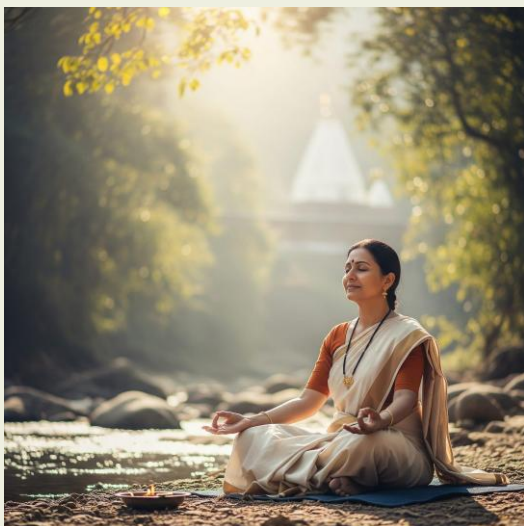
The global health landscape demands a shift from disease treatment to health promotion. While modern medicine is indispensable in acute care, emergency response, and surgical procedures, it often falls short in managing chronic conditions and addressing root causes.

India is uniquely positioned to lead the way. The Government of India recognises

seven official systems of medicine—Ayurveda, Homeopathy, Naturopathy, Siddha, Unani, Sowa-Rigpa, and Allopathy—each with accredited training institutions and practitioners. Institutions like AIIMS are beginning to incorporate these systems, laying the groundwork for an integrative health infrastructure. Initiatives such as promoting yoga, mindfulness, the use of millets, and natural foods are steps in the right direction.

Globally, over 80% of the population uses traditional remedies as part of their primary health care. This underscores a growing need for a healthcare model that combines modern diagnostic precision, traditional therapeutic wisdom, lifestyle-based prevention, and mind-body-spirit coherence.

At SOUKYA, we are witnessing a paradigm shift. People from over 120 countries come to experience an integrative approach that doesn't just treat illness—but promotes health.



Courtesy: Gemini

### **Closing Thoughts: Empowering Self-Healing**

True health is not merely the absence of disease but the presence of vitality, purpose, and inner peace. A holistic model of care honours this vision by placing the individual—not the illness—at the centre of the healing process.

By aligning body, mind, and spirit through integrative practices, we return to our natural state of balance. Healing becomes not a reaction to illness, but a proactive and empowering journey.

Let us embrace this vision of holistic well-being, not as an alternative, but as a necessary evolution in global healthcare.

Healing is not just an act—it is a way of life.



# READING TOGETHER: PARENTS' BEST GIFT TO A CHILD

*Sangeeta Doraiswami, Pallavan Learning Systems*

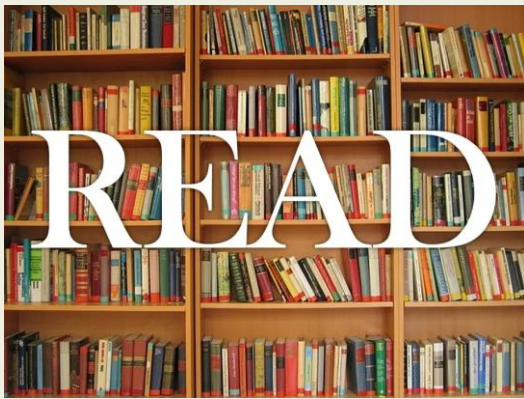


Image credit: alisonjones.com

**S**tarting the habit of reading to your children is one of the most significant and enduring gifts parents can give. Reading does far more than improve literacy; it lays the foundation for a child's 'w'holistic development. Beyond advocating for reading as a beneficial activity, it is essential to emphasise the importance of consistency. The goal is not just to read, but to read regularly and to make it a treasured habit, rather than a mere task.

Reading aloud to children opens up a vast and exciting world of knowledge and imagination. It sharpens literacy and communication skills while also expanding their minds to new perspectives and experiences. Children

are offered a safe space to explore ideas in the comfort of their home. Sharing this time together also strengthens the parent-child bond. At its core, reading together is about more than the words on the page; it's about showing children that parents value their growth and are committed to dedicating time to their learning. It's an expression of care, love, and attention.

This simple act of reading extends to many broader parental responsibilities, playing an integral role in a child's wholistic development across the Five Areas of Development: Cerebral, Emotional, Spiritual, Physical, and Social. Reading subtly supports all these areas in powerful ways. It enhances cerebral development by stimulating engagement, comprehension, and thinking skills. Through stories that reflect various human experiences and emotions, children develop empathy and emotional intelligence, nurturing their emotional development. Spiritually, books that explore values, kindness, and moral lessons offer children the opportunity to grow in empathy and ethical understanding. Physically, reading demands the discipline of sitting still and focusing, which helps develop

patience. Socially, the act of reading together improves communication skills, teaching children how to listen, articulate, and express themselves clearly. In this light, reading becomes more than just a learning tool. It becomes a means of preparing children for the broader challenges and opportunities life will present.

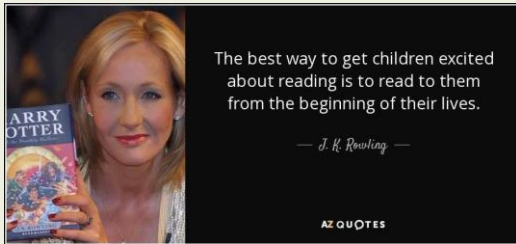


Image credit: azquotes.com

Reading is a powerful tool that can be adapted to meet the needs of children with different learning abilities. Inclusive reading practices ensure that all children can enjoy and benefit from books, no matter their challenges or strengths. For children with special needs, such as those with vision, language, or learning differences, reading can be made accessible with the help of audiobooks, books with textures, or pictures to support the text. Parents can also create a reading space that feels safe and welcoming, where the main focus is on enjoyment and personal growth rather than competition or comparison. This approach helps children feel that they belong and encourages them to see reading as something that can empower them, helping them grow emotionally, socially, and cerebrally. By making simple changes, such as using bigger text or adding interactive elements like sounds or textures, parents can ensure that every child has the chance to connect with stories and develop a love of reading.

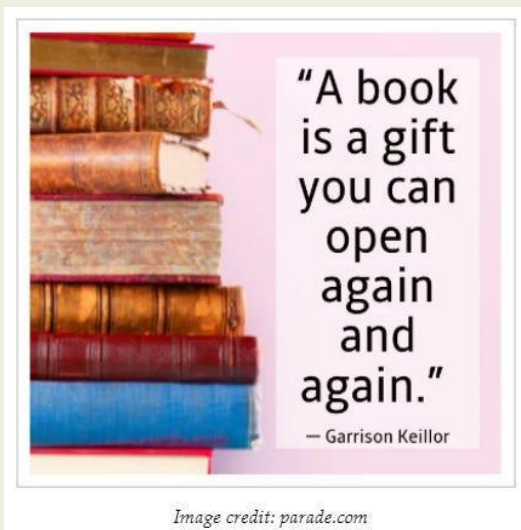
In today's world, parents can also turn to technology to enhance the reading

experience. Digital tools, such as reading apps and AI-powered educational platforms, can be especially helpful in creating a more engaging and interactive reading environment. These tools offer a variety of resources, such as text-to-speech functions, interactive storybooks, and games that can make reading more enjoyable and accessible. Parents can choose from an array of digital books that cater to different learning styles, ensuring their child's unique needs are met. These apps can also track progress and offer personalised suggestions, helping parents stay involved and informed about their child's reading journey. In addition to these, tools like audiobooks through platforms such as [Audible](#), [Storyberries](#), [Podcasts and Audio Apps for Kids](#), child-friendly e-readers like [Kindle Kids](#), a digital repository of multilingual stories like [StoryWeaver](#) and curated reading apps like [Epic](#) and [Vooks](#) provide engaging and age-appropriate content. Interactive websites like Storyline Online, which features actors reading children's books aloud, and [BookTrust](#), [Oxford Owl for Home](#)'s digital book library offer free, high-quality story access. Parents may also explore video storytelling platforms such as [YouTube Kids](#) (with appropriate supervision) or create shared reading experiences with distant relatives or teachers using tools like [Caribu](#) or screen-sharing via Google Meet or Zoom.

Furthermore, digital reading can be used to introduce children to diverse genres and authors from around the world. Parents can discover new ways to encourage reading through these tools, providing a richer and more varied reading experience that extends beyond physical books. Not only does this provide an opportunity to explore more materials, but it also fosters a sense of comfort with technology, preparing children to navigate a digital world.

One of the most beautiful aspects of reading is its potential to become a cherished family ritual, creating a nurturing environment where parent and child come together. In a world increasingly dominated by screens and digital distractions, the time set aside for reading offers a much-needed pause, a space for reflection and connection. Establishing this as a daily routine brings structure and predictability to a child's day, helping them to look forward to the shared adventure of discovering something new in the pages of a book. When children associate reading with fun and togetherness, they are more likely to embrace it as part of their lives, fostering a positive association with books.

Over time, the child learns to balance the fast-paced allure of the digital world with the quiet, imaginative pleasures of reading. This balance is crucial in helping them feel comfortable in both realms - able to navigate the world of technology while also appreciating the deeper understanding and rewards that reading offers.



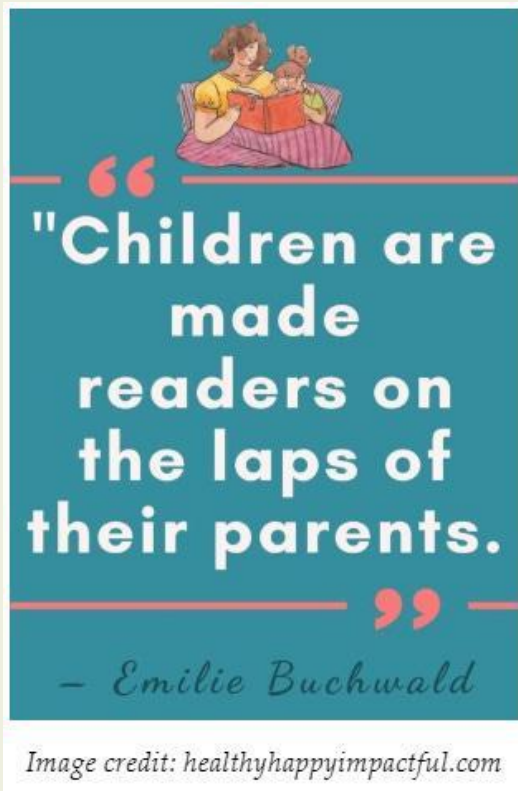
*Image credit: parade.com*

Sowing the seeds of reading in the fertile mind of a child creates a lasting legacy. However, parents must understand that

the process of cultivating a love of reading must be gradual, as children's attention spans differ. Starting slowly and respecting the child's pace allows their listening and comprehension skills to grow. Parents should adjust reading routines based on their child's readiness and interest, understanding that consistency is key. When reading becomes a natural and enjoyable part of their day, children will begin to explore new ideas independently.

There is a certain magic in how stories transport a child to far-off lands or introduce them to people and places they might never encounter in their everyday lives. But beyond this magic lies the tangible benefits of reading. Through books, children learn about narrative structure - beginning, middle, and end - while also gaining familiarity with words, sentences, and grammar. Listening to stories helps build memory retention and attention span, skills that are crucial for learning. Moreover, reading helps shape a child's personality, encouraging them to grow into wholesome individuals who can navigate both real and imagined worlds with ease.

Reading together as a family also strengthens emotional connections, reinforcing feelings of love, security, and togetherness. It shows children that their parents care about not only their learning but their overall well-being. Stories, especially those shared from a parent's own childhood, serve as a bridge between generations, allowing parents to pass down values, life lessons, and memories. As children immerse themselves in stories, ask questions, and make connections, they naturally develop communication skills. The experience reinforces that reading is not just about learning, it's about sharing, connecting, and growing together.



In addition to enhancing creativity and thinking skills, reading expands vocabulary and language acquisition. Children naturally pick up new words and phrases by hearing them in context. They also learn to ask questions, make connections, and think critically. Furthermore, as they mimic their parents' tone, language, and articulation, they develop better communication skills. This lays the foundation for literacy, enabling children to become confident readers in their own right. As they grow, they will explore books independently,

discover new genres and authors, and cultivate a sustained love of reading.

The goal of reading is not to create a genius or to add to the pressures of modern education. Nor should it become a tool for parental competition over milestone achievements. Reading to a child should be done to nurture their love of books in a warm, supportive, and fun environment. The experience should be free, enjoyable, and full of love so the child naturally seeks it as part of their daily routine. It should be a pleasurable, positive activity, a moment of joy and bonding. On the contrary, if the activity is seen to be barely an effort to drive them to learn further, it will be counter-productive. It will only build up negativity about the activity, creating resistance to reading, which can only do more harm than good.

In today's fast-paced world, the gift of reading extends far beyond childhood. It nurtures a child's 'w'holistic development, providing a foundation for continuous learning and personal growth and better preparing them to navigate the complexities of the modern world. They learn to find joy in exploration, solace in quiet moments, and inspiration in the words of others. This love of reading does not fade with time; it is a gift that keeps on giving, offering joy, enrichment, and inspiration for years to come in profound and immeasurable ways.



# BUILDING A READING CULTURE: STRATEGIES FOR SCHOOLS AND CLASSROOMS

*Sunaina Narang, Pallavan Learning Systems*



*Image credit: Gemini*

In today's digital age, cultivating a strong reading culture within schools has never been more important. With screens vying for attention and quick consumption of information becoming the norm, the sustained and reflective practice of reading can seem like a dwindling habit. Yet, reading remains one of the most powerful tools for learning, personal growth, and connection with others. A robust reading culture not only improves literacy and academic outcomes but also nurtures empathy, creativity, and a sense

of identity. The task before schools is not merely to teach reading, but to inspire a genuine love for it—one that can flourish well beyond the classroom.

Building a reading culture, however, requires more than occasional book weeks or a well-stocked library. It involves an intentional, school-wide commitment to embedding reading in the very fabric of everyday life. This article explores some of the key strategies that can help schools and classrooms foster such a culture.

## **Making Reading a Core School Value**

The first step is to make reading a visible and valued part of school life. This goes beyond simply including it in the curriculum—it must be reflected in the school's ethos and practices. When reading is celebrated and prioritised across all areas of the school community, it sends a strong message to learners that it matters.

Leadership plays a crucial role here. When school leaders talk about books in assemblies, share their own reading experiences, and support reading initiatives, it sets the tone for the entire institution. Reading should not be confined to English classes alone; it should be embraced across disciplines, with subject teachers encouraging reading in their own areas, whether that's through historical fiction in history lessons or scientific biographies in science.

### **Creating a Book-Rich Environment**

The environment in which learners grow can significantly influence their reading habits. Classrooms and school corridors should reflect a culture of reading, with displays featuring book covers, author spotlights, learner reviews, and quotes from literature. Class libraries, even in older grades, should be refreshed regularly with new titles that reflect a wide range of interests and reading levels. Comfortable reading corners, beanbags, rugs, or soft lighting can also help create inviting spaces that encourage learners to pick up a book.

The school library, in particular, must be positioned as a dynamic, welcoming space, not just a quiet room for study. It should host events, reading challenges, and book fairs, and should be staffed by someone passionate about books who can guide learners in their choices.

### **Embedding Reading in the Daily Routine**

For reading to become habitual, it needs to be part of the everyday rhythm of school life. Regular, timetabled opportunities for reading must be built into the day, not just during designated

library periods but across subjects and year groups. Even ten to fifteen minutes of silent reading at the start or end of the day can make a difference over time.

Reading aloud, often overlooked in older classrooms, remains a powerful tool across age groups. It allows learners to experience the rhythm and richness of language and introduces them to books they might not otherwise pick up. Teachers can read to their learners, or learners can take turns reading to each other, promoting fluency, confidence, and shared enjoyment.



*Image credit: Gemini*

### **Teachers as Reading Role Models**

Young people are more likely to value reading when they see the adults around them doing it. Teachers who talk about books, share their reading experiences, and recommend titles help normalise reading as a pleasurable and important part of life. This modelling should be authentic—when a teacher expresses genuine excitement about a book, it can be contagious.

In schools where reading cultures thrive, staffrooms too reflect this ethos. Staff

book clubs, reading displays featuring teachers' favourite reads, and initiatives such as "Caught Reading" photos of staff with books help make reading a communal and shared experience.

### **Choice and Diversity in Reading Material**

One of the most significant factors in motivating learners to read is choice. When learners are given autonomy to select books that interest them, rather than being restricted to prescribed texts, they are more likely to read willingly and more frequently. This means offering a wide and diverse range of reading material that reflects different genres, cultures, backgrounds, and identities.

It is important that learners can see themselves in the books they read, but also have the opportunity to explore unfamiliar perspectives. Representation matters. Alongside novels, schools should include graphic novels, poetry, magazines, biographies, and non-fiction texts to cater to a broad range of preferences and literacy levels.

### **Celebrating Reading Without Over-Assessing**

While assessment is an essential part of education, reading for pleasure should be protected from excessive scrutiny. When every book is followed by a test or comprehension worksheet, it can quickly sap the joy out of reading. Instead, teachers can encourage learners to talk about what they've read, recommend books to peers, write informal reflections, or create visual projects or reviews.

Celebrating reading through displays, certificates, or reading milestones can also help motivate learners. Events such

as book weeks, author visits, or reading challenges bring energy and excitement, while traditions like mystery reader sessions or themed book days create lasting memories and positive associations.

### **Learner Voice and Leadership**

When learners are actively involved in shaping the school's reading culture, their engagement deepens. Schools can establish learner reading ambassadors or library monitors who help organise book-related events, recommend books, or run lunchtime book clubs. These roles empower learners and give them ownership of the reading environment.

Learner input can also be sought when updating library stock or planning reading initiatives. What genres are they interested in? Which authors do they want to see more of? When learners feel that their preferences are heard and reflected, they are more likely to engage with what's on offer.

### **Partnerships with Families and the Wider Community**

Reading habits don't begin and end at the school gates. Schools must work in partnership with families to support reading at home. Simple strategies such as sending home recommended reading lists, holding parent workshops, or sharing tips for reading aloud at home can make a significant difference.

Schools might also invite community members, grandparents, or local authors to read with learners or share stories from their own lives. Creating intergenerational connections around books reinforces the idea that reading is a

shared and valued experience across age groups and backgrounds.

### **Harnessing Technology Thoughtfully**

While it's true that technology can be a distraction, it also offers new possibilities for encouraging reading. E-readers and audiobooks can support reluctant readers or those with additional needs. Online platforms and apps can help learners track their reading, write reviews, or connect with wider reading communities.

Digital storytelling tools, book-themed podcasts, and virtual author events can also provide immersive and interactive experiences that complement traditional reading.



Image credit: Gemini

### **Sustaining the Culture**

Ultimately, building a reading culture is not about one-off initiatives or short-term projects. It is about sustained, whole-school commitment—where reading is not just a subject, but a way of life. It requires consistent investment, creativity, and collaboration among teachers, leadership, learners, and families.

The rewards are profound. A learner who reads for pleasure is not only more likely to do well in school, but also more likely to develop into an empathetic, articulate, and curious adult. In building a culture where books are treasured and reading is celebrated, schools give their learners a gift that lasts a lifetime.



# SKILLS, PROCESSES AND WATERMARKS: FOUNDATIONS FOR MEANINGFUL LEARNING

*Choki Wangchuk, Pallavan Learning Systems*

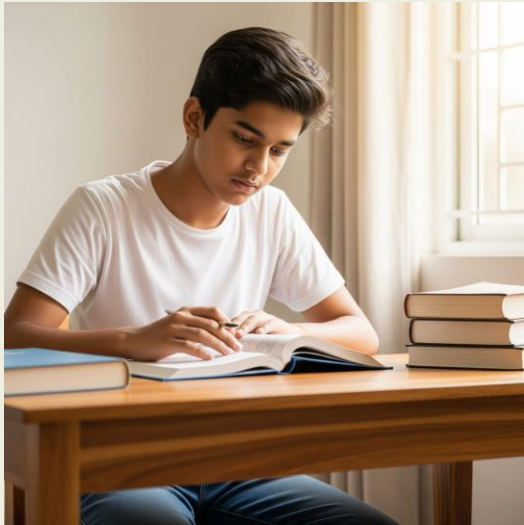
**S**kills, Processes and Watermarks are three interconnected elements that play a vital role in shaping how individuals learn, grow, and navigate the complexities of life. Together, they form a framework for understanding not just what is learned, but how learning happens and who the learner becomes in the process. Unlike traditional approaches that often prioritise the acquisition of content knowledge, this perspective emphasises the ‘w’holistic development of individuals through the cultivation of capabilities, dispositions, and reflective practices.

## **Understanding Skills**

Skills refer to the abilities or capacities individuals use to acquire, interpret, analyse, and apply knowledge. They are functional, purposeful, and transferable across different contexts. Skills are not limited to academic domains but encompass a broad range of abilities essential in various areas of life.

Examples include analytical thinking, communication, comprehension, and decision-making. These skills allow individuals to engage effectively with their surroundings, adapt to changing circumstances, and contribute meaningfully to their environments. Importantly, skills are not static; they evolve through deliberate practice, reflection, and application.

For skills to develop meaningfully, individuals need opportunities to apply them in varied contexts. This requires moving beyond rote learning to engaging with tasks that demand creativity, reasoning, and adaptability. When learners set personal goals and actively monitor their progress, they take ownership of their skill development, making it dynamic and self-directed.



## Exploring Processes

While skills describe what individuals can do, processes define how they learn and develop those abilities. Processes involve the actions, strategies, and mindsets through which knowledge is constructed and skills are strengthened. They are dynamic, iterative, and deeply influenced by experience.

Key processes include:

Reflection – critically examining one’s experiences and progress.

Exploration – actively seeking new information, ideas, and perspectives.

Collaboration – engaging with others to co-create knowledge and solve problems.

These processes emphasise active participation in learning. They require individuals to connect prior knowledge with new experiences, draw patterns across contexts, and create meaning rather than simply memorising facts. Processes are not linear; they evolve as learners encounter new challenges and

opportunities, becoming more complex over time. This iterative nature cultivates the ability to “learn how to learn,” an essential competency in an ever-changing world.

## The Role of Watermarks

Watermarks represent the inner qualities, character traits, and attitudes that shape how individuals approach learning and life. Unlike skills, which are observable, watermarks are the intrinsic dispositions that influence behaviour and decision-making. They include qualities such as resilience, rigour, curiosity, self-awareness, and empathy.

The development of watermarks is a deeply personal and transformative process. They are not simply by-products of education; they need to be intentionally cultivated. Individuals grow these traits by facing challenges, reflecting on experiences, and aligning their actions with personal values. For example, perseverance may be strengthened by working through difficult tasks, while empathy may develop through collaborative projects or community engagement.

Watermarks influence how skills are applied and how processes are enacted. They determine whether a learner approaches a problem with confidence or hesitation, openness or resistance. As such, they are fundamental to meaningful growth.

## The Interconnected Nature of Skills, Processes and Watermarks

Skills, Processes and Watermarks (SPWs) are not separate entities but deeply interconnected. A person’s ability to think critically (a skill) depends on their use of

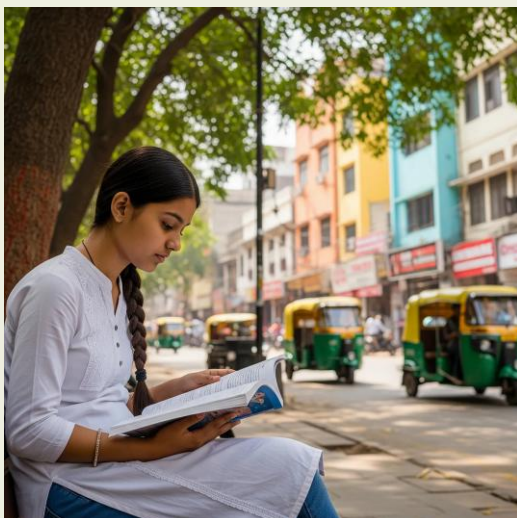
reflective and analytical processes, which are in turn shaped by watermarks such as curiosity and persistence. This interplay ensures that learning is both effective and transformative.

When these elements work together, they enable individuals to transfer learning across contexts. For example, comprehension in one domain—such as science—can inform approaches to challenges in another, such as social interactions or creative pursuits. This transferability is key to preparing individuals for the complexities of life.

### **SPWs as Drivers of Personal and Professional Growth**

Goal setting and assessment play crucial roles in making SPWs visible and actionable. By setting clear goals, individuals identify which skills they aim to acquire, which processes they need to strengthen, and which watermarks they wish to cultivate. This intentionality drives meaningful progress.

Assessment, in this context, goes beyond testing knowledge. It involves qualitative, continuous, and reflective evaluation that focuses on individual growth rather than comparison with others. Tools such



as portfolios, reflective journals, and feedback conversations support this approach. When assessment is aligned with SPWs, it becomes a powerful driver of learning rather than a mere measure of outcomes.

The cultivation of Skills, Processes and Watermarks enables individuals to become self-directed learners and adaptive thinkers. Skills provide the capacity to act, processes guide the methods of learning, and watermarks shape the attitudes and values that underpin behaviour. Together, they prepare individuals to engage with the world's challenges in constructive and ethical ways.

This framework supports not only academic success but also personal fulfilment and social contribution. By focusing on SPWs, education and personal development shift from being about external achievements to fostering inner growth and resilience.

### **Conclusion**

Skills, Processes and Watermarks together form a powerful foundation for meaningful learning and growth. Skills equip individuals with the tools to act, processes shape how they learn and apply knowledge, and watermarks define who they become in the process. These elements, when intentionally cultivated, ensure that learning is not limited to the classroom but extends into all areas of life.

True education lies not in the accumulation of facts but in enabling individuals to continuously learn, adapt, and grow. By integrating Skills, Processes

and Watermarks into learning experiences, we nurture individuals who are not only capable but also reflective,

resilient, and compassionate—ready to thrive and contribute meaningfully to an ever-changing world.



# THE PATH FORWARD: TRANSFORMING EDUCATION THROUGH TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

*Dr Saroj Thapa, Pallavan Learning Systems*

Education worldwide is facing a critical turning point. Rapid societal shifts—such as technological innovation, changing economies, and growing diversity among students—are placing increasing demands on school systems to deliver better outcomes for all learners, often while grappling with constrained resources. Central to meeting this challenge is a clear and essential truth: the transformation of education hinges on empowering teachers. When educators receive genuine support and are entrusted with autonomy, they become effective catalysts for meaningful and lasting change.



*Image courtesy: DPS Modern Indian School*

Teaching today is far more complex than in the past. Teachers work with students who come from a wide variety of cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic backgrounds. They must navigate diverse learning styles, support social and emotional growth, and incorporate technology effectively. Simply expecting teachers to follow rigid, top-down directives is no longer feasible. On the other hand, truly empowered teachers shape their classrooms, adapt strategies, and innovate solutions based on their expertise and daily experiences.

Empowering teachers involves recognizing and trusting their professional judgment, motivating them through meaningful support, and providing ongoing opportunities for growth. Research consistently shows that teacher empowerment drives multiple positive outcomes. Students achieve more when their teachers are motivated and skilled. Schools become more positive, collaborative learning

environments. Teacher retention improves as job satisfaction rises, reducing turnover and its associated costs. Moreover, empowered teachers lead innovation by experimenting and adapting to challenges constructively.

A cornerstone of teacher empowerment is need-based professional development. Traditional one-size-fits-all workshops often fail to address the individual challenges teachers face in their classrooms. Need-based development starts with understanding teachers' specific contexts, challenges, and strengths through surveys, interviews, and observation. This information guides the creation of professional learning plans that are relevant, practical, and immediately applicable.

This targeted approach yields numerous benefits. Teachers engage more deeply when they see direct connections between learning opportunities and their classroom realities. Resources are used efficiently by focusing on real needs rather than generic content. Equally, this approach promotes equity by ensuring that all teachers—regardless of experience or setting—receive support tailored to their circumstances. Effective need-based development is continuous, collaborative and reflective. It is rooted in evidence-based practices, allowing teachers space to experiment and refine their approaches.

Alongside need-based learning, fostering teacher agency is vital. Teacher agency refers to educators' ability to take purposeful action to influence their professional growth, solve problems creatively, and lead improvements. It transforms teachers from passive recipients of instructions into active shapers of their practice and contributors

to their school communities. A critical method for cultivating agency is through action research, which empowers teachers to investigate their own practice systematically.

Action research follows a simple but powerful cycle: teachers select a question or problem relevant to their classrooms, implement strategies to address it, collect and analyze data, reflect on the process and results, and share their findings with colleagues. For example, a teacher might explore how to enhance engagement among reluctant readers by trying new teaching techniques and observing their impact. This process promotes continuous learning, deepens professional expertise, and builds confidence in decision-making.

By engaging in action research, teachers not only improve their effectiveness but also foster a culture of inquiry and collaboration within their schools. When action research becomes a shared endeavour, it moves professional growth beyond isolated efforts to the formation of a professional learning community that leads to collective improvement, strengthening school capacity.



*Image courtesy: The Statesman*

Inclusive practice forms another essential dimension of teacher empowerment. Empowered teachers are better equipped to meet the needs of all students, including those traditionally

marginalized. They employ diverse instructional methods, advocate for equitable resources, and engage families and communities in supporting student success. Inclusive practice is woven into effective professional development through training on differentiated instruction and culturally responsive teaching. When teachers continually develop these skills and mindsets, schools become more welcoming and equitable for every learner.

Leadership and culture within schools significantly influence teacher empowerment. Educational leaders create the conditions for empowerment by involving teachers in decision-making, safeguarding time for collaboration and planning, allocating resources for growth, and celebrating innovations. More than programmes or policies, empowerment requires culture change—valuing teacher expertise, using constructive data, and fostering respect and trust. Schools that adopt this mindset tend to experience stronger morale and sustained improvement.

Measuring the impact of professional development and empowerment efforts is essential to ensure effectiveness and guide progress. Schools should use multiple evidence sources, such as classroom observations, student achievement data, teacher feedback, and equity indicators. Continuous evaluation allows for adaptation, ensuring supports remain relevant and impactful.

Despite clear benefits, barriers to teacher empowerment exist. Limited time and funding constrain professional learning opportunities. Resistance to change may arise from uncertainty or comfort with traditional methods. Policy mandates may restrict teacher autonomy. Overcoming these challenges requires empathetic leadership, flexible use of resources, ongoing communication, and advocacy for progressive policies.



*Image Courtesy: Digital Learning Magazine*

In conclusion, empowering teachers through need-based professional development combined with fostering agency—especially through action research—charts a clear path forward for transforming education systems. This approach elevates teachers as trusted professionals capable of leading innovation and responsiveness in their schools. When teachers are fully supported to grow and lead, every student benefits through richer, more equitable learning experiences. The future of education lies in placing teacher empowerment at its core, ensuring schools become vibrant communities where learners and educators alike thrive.



# AESTHETICS AND TECHNOLOGY: BHUTAN'S NEW WAY OF LEARNING

*Ritika Lall Kapur, Pallavan Learning Systems*

In classrooms across the world, students are told to choose: are you more of an 'arts person' or a 'science person'? Do you prefer beauty or logic, creativity or technology? Bhutan's new curriculum rejects this false choice. Instead, it proposes that aesthetics and technology are two sides of the same coin, both essential to becoming a wise, capable, and compassionate human being.

The Bhutan Baccalaureate's Aesthetics and Technology Curriculum is not just another school subject. It is a philosophy of learning that treats beauty, creativity, values, and technological skill as inseparable. It aims to create learners

who can navigate an increasingly digital world without losing their sense of care, wonder, and interconnectedness.

## **What Do We Mean by Aesthetics?**

When most people hear the word aesthetics, they think of art galleries, fashion, or design. But in this curriculum, aesthetics goes far deeper. It is about cultivating an 'Aesthetic Mindset' - a way of perceiving and engaging with the world.

An aesthetic mind is centred on care: care for oneself, for one's surroundings, for community, for nature, and for the future. It means developing the ability to see and create beauty not only in paintings or songs, but in everyday life - whether arranging water offerings in a temple, cooking a meal, or designing a mobile app.

By developing this mindset, students learn to reimagine innovation itself. They are taught that creativity is not just about solving problems efficiently but about doing so with humanity, balance, and respect for interconnectedness.



## What Do We Mean by Technology?

Technology here is not treated as an abstract collection of machines, but as a mindset of adaptability. A technological mind is open to new ideas, welcomes challenges as opportunities for growth, and constantly seeks to learn.



Students are encouraged to see technology as a bridge between people and cultures, between humans and nature, and between imagination and reality. From coding and artificial intelligence to multimedia design, the curriculum integrates technological tools with an aesthetic sensibility. The goal is not just technical proficiency but ethical, mindful use of technology.

## Why Merge the Two?

Traditionally, aesthetics and technology might be taught separately—art class in one room, computer lab in another. But the Bhutan Baccalaureate merges them into a single, unified domain.

The reason is simple: our world no longer separates them. The phone in your pocket is a technological marvel, but it also depends on aesthetic design - its interface, its usability, its cultural symbolism. Likewise, a painting or dance performance today might be shared globally through digital platforms, transforming not just how art is made, but how it is experienced.

By teaching students to see the connections between aesthetics and technology, Bhutan hopes to nurture individuals who are both skilled innovators and sensitive caretakers—people who can write code and also ask whether that code makes life more beautiful, more just, more humane.

## Truth, Beauty, and Values

At the heart of the Aesthetics and Technology domain lie three guiding principles: Truth, Beauty, and Values.

**Truth:** Students learn to navigate many kinds of truth - scientific facts, cultural traditions, personal beliefs. Technology helps test and expand knowledge, while aesthetics encourages discernment and reflection.

**Beauty:** Learners are taught to appreciate beauty in multiple forms - nature, art, relationships, even the elegance of a well-written program or a sustainable design. Beauty is not luxury; it is essential to meaning.

**Values:** Here, aesthetics and technology meet ethics. Students reflect on questions like: How should technology be used? What is the right balance between progress and preservation? Values give innovation its moral compass.

Together, these three shape a ‘w’holistic worldview that prepares learners not just to invent, but to live responsibly.

### **Aesthetics and Technology Across Five Areas of Development**

The curriculum ensures that the merging of aesthetics and technology is not abstract but woven into every aspect of human development.

**Cerebral Development:** Learners build critical thinking and creative problem-solving skills, integrating coding, design, and artistic expression. Technology sharpens the mind; aesthetics ensures it remains ethical and imaginative.

**Emotional Development:** Emotional intelligence helps students use technology collaboratively and appreciate beauty more deeply. Whether designing an app or composing music, resilience and empathy guide the process.

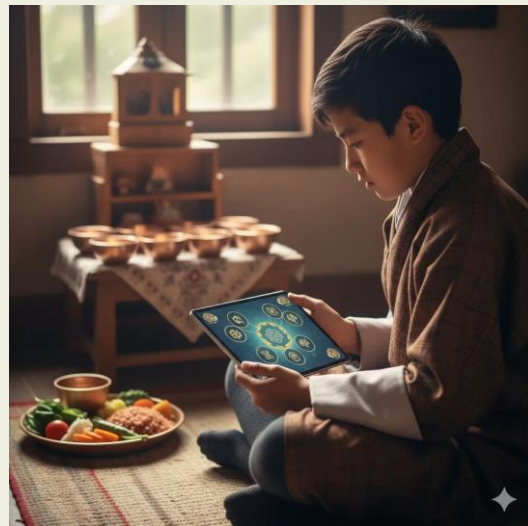
**Physical Development:** Even physical well-being connects to aesthetics and technology. Strong bodies allow for expressive dance or precise digital craftsmanship; good posture and health sustain long-term creative and technical work.

**Spiritual Development:** By infusing creativity with mindfulness, students discover purpose. Technology is reframed as a tool for harmony, while aesthetics connects them to deeper meaning.

**Social Development:** Collaboration, feedback, and cultural awareness are key. Group projects using both art and tech foster empathy and community

engagement, while exposing students to diverse cultural aesthetics.

In this way, aesthetics and technology do not sit in a corner of the timetable. They permeate the whole learner’s growth.



### **Core Concepts in the Curriculum**

Tendrel: Interconnectedness

Students explore the Buddhist idea of Tendrel—that all things arise through interdependence. Here, aesthetics helps them see the beauty of connections, while technology demonstrates them in action, through networks, coding, or even the Internet of Things.

Living in Coherence with Nature

Nature is both inspiration and teacher. Students learn to observe patterns in ecosystems, then use technology (like VR or data analysis) to deepen their understanding. A spider web may inspire new material science; a forest might shape sustainable design. Aesthetics teaches reverence; technology provides tools for conservation.

## Culture and Traditions

From the discipline of Driglam Namzha to digital preservation of manuscripts, students learn how aesthetics and technology interact in cultural identity. Technology is used to safeguard heritage, while aesthetics ensures traditions retain their depth and meaning in modern forms.

## Innovation and Design

Here, students move from theory to creation—combining coding, AI, multimedia, and traditional crafts. Whether weaving patterns or programming an AI tutor, the key is balance: innovation guided by aesthetic sensibility and ethical responsibility.

## Skills, Processes, and Watermarks

The curriculum specifies what learners gain through aesthetics and technology:

**Skills:** analytical and critical thinking, creativity, communication, coding, comprehension.

**Processes:** research, collaboration, exploration, hands-on experiments, learning from nature.

**Watermarks:** care, responsibility, discipline, rigour, resilience.

These are not simply academic checklists; they are habits of mind and character. For instance, a student might design a multimedia project on environmental conservation. To succeed, they must research (process), think critically and creatively (skills), and show resilience and care (watermarks).

## Everyday Aesthetics in a Digital World

Perhaps the most relatable concept is Everyday Aesthetics. Students are encouraged to find beauty not only in grand works of art but in small, daily rituals and objects. In Bhutanese tradition, even a simple water offering carries aesthetic depth.

In today's world, this also means asking: How do our phones, apps, and digital spaces affect our sense of beauty, mental health, and relationships? By integrating aesthetics into digital design, students are guided to create technologies that enhance—not diminish—our quality of life.

## The Larger Vision

The ultimate goal of the Aesthetics and Technology curriculum is to create a spotlight that illuminates every part of education. Rather than keeping 'art' and 'technology' as separate domains, it wants their influence to permeate all learning.

This is not a quick change. It is a long-term project that requires sustained effort, but the vision is clear: learners who are technically skilled, aesthetically sensitive, ethically grounded, and socially responsible.

In other words, education that produces not just coders or painters, but Persons of Substance - whole individuals ready to engage with a fast-changing world without losing sight of truth, beauty, and values.

## Why It Matters

In an age where screens dominate our lives and rapid innovation often outpaces ethics, Bhutan's approach feels both ancient and futuristic. It tells us that technology without aesthetics can be cold and harmful, while aesthetics without technology can be isolated and limited. Together, they make us human.

The Bhutan Baccalaureate is showing that education can prepare young people not just for jobs, but for life: for wonder as well as work, for harmony as well as progress. In doing so, it offers a lesson the whole world might one day learn—

that the future belongs to those who can code with care, innovate with beauty, and live with values.



# ATIŚA DĪPAṂKARA ŚRĪJÑĀNA: THE LAMP THAT STILL SHINES

*Thupten Tsewang, Pallavan Learning Systems*



*Courtesy & Copyright: Himalayan Art Museum, Dharamsala, India*

Every day, whether through news channels, online feeds, or social media, one can sense a quiet restlessness across the world — nations striving for progress yet struggling for peace, societies advancing in knowledge yet longing for understanding. Within our own country too, challenges often test the strength of our communities and the patience of our families. Beneath these layers of uncertainty lies a question older than history itself: why do we lose sight of kindness just when we need it the most?

Perhaps the answer lies not outside but within. A thousand years ago, a gentle

monk from Bengal named **Atiśa Dipaṅkara Śrījñāna** lit a lamp that still burns today. Born a prince, he renounced privilege to seek a truth that could guide humanity beyond its own confusion. Through his journeys from India to Indonesia and Tibet, he carried no treasures — only a simple message: that compassion is the light that never fades. His life reminds us that wisdom begins with a warm heart and that, even in uncertain times, one clear flame can still show the way.

## **Early Life and Renunciation**

Atiśa was born around 982 CE into a royal household at Vikramapura, in what is now Munshiganj, Bangladesh. As a young boy, known by the name *Candragarbha*, he was marked by an unusual calmness and a quiet concern for the suffering of others. Tales from his early years speak of gentle visions — of the goddess *Tārā* appearing in radiant form and of a blue *utpala* flower manifesting as if from the air — subtle signs that his path would reach beyond the walls of royalty.

Although raised amidst luxury and destined for leadership, Atiśa felt a growing sense of emptiness amid the splendour that surrounded him. With his parents' consent, he chose a different path — one of contemplation and service. At twenty-nine, he left the palace behind and received ordination under the revered master *Śīlārakṣita*, taking the name *Dīpaṃkara Śrījñāna*, meaning “Lamp of Supreme Wisdom.” In time, this lamp would illuminate not only the lands he travelled through, but also countless hearts that still draw warmth from its light today.

### Travels and Quest for Wisdom

Atiśa's search for knowledge and understanding took him far beyond the palace gates. Across the Indian subcontinent, he studied with great masters such as *Jetari*, *Bodhibhadra*, and *Avadhūtīpa*, training at the famed centres of learning — *Nālandā*, *Odantapuri*, *Vikramaśīla*, and *Somapura*. In his early thirties, he embarked on a perilous sea journey to Sumatra — then known as *Śrīvijaya* — to study under the revered teacher *Suvarṇadvīpa Dharmarakṣita*, called *Serlingpa* in Tibetan sources. There, over twelve devoted years, Atiśa immersed himself in the living experience of *Bodhicitta* — the deep wish to awaken oneself in order to benefit all beings.

When he returned to India, Atiśa became a leading scholar at *Vikramaśīla*, admired for his clarity in debate and his gentle reform of monastic discipline. Some accounts suggest that his travels also led him through the ancient valleys of *Gandhāra* and *Swat*, once vibrant centres of Buddhist learning. Through these journeys — from India to Sumatra and later to Tibet — Atiśa built unseen bridges of wisdom, friendship, and compassion that continue to link these lands and hearts even today.

### Arrival in Tibet and the Revival of Dharma

The renewal of Buddhism in Tibet owes much to Atiśa's quiet courage and steadfast compassion. The Tibetan king, *Lha Lama Yeshe Ö*, had long dreamt of restoring the purity of the Dharma in his land. Captured and dying in captivity, he could not see that vision fulfilled. His nephew, *Jangchub Ö*, took up the cause and sent the translator *Nagtso Lotsawa* to India to invite Atiśa. Though aware of his advancing years and the dangers of such a journey, Atiśa hesitated only until a series of visions of the goddess *Tārā* assured him that his coming to Tibet would benefit countless beings.

He left India around 1040 and, after a long and arduous crossing of the Himalayas, arrived in western Tibet. Settling first in *Tolung (Purang)*, he spent three fruitful years teaching and composed his renowned *Bodhipathapradīpa* — *The Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*. Later, he travelled through central Tibet, spending his final years in *Nyetang*, near *Lhasa*, where he passed away in 1052 at the age of seventy-two. His foremost disciple, *Dromtön*, later founded Reting Monastery in his honour, giving rise to the Kadam tradition.

## Teachings: The Lamp for the Path

Atiśa's *Bodhipathapradīpa* — *The Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment* — is a brief work of sixty-seven verses that distils the vastness of Buddhist thought into simple, practical guidance. It presents a path grounded in ethics and illuminated by *Bodhicitta*, the awakened heart of compassion. Though concise in form, it carries profound depth and became the model for the later *Lamrim* — the “stages of the path” teachings that continue to guide spiritual practice across generations.

Atiśa also systematised the early methods of *lojong* or mind training, revitalised the discipline of the Vinaya, and strengthened the sacred bond between teacher and disciple. Tibetan accounts credit him with seventy-nine texts, many composed or compiled during his years in Tibet. His teachings were never detached abstractions; they were a way to live with clarity, gentleness, and responsibility. For Atiśa, true wisdom was measured not by learning alone, but by the warmth it brought to the heart — a lesson that feels as vital today as it did a millennium ago.

### Atiśa's Lamp in Our Age: Rekindling the Light

The world today dazzles with progress yet hungers for peace. We have learnt to command the elements, decode the brain, and explore the distant planets, yet we still struggle to live gently on this one. Innovation has made life faster, but not necessarily wiser. We scroll endlessly, speak instantly, and travel farther than ever — yet loneliness and anxiety often keep pace with us.

What we need is not more information but deeper insight — a way to see clearly without losing tenderness. This is where Atiśa's lamp still shines. Atiśa's teachings were never cloistered; they were meant for those seeking stillness amid the world's motion. His *Bodhicitta* — the awakening of a compassionate heart — offers a timeless blueprint for being fully human: alert, open, and kind in thought, word, and deed.

In classrooms, boardrooms, and family homes alike, Atiśa's wisdom reminds us that true intelligence includes empathy, and that real success lies in the calm one brings to others. Compassion is not weakness but strength — quiet, steady, and sustaining. His life also speaks to the challenges of our global age. Born in Bengal, trained in India, enlightened in Sumatra, and teaching in Tibet, Atiśa was a bridge across cultures and minds. He travelled not to conquer but to connect, showing that understanding grows from humility, not pride. His legacy invites us to look beyond difference, to recognise our shared humanity as one vast mandala of interdependence.

He wrote in *The Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*:

*“When you see that all beings are equal in their wish for happiness and freedom from suffering, cherish them as you do yourself — this is the heart of awakening.”*

A thousand years later, these words still reach us like a quiet reminder. The lamp he lit was not for shrines alone, but for every heart that forgets its light and longs to see again.



We successfully organised the International Guru Conference and Exhibition on the **Life and Legacy of Atiśa Dīpaṃkara Śrījñāna** in Delhi (21–30 November 2025). You may access the conference report, exhibition brochure, and recorded session videos at this [link](#).

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# BRIDGING THE PAST AND PRESENT: WHY HERITAGE EDUCATION MATTERS

*Kreeti Goswami, Pallavan Learning Systems*

**H**eritage education is essential because it helps learners connect with their roots, understand their cultural identity, and appreciate the diverse traditions that shape society. It strengthens cultural identity and belonging by helping children and young adults understand their community's stories, traditions, and values, fostering pride and a sense of self. At the same time, it promotes respect for diversity in a country and world where regional, linguistic, and cultural practices differ widely.



## **Builds Belongingness**

Heritage education helps children and young adults understand where they come from—their community's stories, traditions, and values. This strengthens personal identity, nurtures pride, and builds a deep sense of belonging.

## **Promotes Respect for Diversity**

The cultural landscape around us is immensely diverse. Learning about different regional, linguistic, and traditional practices builds empathy, respect, and harmony among students. It nurtures pluralism and helps learners appreciate multiple ways of living.

## **Conserves Knowledge and Traditions**

Many indigenous practices, crafts, stories, and ecological wisdom are at risk of disappearing. Heritage education helps ensure that this knowledge is passed on to the next generation through experiential learning, documentation,

and community engagement—without being rigid or closed in thought.

### **Asks Learners to Question**

Understanding heritage is not about memorising facts. It encourages students to question, compare, analyse, and interpret cultural practices, historical events, architectural styles, and oral histories. This builds curiosity, inquiry skills, and deeper thinking.

### **Connects the Past With the Present**

Learners begin to see how traditions, movements, and cultural exchanges have shaped today's society. This helps them understand continuity and change, making history and culture more relevant and meaningful. Heritage education becomes a bridge that links the past with the present, showing how cultural foundations shape modern identities and values.



### **Encourages Community Participation**

Heritage education often includes visits to local sites, meeting artisans, listening to stories from elders, and exploring

historical places. These experiences build strong school–community connections and help students understand the importance of shared memory.

### **Supports Sustainable Living**

Traditional ecological knowledge—such as water harvesting, farming practices, use of local materials, and understanding local biodiversity—teaches responsible and sustainable ways of living. Students learn how communities once lived in harmony with nature.



### **Heritage as a Living Continuum in the Digital Age**

Social media and cultural influencers now play an important role in helping young people connect with heritage. Through short videos, storytelling, and creative posts, they bring traditional crafts, regional cuisines, folk art, local histories, and indigenous practices into everyday life. This makes heritage relatable and accessible.

Different Instagram pages also give a glimpse into the world of heritage. For example, the page DelhiHouses archives old and unique houses of Delhi and tells the story of how the city has grown and

changed. Many other pages organise heritage walks and food walks in different cities, which children and young adults can participate in. These digital and real-life experiences show that heritage is not something distant, it is around us, evolving, and very much alive.

Heritage education helps learners see that culture is not just something to study. It is something to experience, values. It prepares students to appreciate where they come from and contribute meaningfully to the world they live in.



# ASSOCIATED ENTITIES



## **Pallavan Learning Systems**

An educational research organisation dedicated to the actualisation of every learner's potential, fostering wholistic development and enabling individuals to become Persons of Substance.

[www.pallavanlearningsystems.com](http://www.pallavanlearningsystems.com)

## **Ritinjali**

Established in 1995, Ritinjali — meaning “helping hands” in Sanskrit — works across urban Delhi and rural India to empower disadvantaged communities through education, skilling initiatives and community-led development.

[www.ritinjali.org](http://www.ritinjali.org)

## **Centre for Escalation of Peace**

A programme of Ritinjali, the Centre for Escalation of Peace addresses systemic challenges such as conflict, poverty, limited access to education and skilling, and community disengagement. It seeks sustainable and policy-level solutions through research, dialogue and grassroots engagement.

[www.cepeace.org](http://www.cepeace.org)

## **The Pallavan School, Jhalawar**

Established in 2008 under the Usha Nath Kapur Foundation, The Pallavan School brings quality education to Jhalawar through the Leading Out framework, cultivating growth across the Five Areas of Development, strengthened through Skills, Processes and Watermarks.

[www.pallavanjhalawar.com](http://www.pallavanjhalawar.com)

## **Pallavanjali**

A charitable trust committed to enabling young learners to realise their potential through sustained educational and skilling programmes. For over two decades, Pallavanjali has supported individuals in carving meaningful pathways for personal and professional growth.

[www.pallavanjali.com](http://www.pallavanjali.com)

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