



School Libraries as Knowledge Hubs for Cultural and Heritage Education in India

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Abstract:

School libraries occupy a strategic position in preserving, transmitting, and revitalizing India's cultural and intellectual heritage. In a country marked by linguistic plurality, diverse traditions, classical arts, and extensive historical memory, school libraries can function as dynamic knowledge hubs that nurture cultural identity and promote heritage education. This study adopts a qualitative, descriptive research design based exclusively on secondary sources, including academic literature, policy documents, and government reports. The analysis highlights the transformative potential of school libraries in integrating Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) into contemporary educational practices, particularly through digitization, interdisciplinary engagement, and community participation. The findings suggest that strengthening library infrastructure, enhancing digital access, promoting professional development of librarians, and encouraging collaborative cultural initiatives are essential for repositioning school libraries as active cultural institutions. With systematic institutional support, school libraries can significantly contribute to cultural continuity, national integration, and sustainable knowledge preservation in India.

Keywords: School library, Cultural Heritage Education, Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS), Digital Libraries, NEP 2020.

1.1 Introduction

Libraries have historically functioned as repositories of human knowledge, preserving intellectual achievements across civilizations. In the digital era, however, libraries have evolved beyond static repositories into interactive knowledge ecosystems. Within the Indian educational context, school libraries are increasingly recognized as crucial spaces for cultivating cultural awareness and interdisciplinary learning.

India's educational framework operates within the dual pressures of globalization and technological transformation while striving to retain its civilizational legacy. The Indian Knowledge System (IKS)—encompassing texts such as the Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, Arthashastra, and Charaka Samhita, alongside rich oral and indigenous traditions—offers a holistic epistemology integrating science, ethics, philosophy, and pedagogy. Unlike fragmented disciplinary approaches, IKS emphasizes interconnected

knowledge systems, evident in contributions to mathematics (concept of zero), astronomy (Surya Siddhanta), environmental ethics, and narrative-based moral education (Panchatantra).

In this context, school libraries can function as mediating institutions that connect students with India's cultural and intellectual heritage through curated collections, digital archives, and participatory programs.

1.2 Objectives of the Study:

The objective of this study is given below:

- i. To examine the existing role of school libraries in promoting cultural and heritage education in Indian schools.
- ii. To analyze the potential of school libraries as knowledge hubs for preserving and disseminating Indigenous Knowledge Systems.

1.3 Methodology:

This study adopts a qualitative and descriptive research methodology. The analysis is based exclusively on secondary data, including academic journal articles, books, government reports, and policy documents such as the National Education Policy (2020).

Sources such as the National Digital Library of India (NDLI), UNESCO reports, and scholarly works on Indian Knowledge Systems were reviewed to identify emerging trends in cultural preservation and digital transformation within school libraries.

The scope of the study is limited to literature-based analysis and does not include field surveys or empirical data collection.

1.4 Review of Literature:

Das (2017) conceptualizes libraries as cultural hubs that not only preserve heritage but actively contribute to its development by facilitating interdisciplinary research.

Deka (2023) emphasizes the community empowerment role of libraries in fostering lifelong learning and digital literacy.

Jayamma et al. (2023) highlight the growing importance of digital infrastructure in libraries to enhance information literacy among students and faculty.

Malipati (2025) underscores the role of rural libraries in reducing educational disparities between urban and rural India.

Kumar (2025) asserts that school libraries are integral to enriching student learning by promoting inquiry, reading culture, and ICT integration.

Collectively, these studies indicate that libraries are evolving institutions capable of bridging traditional knowledge with digital innovation.

1.5 Findings and Discussion:

The digitization of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) by libraries is profoundly transforming teacher education. It promotes a teaching approach that integrates India's intellectual heritage with advanced technology, in line with the vision of the National Education Policy 2020

- i. **Libraries as Custodians of Indigenous Knowledge Systems:** School libraries increasingly serve as custodians of Indigenous Knowledge Systems by preserving manuscripts, regional literature, oral histories, folklore, traditional ecological knowledge, and community archives. Digitization initiatives ensure long-term preservation and global accessibility of fragile cultural resources.

This transformation aligns with the vision of the National Education Policy (2020), which advocates for education rooted in the Indian ethos while embracing technological advancement.

- ii. **Digitization and Technology Integration:** Digitization of cultural resources enhances teacher education and student engagement. Virtual reality applications can recreate historical settings, artificial intelligence tools can curate personalized learning pathways, and digital archives allow structured access to reliable cultural materials.

However, significant challenges persist:

- Funding limitations
- Digital divide between rural and urban schools
- Lack of trained library professionals
- Urban bias in digital access initiatives such as NDLI

Addressing these issues requires inclusive policy frameworks, mobile libraries, and community-based digital centres.

- iii. **School Libraries as Community Cultural Spaces:** Modern school libraries must move beyond book storage to become participatory cultural spaces. This includes:

- Organizing workshops on traditional arts and crafts
- Hosting storytelling sessions on folklore and indigenous narratives
- Preserving local manuscripts and oral traditions
- Facilitating teacher training on culturally responsive pedagogy

By fostering collaborative engagement between educators, students, librarians, and community elders, libraries become living cultural laboratories rather than passive repositories.

- iv. **Pedagogical Implications:** Access to curated cultural materials allows teachers to integrate authentic indigenous content into classroom instruction. Structured archives reduce misinformation and enable culturally grounded, interdisciplinary pedagogy.

Training initiatives and digital platforms further empower teachers to interpret and apply cultural knowledge responsibly, avoiding superficial or ideological misrepresentations.

In essence, libraries serve as a bridge connecting the past with the present. They safeguard traditions while making them relevant for contemporary education. They support teachers, enhance cultural awareness, and ensure that Indigenous knowledge remains vibrant, accessible, and capable of guiding future generations.

1.6 Conclusion:

School libraries in India possess immense potential to function as knowledge hubs for cultural and heritage education. Their evolving role in preserving Indigenous Knowledge Systems, facilitating digital access, and supporting culturally responsive pedagogy positions them as foundational institutions in India's educational transformation.

While challenges related to infrastructure, funding, and accessibility remain significant, collaborative policy support, technological innovation, and professional development can reposition school libraries as active cultural stewards.

By simultaneously preserving tradition and embracing digital progress, school libraries contribute to building a culturally rooted, technologically empowered educational ecosystem aligned with India's aspirations as a global knowledge society.

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