Role of the Sanskrit Language in the Indian Knowledge System and Its Integration into Modern Education: A Critical Study

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Abstract:

The Sanskrit language, recognized as one of the oldest and most sophisticated classical languages in the world, has played a pivotal role in shaping the Indian Knowledge System (IKS). This study critically examines the contribution of Sanskrit in preserving, transmitting, and systematizing knowledge that emerged from the Indian subcontinent over millennia. Employing a qualitative research design based on documentary analysis, the study explores the historical evolution of Sanskrit as a language of knowledge and its central role in ancient Indian intellectual traditions. The findings indicate that Sanskrit functioned not merely as a linguistic medium but as a structured intellectual framework that facilitated developments in philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, medicine, aesthetics, and governance. While contemporary educational policies such as the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasize revitalizing Sanskrit, the study highlights the need for inclusive, interdisciplinary, and technology-integrated pedagogical approaches to ensure its meaningful integration into modern education. The research concludes that Sanskrit remains a valuable intellectual resource capable of enriching contemporary academic discourse when approached critically and inclusively.

Keywords: *Sanskrit Language, Indian Knowledge System (IKS), Knowledge Transmission, NEP 2020, Holistic Education.*

1.1 Introduction:

Sanskrit, one of the most ancient languages of India, has historically served as a major medium for the transmission of knowledge. Within the Indian Knowledge System, Sanskrit functioned as the linguistic foundation for religious scriptures, philosophical treatises, scientific works, and literary masterpieces. Texts such as the Vedas, Upaniṣads, Ramayana, Mahabharata, and classical works like Abhijñānaśākuntalam and Meghadūta illustrate the intellectual richness embedded in Sanskrit literature.

Beyond religious texts, Sanskrit enabled systematic developments in disciplines such as mathematics (Gaṇita), astronomy (Jyotiṣa), medicine (Āyurveda), grammar (Vyākaraṇa), architecture (Vāstu), and

aesthetics (Nāṭyaśāstra). However, over the centuries, the decline in its functional use has raised concerns regarding the preservation of India's classical intellectual heritage.

Recognizing its importance, the National Education Policy (2020) underscores the revitalization of Sanskrit education and recommends its integration into contemporary curricula. The policy emphasizes the need to bridge traditional knowledge with modern educational practices to ensure accessibility and relevance.

1.2 Objectives of the Study:

The objective of this study is given below:

1. To examine the contribution of Sanskrit to various branches of traditional Indian knowledge.

2. To critically analyze its integration into modern educational frameworks.

1.3 Methodology of the Study:

The study adopts a qualitative, descriptive, and analytical research design. Documentary analysis was employed as the principal method. Primary and secondary sources, including translations of Sanskrit texts and academic publications related to Indian Knowledge Systems, were analyzed to interpret the intellectual and pedagogical significance of Sanskrit.

1.4 Review of the Related Literature:

Goyal and Gupta (2025) emphasized Sanskrit as a medium through which vast intellectual, spiritual, and scientific traditions were transmitted across generations. Their study highlights the continuity of knowledge embedded in Vedic and classical literature.

Majhi (2024) examined the influence of Sanskrit literature in shaping the Indian Knowledge System, particularly in philosophy, arts, and sciences. The study underscores Sanskrit's foundational role in civilizational development.

Other scholars have highlighted Sanskrit's contribution to cultural identity (Narasimhan, 2017), preservation of heritage (Das, 2024), and its educational relevance (Gopal Krishna, 2014; Mishra, 2018; Mishra, 2023). Collectively, these studies affirm the intellectual depth of Sanskrit while also recognizing the need for modernization in pedagogy.

1.5 Findings and Discussions:

The current study emphasizes the intricate and dynamic role of Sanskrit within the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) and provides a critical assessment of its incorporation into contemporary educational structures. The discourse highlights both the opportunities and limitations of establishing Sanskrit as a fundamental element for modern knowledge development. Sanskrit as an Intellectual Foundation of the Indian Knowledge System has historically functioned as the linguistic vehicle for India's classical sciences, which encompass philosophy (Darśana), mathematics (Gaṇita), astronomy (Jyotiṣa), medicine (Āyurveda), architecture (Vāstu), grammar (Vyākaraṇa), and aesthetics (Sāhitya and Nāṭyaśāstra). The study reaffirms that its highly organized grammar and semantic accuracy made it a powerful instrument for the preservation and transmission of knowledge. Nevertheless, the discussion also highlights the inclination in contemporary scholarship to idealize this role. While Sanskrit indeed embodies a rich intellectual legacy, access to these texts was traditionally restricted to certain social classes.

- **Sanskrit as the Intellectual Foundation of IKS:** Sanskrit historically functioned as the structured linguistic vehicle of India's classical sciences. Its systematic grammar, particularly Pāṇini's Aṣṭādhyāyī, demonstrates remarkable precision comparable to modern formal linguistic systems. However, access to Sanskrit education was historically restricted, which necessitates inclusive reforms in contemporary contexts.

- **Challenges in Modern Integration:** Several structural barriers impede Sanskrit's integration into mainstream education:

  - Perception of Sanskrit as a ritualistic language

  - Outdated grammar-centric curricula

  - Shortage of trained interdisciplinary educators

  - Limited digital pedagogical tools

Without innovation, Sanskrit risks remaining peripheral in contemporary academic discourse.

i. **Interdisciplinary and Applied Opportunities:** Sanskrit's structured linguistic system offers potential applications in computational linguistics, artificial intelligence, logic, and cognitive science. Ancient texts addressing environmental ethics, holistic health, and sustainable living can be critically reinterpreted to contribute to modern knowledge frameworks. Moreover, integrating Sanskrit texts into modern contexts—such as environmental ethics, holistic wellness, psychology (including Yogic and Ayurvedic models), and sustainable living—can forge a connection between ancient wisdom and current scientific exploration. This methodology not only enhances learners' conceptual frameworks but also aids in the reinterpretation of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) through critical, evidence-based perspectives.

ii. **Cultural Identity and Decolonization:** The revival of Sanskrit is often linked to cultural identity and decolonization. However, its integration must remain academic rather than ideological. Critical engagement, evidence-based interpretation, and scholarly rigour are essential to avoid romanticisation. Nonetheless, the potential for ideological appropriation persists. To maintain objectivity, Sanskrit education must uphold scholarly standards, promote critical examination, and refrain from uncritical veneration of ancient texts. A well-balanced integration can foster cultural rootedness while enhancing global academic competitiveness.

iii. **Technology-Enhanced Pedagogy:** Modern Sanskrit education should adopt:

  - Competency-based learning

  - Digital corpora and manuscript digitization

  - Interactive e-learning platforms

  - Interdisciplinary course design

Technology can democratize access and ensure relevance in contemporary academic environments. Technology presents new opportunities—such as digital corpora, e-learning platforms, manuscript digitization, and interactive tools—to render Sanskrit education more accessible.

2.6 Conclusion:

The study confirms that Sanskrit functioned as a unifying intellectual force across diverse branches of traditional Indian knowledge. Its grammatical sophistication, semantic precision, and philosophical depth

facilitated cumulative knowledge development in medicine, astronomy, mathematics, aesthetics, governance, and ethics.

Works such as the Aṣṭādhyāyī, Charaka Saṃhitā, Sūrya Siddhānta, Nāṭyaśāstra, and Arthaśāstra demonstrate the interdisciplinary richness of Sanskrit scholarship.

The examination of Sanskrit's contribution to the diverse branches of traditional Indian knowledge demonstrates that the language served as a unifying intellectual force across multiple disciplines. Far beyond functioning as a medium of communication, Sanskrit emerged as the structural backbone of India's classical knowledge systems. Its highly refined grammatical framework, philosophical depth, and semantic precision enabled the systematic development of fields such as Ayurveda, astronomy, mathematics, linguistics, governance, logic, philosophy, literature, music, and architecture.

Sanskrit's contribution extends beyond theoretical discourse into practical domains of science and socio-cultural organization. Therefore, its thoughtful and critical integration into modern education can enrich contemporary academic disciplines. Rather than being treated as a relic of the past, Sanskrit should be positioned as a dynamic intellectual resource for holistic and multidisciplinary development.

In conclusion, Sanskrit's contribution to traditional Indian knowledge is vast, foundational, and enduring. Understanding these contributions highlights the extraordinary sophistication of India's intellectual heritage and offers modern scholarship valuable insights into indigenous methods of inquiry. Recognizing Sanskrit's historical role also strengthens the case for its thoughtful integration into contemporary education—not as a relic of the past, but as a living resource capable of enriching modern academic disciplines.

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