

Reviving Sanskrit: NEP's Role in India's Heritage

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Abstract: The New Education Policy (NEP) 2020, introduced by the Government of India, signifies a transformative shift in the nation's approach to education. One of its most remarkable features is the renewed emphasis on classical languages, particularly Sanskrit. Sanskrit, revered as the mother of many Indian languages and the repository of ancient Indian wisdom, has long been marginalized in mainstream education. The NEP seeks to rectify this imbalance by promoting Sanskrit as a language of not just historical or literary importance but also of contemporary relevance. This paper critically examines how NEP 2020 integrates Sanskrit within the larger framework of educational reform by enabling access to ancient knowledge systems, encouraging multidisciplinary studies, fostering research, and ensuring linguistic diversity. The policy aims to make Sanskrit accessible across educational levels through curriculum reform, teacher training, digital integration, and incentivized research. Despite challenges such as lack of modern pedagogical tools and limited faculty, the NEP opens new avenues for the language's revitalization. By positioning Sanskrit as an intellectual and cultural bridge between India's past and future, the policy presents an opportunity to reshape the educational landscape with deeper cultural rootedness.

Keywords: New Education Policy 2020, Sanskrit Education, Classical Languages, Indian Knowledge Systems, Language Policy, Multidisciplinary Learning, Digital Sanskrit, Teacher Training, Cultural Heritage.

Introduction

Sanskrit, often hailed as the *Devabhāṣā* (language of the gods), holds an unparalleled position in the cultural, spiritual, and intellectual history of India. Its literature encompasses the Vedas, the Upanishads, the epics, the Puranas, treatises on Ayurveda, astronomy, mathematics, linguistics, politics, and more. However, in post-colonial India, the decline of Sanskrit education has been a concern for educators, linguists, and cultural scholars alike. The New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 brings fresh hope by acknowledging the foundational role Sanskrit can play in reconnecting students with their heritage while promoting modern, inclusive, and holistic education.

This article explores the NEP's strategy for reviving Sanskrit, its incorporation across various stages of education, and the prospects it offers for integrating ancient Indian knowledge systems into contemporary academic discourse.

Sanskrit and NEP 2020: Vision and Framework

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 lays out a transformative vision for Indian education, aiming to create a student-centric, flexible, and holistic learning environment that respects India's rich linguistic, cultural, and intellectual heritage. Within this framework, **Sanskrit** holds a position of central importance, reflecting its integral role in India's knowledge systems, values, and traditions.

- **Sanskrit for All Levels:** NEP 2020 advocates for Sanskrit to be available at every level of education—from foundational school years to university-level studies—not merely as an optional subject, but as a mainstream language of learning. The policy encourages a shift away from rote learning to a fun, engaging, and application-based approach to Sanskrit. It seeks to revitalize the language by making it relevant and accessible, emphasizing that Sanskrit can be taught not just through texts, but also through everyday conversation, songs, and interactive tools that resonate with modern learners.
- **Three-Language Formula:** The policy promotes linguistic flexibility through the three-language formula, wherein students can choose Sanskrit as one of the three languages, along with regional and/or international languages. This inclusion ensures the preservation and promotion of classical languages without enforcing rigid impositions. Sanskrit thus becomes a viable and attractive option for language learning, enabling cultural continuity alongside multilingual competence.
- **Integration with Modern Pedagogy:** Recognizing the need for innovation in teaching methods, NEP 2020 recommends the creation of high-quality Sanskrit learning materials that blend traditional knowledge—like Vyākaraṇa (grammar), Sāhitya (literature), and Darśana (philosophy)—with modern pedagogical tools. This includes digital platforms, story-based learning, and conversational Sanskrit, ensuring that the language remains vibrant, relevant, and intellectually enriching in the 21st century.

Promoting Sanskrit through Multidisciplinary Learning

NEP 2020's emphasis on multidisciplinary and liberal education opens new pathways for Sanskrit:

- **Access to Knowledge Systems:** Sanskrit is the key to a treasure trove of texts in diverse disciplines—logic, medicine (*Ayurveda*), architecture (*Vāstu*), political science (*Arthaśāstra*), and environmental studies. A student trained in Sanskrit gains direct access to these texts in their original form, leading to a more nuanced understanding.
- **Classical Languages and New Universities:** NEP encourages the

establishment of institutions focused on classical studies, such as Indian Institutes for Classical Languages. These institutions are tasked with nurturing research and teaching in Sanskrit and other classical languages like Pali, Prakrit, and Tamil.

- **National Institute for Pali, Persian, and Prakrit:** In a bid to support classical languages, the NEP envisions national institutes that would promote Sanskrit alongside other traditional Indian languages, enhancing interdisciplinary research and cultural studies.

Reviving Sanskrit in Higher Education and Research

In higher education, the NEP suggests major reforms that support Sanskrit:

- **Dedicated Departments and Research Centers:** Existing universities are encouraged to strengthen their Sanskrit departments and create research centers focusing on classical Indian knowledge systems.
- **Translation and Publication Projects:** The policy recommends large-scale translation of classical Sanskrit texts into regional and international languages, and vice versa, to encourage accessibility and global engagement.
- **Doctoral and Postdoctoral Opportunities:** NEP advocates the expansion of funding and fellowships in the field of Sanskrit, promoting deeper academic research on Vedic literature, Indian philosophy, and grammar.

Technology and Sanskrit Education

To reach a broader audience and make Sanskrit learning inclusive, the NEP stresses the use of digital technologies:

- **E-Learning Platforms:** Sanskrit courses are to be developed for platforms like SWAYAM, DIKSHA, and other MOOCs. These will include beginner to advanced levels of spoken and literary Sanskrit, often with interactive features.
- **Digital Libraries:** Ancient manuscripts in Sanskrit, preserved in museums and private collections, are being digitized and made available to researchers worldwide. Institutions like the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute and IGNCA are already contributing.
- **AI and Linguistic Tools:** Intelligence (AI) and Natural Language Processing (NLP) are being used to create Sanskrit dictionaries, translation tools, and voice recognition apps that can help in learning and translating Sanskrit texts.

Teacher Training and Pedagogical Reforms

One of the most critical aspects of the NEP's Sanskrit revival plan is teacher development:

- **Training in Modern Teaching Methods:** NEP promotes teacher

training that blends traditional Sanskrit scholarship with modern methodologies, including audio-visual aids, activity-based learning, and technology-assisted teaching.

- **Incentivizing Sanskrit Scholars:** Grants and scholarships are being offered to motivate students and researchers to pursue Sanskrit as a career path, which will ultimately address the shortage of qualified teachers.

Challenges to Implementation

Despite its ambitious framework, the NEP's Sanskrit roadmap faces practical hurdles:

- **Shortage of Qualified Teachers:** There is a dearth of trained Sanskrit educators proficient in both classical and modern teaching techniques.
- **Resistance to Language Policy:** The three-language policy has faced criticism from some states on grounds of linguistic imposition. Promoting Sanskrit in such regions requires careful, inclusive planning.
- **Curriculum Development Lag:** Creating engaging and standardized Sanskrit textbooks and resources aligned with NEP goals is a time-consuming process and requires collaboration among linguists, scholars, and technologists.

Opportunities and Future Prospects

While challenges persist, the potential of NEP 2020 in reviving Sanskrit is immense:

- **Global Interest in Sanskrit:** International universities have shown growing interest in Sanskrit studies, from Harvard to Heidelberg. A strong NEP-backed Sanskrit education system can position India as a global leader in Indology and comparative philosophy.
- **Career Prospects in Sanskrit:** New career opportunities are opening up in translation, archival research, yoga and Ayurveda instruction, tourism, and cultural diplomacy where Sanskrit knowledge is valued.
- **Promoting Unity in Diversity:** Sanskrit, as a pan-Indian classical language, has the potential to foster national integration and appreciation for India's pluralistic traditions.

Conclusion

The New Education Policy 2020 emerges as a progressive blueprint with the capacity to reintegrate Sanskrit into the Indian education system with renewed vigor. By embedding Sanskrit within school curricula, encouraging its adoption in higher education, leveraging technology, and pro-

moting scholarly research, the NEP endeavors to bridge India's classical legacy with contemporary knowledge needs. Sanskrit's revival is not merely an act of cultural preservation—it is an investment in intellectual diversity, holistic learning, and national identity. If implemented with care, inclusivity, and academic rigor, the NEP can pave the way for a Sanskrit renaissance, benefitting not just India but the global academic community.

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