

Rediscovering Ancient India: Sanskrit As a Pathway To India's Timeless Wisdom

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Abstract

India possesses one of the most extensive linguistic diversities globally. Despite not being widely used today, ancient Sanskrit provides a live link to India's enormous traditional knowledge base. This paper examines the difficulties caused by language loss, the ways in which Sanskrit ties contemporary India to its ancient customs, and the limitations of translation in capturing the richness of the source ideas. It also explores at how the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and other institutional and state-level efforts might help protect endangered languages like Sanskrit. As part of a larger initiative to preserve intellectual diversity and cultural continuity, this paper also explores the role that politics play in protecting not just Sanskrit but also India's endangered languages. It is not just a language; it is the key that unlocks the treasure chest of India's ancient wisdom. For thousands of years the saints, scholars and thinkers used this language to put and record their ideas in the field of philosophy, mathematics, medicine, astronomy, literature and governance. The loss of Sanskrit or its weakening in education risks breaking the bridge to this vast heritage. In absence of Sanskrit, a significant portion of the knowledge would have been lost, misinterpreted or fragmented into incomplete portions. By combining qualitative research by academic studies, institutional reports and policy documents, this study offers a comprehensive perspective and understanding on how Sanskrit's preservation is essential for sustaining India's timeless dialogue between past, present, and future.

Keywords: Sanskrit Language, Indian Knowledge systems, Endangered language, Panini's grammar, National Education Policy-2020

1. Introduction

India's diversity is a fundamental and unique part of its civilisational legacy, and Sanskrit holds a special and unique place as the main language used to preserve and circulate ancient scientific, philosophical, and cultural knowledge. It is also known as Devavani means the "language of the gods," Sanskrit functioned as an intellectual link across many areas, fields, and eras. Sanskrit has long been a language of invention, study, inquiry, and expression, from the hymns of the Veda and the Upanishads to Panini's complex grammatical system and Aryabhata's astronomical treasure. However, at present the lack of ability to understand Sanskrit has made it difficult to access, understand, and protect large amounts of ancient knowledge. The depletion of India's linguistic wealth is not limited to Sanskrit language only, there are so many languages which already get extinct or are endangered. This disappearance eliminates distinctive cultural understandings, communal identities as well as local knowledge systems, and reducing linguistic communication. Sanskrit's urgent preservation is therefore linked to larger initiatives to save

endangered languages and the intellectual as well as cultural ecology they support. Different policy measures such as the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 have reopened the gate to possibilities for reviving Sanskrit through curriculum integration, teacher training, digital tools, and interdisciplinary research. The purpose of this paper is to evaluate the risk associated with Sanskrit decline and offer workable solutions to restore it as a living, functional language at present.

2. Objectives

- To highlight the importance of Sanskrit as the primary medium for preserving India's ancient philosophical, scientific, and cultural knowledge.
- To explore how education policies and initiatives help to promote and revive Sanskrit in addition to other regional and tribal languages.
- To examine the current threats to India's ancient knowledge in absence of Sanskrit.
- To propose strategic recommendations for revitalizing Sanskrit as a language to safeguard India's ancient knowledge systems in contemporary contexts.

3. Scope & Methodology

This study explores the current status, historical necessity, and future aspects of India's linguistic heritage. The major focus of the study is the ancient Indian language that is Sanskrit. It studies the two interlinking aspects, that are the decline of ancient Indian language and role of Sanskrit in identifying the real Indian knowledge. The paper follows the qualitative and descriptive research approach. It focuses more on collecting, analyzing, and interpreting information collected from the authentic sources such as Academic research papers, government policy documents (especially the National Education Policy 2020), reports from the People's Linguistic Survey of India (PLSI), and books; which helps in understanding the role of Sanskrit in India's ancient knowledge system and the broader issue of endangered languages. The study of Institutional reports, educational programs, and government attempts is done to assess efforts for endangered languages and Sanskrit.

4. Review of Related Literature

Pallock (2002) study the working papers on sanskrit knowledge system on the eve of colonialism. The study focuses on major goals to create a digital archive of manuscript in eight traditional subjects, to build a database of scholars and analyze text using a common framework. It shows the different role of knowledge that was produced to develop the society in better way. He suggested to understand the Indian intellectual history, we need to study the real strengths and creativity of Sanskrit scholars before the colonial period.

Kaviraj (2005) in his study 'The sudden death of Sanskrit knowledge' investigates how the dominant scholarly language of India rapidly lost its position in the intellectual sphere during the modern period. The study focuses the British education policies which prioritize English as the main medium for studies and which leads to sidelining Sanskrit-based education. The collapse of Sanskrit directly disrupts the Indian knowledge and its different fields. The paper suggests vital modern attempts to revive Sanskrit by providing importance to it at different stages.

Sharma (2013) investigate education system in ancient Sanskrit literature. She focuses on the ancient education setting and explains that the gurukul, guru and shishyas(students) were the major elements of this system. The curriculum comprises of different disciplines like Vedas, grammar, philosophy, and ritual sciences and were taught structured, and passed down through strict oral methods. The study examines the role of caste, family, and religious institutions in influencing access to education and shows that the main motive of education was all over development of students.

Yadav (2023) examine the importance of Sanskrit mantras and ancient Indian knowledge system in sustainable development. She explains how Sanskrit mantras reflect a worldview emphasizing harmony between human and natural surroundings. The practices related to nature around fire, air, water and cosmic rhythms reinforce sustainability values thousands of years ago. Modern study also suggest that chanting mantras can reduce stress, lower blood pressure and enhance memory.

Majhi (2024) explores the significance of Sanskrit literature in shaping of Indian knowledge system. He explains the foundational role of Sanskrit literature as the center of development of India's intellectual traditions. The study tracks the historical transformation of Sanskrit literature integrates drama, music and aesthetics as mode of spiritual expression and not entertainment.

5. Results and Discussion

5.1. Endangered Tongues of India: A Call for Action

The range of languages of India is fastly dwindling. The People's Linguistic Survey of India (PLSI) shows that the number of renowned languages which were recognized as "mother tongues" dropped drastically—from 1,652 in the year 1961 to just 780 by 2010 means with over 220 languages having disappeared during that time period (Soman, 2013). Many experts says that in every 15 days one language get disappeared in the world. When there is a loss of language that does not means that there is a loss of words, it shows that cultural understanding, local histories, health customs, environmental awareness, and identity are all lost as well. Extreme pressures are put on smaller communities, notably those that have historically been excluded. Speaking their native tongue became undesirable for many as a result of wider discrimination. Through the creation of community-driven dictionaries and revival campaigns, activists such as Deepa Pawar are dedicating their lives to reviving these endangered languages.

5.2. Sanskrit the language of knowledge

The language Sanskrit is also addressed as 'Devavani' means the language of gods. From detailed instructions for surgery to the hymns about the universe, it was the vehicle that carried and connected knowledge across India's different areas and over generations. It was the vital medium that scholars used to record, discuss and pass on ideas across many subjects – religion, philosophy, law, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, art, and politics.

From Vedas to Upanishads, from Panini's grammar to Aryabhata's astronomy, Sanskrit has been the main medium of intellectual and spiritual expression in India. Sanskrit is the language where words are formed using clear rules; every sound, letter and change has a reason. Its pronunciation is exact as written with no silent letters, no guess work. Around 2,500 years ago, the philologist Panini wrote Ashtadhyayi, a grammar book so precisely that even today's computer scientist admire it as –almost like a programming language(Kulkarni, 2019). Many

Sanskrit words like *Om* creates vibrations that calms the mind and affect breathing if pronounced in the right way. It is also said that many mantras mainly produce sound frequency that helps in relaxing the mind like ‘Om’ for produce sound at a frequency similar to 432 Hz, aligning with natural vibrations of the universe(Thakur, 2025). It worked as the link language across regions, kings, scholars and travelers regardless of the mother tongue. It is the source to many other languages and even some foreign languages, for example the English word Sugar came from the Sanskrit word *Sarkara*.

5.3. Sanskrit’s Decline and the Collapse of the Knowledge Bridge

Many words in Sanskrit do not provide exact meaning when translated in English or other languages for instance *Dharam*, *karma*, *moksha*, and many more has no English equivalents. Manytimes when the Sanskrit word is translated in the other language it simplifies or distort the original meaning of the words. *Guru* is said as teacher in English which means the person who teaches but in Sanskrit *guru* is not just a person who teach any subject, according to Advaya Taraka Upnishad (verse 16) the word ‘*gu*’ means Darkness and ‘*Ru*’ means remover so “*guru*” means the person who remove darkness and bring light of knowledge. It is observed numerous times that when an ancient text is translated from Sanskrit to other language it lost its real meaning and sometimes misunderstood. One more example could be of the word *Dharma* which simply means “religion” but it carries a complex and a unique meaning which includes duty, moral and universal laws. Through the spread of Sanskrit, India's cultural significance is now felt beyond Southeast Asia. For instance, three thousand Sanskrit-derived phrases used in Cambodia are presented in a book called "Common Sanskrit Loanwords in the Modern Khmer Language," which shows to centuries of cross-cultural exchange and ancestral connection. This intercultural connection reflects Sanskrit's significance as more than just a national asset but it additionally fosters intercultural communication and worldwide cultural interrelationships.

5.4. Education and Policy: Instruments of Preservation

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 provide a unique space to regional, local and ancient languages of India which are endangered. Both mother-tongue instruction and the incorporation of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) into regular classroom learning are supported under NEP 2020. Smaller languages are protected and learning is made easier. NEP promotes three language formula where at least two Indian languages and a third, which might be foreign or Sanskrit should be studied by any student. But here, no language is mandated, it is totally dependent on the interest of the student and the choice of the institutions. NEP offers courses related to Indian knowledge system at the higher education level, permitting students to earn study credits in ancient Indian philosophy, science, and the arts. Initiatives for educator preparation have begun and UGC standards motivate students to earn 5% of their credits through IKS.

Several state-level policies & institutional initiatives are also introduced by the government of nation to promote the use of language at several levels: Maharashtra's Kavikulguru Kalidas Sanskrit University (KKSU) recently purchased additional infrastructure with an aim to expand RUSA (Rastriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan) for ₹120 crore. Bihar also aims to elevate one Sanskrit school every district to the status of "model schools" in order to raise facilities and instructional standards. With the use of qualified teachers

and artificial intelligence (AI) technologies, Uttarakhand established "model Sanskrit villages" in each district, integrating Sanskrit into everyday life, education, public signs, and community initiatives. CM Yogi Adityanath promoted the usage of Sanskrit in homes, schools, and communities during Sanskrit Week, portraying it as a living language that is pertinent to contemporary disciplines like linguistics, science, and yoga. The Bharatiya Bhasha Anubhag is the entry point for Indian languages in government and education in India; it advocates for resources, provides translation infrastructure, and gives NEP objectives first priority.

Various digital Language Tools are also introduced to assist multilingual e-governance and digital inclusion, which also helps in exploring how Sanskrit grammar, such as Panini's rules and roots, might be used to enable root extraction and language interoperability; such as 'SanskritShala' is a web-based neural natural language processing application for Sanskrit that can do word-embedding models, dependency parsing, and morphological tagging. With the potential for digital engagement with the language, it is used for annotation as well as pedagogical reasons. Additionally, some excellent ways of protecting endangered languages are the endeavours to rejuvenate and popularise it.

Well-educated teachers: To indulge students in understanding of the linguistic diversity of the nation and understanding the ancient language the most important aspect is the availability of well-educated teachers. The teachers who have ample knowledge in their field and have good pedagogical skills to deliver that knowledge to the students.

Specialised Institutions: Language presence could be strengthened by culturally rooted institutions like Sanskrit universities and model schools. Integration into Education: Including integration into curriculum designs promotes exposure and eases the transfer of knowledge between generations.

Technological Advantage: Sanskrit's adoption of NLP (National language processing) models suggests the possibility for other languages; technologies like digital vocabularies or learning applications expand access.

Policy Support: Bharatiya Bhasha Anubhag and other national organisations highlight how central policy may support the creation of resources and translation services.

5.5. Some strategic recommendations for revitalizing Sanskrit

- **Education & Curriculum Integration**

Curriculum should introduce Sanskrit as the compulsory language mainly at the school level which could help in developing the base of students. At the level of university there should be availability of skill-based courses in Sanskrit else there should be availability of short-term Sanskrit courses for free. Policies must promote Establishment of Sanskrit medium schools and special Sanskrit resource centers across states.

- **Digital Preservation & Technology**

In this time of digital advancement, Development of bilingual digital archives of ancient Sanskrit manuscripts with open access must be promoted. Different mobile applications, games and e-learning platforms must be developed to promote Sanskrit education in the nation.

- **Research & Interdisciplinary Studies**

Various research must be conducted and promoted in the field of Sanskrit which develops the understanding of present by keeping the awareness of Indian knowledge system with it. Promotion of Sanskrit-based research fellowships for young scholars and scientists will really help in developing the understanding.

- **Media, Culture & Popularization**

Social media plays an important role in creating awareness among people in today's world; Launching television programs, podcasts, and Organizing Sanskrit drama, poetry, and storytelling festivals to attract youth could normalize its use in casual conversation.

- **Policy & Institutional Support**

Government must develop and encourage the policies that incentivize Sanskrit learning in both rural and urban areas that help in recognizing Sanskrit as a heritage and functional language in administration, tourism, and cultural diplomacy.

- **Community Engagement & Grassroots Movements**

Seminars and workshops must be organized for the locals to develop their basic understanding of Sanskrit and awareness of vital place Sanskrit language is holding.

6. Findings

The study uncovers a crucial situation regarding India's linguistic diversity. The People's Linguistic Survey of India (PLSI) indicates that the number of recognized "mother tongues" fell drastically—from 1,652 in 1961 to only 780 by 2010. Global estimates also warn that one language vanishes every 15 days. Such decline is not only about the loss of vocabulary but also about the disappearing cultural knowledge, local histories, health, customs, environmental knowledge, and holistic identity. Finding pointed that there is a vital role of Sanskrit in India's intellectual and spiritual life. Sanskrit, also called Devavani (language of the gods), served as the building stone of knowledge systems from centuries. It carried hymns about the universe, detailed surgical instructions, philosophical discourses, and mathematical concepts. Scholars like Panini, through his Ashtadhyayi, developed a scientific grammar 2,500 years ago so precise that modern computer scientists see it as a forerunner to programming languages. The study also notes that Sanskrit pronunciation is exact, with no silent letters, making it uniquely logical and systematic.

However, the depletion of Sanskrit mirrors the broad issue of language erosion. The study also highlights that translation from Sanskrit to English or other languages often reduces the depth of meaning. Concepts like dharma, karma, or moksha have no exact equivalents, and words like guru lose their essence when translated merely as "teacher." In conclusion, the findings underline concerns that disappearance of regional tongues and the diminishing role of Sanskrit is a crucial issue that should be

resolved at earliest. All together, these issues require a call for immediate action to preserve, revive, and reintegrate India's linguistic treasures before it fades further into silence.

7. Limitations and Research Gaps

- The study is heavily based on secondary data that includes reports (like the PLSI) and published literature. It does not include extensive primary fieldwork and first-hand insights.

- The paper majorly focuses on Sanskrit, but there is a broad scope in depth of analysis on other individual languages or communities.
- There are many texts available to show Sanskrit's historical role, research is lacking on how it can be adapted meaningfully into modern education, technology, and intercultural communication.
- There is limited study on how globalization, digital platforms, and migration are accelerating even in some cases, helping to revive endangered languages in India.
- While India has language preservation policies, very few studies critically evaluate their real impact at the community level.
- Interdisciplinary Approaches is required that connects linguistics with psychology, anthropology, environmental studies, digital humanities, and other such disciplines to fully capture the loss and potential revival of languages.

8. Conclusion

Sanskrit is the language which works as the thread to tie India's deep intellectual and cultural roots to its' present. Without it the larger area of Indian knowledge would remain inaccessible and misunderstood. Several words like dharma, karma, guru, etc. carries a unique meaning that cannot be fully translated to other languages, which shows that direct engagement with this language is necessary. The NEP 2020, along with several state programs and digital initiatives promote strong teacher training, modern technology and community participation which could lead to sustainable and practical language preservation. India must ensure that Sanskrit remains a live link to its ancient wisdom while also protecting the numerous other languages that collectively constituted the country's cultural soul. Prevention of Sanskrit is the protection of India's timeless dialogue between the past, present and future, is not just about saving words; it is about safeguarding a repository of scientific, cultural, and philosophical wisdom that continues to shape India's identity.

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