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The Role of Hindi as a Catalyst for Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS): A Socio-Linguistic and Pedagogical Perspective

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Abstract

The promulgation of the **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020** has catalyzed a structural reintegration of **Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS)** into mainstream academia, seeking to bridge the gap between traditional wisdom and modern scientific discourse. While the foundational tenets of IKS—ranging from advanced mathematics and linguistics to holistic medicine and governance—are predominantly preserved in classical Sanskrit, the pragmatic dissemination of this knowledge faces significant linguistic barriers in a contemporary context. This paper investigates the strategic role of **Hindi** as a critical socio-linguistic bridge and interpretive catalyst. The findings suggest that Hindi serves as an indispensable tool for the democratization of knowledge, transforming IKS from an elite, archival subject into a living, functional discourse. By serving as a linguistic mediator, Hindi not only preserves the ontological essence of Indian heritage but also prepares it for global engagement. The paper concludes by proposing a bilingual framework for IKS scholarship to ensure local relevance and international visibility.

Keywords

- **Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS):** The core subject of the paper.
- **National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020):** The policy framework driving the integration.
- **Hindi Literature:** The specific linguistic field of study.
- **Socio-linguistics:** To reflect the study of language in relation to social factors and heritage.

Introduction

The intellectual landscape of India is currently witnessing a profound transformation, characterized by a renewed emphasis on decolonizing the academic mind and reclaiming indigenous heritage. At the heart of this movement is the ****Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS)****, a comprehensive umbrella term encompassing the vast scientific, philosophical, artistic, and administrative wisdom that has flourished on the subcontinent for millennia.

While this heritage was systematically marginalized during the colonial era, the ****National Education Policy (NEP) 2020**** has provided a formal institutional mandate to reintegrate IKS into the modern educational framework. However, the successful implementation of this vision hinges on a critical, yet often overlooked, factor: the linguistic medium of dissemination.

Historically, the most sophisticated treatises of IKS—ranging from the mathematical insights of the ***Sulba Sutras*** to the medical precision of ***Sushruta Samhita***—were composed in ****Sanskrit****. While Sanskrit remains the “language of the gods” and the ultimate source of these systems, its accessibility is restricted to a specialized group of scholars in the modern era. This creates a “knowledge silo” where profound insights remain trapped in classical scripts, inaccessible to the contemporary student and the common citizen. This is where ****Hindi****, in its various historical and modern forms, emerges as a vital functional catalyst. Hindi does not merely act as a secondary language of translation; it functions as a ****linguistic conduit**** that preserves the phonetic and conceptual essence of Sanskrit while providing the structural flexibility required for modern academic discourse.



The role of Hindi in the democratization of IKS is deeply rooted in the **Bhakti Movement**. During this era, saint-poets like Tulsidas, Kabir, and Surdas performed a revolutionary act of “intellectual translation.” They took complex metaphysical truths—previously the domain of the elite—and reframed them into the **Lok Bhasha** (language of the people) through dialects like Awadhi and Braj Bhasha. This transition ensured that the core ethical and sociological frameworks of IKS survived through centuries of social and political upheaval. In the current context, this tradition of accessibility continues as Hindi facilitates the transition of IKS from archival curiosity to classroom reality.

Furthermore, the integration of IKS under NEP 2020 demands a pedagogy that is both culturally rooted and scientifically rigorous. Hindi’s shared vocabulary with Sanskrit (**Tatsama** words) allows it to carry technical terms—such as **Prana**, **Dharma**, **Nyaya**, and **Shakti**—without the “semantic thinning” that often occurs when these terms are translated into English. By utilizing Hindi as a medium of instruction, educators can bridge the cognitive gap for millions of students, allowing them to engage with indigenous mathematics, linguistics, and environmental ethics in a language that resonates with their lived reality. This study underscores Hindi’s role as an indispensable bridge in the journey toward a truly indigenous and inclusive educational paradigm.

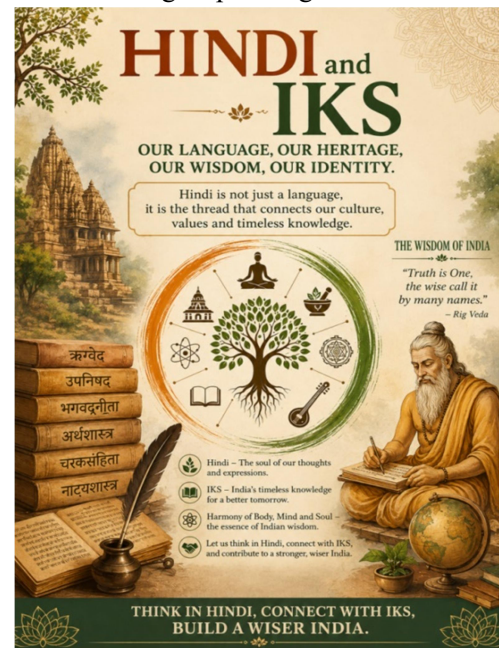
1. Hindi as a Bridge Between Classical and Vernacular Scholarship

The structural and functional relationship between Sanskrit and Hindi is perhaps the most critical factor in the modern survival of **Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS)**. Historically, the foundational pillars of IKS—the four Vedas, the philosophical depth of the Upanishads, and the scientific treatises of **Ayurveda** (medicine), **Arthashastra** (economics/governance), and **Vastushastra** (architecture)—were encoded in classical Sanskrit. While this ensured a high degree of precision and preservation, it also created a significant linguistic barrier as society evolved. Over time, Sanskrit transitioned into a language of the scholarly elite, leaving a vast cognitive gap between the repository of knowledge and the common citizen. Hindi has emerged as the primary linguistic bridge, facilitating a seamless transition of this knowledge from the “classical” to the “vernacular.”

1.1 Translation, Commentary, and ‘Bhashya’ Traditions

The democratization of IKS has been made possible largely through the extensive tradition of **Bhashyas** (commentaries) and translations in Hindi. The process of translating a Sanskrit treatise is not merely a linguistic substitution; it is a hermeneutic act of making complex philosophical and scientific ideas accessible to a broader audience. Major research institutions and scholars have utilized Hindi to decode the cryptic **Sutras** of ancient texts into a discourse that resonates with contemporary understanding.

For instance, the intricate psychological insights of the **Patanjali Yoga Sutras** or the ethical complexities of the **Manusmriti** are widely studied today through Hindi interpretations. These Hindi commentaries serve a dual purpose: they preserve the sanctity of the original Sanskrit text while providing the necessary sociocultural context for a modern reader. This allows IKS to move beyond the confines of specialized research centers and into the public sphere, fulfilling the NEP 2020 mandate of making traditional knowledge a part of general awareness.



1.2 Terminology and ‘Tatsama’ Continuity

The efficacy of Hindi as a bridge is further strengthened by its linguistic proximity to Sanskrit. Hindi retains a high percentage of **Tatsama** vocabulary—words borrowed directly from Sanskrit without phonetic alteration. This is a crucial advantage when dealing with technical IKS terminology.

In many Western languages, translating terms like *Dharma*, *Prakriti*, *Guna*, or *Rasa* often leads to “semantic thinning,” where the original philosophical depth is lost in favor of an approximate equivalent (e.g., translating *Dharma* simply as “religion”).

In contrast, Hindi utilizes these terms in their original form. A Hindi speaker discussing *Ayurveda* naturally uses terms like *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha* without needing a translation, as these words are already part of the linguistic ecosystem. This continuity allows Hindi to carry technical IKS concepts into modern academic and public discourse without losing their original conceptual nuances. Consequently, Hindi acts as a “preservative” for the intellectual rigor of IKS, ensuring that as we modernize these systems, we do not dilute the profound logic that defines them. By serving as this linguistic conduit, Hindi ensures that the ancient wisdom of the *Rishis* remains a living, breathing reality for the 21st-century learner.

2. Historical Context: From Sanskrit to Khari Boli

The evolution of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) is not merely a history of ideas, but a history of linguistic democratization. For centuries, the Shastras—the formal, authoritative texts on science, law, and philosophy—were the exclusive domain of Sanskrit. This “Language of the Gods” provided a rigorous structure for preserving knowledge but simultaneously restricted its flow to a specialized scholarly class. The transition from these formal texts to the Lok Bhasha (the language of the people) represents a pivotal shift where IKS moved from the palm-leaf manuscripts of the elite to the daily lives of the masses.

2.1 The Bhakti Movement: Intellectual Translation

The most significant catalyst in this transition was the Bhakti Movement (roughly 14th to 17th centuries). This period witnessed a revolutionary act of “intellectual translation,” where saint-poets acted as mediators between classical wisdom and the common person. Rather than creating entirely new systems, they reframed complex metaphysical IKS concepts into accessible regional dialects.

Goswami Tulsidas: By composing the Ramcharitmanas in Awadhi instead of Sanskrit, Tulsidas took the profound psychological and ethical frameworks of the Valmiki Ramayana and the

Upanishads and brought them into the rural courtyards of North India.

Kabir Das: Using a rugged, direct form of early Hindi (Sadhukkari), Kabir demystified Advaita (non-duality) and Sahaja Yoga. He bypassed ritualistic jargon to explain the IKS concepts of self-realization and social equality in terms that a weaver or a farmer could instantly grasp.

2.2 From Dialects to Khari Boli

As the various dialects like Braj Bhasha and Awadhi coalesced into modern Khari Boli (Standard Hindi), the repository of IKS found a new, standardized home. This transition ensured that the ethical, medicinal, and astrological knowledge preserved in folk traditions remained intact. By the time of the Indian Renaissance in the 19th and 20th centuries, Hindi had become the primary vehicle for reviving these indigenous systems against the tide of colonial education. This historical journey confirms that Hindi is not just a language of modern convenience, but the historical successor that kept the flame of IKS alive through the centuries.

3. Hindi as a Repository of Scientific Terminology

The strength of any knowledge system lies in the precision of its terminology. Within the framework of **Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS)**, Hindi serves as a sophisticated repository of scientific and technical terms, primarily due to its deep-rooted connection with Sanskrit. Unlike many modern languages that struggle to find vernacular equivalents for ancient scientific concepts, Hindi’s linguistic architecture allows it to function as a natural extension of India’s classical intellectual tradition.

3.1 The Etymological Link and Linguistic Continuity

The structural relationship between Hindi and Sanskrit is characterized by a “parent-offspring” dynamic that facilitates a high degree of conceptual fluidity. Hindi utilizes a vast lexicon of **Tatsama** words—terms that have been adopted from Sanskrit without any phonetic or semantic modification. This etymological link ensures that the philosophical and scientific weight of a term remains intact. When an academician or practitioner uses Hindi to discuss IKS, they are not merely “translating”; they are employing a living vocabulary that has been refined over millennia to describe specific physical and metaphysical phenomena.

3.2 Technical Adaptation: Paribhashik Shabdavali

Hindi's ability to adapt Sanskrit technical terms, known as **Paribhashik Shabdavali**, is most evident in specialized fields like **Ayurveda** and **Vastu Shastra**.

Ayurveda: In the study of life sciences, Hindi preserves technical designations for biological humors (**Vata**, **Pitta**, **Kapha**) and metabolic processes (**Agni**, **Dhatu**) that do not have direct English equivalents.

Vastu Shastra: In architecture and spatial science, Hindi carries forward terms like **Brahmasthan** (central space) and **Dik-Nirnaya** (directional orientation), ensuring that the scientific logic of energy flow and geometry is accurately communicated to modern practitioners.

This technical adaptation allows Hindi to serve as a functional manual for traditional sciences, making them applicable in contemporary professional settings.

3.3 Linguistic Precision and Acoustic Science

Beyond vocabulary, the very structure of the Hindi phonetic system—the **Varnamala**—is a direct application of ancient Indian acoustic science (**Shiksha**). The arrangement of the Hindi alphabet is strictly scientific, categorized based on the place of articulation (Gutturals, Palatals, Cerebrals, Dentals, and Labials) and the nature of sound production (Aspirated vs. Unaspirated). This systematic organization reflects a profound understanding of phonetics and the physiological impact of sound, which is a core component of IKS. By maintaining this phonetic rigor, Hindi ensures that the oral traditions and mantras essential to various Indian sciences are preserved with their original vibrational integrity and precision.

4. Pedagogical Integration under NEP 2020

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 marks a historic shift in Indian academia by mandating the integration of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) into the formal credit structure of schools and universities. Central to this mission is the promotion of Indian languages as a medium of instruction, ensuring that students can engage with complex traditional concepts without the cognitive burden of a foreign linguistic filter. Within the diverse linguistic landscape of India, Hindi serves as a crucial pedagogical vehicle for IKS, particularly across the expansive educational networks of North and Central India.

4.1 Medium of Instruction: Strategic Importance

The strategic importance of Hindi in higher education lies in its ability to bridge the gap between academic theory and the student's lived reality. In many regions, English-centric education has historically alienated students from their own cultural and intellectual roots. By utilizing Hindi as the medium for teaching IKS modules, universities can foster a more inclusive and participative learning environment. This approach allows students to explore subjects like **Dharmashastra** (Ethics), **Nyaya** (Logic), and **Krishi-Shastra** (Agricultural Science) in a language that naturally supports the conceptual nuances of these fields.

4.2 Curriculum Design and Hindi-Language Research

A significant challenge in implementing IKS is the scarcity of modern, standardized textbooks. Hindi-language research is currently playing a transformative role in curriculum design. Scholars are actively translating and re-interpreting ancient manuscripts to create contemporary pedagogical tools.

Indigenous Mathematics: Textbooks on **Vedic Ganit** (Vedic Mathematics) in Hindi provide students with alternative computational methods that enhance mental agility and mathematical interest.

Environmental Ethics: Research in Hindi is revitalizing the concepts of **Prakriti-Rakshati-Rakshita** (Nature protects those who protect her), integrating traditional ecological wisdom into modern environmental science curricula.

These Hindi-medium resources ensure that IKS is not taught as a static history lesson but as a dynamic, evolving body of knowledge relevant to modern challenges.

4.3 Case Studies of Implementation

Several premier institutions have already begun successfully implementing IKS-based credits through Hindi-medium courses. For instance, Banaras Hindu University (BHU) has been a pioneer in integrating traditional knowledge into its mainstream curriculum, offering elective courses in Hindi on Vedic science and ancient Indian administrative systems. Similarly, Delhi University and various state universities in Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh have introduced IKS foundational courses where Hindi is the primary language of lecture and examination. These initiatives demonstrate that teaching IKS in Hindi

Significantly increases student enrollment and engagement, proving that a vernacular-based pedagogical model is the most effective way to democratize and globalize India's intellectual heritage.

5. IKS in Hindi Literature and Modern Fiction

The revitalization of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) is not confined to textbooks and academic treatises; it finds its most vibrant and emotive expression in the realm of Hindi literature. Modern Hindi fiction serves as a “living laboratory” where ancient wisdom, folklore, and indigenous psychological frameworks are tested against the complexities of contemporary life. By weaving IKS into the fabric of storytelling, Hindi writers ensure that traditional knowledge remains socially relevant and psychologically resonant.

5.1 Modern Interpretations: Weaving Wisdom into Narrative

Modern Hindi novelists and short-story writers have moved beyond a mere nostalgic look at the past, instead using IKS as a lens to examine modern dilemmas. This integration manifests in several ways:

Indigenous Psychology (Manovigyan): Unlike Western psychoanalysis, which often focuses on the individual ego, modern Hindi fiction frequently draws upon the IKS concepts of Triguna (Sattva, Rajas, Tamas) and Panchakosha (the five sheaths of existence). Writers explore character development by analyzing the internal conflict between these elemental forces, providing a nuanced understanding of human behavior that is rooted in Indian philosophical thought.

Folklore and Ethno-knowledge: The inclusion of “Lok Katha” (folktales) and regional myths is a hallmark of the Anchalik (regional) novel tradition in Hindi. These stories are repositories of indigenous knowledge regarding local ecology, traditional healing, and community governance. By incorporating these elements, writers like Phanishwar Nath ‘Renu’ have preserved the “Desi” or local variants of IKS that might otherwise be lost to urbanization.

Ethical Frameworks: Modern narratives often reconstruct the concept of Dharma—not as a religious dogma, but as a complex ethical compass. Characters are placed in situations where they must navigate Apaddharma (ethics in times of crisis), reflecting the sophisticated moral reasoning found in the Mahabharata.

5.2 Female Perspectives: Re-interpreting Heritage

One of the most significant developments in contemporary Hindi literature is the role of women authors in re-interpreting IKS through a gender-sensitive lens. Historically, many traditional roles and knowledge systems were interpreted through a patriarchal framework. However, modern female writers are reclaiming these narratives, offering what can be termed a “feminist re-reading” of IKS.

Subverting Archetypes: Authors like Krishna Sobti and Mannu Bhandari have revisited traditional archetypes. They explore the strength of the Stree Shakti (feminine power) not just as a mythological concept, but as a practical force for social resilience and domestic autonomy. Their work often highlights the “oral knowledge” passed down through generations of women—ranging from home-based pharmacopoeia (Dadi Maa ke Nuskhe) to complex emotional intelligence.

Reclaiming Space: Modern female voices often delve into the Grihastha (householder) stage of life, traditionally governed by strict codes, to find spaces of agency and intellectual contribution. They re-evaluate the role of women in ancient Indian society, suggesting that women were not merely passive recipients of knowledge but active participants in the philosophical and scientific discourses of their time.

Modern Myth-Making: Through “Mythoreality,” women writers are rewriting the stories of figures like Sita, Draupadi, and Urmila. In doing so, they use the structural tools of IKS to question modern gender roles, proving that traditional stories contain the seeds for contemporary liberation.

5.3 Conclusion of the Literary Role

The intersection of Hindi literature and IKS creates a dynamic cultural continuity. By translating abstract philosophical concepts into the lived experiences of fictional characters, Hindi writers bridge the gap between the Shastras and the Samaj (society). This literary engagement ensures that Indian Knowledge Systems are not viewed as static relics of the past, but as a fluid, evolving, and indispensable part of India's modern identity. Through fiction, IKS finds its heart, moving from the intellect to the spirit of the common reader.

8. Conclusion

The revitalization of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) under the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 represents a fundamental reclamation of India's intellectual sovereignty. This paper has demonstrated that Hindi serves as much more than a medium of communication; it is a sophisticated functional tool and a linguistic conduit that connects classical scholarship with modern societal needs.

The findings confirm that Hindi's deep etymological ties to Sanskrit allow for the preservation of technical and philosophical nuances—such as Dharma, Prana, and Rasa—that often suffer “semantic thinning” in Western translations. Historically, the transition from Shastras to Lok Bhasha during the Bhakti Movement proved that Hindi could sustain complex ethical and scientific frameworks through periods of upheaval. Today, this continues through pedagogical integration, where Hindi-medium instruction reduces cognitive load and fosters an inclusive academic environment. Furthermore, modern Hindi fiction and the evolving female perspective ensure that IKS remains a “living tradition,” adapting ancient wisdom to contemporary psychology and social ethics.

To ensure global visibility, future efforts must focus on strengthening the Hindi-IKS research infrastructure and encouraging bilingual publications. Digital standardization of IKS terminology in Hindi will further facilitate interdisciplinary collaboration between traditional scholars and modern scientists. Ultimately, Hindi is the heartbeat of IKS in the 21st century. By strengthening this linguistic bridge, India can ensure its heritage is not merely a relic of the past but a thriving contributor to the global knowledge economy.

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