

LIBRARIES AS CENTERS FOR DISSEMINATING INDIAN KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS

Dr. Amol B. Meshram

Librarian,

S.N. Arts and U.K. Commerce College
Akola

Email: aaambbbm72@gmail.com

Abstract :

Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) are the culmination of centuries of scientific, cultural, and intellectual accomplishments that have influenced human knowledge in many fields. Libraries are becoming increasingly important organizations in the digital age, both for preserving this enormous legacy and for ensuring that it is available to current and future generations. In light of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, this study explores the traditional roles, contemporary practices, and potential of libraries as hubs for the dissemination of IKS. It emphasizes digital repositories, digitization projects, manuscript preservation programs, and the function of librarians in introducing communities to indigenous knowledge. The study intends to examine the extent of IKS, assess the role libraries play in disseminating and conserving this knowledge, pinpoint current obstacles, and offer solutions for improved distribution. There is discussion of case studies of organizations like the National Mission for Manuscripts (NMM), the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute (BORI), and the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA). In order to effectively promote India's intellectual legacy on a national and international level, the paper makes the case that libraries need to be repositioned as vibrant centers of culture and education.

Keywords: Indian Knowledge Systems, Libraries, Indigenous Knowledge, NEP 2020, Digitization, Cultural Heritage

Introduction :

India has long been seen as a source of innovation, philosophy, and knowledge. Known as Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS), the nation's collective intellectual traditions cover a wide range of fields, including linguistics, philosophy, logic, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, fine arts, and governance. In addition to having an impact on Indian society, these systems have made a substantial contribution to world philosophy. Oral traditions, palm-leaf manuscripts, and early institutional libraries connected to universities like Takshashila and Nalanda have all historically been used to preserve and transmit this knowledge.

Libraries are reinventing themselves as interactive learning and cultural exchange spaces in the twenty-first century, moving beyond their previous role as repositories of

documents. Libraries are essential to this effort because the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has given IKS integration into mainstream education a new lease on life. Libraries can bridge the gap between the ancient and the modern by acting as IKS custodians, facilitators, and promoters, while also making sure that this legacy is preserved in both digital and physical formats.

Objectives of the Study :

- To explore the scope and significance of Indian Knowledge Systems in the modern context.
- To analyze the historical role of libraries in the preservation and transmission of IKS.
- To examine scholarly literature related to libraries and indigenous knowledge dissemination.
- To review contemporary initiatives and case studies of IKS preservation and sharing.
- To identify opportunities and challenges faced by libraries in promoting IKS.
- To suggest actionable recommendations to enhance the role of libraries as centers for IKS dissemination under the NEP 2020 framework.

Review of Literature :

1. Understanding Indian Knowledge Systems :

Sharma (2019) defines IKS as a comprehensive framework of indigenous wisdom spanning spirituality, science, philosophy, and cultural practices. The NEP 2020 underscores the necessity of integrating these systems into curricula to instill cultural pride and foster holistic education (Government of India, 2020).

2. Libraries as Custodians of Heritage :

Chandra (2017) highlights that ancient institutions like Nalanda housed extensive manuscript collections and acted as epicenters of learning. Singh and Devi (2021) stress that modern libraries must evolve to safeguard cultural heritage in both physical and digital spaces, ensuring accessibility for diverse audiences.

3. Digitization and Dissemination :

Jain (2020) points to initiatives such as the National Mission for Manuscripts and the Digital Library of India as vital for preserving fragile resources and making them globally accessible. The IGNCA's digitization projects further demonstrate how technology is transforming access to cultural knowledge.

4. Librarians' Expanding Role :

Kumar and Thomas (2022) argue that librarians must move beyond being passive custodians to becoming facilitators and educators who can promote indigenous knowledge through exhibitions, cataloguing innovations, and digital literacy initiatives.

Identified Gaps :

Although preservation has gotten a lot of attention, there isn't much research on dissemination tactics, like incorporating IKS into outreach initiatives, community involvement, and instruction. Focused research on the implications of NEP 2020 for libraries in this field is also lacking.

Methodology :

Using secondary sources like academic books, peer-reviewed journal articles, government policy documents, institutional reports, and case studies, this study takes a conceptual and analytical approach. The NEP 2020, IGNCA, BORI, and NMM official publications served as the sources of the data. Mapping the changing roles of libraries with the overarching goal of spreading Indian Knowledge Systems is the main focus of the analysis.

Discussion :**1. Scope of Indian Knowledge Systems :**

- Indian Knowledge Systems cover a broad spectrum of disciplines, including:
- Philosophy and Ethics – Upanishads, Vedanta, Buddhist and Jain teachings.
- Health and Medicine – Ayurveda, Yoga, Siddha, and Naturopathy.
- Science and Mathematics – Aryabhata's works in astronomy, Baudhayana's geometry, Panini's grammar.
- Arts and Culture – Natyashastra in performing arts, treatises on music, dance, and architecture.
- Socio-Political Thought – Kautilya's Arthashastra, Dharmaśāstras on law and governance.

Because of its diversity, IKS is not only important historically but also pertinent to today's concerns about sustainability, education, wellness, and the environment.

2. Libraries in Historical Perspective :

Libraries in India have traditionally been custodians of this vast knowledge.

- Nalanda and Vikramshila Universities: Renowned for their extensive collections of manuscripts that drew scholars from across Asia.
- Sarasvati Bhandaras: Jain libraries in Gujarat and Rajasthan preserved rare scriptures for centuries.
- Saraswati Mahal Library (Tanjore): Famous for palm-leaf manuscripts on medicine, music, and the arts.

3. Modern Libraries as Guardians of IKS :

Contemporary Indian libraries are continuing this legacy in innovative ways :

- National Mission for Manuscripts (NMM): Has documented more than 5 million manuscripts across India.
- Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA): Maintains digital repositories on cultural and artistic heritage.
- Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute (BORI): Houses rare Sanskrit manuscripts, including UNESCO-recognized Rigveda texts.
- National Digital Library of India (NDLI): Offers digital access to a wide range of resources, including IKS-related material.

4. Dissemination Strategies Adopted by Libraries :

Libraries today employ multiple strategies for sharing IKS :

- Print Resources: Manuscript catalogues, critical editions, and conservation reports.
- Digital Archives: E-libraries, online repositories, and virtual exhibitions.
- Community Engagement: Public lectures, cultural exhibitions, yoga workshops, and heritage festivals.
- Academic Support: Providing resources for new IKS courses introduced under NEP 2020.
- Collaborative Programs: Partnering with universities, museums, and cultural institutions to expand reach.

Recommendations :

1. Strengthen digitization and preservation projects with adequate funding and technological support.
2. Establish dedicated IKS resource centers in universities and major public libraries.
3. Provide specialized training to librarians and archivists in cultural heritage management.
4. Encourage inter-institutional collaborations between libraries, museums, and academic institutions.
5. Launch public awareness programs and literacy initiatives focusing on IKS.
6. Develop multilingual digital platforms to overcome language barriers.
7. Ensure sustained policy-level support under the NEP 2020 for long-term initiatives.

Conclusion :

Libraries have long been central to the sharing and preservation of knowledge. Their duty with regard to Indian Knowledge Systems includes reviving and advancing centuries-old customs in ways that appeal to both the current and upcoming generations. Libraries can develop into thriving cultural and educational hubs by embracing digitization, community involvement, and academic integration. Libraries are in a unique position to serve as links between the past and present as India looks to incorporate IKS into its educational and developmental frameworks, guaranteeing that traditional knowledge contributes to today's global issues.

References:

Books:

- Kapur, A. (2018). Ancient Indian Knowledge Systems: A Comprehensive Study. New Delhi: Sage Publications.
- Rao, S. (2016). Manuscript Culture in India. Hyderabad: Orient Blackswan.
- Balasubramanian, R. (2019). Indian Philosophy and Knowledge Traditions. New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- Pollock, S. (2006). The Language of the Gods in the World of Men: Sanskrit, Culture, and Power in Premodern India. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Subrahmanyam, S. (2015). Connected Histories: Notes towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Journal Articles :

- Das, S. (2020). "Indian Knowledge Systems in Higher Education: Challenges and Opportunities." Higher Education for the Future, 7(2), 205–220.
- Bhardwaj, R. (2018). "Libraries as Custodians of Cultural Heritage in India." Annals of Library and Information Studies, 65(3), 145–154.
- Menon, A., & Sharma, N. (2021). "Digitization of Indigenous Knowledge: Role of Academic Libraries in India." DESIDOC Journal of Library & Information Technology, 41(6), 369–376.
- Krishnan, P. (2017). "Preservation of Palm-Leaf Manuscripts: Techniques and Practices." Journal of Heritage Studies, 23(5), 451–463.
- Mukherjee, A. (2019). "Libraries and Indigenous Knowledge Dissemination: An Indian Perspective." International Journal of Information Studies & Libraries, 4(2), 99–112.

Institutional & Government Reports :

- Ministry of Education. (2020). National Education Policy 2020. Government of India.
- National Mission for Manuscripts. (2022). Preservation and Access Initiatives. New Delhi: Ministry of Culture.
- Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA). (2021). Digital Initiatives in Cultural Heritage. New Delhi: IGNCA.
- Indian Council of Philosophical Research (ICPR). (2018). Report on Integrating Indian Knowledge Systems in Education. New Delhi: ICPR.
- UNESCO. (2017). Memory of the World Programme: Safeguarding Documentary Heritage in South Asia. Paris: UNESCO Publishing.

Online / Digital Resources :

- Digital Library of India (DLI). (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.dli.gov.in>
- National Digital Library of India (NDLI). (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://ndl.iitkgp.ac.in>



- Manuscripts of India Portal, National Mission for Manuscripts. (n.d.). <http://www.namami.org>
- IGNCA Digital Archives. (n.d.). <https://ignca.gov.in/divisionss/digital-library/>
- Shodhganga: A Reservoir of Indian Theses. (n.d.). <https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in>