

The Renaissance of the Sanskrit Language: An Imperative for Modern Times

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Cite this paper:

Silwal Chhetri, B. (2024). The renaissance of the Sanskrit language: an imperative for modern times. *Journal of Business and Social Sciences*, 6(1), 91-98

<https://doi.org/10.3126/jbss.v6i1.78758>

Abstract

Sanskrit labelled as the "language of Divine," boasts a distinctive place in the linguistic and cultural legacy of the globe. Its profound influence on Eastern philosophy, science, literature, languages, and religion emphasizes its historical significance. However, Sanskrit confronts apathy and marginalization in the modern world. The present research explores the various motives behind the resurgence of Sanskrit, emphasizing its relevance in the contemporary world through language analysis, technical usage, and rejuvenation of culture. Overall, this study argues for a deliberate and worldwide resurrection of Sanskrit in order to harness its potential for modern society and possible future advancements by examining its historical origin, current challenges, and prospective possibilities.

Keywords: Sanskrit, Eastern philosophy, Spiritual, Metaphysical, Linguistic dimension

Introduction

The ancient Indo-Aryan language of Sanskrit stands as the foundation of Indo-Nepal's spiritual and intellectual heritage. It has had an unparalleled impact on Hindu and Indo-Aryan philosophy, science, and culture. Since time immemorial, Sanskrit has been a valuable asset of human knowledge. The ancient scriptures of the Vedas, Puranas, Epics and Upanishads hold the profound body of knowledge of metaphysics, spirituality, astronomy, yoga, astrology, logic, arithmetic and medicine. Being a classical language, it offers insights into the structure and development of languages and advances the fields of linguistics and comparative philology. The usage of this language has, however, drastically decreased in the contemporary times. This decrease raises significant concerns regarding the possible loss of a linguistic treasure that can offer insightful information in the multidisciplinary disciplines of today. Academic institutions, technology, and cultural supporters have all contributed to the recent surge in efforts to revive Sanskrit. This project critically examines the need for a Sanskrit renaissance, especially as it relates to philosophy, artificial intelligence and computational linguistics.

Sanskrit, written in the Devanagari script, is the oldest, most distinctive, and most scientific language in the globe. It is acknowledged as the predecessor of all Indo-European languages and is

revered as the language of the Vedas. As evidence of Sanskrit's significant influence, the Nepali language, which has its root in the Sinja region of Jumla, Nepal also owes a large portion of its syntax and lexicon to it.

Sanskrit is the source of several Nepali words. The words tatsama (borrowed directly) and tadbhava (derived) have their root in Sanskrit. Almost all of Nepal's languages have been influenced by this language, either directly or indirectly. Sadly, there is still a false conception that Sanskrit belongs to specific castes and community such Brahmins and Kshatriyas only. This is completely illogical and misinterpretation. No language in the world is as clear, logical, systematic, prosperous and scientific as Sanskrit.

Linguistically, Sanskrit falls under Indo-European family of languages-more precisely under the Aryan-Iranian branch of the Indo-Aryan subfamily. Modern Indo-European languages like Hindi, Urdu, Pali, Sindhi, Marathi, Punjabi, Nepali, Persian, and Bengali trace their lineage to Sanskrit. It is the mother language of all these tongues. Besides, it is the language of Sanatan Vedic tradition and classical medium to perform all the religious sacrament , rituals and rites . The ancient religious texts and scripture of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism are written in Sanskrit.

"Amar Bhasha", the immortal language; "Surabharati", the celestial language ; and "Devavani", the divine language , are among the other names that precede Sanskrit and are pronounced with great reverence. Ancient sages and scholars such as Maharshi Panini, the author of the "Ashtadhyayi", Maharshi Pingala, the author of "Chhandashastra", Maharshi Katyayana author of "Varttika" and Maharshi Patanjali, the author of "Mahabhashya", and father of Yoga , diligently established its grammar, which is still in use today, precisely as it was many millennia ago. Despite being written in prehistoric times, Panini's grammar is still regarded as a paradigm of linguistic purity.

The term 'Devabhasha' was ascribed to Sanskrit as it is used in Vedic rituals such as yajna, mantras, chanting, homas, pujas and all other prospective form of spiritual practices .According to Vedic way of life , all the sixteen sacraments, from conception to death are performed in Sanskrit in Hindu tradition . In Hindu ceremonies, Sanskrit is frequently utilized as a ceremonial language in the form of mantras and hymns. During classical era , Sanskrit was the official language of Bharatvarsha .

Since it is more than merely a language, it is a way of life and source of culture, which is why it has been termed as the " Purified Language." Unlike most languages, which are arbitrary and contextually bound, this one maintains the harmonic relationship between the word and its meaning or signifier and signified. With over trillion words and countless synonyms, Sanskrit is a tremendously rich lexical language. There are more than 280 synonyms for "water," for instance, and each one varies depending on the situation and each word can appear in a minimum of 25 grammatical forms. The formulation of the theoretical framework for describing the Sanskrit language has been one of the biggest innovations ever made in any language. In order to express the syntactical structure of Sanskrit with the most brevity and clarity, Panini created the Generative theory of grammatical description, which has since been modified to describe Indian languages. The Paninian's model of language description including algorithmic structure, metalanguage,

morphological analysis and phonetics have a significant influence on modern linguistics in the western world. The credit of introducing language model and rewriting or amending rules goes to Panini .

The language has played a crucial role in interpreting Eastern philosophy, religion, and history. To fully appreciate its rich heritage and legacy , a deep understanding of Sanskrit is essential. Almost all Hindu scriptures, including the four Vedas, Upavedas, Puranas, Upanishads, Darshanas (Philosophy : Ontology, Epistemology and Axiology) , Mimamsa texts, epics, art and literature were written in Sanskrit. In the modern world, proficiency in Sanskrit is vital for deciphering the immense amount of spiritual, scientific, and transcendental information contained in priceless masterpieces like the Ramayana, Mahabharata, Bhagavad Gita, and Mahapuranas.

Literature Review

Over the past few decades, the debate over the resurgence of Sanskrit has gathered a lot of momentum, with academics from a variety of disciplines highlighting its importance for contemporary education, cultural preservation, and international knowledge systems. This overview of the literature examines the main justifications for the revival of Sanskrit language , referencing studies in comparative philosophy, linguistics, education, and cultural studies.

Known as the "mother of all languages," Sanskrit has played a pivotal role in the advancement of Indo Aryan civilization of Bharat Varsha . According to academics like Witzel (1997) and Mayrhofer (2000), Sanskrit is important for ancient Indo Aryan literature, such as the Vedas, Upanishads, and epics like the Mahabharata and Ramayana, and its importance goes beyond its use as a language. These writings serve as the foundation for Eastern metaphysics, philosophy, and religion. Niyogi (2009), asserts that a close relationship with Sanskrit is necessary to comprehend the philosophical and spiritual traditions that molded Indo Aryan's past, the resurgence of Sanskrit is thus viewed as a way to preserve and revitalize Hindu and Aryan cultural identity.

According to Renou (1957) and Gonda (1967), in the larger framework of world languages, Sanskrit's historical function as a lingua franca in South Asia allowed intellectual traditions to flourish in a variety of geographical areas. In addition to being seen as a cultural renaissance for the Indian subcontinent, the revival of Sanskrit is seen as a significant step in resurrecting the intellectual interactions that had previously been made possible by its wide usage throughout several kingdoms, states and empires.

Importance of Sanskrit Education in Academia

The cognitive advantages of Sanskrit is one of the main justifications for its resurgence. According to Brockington (2008) and Kak (2011), the syntactic richness and exact phonetic structure of Sanskrit promote superior cognitive functions like logical reasoning, memory retention, and critical thinking. Studies have demonstrated that learning Sanskrit benefits in the development of linguistic and mathematical abilities owing to its logical morphological system and connections to other Indo-European languages (Patnaik, 2015). Additionally, Narayan (2004) argues that Sanskrit offers a framework for comprehending the genesis of numerous modern languages, especially in the domains of comparative philology and linguistics.

Agarwal and Sharma (2018) provide a more recent application of this concept in their study on the effectiveness of Sanskrit in improving students' learning abilities in contemporary educational settings. Their findings imply that incorporating Sanskrit into curricula can enhance students' rationality, problem solving abilities, logical and creative thinking particularly in areas like science and mathematics.

Jha (2016) and Dixit (2017) have pointed out the importance of Sanskrit in the domains of mathematics, astronomy, and medicine. The ancient Indian scholars and mathematicians like Aryabhata and Brahmagupta have written the text in Sanskrit language which reveal early developments in astronomy and mathematics.

With a growing interest in applying artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning to decipher and preserve Sanskrit writings, Singh (2019) investigates the potential of Sanskrit texts in translating ancient manuscripts into modern digital formats.

Nepal has neglected this profound linguistic heritage, despite the fact that nations like Germany and Russia have been studying and researching Sanskrit extensively. Sanskrit is taught in more than 14 universities in Germany alone. The majority of scholarly works and research on Sanskrit is now published in Western nations, despite its Eastern roots. Organizations like ISKCON are dedicated to preserving this sacred language.

The potential of Sanskrit as the best algorithmic language for computer programming in AI systems was examined by NASA scientist Rick Briggs in his seminal work "Knowledge Representation in Sanskrit and Artificial Intelligence." (1985) According to him, "Sanskrit's highly structured grammar and rich vocabulary make it a suitable language for natural language processing and machine learning."

Many of the astounding principles of modern science—quantum mechanics, aerodynamics, energy systems, and laser technology—were foreseen in ancient Vedic, Puranic, and Upanishadic texts thousands of years ago. Even the concept of supersonic aircraft, exemplified by the mythical Pushpaka Vimana, predates modern aviation, as validated by Sanskrit scriptures.

For instance, another treatise: The Architecture of Knowledge, Kak, S. (2007) underlines the importance of Sanskrit in attempting to explain the unity of ancient insight with contemporary science.

Similarly, Pushpaka Vimana and Ancient Technology: Kanjilal, D. (1985) examine the references of flying machines in ancient texts and tries to correlate them with technological interpretations.

The book, Vedic World View and Modern Science: Tripathi, R. (2007) sets out parallels between Vedic philosophy and modern scientific concepts, especially quantum mechanics and consciousness. However, these texts should be understood symbolically, taking into account the sociocultural and historical context of their time rather than through an objective analysis.

Furthermore, Vaidya (2010) highlights how Sanskrit might improve international communication, especially when it comes to cross-border scholarly debate. He points out that Sanskrit is the origin

of many contemporary scientific words used in disciplines like physics, chemistry, and biology, and that reviving the language can aid in bridging the gap between traditional knowledge and contemporary scientific perspectives. Furthermore, according to Rao (2021), the Sanskrit resurgence may encourage more ideas to be shared between the East and the West by providing a common linguistic background that promotes intercultural communication.

Thus, it is unjust to confine Sanskrit to language alone since it is an all-encompassing way of life. In addition to teaching us the art of living, Sanskrit also teaches us the art of dying and the meaning of life itself. It is a way of living that demonstrates to people how to achieve enlightenment and freedom.

According to Ramaswamy (2013), the practical challenges of teaching and learning Sanskrit in the modern world provide another difficulty. Widespread adoption is hindered by its intricate grammar and pronunciation, especially among younger generations. In order to address these obstacles, Patel (2019) proposes a hybrid methods that blends modern pedagogical strategies with more conventional approaches to learning Sanskrit, such as online courses and interactive digital platforms that increase accessibility.

Sparking Philosophical and Spiritual Dimension

The four goals of life—Dharma (righteousness), Artha (wealth), Kama (desire), and Moksha (liberation)—can all be achieved through the wisdom of Sanskrit. This language acts as a key to uncovering ultimate and eternal truth and grasping the essence of existence. It was the foundation of ancient civilizations and continues to hold significance in today's world.

However, it is clear that its decline is largely due to the lack of governmental support for its growth. This language served as the cornerstone of ancient civilizations and is still relevant in the postmodern era. Nevertheless, it is clear that the government's indifference to its promotion and development has contributed to its decline.

During Padma Shamsher Rana's rule, Sanskrit was labeled a "dead language," highlighting the state's disregard for it. Its prestige has been further damaged by the increasing domination of English speakers. While some Hindu radicals assert exclusive ownership of the language, self-styled modernists dismiss it as inflexible, archaic and outdated, damaging its reputation. Tragically, Sanskrit has been relegated to library shelves in the current globalized, which is a sad irony. A decline in student enrollment in Sanskrit programs, a lack of research efforts, a shortage of competent academics and lack of speakers have all contributed to its struggle for preservation and promotion. Its usage is now mainly confined to countries such as Nepal, India, and Indonesia.

Swami Vivekananda's discourse on Hinduism and the magnificence of Sanskrit at the 1893 Chicago Conference aroused curiosity and attention around the world. Since then, though, there hasn't been any noteworthy effort to conserve or advance the language. Sanskrit has been reduced to oblivion while being a wealth of unmatched spirituality and knowledge. Today, the few Sanskrit research centers and institutions operate with little vigor and resources.

Obstacles such as outdated curricula, a shortage of qualified teachers, insufficient promotion, high unemployment rates among Sanskrit scholars, and decreasing everyday use all point to the challenges facing its revival.

Sanskrit is essential for maintaining the integrity of the Nepali language, promoting ethical, social, and moral growth in individuals, and driving positive changes in society. It transcends geographical, cultural and linguistic boundaries. However, confining Sanskrit to rituals has hindered its recognition as a source of profound wisdom. The rise of Western ideologies and trends under the guise of modernity has endangered our native languages and culture. Misunderstandings surrounding Sanskrit have enabled pseudo-intellectuals to portray it as obsolete, which poses a serious threat to its continued existence.

Methodology

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative research techniques to provide a comprehensive understanding of the necessity and possibilities for the comeback of the traditional Sanskrit language and its education.

A historical analysis tool will be employed as a qualitative method to investigate the history of the Sanskrit language, including its ascent and decline as well as attempts at revival throughout time. Similarly, Content Analysis Approach have been applied to analyze texts, documents, and records related to Sanskrit education, literature, and cultural preservation.

Quantitative Methods are deployed to analyze current trends, perceptions, and the impact of policies related to Sanskrit language.

Theoretical Frameworks

Three interconnected theoretical frameworks: sociolinguistic theories, postcolonial theory and cultural revivalism theories are used in this project to examine the resurgence of Sanskrit language :

i) Sociolinguistic Framework

This framework is used to explore the political, cultural, and social components that have shaped Sanskrit's standing over time. By using this method this study analyzed the social norms and language regulations affecting academic adoption and incorporation of Sanskrit. It also examines Sanskrit's impact on multilingualism and its importance in identity formation

ii) Postcolonial Theory

Through this approach this project examines how Western colonial mindsets and Anglo Language system undermined Sanskrit language. Furthermore it studies the current initiatives to redraw western education through the use of indigenous knowledge systems, such as Sanskrit. In particular, it looks how Sanskrit may assist in restoring cultural autonomy. Despite its rich history, Sanskrit may have been "subalternized" or overlooked in Nepal's contemporary linguistic and cultural hierarchy, displaced by local lingua francas or mainstream international languages like

English. Reviving Sanskrit might assist to provide a platform to a historically underappreciated intellectual and cultural tradition, as suggested by postcolonial theory.

ii) Cultural Revivalism Theory

By focusing on the symbolic and cultural importance of Sanskrit as a foundation of linguistic heritage, the current text analyzes how Sanskrit language and education contributes to the broader movement of cultural preservation and revival in a globalized society. This study will also investigate the role of institutions, scholars, and governments in fostering this revival.

Hence, by utilizing these approaches and methodology, the study provides a well-rounded perspective on the renaissance of the Sanskrit language and education, emphasizing its relevance and applicability in the modern academic and cultural landscape. Nepal's cultural, religious, and historical fabric is intricately woven with Sanskrit language. Reviving it can be viewed as a means of recovering a national identity that sets Nepal apart from the homogenization of the world and confirms its longstanding position as a hub of intellectual and cultural activity. By reestablishing a connection with their historical roots, the Sanskrit renaissance can help Nepalese people feel proud and united.

Conclusion

The resurgence of Sanskrit's great cultural, intellectual, and cognitive value is vital in today's world. Its significance extends beyond spiritual, metaphysical, and linguistic dimension. Sanskrit revival has the ability to advance contemporary scientific and educational systems in addition to protecting Indo Nepal's rich cultural legacy. Its contributions to neuroscience, artificial intelligence, and psychology have been more widely acknowledged. Research in computer programming and natural language processing has been stimulated by the language's algorithmic structure. Moreover, modern meditation and mental health initiatives are in alignment with Sanskrit's emphasis on holistic health. Sanskrit-based practices that encourage inner calm and resilience, like yoga and mantra meditation are becoming more prevalent worldwide.

Nonetheless, the revival process needs to be managed sensitively, taking into account its intricate sociopolitical historical and practical aspects. The resurrection of Sanskrit becomes an important endeavor for promoting a deeper understanding of ancient knowledge and its relevance in the present world as the world community comes to grasp the necessity of intellectual interaction, localization and cultural preservation.

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