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## THE STUDY OF SANSKRIT LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE IN MODERN INDIA

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Sanskrit is a classical language of India and has been an integral part of the Indian cultural and intellectual heritage for thousands of years. Sanskrit is an ancient language of India, believed to have been used between the 4th millennium BCE and the 5th century CE.<sup>1</sup> It is considered one of the primitive languages of the world, and its literature and grammar have been the subject of study for centuries. The Rigveda is the oldest surviving Sanskrit literature and is considered the first living representation of ancient Indian literature.

Despite the fact that Sanskrit was once the dominant language in India, it has since declined in usage and the study of Sanskrit and Sanskrit literature has faced several challenges in modern India.

In modern India, the study of Sanskrit language and literature continues to be of great importance, both in academic circles and in the larger cultural context. There has been a resurgence of interest in the study of Sanskrit in recent years, particularly in the academic community.

Sanskrit was the medium of study in India from the beginning of the Indian civilization. Sanskrit education was carried on through gurukul, ashram, temple, tola etc. Gurukuls and Ashrams still exist today and are the traditional way of studying Sanskrit.

The study of Sanskrit language and literature in modern India has its roots in the colonial era, when British scholars introduced the language to the West. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Sanskrit became a subject of study in Indian universities, and it continues to be taught in schools and universities across the country today.

The study of Sanskrit language and literature in modern India is important for several reasons. Firstly, Sanskrit is considered to be one of the oldest and most sophisticated Indo-European languages, and has played a major role in the development of the Indian cultural and intellectual heritage. The language is also considered to be a valuable source of information about ancient Indian culture, including its philosophy, religion, and social structure. One of the main reasons for the continued study of Sanskrit in modern India is its rich cultural

<sup>1</sup> Sharma, Umashankar. Sam skṛta Sāhitya kā Itihāsa. P – 107

heritage. Sanskrit literature includes a vast body of works, including epic poems, hymns, philosophical treatises, and plays. These works are considered to be some of the earliest examples of Indian literature and provide valuable insight into ancient Indian culture and religion.

In addition to its historical and cultural importance, the study of Sanskrit is also important for the development of modern linguistics and comparative philology. Sanskrit has a complex grammar and vocabulary that is well-suited to linguistic analysis, and has been used as a model for the study of other ancient languages, such as Latin and Greek.

Another reason for the study of Sanskrit in modern India is its importance in the development of many other Indian languages. Sanskrit is considered to be the root of many modern Indian languages, and its study can provide a deeper understanding of the linguistic and cultural heritage of India.

In addition to its academic importance, the study of Sanskrit language and literature is also considered important in preserving India's cultural identity. Sanskrit is considered to be a symbol of India's rich cultural heritage, and its study helps to maintain this connection to the past.

Despite these benefits and its continued importance, the study of Sanskrit in modern India has faced several challenges. One of the biggest challenges is the decline of Sanskrit as a spoken language, which has resulted in a decline in the number of people who are able to read and write the language. Another big challenge is a lack of resources and support for the study of Sanskrit. Many schools and universities do not have the resources to support the study of Sanskrit, and there is often a shortage of qualified teachers. Additionally, there has been a decline in the number of institutions that offer Sanskrit education, and many students are no longer taught the language in schools. Another main challenge is the declining use of Sanskrit in everyday life. In many parts of India, Sanskrit is no longer used as a spoken language, and it is becoming increasingly difficult to find people who are able to read and understand the language.

In recent years, however, there has been a resurgence of interest in the study of Sanskrit in India, particularly among academics and intellectuals. This has been driven by a recognition of the importance of Sanskrit for preserving India's cultural and intellectual heritage, and for the development of modern linguistics and comparative philology.

In the current time, Sanskrit language is experiencing a revival due to favorable government policies and financial support. The number of students studying Sanskrit cannot be said to be less and the number of students studying Sanskrit is quite satisfactory. The number of researchers in the field of Sanskrit is also satisfactory. According to the data of Shodhganga 2022, there were 6118 theses on Sanskrit, which is more than the number of theses on subjects like political science and geography. Sanskrit Bharati and some Sanskrit-loving organizations are making an extraordinary contribution to the promotion of the Sanskrit language. Some well-known institutions such as BHU, Sampurnananda Sanskrit University, SLBSNSU, CSU, NSU, etc., are famous centers of Sanskrit education.

Sanskrit has several important branches that make it relevant and important even today, as people continue to study Sanskrit. There is great potential for exploration and research in these branches, particularly in regards to modernity and extensive research. Some of these branches include philosophy, religion, literature, and linguistics. These branches provide opportunities for discovering new ideas and delving deeper into the mysteries of Sanskrit. Some of these branches are briefly described below, but deserve more in-depth study and exploration.

**Aesthetics** - Sanskrit aesthetics are an integral part of literature, originating in ancient India over 3,000 years ago. Sanskrit aesthetics emphasize the beauty and harmony of art, literature, and performance, and include concepts such as rasa (emotional flavor), dhvani (suggestiveness), and alankara (ornamentation).<sup>2</sup> Sanskrit aestheticians also discussed the importance of audience engagement, the role of the artist, and the relationship between form and content. These ideas influenced not only Indian art and literature but also other cultural traditions throughout Asia. The study of Sanskrit aesthetics continues to be an important part of Indian cultural heritage, influencing modern artistic expression and critical evaluation.

**Linguistics** - Sanskrit linguistics studies the grammar, phonology, and vocabulary of Sanskrit, one of the oldest and most classical languages of India.<sup>3</sup> It focuses on understanding the complexities of the Sanskrit language and its development over time. Sanskrit linguistics also examines the relationship between Sanskrit and other Indo-European languages and its influence on other languages in the region. Despite its decline as a spoken language, Sanskrit continues to play an important role in the study of linguistics and its influence on various aspects of Indian culture and religion.

**Law and administration** - Law and administration were extensively documented in Sanskrit literature, particularly in ancient India. Sanskrit works such as the Manusmriti, Arthashastra, and Dharmashastra contain detailed information on laws, governance, and administration. These texts provide insights into the legal and political systems of ancient India, including criminal and civil laws, administration of justice, and political governance. They also discuss the duties and responsibilities of rulers, the importance of maintaining law and order, and the role of the judiciary in maintaining justice.<sup>4</sup> These ancient Sanskrit works continue to be studied for their historical and cultural significance and for their influence on the development of law and administration in India and South Asia.

**Astronomy** - Astronomy was a major area of study in ancient India and was extensively documented in Sanskrit literature. Sanskrit works such as the Vedas, Jyotisha Shastra, and the Surya Siddhanta contain extensive information on astronomical observations and calculations. These texts describe astronomical phenomena such as eclipses, the motions of celestial bodies, and the creation and destruction of the universe. They also discuss the use of astronomy in calendar-making, astrology, and time-keeping. Sanskrit astronomy had a profound influence on the development of astronomy in the region and played an important role in the transmission of astronomical knowledge from India to other parts of the world.<sup>5</sup> These ancient Sanskrit works continue to be studied for their historical and cultural significance and for their contributions to the field of astronomy.

**Architecture** - Architecture was an important aspect of ancient Indian culture, and its principles and practices were documented in Sanskrit literature. Sanskrit works such as the Mayamatam, Manasara, and the Vastu Shastra contain detailed descriptions and illustrations of architectural designs and construction techniques. These texts discuss the design and construction of buildings, palaces, temples, and cities, as well as the use of sacred geometry, symbolism, and astrology in architecture. Sanskrit architecture had a significant influence on the architectural styles and techniques of ancient and medieval India, and many of its principles and practices continue to be used today.<sup>6</sup> These ancient Sanskrit works continue to be studied for their historical and cultural significance and for their contributions to the field of architecture.

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<sup>2</sup> Chaturvedi, Vrajamohan. Naṭyasāstraṃ . P- 9 to 12

<sup>3</sup> Goswami, Bijaya. Tulanaṃmuṃlaak Bhaṣaṃhatatva O Saṃskṛta. P- 1

<sup>4</sup> Bandopadhyay, Manabendu & Ashok Kumar Bandoopathyay. Kautilya Arthasāstra - Introduction

<sup>5</sup> Sharma, Umashankar. Saṃskṛta Sāhitya kā Itihāsa. P-604 To 606

<sup>6</sup> Das, Devkumar. Saṃskṛta Sāhitya eṅg Itihāsa. P- 336 To 338

**Darshan (Philosophy)** - Philosophy was a major area of inquiry in ancient India, and its principles and practices were extensively documented in Sanskrit literature. Sanskrit works such as the Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, and the Vedanta Sutras contain philosophical discussions on a wide range of topics, including the nature of reality, the self, ethics, and spirituality. These texts also explore the relationship between the individual and the universe, the concept of karma and rebirth, and the path to liberation and enlightenment.<sup>7</sup> Sanskrit philosophy had a profound influence on the development of philosophical thought in India and beyond, and its ideas continue to be studied and discussed to this day. These ancient Sanskrit works continue to be a source of inspiration and guidance for those seeking a deeper understanding of the nature of existence and the meaning of life.

**Ayurveda** - Ayurveda is an ancient system of medicine with roots in Sanskrit literature. It is considered to be one of the oldest forms of healthcare in the world and is based on the belief that health and wellness depend on a delicate balance between the mind, body, and spirit. The foundational text of Ayurveda, the Charaka Samhita, provides comprehensive information on anatomy, physiology, diagnosis, and treatment of various illnesses. Another important text, the Sushruta Samhita, focuses on surgical techniques and the use of herbal medicines.<sup>8</sup> These texts have greatly influenced the development of traditional Indian medicine and continue to be widely studied and practiced today. The principles of Ayurveda have also been integrated into other forms of traditional medicine and alternative therapies around the world.

**Yoga** - Yoga has its roots in Sanskrit literature, with the earliest references appearing in the Upanishads. The most comprehensive text on yoga is the Bhagavad Gita, which presents a dialogue between Prince Arjuna and Lord Krishna on the nature of action, duty, and spiritual liberation. The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali is another important text that outlines the eight-fold path of yoga, including physical postures, breath control, and meditation.<sup>9</sup> These ancient texts continue to be widely studied and practiced, providing a rich heritage for understanding the development of yoga as a physical and spiritual discipline.

**Spirituality** - Spirituality has a central role in Sanskrit literature, with many texts exploring the nature of the self, consciousness, and the ultimate reality. The Upanishads, which are part of the Vedas, contain some of the earliest and most influential philosophical explorations of spirituality in India. These texts discuss the concept of Brahman, the ultimate reality and source of all existence, and the relationship between the individual self and the divine. The Bhagavad Gita, another important text, presents a dialogue between Prince Arjuna and Lord Krishna on the nature of action, duty, and spiritual liberation. Sanskrit literature also includes works on yoga, meditation, and other practices aimed at fostering inner peace and spiritual development. These texts continue to be widely read and studied for their insights into the nature of consciousness and the path to spiritual enlightenment.

**Ethics and morality** - Ethics and morality play a significant role in Sanskrit literature, with many texts addressing the importance of virtuous behavior and the consequences of actions. The Mahabharata, for example, contains the famous dialogue between King Janaka and Sage Yajnavalkya on the nature of self, consciousness, and ethics. The Manusmriti, a text of Hindu law, lays out a code of conduct for individuals and society. The Bhagavad Gita discusses the concept of Dharma, or right action, and its importance in fulfilling one's duty and leading a fulfilling life. Sanskrit literature also addresses ethical and moral dilemmas, such as the struggle between righteousness and unrighteousness in the Ramayana. These texts continue to be relevant today and continue to shape moral and ethical values in India and around the world.

<sup>7</sup> Das, Devkumar. Saṃ skṛta Sāhitya eṅg Itihāsa. P- 198

<sup>8</sup> Das, Devkumar. Saṃ skṛta Sāhitya eṅg Itihāsa. P- 302

<sup>9</sup> Das, Devkumar. Saṃ skṛta Sāhitya eṅg Itihāsa. P- 203

**Mathematics** - Mathematical knowledge was an important aspect of ancient Indian culture and is well represented in Sanskrit literature. The Vedas, one of the earliest Sanskrit texts, contain mathematical concepts and problems, including calculations of time and the measurement of geometrical shapes. The Sulbasutras, a set of texts associated with the Vedas, contain mathematical rules for the construction of altars and the performance of religious rituals. The mathematical works of Aryabhata, Bhaskara, and Brahmagupta, all written in Sanskrit, made important contributions to the field of mathematics and continue to be studied for their mathematical insights. Sanskrit literature also includes works on astronomy, which made use of mathematical concepts to explain the motions of celestial bodies. Overall, Sanskrit literature provides a window into the mathematical knowledge and achievements of ancient Indian civilization.<sup>10</sup>

In conclusion, the study of Sanskrit language and literature is of immense importance for the preservation of India's cultural and intellectual heritage, as well as for the development of modern linguistics and comparative philology. It provides valuable insight into India's rich cultural heritage and provides a connection to the past. With continued support and resources, the study of Sanskrit can continue to thrive and preserve India's cultural identity for future generations. Despite the challenges that it faces, there has been a resurgence of interest in the study of Sanskrit in modern India, which is a positive sign for the future of Sanskrit studies.

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<sup>10</sup> Das, Devkumar. *Sam skṛta Sāhity eṅr Itihā sa*. P- 294 To 301