

ROLE AND INITIATIVES OF LIBRARIES IN PRESERVATION OF THE INDIAN KNOWLEDGE SYSTEM

Dr. Priti P. Umredkar

Assistant Professor

PGTD of Library and Information Science

RTM Nagpur University, Nagpur

E-mail ID: pritipu22@gmail.com

Mobile No.: 9922008862

Dr. Mangala A. Hirwade

Professor & Head

PGTD of Library and Information Science

RTM Nagpur University, Nagpur

E-mail ID: hmangala@rediffmail.com

Mobile No.: 9850341329

Abstract :

The Indian Knowledge System (IKS) is a symbol of traditional knowledge in the form of manuscripts, indigenous knowledge, oral traditions, traditional medicines, arts, sciences and philosophy, and India has one of the richest heritages of traditional knowledge systems. Over time, much of this knowledge has been damaged or become inaccessible due to neglect, linguistic decline, environmental damage or lack of documentation. Libraries in India and associated institutions such as governmental, academic and non-profit organizations have taken the initiatives for preservation, digitization, documentation and dissemination this heritage in India. This paper surveys the major initiatives in that context and analyses the various roles of libraries.

Keywords : Indian Knowledge System (IKS), Traditional Knowledge, Manuscripts, Digitization, Preservation

Introduction :

The Indian Knowledge System (IKS) is the systematic transmission of knowledge from one generation to next generation. It is a structured system and a process of knowledge transfer rather than a tradition. The Indian Knowledge System is based on the Vedic literature, the Upanishads, the Vedas, and the Upvedas. The NEP-2020 (National Education Policy) recognizes this rich heritage of ancient and eternal Indian knowledge and thought as a guiding principle. The Indian Knowledge Systems comprise of Jnan, Vignan, and Jeevan Darshan that have evolved out of experience, observation, experimentation, and rigorous analysis. This tradition of validating and putting into practice has impacted our education, arts, administration, law, justice, health, manufacturing, and commerce. This has influenced classical and other languages of Bharat, that were transmitted through textual, oral, and artistic traditions. It includes knowledge from ancient India and, its successes and challenges, and a sense of India's future aspirations specific to education, health, environment and indeed all aspects of life.

Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) include ancient manuscripts (Sanskrit, regional languages), oral traditions, ritual and indigenous practices, local sciences etc. Libraries have

historically has been custodians of texts. In modern age the role of libraries and allied agencies has expanded to include digital archiving, community engagement, securing rights, etc. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasises integration of Indian Knowledge Systems in curricula. Libraries are playing a vital role in realising these visions.

What is Indian Knowledge System (IKS) :

Indian Knowledge System is the body of knowledge developed in the Indian subcontinent over millennia spanning Sanskrit texts, local literatures, folk knowledge, medicinal systems like Ayurveda, Siddha and Unani, indigenous ecological knowledge, epistemological systems, performing arts, oral traditions etc.

Importance to preserve IKS :

Preservation of IKS is important for cultural heritage, identity, knowledge-rich diversity, potential scientific, medical or environmental insights and education in line with indigenous knowledge. Moreover, India's NEP 2020 has emphasized on incorporating IKS in education and research. Therefore, this knowledge system can be a strong asset in the vision of a rich knowledge system towards a developed India.

Functions of Libraries in Preservation of IKS :

Following are the principal functions and its related activities that libraries play in preserving the IKS.

Function of Libraries and allied agencies	Description / Activities performing
Collection & Documentation	Libraries acquire manuscripts, rare books, folk tales, oral histories, conduct fieldwork to collect local traditions, receive donations.
Cataloguing & Classification	Classifying materials (printed / manuscripts / audio-visual), indexing, applying metadata, ensuring that materials are findable.
Conservation & Preservation	Physical conservation (repair of manuscripts, proper storage, climate control), microfilming, digitization for preservation.
Digitization & Digital Repositories	Converting materials into digital form, maintaining digital archives, providing online access. For example, TKDL, National Digital Library of India (NDLI).
Access & Dissemination	Open access to users, making materials available to scholars, students, general public, sometimes translation, transcription.
Promoting Awareness & Education	Organizing exhibitions, seminars, workshops, integrating IKS into educational curricula, collaborating

	with educational institutions. For teacher education libraries in India, there is recognition of the value of IKS in enriching pedagogy.
Legal & Policy Support	Working with intellectual property rights frameworks, ensuring that community owned knowledge is protected, dealing with biopiracy, policy advocacy.
Community Engagement	Working with local knowledge holders (oral tradition, elders, practitioners) to document and preserve knowledge; respect for cultural norms and permissions.

Role in the preservation of IKS under NEP 2020 :

The National Education Policy 2020 clearly encourages the revival and integration of Indian knowledge systems in the curriculum. Libraries are uniquely positioned for this. However, to make the knowledge system more effective, the NEP 2020 policy has outlined the following key recommendations for libraries in this regard.

- To act as a repository of IKS materials for the curriculum.
- To support teacher education by providing access to these resources.
- To become a digital hub for IKS dissemination.
- To facilitate research in IKS.

Libraries certainly play a key role in realizing the vision due to these recommendations.

Roles of Libraries in Preservation of IKS :

To better understand the multifaceted role of libraries in safeguarding the Indian Knowledge System, it is useful to analyse their functions across different domains. Libraries not only serve as custodians of manuscripts and rare texts but also act as centres of conservation, digitization, and dissemination of traditional wisdom. Several initiatives at institutional, governmental, and community levels reflect these roles in practice. Libraries play a major role in preserving the Indian knowledge system in various ways, which can be stated as follows.

Historical Role :

Guardians of Knowledge : In ancient India, institutions like Nalanda University and temple libraries were vital centres for storing sacred texts, scholarly works, and practical treatises.

Centres of Intellectual Exchange : Libraries were not just for storage but also for fostering discussion, debate, and the free flow of ideas, ensuring the intellectual traditions of India's knowledge systems will be continued.

Modern Role :

Digital Preservation : Libraries now employ advanced techniques like digitization and online

archiving to preserve rare texts and manuscripts from physical deterioration, making them globally accessible.

Dissemination and Access : Through initiatives like the Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL) and the National Digital Library of India (NDLI), libraries make IKS accessible to a wider audience and support interdisciplinary research.

Integration into Modern Frameworks : Libraries play a key role in integrating IKS into academic curricula and promoting it through workshops and digital platforms, in line with policies like NEP 2020.

Major Initiatives by Libraries and Allied Agencies in Preservation of IKS :

Various national missions, digital repositories, and library initiatives are working together to preserve, digitize, and disseminate India's vast traditional knowledge. The following table presents major initiatives, their stakeholders, objectives, and outputs, showing how government bodies, academic institutions, and non-profit organizations are collectively safeguarding Indian Knowledge Systems for future generations.

Initiative	Stakeholders	Objectives	Outputs
National Mission for Manuscripts (NAMAMI)	Ministry of Culture; Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) as nodal agency	To identify, document, conserve, digitize, and make accessible India's manuscript heritage. Estimate of 5-10 million manuscripts	Establishment of many Manuscript Resource Centres (MRCs), Manuscript Conservation Centres (MCCs), Cataloguing, creating Digital Manuscripts Library, restoration & conservation training, publications, surveys
Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL)	CSIR in collaboration with Ministry of AYUSH (traditional medicine systems)	To document traditional knowledge (especially medicinal formulations) in formats usable in IP / patent contexts, to prevent misappropriation / biopiracy, make accessible to patent examiners globally	Compiling details of formulations (Ayurveda, Unani, Siddha, etc.), translating into major foreign languages, integrating into patent office databases so that prior art is clearly documented.
National Mission on Libraries (NML)	Ministry of Culture, Govt. of India, various public/community libraries	To modernize libraries, provide access, connect libraries digitally, promote reading, ensure equitable library service	Digitally linking many public libraries, improving infrastructure, collection development, services to diverse populations,

		under Kala Sanskriti Vikas Yojana	making libraries more inclusive.
Indian Knowledge Systems Division (IKS Cell)	Ministry of Education (AICTE etc.) under NEP 2020 framework	To promote interdisciplinary research, preserve and disseminate IKS, integrate knowledge with education in arts, sciences, technology etc.	Supporting research, publications, workshops, knowledge repositories like IKS Wiki, embedding IKS in curriculum and encouraging scholarship.
Kalasampada (Digital Library: Resource for Indian Cultural Heritage, IGNCA)	IGNCA, Ministry of Culture / MCIT through various e-governance / cultural heritage programs.	To provide a multimedia digital repository of Indian cultural heritage: manuscripts, rare books, slides, audio/video etc., for scholars and general public.	Digitization of manuscripts and rare materials, interactive non-linear access, integrated interface combining text, audio/video, images, repository for cultural information.
Panjab Digital Library	The Nanakshahi Trust, volunteers, donations, public-private inputs.	To digitize and preserve the cultural heritage of Punjab: manuscripts, books, newspapers, photographs, sound recordings etc.	Over 85 million pages digitized, collecting across materials, making accessible online, focusing on regional languages and scripts, archival work.
Tamil Heritage Foundation (THF)	Non-profit foundation, in collaboration with other institutions & diasporas.	Collection, preservation, digitization of Tamil cultural heritage, literature, manuscripts.	Digitization of manuscript material, awareness, building digital archives, fostering scholarship.
National Digital Library of India (NDLI)	Ministry of Education, IIT Kharagpur (nodal institute)	To create a single-window platform for digital educational & cultural resources, integrate traditional texts with modern content.	Aggregation of millions of resources (books, theses, manuscripts etc.) multilingual search, includes some traditional texts access for students, teachers, researchers.
Academic & University Libraries	Central/state universities, colleges, research institutes	To collect, preserve, and integrate indigenous/local knowledge into higher education & research.	Local initiatives to collect indigenous knowledge resources (IKR), establishing special collections, digitization projects, inclusion of IKS

			in syllabi, collaborations with local knowledge holders.
Special libraries and manuscript libraries (e.g. Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, Asiatic Society Library etc.)	Independent heritage libraries, state bodies, trusts	To maintain & conserve rare manuscripts, oriental texts, cultural archives.	Maintaining rare manuscripts, digitization efforts, conservation projects, Preservation labs, public exhibitions. (News reports point to Khuda Bakhsh preserving large numbers of manuscripts)
Government Missions & Policies	Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Education, other allied agencies	To mainstream preservation of IKS through policy & funding support.	NEP 2020, National Mission on Libraries which aims to modernise & link libraries. NEP 2020 emphasis on IKS, digitization funding, cultural preservation schemes.

Conclusion :

Preservation of the Indian Knowledge System is essential for sustaining India's cultural identity and intellectual heritage. Libraries, through collection, conservation, digitization, and dissemination, serve as vital custodians connecting tradition with modern education and research. With initiatives like TKDL, NDLI, all allied agencies and the guidance of NEP 2020, libraries are not only safeguarding knowledge but also ensuring its global accessibility and relevance for future generations. In all these perspectives, the key role and initiatives of libraries and allied agencies is of utmost importance for the preservation of the Indian knowledge system.

References :

- AICTE. (2020). *Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) Division*. All India Council for Technical Education. <https://www.aicte-india.org/iks>
- CSIR & Ministry of AYUSH. (n.d.). *Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL)*. Council of Scientific and Industrial Research. <https://www.tkdil.res.in>
- Definition of Indian Knowledge System. <https://www.education.gov.in/en/nep/indian-knowledge-systems>

- Government of India. (2020). *National Education Policy 2020*. Ministry of Education. <https://www.education.gov.in/nep>
- Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA). (n.d.). *National Mission for Manuscripts (NAMAMI)*. Ministry of Culture, Government of India. <https://www.ignca.gov.in/divisionss/manuscripts/>
- Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA). (n.d.). *Kalasampada: Digital Library–Resource for Indian Cultural Heritage*. <https://www.ignca.gov.in/divisionss/kalasampada/>
- Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur. (n.d.). *National Digital Library of India (NDLI)*. Ministry of Education, Government of India. <https://ndl.iitkgp.ac.in>
- Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library. (n.d.). *Rare manuscript collections*. Patna. <http://kblibrary.bih.nic.in>
- Ministry of Culture. (2014). *National Mission on Libraries (NML): Guidelines and framework*. Government of India. <https://www.nmlindia.nic.in>
- Panjab Digital Library. (n.d.). *Preserving Heritage for Generations*. <https://www.panjabdigilib.org>
- Tamil Heritage Foundation. (n.d.). *Digital Preservation of Tamil Manuscripts*. <http://www.tamilheritage.org>