

## PROBLEMS OF SANSKRIT TEACHING IN NEPAL

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### *The State of Sanskrit Education in Nepal*

The tradition of teaching Sanskrit literature has widespread in Nepal since the period of the Licchavis. Even in ancient times, as is clearly known from rock inscriptions, in various holy places, cities and villages of Nepal there were many residential institutions (*gurukulas*), Buddhist shrines and other centres of learning which strove hard for the protection of Sanskrit Literature and for its expansion. In the twelfth century of Vikram era during the reign of the king Mallabhupa Sanskrit education was traditionally institutionalised. From the royal statutes found in rock inscriptions it can be understood that during the rule of Mallabhupa Sanskrit enjoyed the status of the state's official language. In his times even the royal officials were scholars and poets. Their works have been preserved with care in the national libraries through ages. Later in the time of Sah Sanskrit medium educational institutions were established. Through those schools Sanskrit education got much popularity. In 2008 of Vikrama era many Sanskrit colleges have been installed in Nepal. In the post democratic period when Tribhuvan University was established, the professorial members of this university have offered very remarkable contribution.

In the same period by the initiation of king Sri Mahendra, who was a lover of Sanskrit, the thought of establishing a Sanskrit University materialised. It led to the establishment of a Sanskrit-higher learning study centre (*Samṣkṛtādhyayana Samsthān*) as part of Tribhuvan University. More than five educations were started under the affiliation to this Samskritadhyana Sansthan for study of Sanskrit up to research level. Protecting the Sanskrit scholarly cycles and increasing the number of Sanskrit students were some of the steps taken by these Sanskrit study centers.

In the rule of Sri Virendra Vikrama Sahadeva, Mahendra Samskrita Viswavidyalaya was established in memory of his father in the year 2043 of Vikram era. Consequently at present fourteen PG Centres (*Vidyapeethas*) are offering various courses in Sanskrit up to research level on modern lines. Nearly more than sixty Sanskrit-medium government institutions, spread all over the nation, have been run under the channel of these PG Centres. The government of Nepal has started some Vedic and Vedanga institutions for the promotion of Hinduism. Some Ashrams and shrines are also organising some Sanskrit educational institutions at various levels. In the Sanskrit-medium institutions subjects like Veda, Vyākaraṇa, Jyotiṣa, Nyāya and Sāhitya are being taught. As a part of astronomy sciences like physics and mathematics are also being taught. The entire Intermediate education system is being organised by the Government of Nepal.

In the Mahendra Sanskrit University and its affiliated institutions (*Vidyapeethas*) the subjects like Śuklayajurveda, Vyākaraṇa, Sāhitya, Siddhānta Jyotiṣa, Phalita Jyotiṣa, Navya Nyāya, Prācīna Nyāya, Pūrva Mīmāṃsā, Śāṅkara Vedānta, Dharmasāstra, Sarvadarśana, Bauddha darśana, epics and purāṇas, Tantra, Āyurveda, Oriental Political Science, Ethics and principles of Education are offered. Nepali, Hindi, Maithili, Politics, Economics, Mathematics and other such modern subjects are being taught. Presently in the Vidyapeethas there are more students learning Vyākaraṇa, Siddhānta Jyotiṣa, Phalita Jyotiṣa, Śikṣā and Āyurveda when compared to the number of students learning the rest of the subjects. Research activity in the Mahendra University is going on with and without scholarships. There are nearly fifty students registered for Vidyāvaridhi (Ph.D.) course. The syllabi of various courses in the Mahendra Sanskrit University in all respects are in agreement with that of the equivalent courses in most of the Indian Universities and

Tribhuvan University, Nepal. From time to time there are changes in the syllabi as a part of the knowledge-updating process. In the previous year only their syllabi from Post Intermediate level to Post-Graduate level are changed. In the process of modification of syllabi paper-wise description of lessons, adaptable teaching methods, prescribed textbooks, reference books and evaluation mode are also enclosed with clear instructions. Whatever merit there is in the syllabi of any modern university is there in the syllabi of Mahendra Sanskrit University also.

### ***Present Problems of Sanskrit Teaching in Nepal***

The problems that are faced in Sanskrit teaching are almost equal in both Nepal and Bharat. Still the intensity of such problems is more in Nepal than in Bharat for many reasons such as comparatively smaller geographical size of Nepal, its land-lockedness, abundance of mountain surroundings, influence of non-Aryan racial groups and the increasing interest of society in Western education. Some of the striking major problems are given here under:

1. Losing interest of the people in Sanskrit learning.
2. Enmity of non-Aryan races towards Aryan culture and Sanskrit.
3. Shortage of employment opportunities for Sanskrit scholars.
4. False propoganda that Sanskrit is useful only in traditional ritual activities and priesthood.
5. Passiveness of Administration (Government).
6. Economic handicapped ness of common people.
7. Traditional teaching methods adopted in the Sanskrit educational institutions.
8. No attempts for reconciling eastern and western (modern) theories of knowledge.
9. Absence of Sanskrit popularisation activity.
10. Disinterest of Sanskrit teachers to teach in Sanskrit medium.

### ***Some Remedial Ideas***

1. The following ideas may help in increasing the public interest towards Sanskrit.
  - a) Introduction of Yoga in the Curriculum: in the process of Nature cure for curing many diseases Yoga is popularly accepted by many people. By offering Yoga in the education people will grow their interest for Sanskrit.
  - b) Through the syllabus of Ayurveda people would like to learn Sanskrit.
  - c) It is the opinion of the scholars that the association of Sanskrit with Computer will excel all other branches of learning. By making Sanskrit-Computer learning compulsory people will grow their interest for Sanskrit.
  - d) Various training Programmes: the following short term programme packages to teach Sanskrit-based Vedic rituals, Buddhist rituals, Jyotiṣa, Palmistry, Purāṇa recitation, Classical dance, Sculpture and various scripts will help to grow interest for Sanskrit.
2. Practical and job-oriented courses in the subjects such as Āyurveda and Computers in relevance to Sanskrit may better the situation.
3. Access for Sanskritists also to enter Government, Administration, Management and Academic services on a par with other modern social Science faculty members should be provided. Necessary changes in Sanskrit course to that effect should be brought in.
4. There is a misconception among the people that Sanskrit is confined to ritualistic activities only. To remove this misconception many explorative projects relevant to

Sanskrit and Science should be undertaken and the outcome should be demonstrated to the public with empirical proof, which in turn will wipe out existing misconception.

5. The political leaders are doing much harm to the Sanskrit field with an interest to gain the support of the anti- Sanskrit vote. The Government formed by the groups of such leaders will naturally and indirectly work for the fall of Sanskrit only. To avoid this in the respective states necessary steps should be taken for the protection of Sanskrit learning environment.
6. As the academic programme is very difficult for understanding and learning and as it is highly difficult to get employment through such hard Sanskrit courses, common people are not showing interest to learn Sanskrit. To drive poverty they are clinging to learn some other simple disciplines of learning for their immediate livelihood. Therefore, to attract the attention of such people some simplified and job-oriented courses should be designed.
7. Generally the modern Sanskrit teachers are adopting the traditional methods of teaching only against the psychology of the students. Their way of teaching is keeping off even such people who have some interest for Sanskrit learning. To rectify this a refresher course should be conducted for such Sanskrit teachers. From time to time programmes in modern teaching methods should be introduced. On the modern curriculum principles new textbooks should be authored/brought out.
8. The lack of reconciliation between oriental and modern theories is another hindrance in this respect. Some topics prescribed in the teaching programmes are unscientific. For instance in the Siddhānta Jyotiṣa treatises like Sūrya Siddhānta are prescribed. Those treatises say that the Sun moves in the sky when the Earth is static, the Mercury moves nearby the Moon, the Sun is one among the nine planets and other such matters. But modern scientific concepts are against these notions. They say that the Earth is dynamic, the Sun is static, the Mercury moves nearby and round the Sun, the Sun is a star but not a planet and so on. The people who observe this may get confused. Hence, the fact should be examined while prescribing such tests.
9. Another serious problem is the shortage of students for higher learning in Sanskrit in the Universities. As Sanskrit popularization activities are almost absent nowadays, this shortage of students results. Therefore, Government should undertake such programmes, which can help for the growth of Sanskrit learners in the Universities.
10. Teaching Sanskrit through other language media is also one of the reasons for the fall of public interest in Sanskrit; presently most of the Sanskrit teachers are teaching Sanskrit through their respective mother tongues. By this deed the teachers are gradually becoming incapable of teaching through Sanskrit medium. With a thought that it is difficult to gain good knowledge of Sanskrit under the guidance of such teachers, the students who get admission in the Vidyapeethas are in no time shifting to other faculties. To face this situation Sanskrit teachers should be well trained through various training programmes improving their teaching abilities to teach Sanskrit through Sanskrit medium.

*This is the present state of affairs not only in the Mahendra Sanskrit University but also in all other Universities. Hence all scholars may be kind enough to think seriously of these problems and for their solutions.*