

An Overview of Indian Knowledge System in Odia Literature

Dr. Gopinath Khutia

Assistant Professor (TE) of English, Bhadrak Autonomous College, Bhadrak, INDIA.

Corresponding Author: gopinathkhutia@gmail.com

ORCID

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7691-5915>



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ABSTRACT

The article seeks to explore Indian knowledge systems (IKS) in Odia literature which reveals a rich legacy of intellectual, cultural, and philosophical contributions. Rooted in ancient traditions, Odia literature not only preserves the wisdom of Indian knowledge systems but also showcases how regional perspectives have enriched this broader corpus. From the Vedic, Puranic, and classical Sanskrit sources to the medieval Bhakti movement and indigenous practices, Odia literature has documented, interpreted, and localized IKS, creating a unique confluence of knowledge that reflects the ethos of Odisha and its people. The Indian knowledge system, as preserved in Odia literature, is a testament to the region's intellectual diversity and spiritual depth. It underscores the importance of regional interpretations within the broader Indian epistemological framework, contributing to a holistic view of knowledge that values the insights and wisdom of all traditions. Odia literature, by preserving and evolving these ideas, plays a vital role in keeping the Indian knowledge systems alive, relevant, and impactful for future generations. This study aims to analyze key literary contributions, the contextualization of IKS themes in Odia writings, and the continued relevance of these traditions in contemporary society.

Keywords- Indian Knowledge System (IKS); Odia literature; Indigenous knowledge.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Indian Knowledge System (IKS), encompassing philosophy, science, art, literature, and spirituality, has been an integral part of India's intellectual and cultural heritage. The exploration of the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) in Odia literature offers a rich tapestry of cultural, spiritual, and scientific insights that have been integral to Odisha's intellectual tradition. Rooted in ancient Indian philosophies, the Indian Knowledge System represents a holistic approach to knowledge encompassing disciplines as varied as Ayurveda, astronomy, philosophy, arts, and linguistics. In the context of Odia literature, this system becomes a vital source for both literary themes and character development, where texts often draw on indigenous epistemologies to frame their narratives and present

alternative ways of knowing and understanding the world. This article examines how the Indian Knowledge System manifests in Odia literature, with particular emphasis on its role in cultivating a distinct regional identity, fostering indigenous epistemologies, and integrating local wisdom with broader Indian traditions.

II. HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND PHILOSOPHICAL UNDERPINNINGS

The Indian Knowledge System is inherently pluralistic, encompassing a diversity of schools of thought such as Vedanta, Tantra, Yoga, and Ayurveda. In Odia literature, these philosophies have profoundly influenced both classical and modern works, providing a

foundational structure for interpreting life and the cosmos. The *Bhagavati Gita in Sarala Mahabharata*, one of the earliest retellings of the *Mahabharata* in a regional language by the poet Sarala Das, offers an indigenous understanding of dharma (duty) and karma (action), elements that are central to Indian philosophy (Tripathy 54). Sarala Das's work reflects the Odia adaptation of Sanskrit knowledge traditions and reinterprets them to resonate with local values and beliefs, making his text a crucial work for understanding the intersection of Odia literary culture and Indian Knowledge traditions.

The works of Jagannath Das, particularly his *Bhagavata Purana* in Odia, are also significant in this context. His text is a religious and philosophical treatise that synthesizes bhakti (devotion) with the Upanishadic quest for self-knowledge, illustrating how Odia literature has historically drawn from pan-Indian knowledge systems to create narratives that are simultaneously universal and regionally specific. As Mishra notes, "Jagannath Das's work encapsulates the quintessential aspects of Odia spiritual culture while offering insights into larger philosophical concerns, thus bridging the local and the universal" (88). Through such texts, Odia literature has not only preserved indigenous knowledge systems but also reimagined them for the Odia-speaking population.

III. INTEGRATION OF IKS IN FOLKLORE AND ORAL TRADITIONS

Folklore and oral traditions in Odisha have been instrumental in the transmission of Indian Knowledge Systems. Stories, songs, and performances often convey complex philosophical and scientific ideas in accessible forms. For instance, the *Daskathia* and *Pala* performance traditions, which involve storytelling combined with music and dialogue, incorporate elements of Ayurveda, astrology, and indigenous herbal knowledge (Pattnaik 43). These forms serve as "living texts" that perpetuate the IKS, illustrating its adaptability and resilience across centuries and its embeddedness within Odia folk culture.

Such oral narratives often revolve around deities and local heroes, intertwining mythology with knowledge of natural sciences. This is particularly evident in *Chhanda*, a traditional form of Odia poetry that incorporates mathematical patterns and employs complex meters. According to Rao, "the sophistication of *Chhanda* as a poetic form reflects an indigenous mathematical tradition, where rhythmic structures embody a sophisticated understanding of numerical harmony and meter" (35). By embedding these epistemic frameworks into its structure, Odia literature not only preserves but also perpetuates aspects of the Indian Knowledge System in forms that are deeply rooted in regional cultural practices.

IV. REPRESENTATION IN MODERN ODISIA LITERATURE

The influence of IKS extends into modern Odia literature, where contemporary authors continue to draw on ancient philosophies and sciences to enrich their narratives. In works like Gopinath Mohanty's *Paraja*, we see characters "embodying indigenous knowledge systems, using herbal remedies and indigenous agricultural practices that reflect the ecological wisdom of local communities" (Panda 67). These depictions underscore the relevance of IKS in addressing contemporary issues like environmental sustainability and cultural identity, offering alternatives to Western scientific paradigms.

Moreover, modern poets like Sitakant Mahapatra explore themes of self and consciousness through symbols and motifs derived from Indian philosophy. In his poem *Sabari*, Mahapatra invokes "the Vedic concept of *rita* (cosmic order) and the *Panchabhuta* (five elements) to connect human existence with the cosmos, illustrating how ancient Indian metaphysical ideas continue to inform the existential concerns in Odia poetry" (23). This continuity suggests that IKS remains an active and evolving part of Odia literary expression, allowing modern writers to engage with ancient themes in innovative ways.

V. CONCLUSION

Despite its rich contributions, the Indian Knowledge System in Odia literature faces challenges, particularly with the dominance of Western epistemologies and the marginalization of indigenous languages in academic and literary discourse. As Mohanty argues, "the devaluation of indigenous knowledge systems in mainstream education has led to a disconnect between younger generations and their cultural heritage" (92). Revitalizing IKS within Odia literature and education systems can offer a path forward, reasserting the relevance of traditional knowledge in contemporary society.

In conclusion, the Indian Knowledge System forms a foundational layer in Odia literature, permeating its themes, structures, and cultural expressions. From classical works like *Sarala Mahabharata* to modern narratives, Odia literature reflects a deep engagement with Indian philosophical and scientific traditions, reaffirming the importance of IKS in shaping both regional and national identities. By integrating these systems into narratives that resonate with contemporary audiences, Odia literature not only preserves the wisdom of the past but also redefines it for future generations.

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