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# **Bharatiya Bhasha in Higher Education Under NEP 2020: Implications for Literary Writing and Literary Studies**

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**ABSTRACT:**

The National Education Policy 2020 represents a decisive shift in India's educational philosophy by foregrounding the role of Bharatiya Bhasha in higher education. Language, however, is not merely a medium of instruction; it is also the foundation of literary creativity, interpretation, and critical discourse. This paper examines the vision of NEP 2020 with specific reference to Bharatiya Bhasha in higher education and analyses its implications for literary writing and literary studies. It explores how the use of Indian languages in teaching and research can deepen literary comprehension, encourage creative expression, and strengthen engagement with regional and indigenous literary traditions. At the same time, the paper critically reflects on challenges such as the lack of academic resources, faculty preparedness, and institutional readiness for literary scholarship in Bharatiya Bhasha. The study highlights emerging possibilities, including translation initiatives, multilingual pedagogy, curriculum reform and digital platforms that support literary production and criticism. The paper argues that a gradual, inclusive, and balanced implementation of NEP 2020 can rejuvenate literary studies by fostering culturally rooted yet globally connected scholarship.

**KEYWORDS:**

Bharatiya Bhasha, NEP 2020, Literary Studies, Multilingualism, Indian Literature, Higher Education.



## **Introduction**

Language lies at the heart of education, not only as a means of communication but as a medium through which knowledge, culture, and imagination are shaped. In literary studies, language assumes even greater significance, as literature cannot be separated from the linguistic, cultural, and social contexts in which it is produced. India, with its extraordinary linguistic diversity, possesses a long and rich tradition of literary expression in Bharatiya Bhasha. Across centuries, poetry, drama, prose, folklore, and oral narratives in Indian languages have articulated social values, philosophical ideas, ecological awareness, and lived human experiences.

Despite this richness, higher education in India has primarily operated in English, particularly in the humanities and literary disciplines. English has undoubtedly facilitated access to global literary traditions and critical theories. However, its dominance has also created a gap between students and their own linguistic and literary heritage. Many learners encounter regional literatures only through translation or as marginal components of the curriculum. This separation between lived language and academic study often limits comprehension, critical engagement, and creative expression.

The National Education Policy 2020 seeks to address this imbalance by emphasising the importance of Bharatiya Bhasha in education, including higher education. By promoting multilingualism and encouraging the use of Indian languages as mediums of instruction and research, the policy opens new possibilities for literary writing, criticism, and scholarship. This paper examines how NEP 2020 reimagines the role of Bharatiya Bhasha in higher education and evaluates its implications for scholarly studies, creative writing, pedagogy, and academic discourse.

## **Bharatiya Bhasha and the Indian Literary Tradition**

Indian literary traditions have evolved over centuries in close relationship with local languages, cultures, and social realities. Classical languages such as Sanskrit and Tamil produced

philosophical treatises, epics, and lyrical poetry that shaped intellectual life across regions. Similarly, modern Indian languages such as Kannada, Bengali, Hindi, Marathi, and Telugu developed vibrant literary cultures that responded to social reform, colonial resistance, nationalism, and modernity.

Literature in Bharatiya Bhasha was never limited to written texts alone. Oral traditions, folk narratives, ballads, devotional songs, and performance forms played an equally important role in shaping collective memory and cultural consciousness. These literary forms were deeply rooted in everyday life and reflected regional histories, landscapes, and community values.

The colonial introduction of English gradually transformed academic hierarchies within educational institutions. English emerged as the dominant language of higher education, administration, and intellectual prestige. Consequently, English literature gained centrality in university curricula, while Indian-language literatures were often confined to regional departments or treated as optional subjects. As Pattanayak observes, multilingualism in Indian education has frequently been viewed as a challenge rather than as a literary and intellectual resource (34).

This historical shift affected not only language policy but also the nature of literary scholarship. Indian literatures were often studied through English translations, which, while valuable, could not fully convey linguistic nuance, cultural symbolism, and aesthetic complexity. NEP 2020 attempts to correct this imbalance by recognising Bharatiya Bhasha as a legitimate medium of higher education and literary inquiry.

### **NEP 2020 and Language Policy in Higher Education**

The National Education Policy 2020 presents a comprehensive vision of multilingual education that is directly relevant to higher education. It emphasises flexibility in language choice and encourages institutions to offer programmes in regional and Indian

languages, particularly at the undergraduate level (Government of India). The policy also supports the development of textbooks, academic resources, and research publications in Bharatiya Bhasha.

Importantly, NEP 2020 does not position English in opposition to Indian languages. Instead, it promotes coexistence and balance. English continues to be acknowledged as a language of global communication, while Bharatiya Bhasha are recognised as essential for inclusive learning and cultural continuity. This balanced approach reflects a realistic understanding of India's linguistic ecology.

For literary studies, this policy shift creates space for deeper engagement with texts in their original linguistic contexts. It also enables the growth of literary criticism, theory, and scholarship in Indian languages rather than limiting serious academic discourse to English alone.

### **Implications for Literary Studies and Curriculum Design**

The promotion of Bharatiya Bhasha in higher education has far-reaching implications for literary studies and curriculum design. Literature is inseparable from language, and studying texts in their original form allows for richer interpretation. Poetry, drama, and fiction often rely on linguistic rhythms, idioms, metaphors, and cultural references that cannot be fully captured in translation.

NEP 2020 encourages the integration of Bharatiya Bhasha into mainstream curricula, allowing students to study regional literatures as central rather than peripheral subjects. This can revitalise literature departments and promote interdisciplinary approaches that connect literature with history, philosophy, ecology, and cultural studies.

Furthermore, the policy supports comparative literary studies that move beyond English-centric frameworks. Indian literatures can be studied in dialogue with one another, fostering a more inclusive understanding of literary traditions across regions.

### **Impact on Literary Writing and Creative Expression**

One of the most significant outcomes of promoting Bharatiya

Bhasha in higher education is its impact on literary writing and creative expression. When students are encouraged to write essays, research papers, and creative works in their own languages, they often express ideas with greater confidence and authenticity. Mohanty argues that learning and expression in one's home language strengthen cognitive development and creative depth (62).

Creative writing in Bharatiya Bhasha enables students to draw upon local experiences, cultural memories, and linguistic resources. This can lead to the emergence of new literary voices and forms that may otherwise remain marginalised—academic recognition of such writing challenges long-standing hierarchies within literary production.

At the same time, the emphasis on Bharatiya Bhasha strengthens translation studies. Translation becomes a reciprocal process, allowing literature to move across languages while maintaining cultural sensitivity. This enriches both Indian and global literary landscapes.

### **Bharatiya Bhasha and English Literary Studies**

NEP 2020 also has important implications for English studies in India. Rather than diminishing the relevance of English literature, the policy encourages a more dialogic relationship between English and Indian-language literatures. English studies can become more comparative, interdisciplinary, and culturally grounded.

Students of English literature who are trained in multilingual environments are better equipped to engage with postcolonial theory, translation studies, and world literature. This approach allows English literature to be studied alongside Bharatiya Bhasha literature, fostering mutual enrichment rather than competition.

### **Challenges in Implementation**

Despite its progressive vision, implementing Bharatiya Bhasha in higher education faces several challenges. One primary concern is the limited availability of academic and critical resources

in Indian languages. Much of contemporary literary theory remains accessible primarily through English.

Faculty preparedness is another challenge. Teachers trained within English-dominated academic systems may require support to adopt bilingual or multilingual pedagogies. Institutional commitment, faculty training programmes, and resource development are essential for meaningful implementation.

Institutional readiness also plays a crucial role. Universities must develop clear policies, allocate resources, and create supportive environments for multilingual literary education. Without sustained effort, the objectives of NEP 2020 may remain largely aspirational.

### **Emerging Possibilities and Support Systems**

NEP 2020 also creates new opportunities for strengthening literary studies through Bharatiya Bhasha. Translation initiatives such as the National Translation Mission can make literary texts and critical works accessible across languages. Digital archives, open-access journals, and online repositories support the preservation and dissemination of Indian-language literature.

UNESCO emphasises that technology, when used responsibly, can strengthen multilingual education and promote cultural diversity (UNESCO). Such tools can play a crucial role in sustaining literary scholarship across Indian languages.

### **Conclusion**

The emphasis on Bharatiya Bhasha in higher education under NEP 2020 represents a transformative moment for literary studies in India. By creating space for scholarly writing, criticism, and research in Indian languages, the policy challenges long-standing academic hierarchies and expands the scope of literary scholarship.

While implementation requires careful planning and institutional support, the potential benefits are substantial. A balanced approach that values Bharatiya Bhasha alongside global

literary engagement can foster a more inclusive, culturally rooted, and intellectually vibrant academic environment. Strengthening Indian-language literature in higher education is not merely a linguistic reform but a step toward reclaiming diverse literary voices within national and global academic discourse.

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