



Translation and Language Policy in India under NEP 2020

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ABSTRACT

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is a landmark policy intervention in the educational landscape of India as it prioritizes multilingualism and rejuvenation of Indian languages. Veering towards an aspiration of universalising knowledge, the new policy is knotted into a linguistic and pedagogical warp that demotes translation to its very sinews. In this paper, the importance of translation is discussed in the context of achieving the objectives set by NEP 2020, the focus being on imparting education in primary and mother tongue languages as well as building knowledge repositories within various disciplines. Based on the analysis of public policies, institutional practices, and evolving translation technologies, the research investigates how translation works as an instrument of empowerment on the one hand, and a site of competition on the other. NEP 2020 provides a unique opportunity to language inclusive education, the absence of infrastructure, trained personnel and standard terminology acts as major roadblocks. Translation itself is presented as a strong means of transcending linguistic dominance; the paper also calls for caution in this regard against its abuse in the decapitalization of cultural dominion. This study, on a systematic critique of implementation strategies demonstrates the demand for culturally tailored, entrusted intermediary translation practices that are reinforced by well-functioning institutional mechanisms. The paper argues, in the end, that the effectiveness of NEP 2020's multilingual vision hinges on seeing translation not as an appendage to knowledge-production but as a knowledge-producing intervention.

Introduction

India is home to a rich tapestry of more than 1,200 languages —only 22 are recognised under the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution. This multilingualism is not just a sociolinguistic fact, but part of the civilizational heritage of our cultural and intellectual pluralism. Like G.N. Devy rightly puts it, “India is perhaps the only country where language is not only a means of communication but also a form of identity and resistance” (Devy, *The Crisis Within*, 2017). This rich linguistic diversity poses a challenge to Indian education — and the dance of unity and diversity has to be ensured; one side cannot be overemphasized at the cost of the other (national unity vs fragmentation due to multiplicity languages/ impediments in accessing knowledge and information).

The Three-Language Formula is an educational language policy to maintain a delicate linguistic balance in the highly multilingual Indian medium of instruction adopted for schools. It suggested teaching Hindi, English and one regional language for multilingual proficiency. But in actuality, the policy failed time and again on regional resistance, infrastructural shortcomings and spiritual domination of Hindi and English particularly at college level. The legacy of colonial rule means that English remains the language of upward mobility and Hindi continues to enjoy state patronage, marginalising many Indian languages in processes of knowledge production and dissemination.

In this context, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 takes a step in the right direction by promoting multilingualism and recommending primary education at least till Grade 5 and preferably till Grade 8 and beyond be in mother tongues and regional languages. It acknowledges that “children learn and grasp non-trivial concept more quickly in their home language/mother tongue,” which is based on pedagogical research as well as cultural affirmation (NEP 2020, para 4.11). The NEP 2020 aspires for an Indian system of education rooted in the Indian ethos that is truly world-class in standards, and language stands at the core of these two aspirations.

At the heart of this multilingual vision is translation itself — no longer simply as a linguistic practice, but as a practice of epistemic transformation and justice. Because the world academic and scientific content is so much in English, unveiling the best access for our nations to the knowledge becomes extremely necessary. A way to push back against linguistic supremacy and cross-fertilize ideas beyond language silos. In the Indian context, this is true for translation both as a cultural imperative and political action and as an opportunity to challenge hierarchies that govern what can or cannot be included in the repository of knowledge.

Since the NEP promises us “high-quality bilingual textbooks and teaching-learning materials,” translation is a factor that we cannot ignore— not merely as a tool to keep knowledge accessible in various languages but also make sure it is done so in culturally indigenous, pedagogically beneficial manner. It is in this context that the NEP echoes the vision of a creative thinker like Rabindranath Tagore calling for an education which should be “rooted in one’s own language and culture, but open to the winds of the world.”

On the whole, the mode of the language of India is not confined to communication but it extends its spectrum up to power, access and identity. This is an invaluable moment to advocate for recasting language policy in NEP 2020 as a vehicle of inclusion, and translation can be used as the most efficacious weapon to realize this preposition.

Historical Background of Language Policy in India

The process of language policy in India, especially post-independence has been tumultuous. In the Indian context, language has hardly ever been a neutral medium; it has always served as an indicator of pride, a regional identity and political assertion. After independence, the Indian state made a serious effort to come up with an appropriate language policy that could both assimilate and accept India's enormous linguistic diversity.

As recently as 1947, the members of the Constituent Assembly in southern Bombay had strenuously debated on a national language. While Hindi had its share of votaries, coming as it did from the Hindi belt; non-Hindi areas, particularly in the South stood up against this choice by rebuffing ferociously. It gave birth to a compromise- English would continue to be an associate official language for fifteen years along with Hindi. However, that did not resolve it. The anti-Hindi agitations in Tamil Nadu throughout the 1960s, particularly 1965 stood as a powerful regional assertion against cultural and linguistic imperialism. Younger scholars like Sudipta Kaviraj write: "Language in post-colonial India has always remained more than a means of communication; it is a political instrument" (Kaviraj, *Politics in India*, 1999).

In this regard, the Kothari Commission Report (1964–66) underlined the Three-Language Formula (TLF) as a policy instrument to straddle national integration with regional autonomy. The formula is: for students from Hindi speaking states: (1) Hindi, (2) English and (3) any modern Indian language preferably a South Indian language and for non-Hindi speaking states: (1) Regional language, (2) Hindi and (3) English. Though pedagogically well-intended, the policy floundered in execution. Opposition to Hindi persisted in many non-Hindi states and English became the widely used language of elite education, journalism and government services.

English has indeed been suspended in a paradoxical position by the Indian society. It was, of course, simultaneously a colonial legacy and the dialect which made possible many aspirations to upwardly mobile futures, global connection. As Braj B. Kachru famously said, "English in India is a symbol of modernity, of elitism, and of socio-economic opportunity" (Kachru, *The Indianization of English*). Urban centres and private institutions adopted English-medium education, vernacular schools more and more appeared as indicators of inferior quality further reflecting class for caste hierarchies.

However, claims to regional identity in states like Tamil Nadu, Punjab and Bengal became more vocal with language taking on a central role the Dravidian movement in Tamil Nadu drew on language as a means of resistance against the domination perceived to come from the north. A Punjabi Suba was favoured in Punjab out of linguistic and cultural identity. Profound ethnolinguistic pride in the Bengali language itself came to create major cultural movements among Bengalis in Bengal. These movements demonstrated the linguistic diversity of India which could never be homogenised by simply imposing one language from the centre.

The pre-NEP era saw largely ad hoc translation practices. Projects of the National Book Trust and Sahitya Akademi did include translations, but these were few and far between with a focus on literary. No national-level policy existed for conversion of academic, scientific and pedagogical literature in Indian languages. Consequently, much of the higher education content was still English-only and that made for a steep learning curve for students whose first language or home language was not English. In this environment, translation had been conceptualized in cultural rather than systemic terms of knowledge access.

In this context, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is a milestone being pursued with the recognition of historical bottlenecks. NEP proposes the rarefied act of converting educational material into all big Indian languages and in doing so aims to formalise what was once both informal, and a non-area. The policy highlights the fact that “the importance of translation cannot be understated in a multilingual country such as India” (NEP 2020, para 22.12), marking an overdue move towards linguistic democratization in Indian education sector.

NEP 2020 and Its Vision for Multilingualism

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has a re-stated commitment to the multilingual heritage of India, that seeks a national vision in this respect which is not just pedagogical but also socio-political. Acknowledging the complex linguistic plurality of the country, its approach is a confident break from monolingual proclivities and a reiteration of India's polyphonic heritage. India is a multilingual country, home to more than 1,600 languages (as of the last count) and 22 languages that are listed in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution. The draft on NEP acknowledges this plurality not as a bane but avital cultural resource to be conserved and developed through reforms.

Another significant statement in NEP is the preference of the medium of instruction as the mother tongue or regional language, including till Grade 5, hopefully till Grade 8, and above. The policy mentions that “Wherever possible, the medium of instruction until at least Grade 5, but preferably till Grade 8 and beyond, will be the mother tongue or the local language or the regional language” (NEP 2020, Para 4.11). This is based on well-established central conclusions from global pedagogical investigation and Indian educationist equivalents. International research has revealed that children do concepts and critical thinking best in their mother tongue. As Krishna Kumar states, “imposing an alien language early in schooling not only hampers learning but estranges children from their cultural roots” (*Politics of Education in Colonial India*, 2014).

The NEP suggests the setting up of a National Institute for Translation and Interpretation (NITI) to implement the idea of linguistic inclusivity. The proposed agency is supposed to be a centralized body that will supervise quality translation of materials in systematic and professional ways, especially within the field of higher education. Its objective is to democratise quality educational content, both for learning languages as well as for enabling students in universities to learn their subjects in their own regional languages. As per the policy, “high-quality translation of all curricular and other materials into the languages of India will be actively pursued” (NEP 2020, Para 22.12).

To add to this, one of the most revolutionary measures suggested by the NEP will be translation in major Indian languages of textbooks and reference materials. It was not only a technical but also philosophical choice. It takes on the age-old hierarchy in Indian education of English being paramount for post graduate studies and professional courses. While most students in non-English speaking communities can graduate within their mother tongue, others already deprived of the system through the English language will find studying in it entirely add further hindrance. In the same vein, Ganesh Devy claims: “language is not just a means of communication; it is a way of seeing the world. Denying someone education in their own language is tantamount to denying their worldview” (*The G.N. Devy Reader*, 2020).

More importantly, the policy also warns against translation technology. The initiative fosters the research, development and integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) into translation processes, cutting-edge resources being utilized in a special manner or another what advances high-level technologies. These tools can translate effort, and provide for multilingual instruction in life. At the same time, however, the policy is mindful of the shortcomings that can be a side effect of using automated tools and explicitly mentions human review to ensure a higher quality and contextual fidelity.

A third significant issue of NEP 2020 is its pledge to save the linguistic diversity of India and de-centre the standard language hierarchies. In prioritising mother tongues and regional languages, the curriculum would be broken down followed up the hierarchy where knowledge is shared among maximum access to education users in addition to absolutely decentralising know-how. It disturbs the language policy we have inherited from colonizers that is fixated on the English-Hindi binary and makes room for minority and tribal languages to thrive in the mainstream education. The use of Indian Sign Language (ISL) as a standardizing language throughout the country, is also seen to be an important and innovative development towards inclusive multilingualism.

It embodies, in short, a historic time to completely overhaul the language question with an inclusive and forward-looking framework through NEP 2020. But in its insistence on translation, on technological advancement, and on pedagogical parity it points toward an educational system that is hostile no longer to linguistic capital but to the unequal distribution of such. There must be a model, as put by Udaya Narayana Singh that “all languages are spoken, and all languages are empowered” (Singh 7).

Translation as a Pedagogical and Political Tool

For us, this translation in the Indian context is not merely linguistic; it is pedagogical justice and a political reclamation. It might disrupt epistemic hierarchies that have been in place for a long time and that pump some languages — English above all else — at the expense of diverse and vibrant linguistic traditions of the Indian subcontinent. It became clear that translation, as medium and metaphor, forces a reflection on educational justice or disenfranchisement, the democratization of knowledge for all social classes and linguistic empowerment.

A central justification for the practice of using translation in education is to foster access and participation in education. In a multilingual country like India, where most quality education is delivered through English or Hindi as though these were 'national' languages (they are not), regional language speakers are at a significant disadvantage. This asymmetry is corrected by translation. As G.N. Devy rightly points out, “Translation is not only a bridge between texts; it is a bridge between people, knowledge systems, and cultures” (*The G.N. Devy Reader*, 2020). Local language translations of materials could help close the first-mile gap for subaltern learners, as well as rural and semi-urban learners.

Translation, as it is used selectively, can serve to democratize knowledge, this is especially key in the sciences and philosophy, but also in the humanities. Traditional scientific dialogues historically have had an English bias in India, keeping a very large population of students away from it. The average age of his literature is over 100 years at this point, and the NEP 2020 approaches this question by envisioning textbooks and reference materials being translated into regional languages. This is beyond just access and extends to giving Indian

languages a sense of intellectual credibility. As U.R. Ananthamurthy said, “Philosophical ideas must be grounded in the language of the people; otherwise, they lose their ethical and experiential dimension” (qtd. in Mukherjee, *Translation and Its Politics*, 2013).

Translation can help Indian languages occupy epistemic domains such as abstract reasoning, scientific terminology and conceptual discourse—fields that have been traditionally colonised by colonial languages. This would help the process of an internal civilisational dialogue that can strengthen cultural continuity and pedagogic relevance, through translation of key texts from classical Indian philosophical thought into modern Indian languages.

Translation, though, is rarely neutral or altruistic. It is a double-edged sword, either a tool of empowerment, or one of appropriation. In fact, translation into dominant languages (in general and more pronounced when translated into English) has been used historically as an act of removal-violence. As Tejaswini Niranjana famously said, “Colonial translation was part of a wider discursive formation that produced the colonial subject as always-already lacking, in need of instruction from the West” (*Siting Translation*, 1992). Abdulrazak Gurnah likens translation into Indian languages to cultural appropriation, when it clearly is not at least it does not have to be if done with reciprocity and respect as opposed to pretending that [translating from] Indian ‘translations’ of English-language texts are an act of cultural reclamation.

However, translation is not always a neutral or benevolent act. It can be a double-edged sword—a means of empowerment or a mode of appropriation. Translation into dominant languages, especially into English, has historically involved a violence of erasure. As Tejaswini Niranjana famously asserted, “Colonial translation was part of a wider discursive formation that produced the colonial subject as always-already lacking, in need of instruction from the West” (*Siting Translation*, 1992). Meanwhile, translating to Indian languages — when it is based in giving and taking or an informed sense of belonging— switches nature: a claim to sovereignty over culture and space of knowledge.

This means that translation must necessarily be subject to, and sensitive towards, power relations between languages, regions, and knowledge traditions. More than mere transfer of English to Kannada or Tamil, it is an ideological exercise in establishing the claim to credibility that this language carries some serious thought. However, when the translation is also not motivated by reciprocity and geared towards extractive or market ends, such mere transcreation can still be exploitative.

Attempts at institutionalising translation in Indian education can be viewed as a part of these larger changes initiated and strengthened over the past few years. On the other hand, the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) has been working on translation into major Indian languages like Kannada, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu as well as Bengali among others for school textbooks. Over time, this has enabled hundreds of thousands of students to learn science and math in their mother tongues.

On a similar note, following the orders of NEP 2020, University Grants Commission (UGC) has also started having foundational level undergraduate studies in Economics, Political Science and Physics translated to regional languages. In Karnataka, core texts for BA and BSc programs are being translated into Kannada; Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu is also working on such projects. In Marathi and Tamil, the intention is to create a more comprehensive understanding, better memorisation and stronger social bonding for learners.

But at the same time, it is necessary that these translations are both conceptually accurate, terminologically precise and stylistically faithful. Poor translations instead of being empowering can isolate, and this process is what Prithvi Datta Chandra Shobhi terms “vernacular disillusionment” — a condition where the student starts feeling that her language is inadequate for high intellectual pursuit.

And thus, in India translation has to be seen both as pedagogical strategic as well as a political intervention. It can make knowledge a democracy, engender linguistic justice and give back dignity to languages and communities euchred from the schooling process. But it should also go hand-in-hand with thought about itself, not to give in to centralisation or homogenisation or tokenism. While the NEP proposes to rejuvenate our educational system by embracing multilingualism, translation will be its biggest bastion; one that should not lose sight of equity, ethics and epistemological humility.

Institutional Frameworks for Translation under NEP

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is an illustration of this paradigm shift, enunciating a renewed focus on translation — no longer just as an ancillary activity but as systemic necessity for multilingualism and inclusive education in India. This vision can be realized only through strong institutional frameworks, in terms of policy and execution. The NEP acknowledges the infrastructural and technological issues associated with multilingual education and anticipates a decentralised, tech driven translation ecosystem among government entities, academia, and private stakeholders.

At the heart of this framework is the National Translation Mission (NTM), one of the flagship programs implemented in the Eleventh Five-Year Plan, which enables textbooks to be made accessible in a variety of Indian languages. While the mission has seen fits and starts in progress, NEP 2020 outlines a rejuvenation and expansion of the exercise to be in consonance with modern academic and technological requirements. According to the policy, NTM shall primarily be responsible for translating textbooks and reference materials at school level and university level into regional communication languages. The objective is not only to bring about linguistic accessibility, but also what the policy calls as “knowledge equity and academic democratisation” (NEP 2020, para 22.12).

It is multidisciplinary, focused both on classical texts and contemporary scientific material. Translating undergraduate level sociology and political science books into Kannada, Bangla, Tamil, Urdu constitute part efforts of the past which might be considered as a base on top of which newer translation initiatives could plug in to newer technology platforms.

The NEP proposes creation of university-based translation bureaus, particularly inside universities with strong regional language departments, to make translation happen at the ground level. These bureaus are intended to lead efforts in local translation, form fields specific glossaries and run capacity building activities including workshops and programs that award a certification in translation.

Even colleges like Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) and University of Hyderabad have translation studies departments that are good enough. In the broader vision of NEP, these departments can be strengthened even more as nodal centres for translation across disciplines. Finally, as Udaya Narayana Singh rightly says, “Translation within Indian universities must evolve from an act of cultural preservation to an act of pedagogic intervention” (*Multilingualism and the Making of Nations*, 2016). It is hoped that these centres will preserve

the linguistic and disciplinary purity, an especially essential element in technical-scientific texts.

Due to the large scale of translation that is needed, the NEP also suggests leveraging Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) for translations. The Government of India has also developed two significant platforms- Bhashini and Anuvadini.

- Under National Language Translation Mission (NLTM), Bhashini is an AI-based platform to provide real time translation of contents from any language to Indian languages. That includes voice recognition, speech-to-text, and cross-lingual search.
- Launched by the Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL), Anuvadini is a neural machine translation system for translation of paradigmatic types of documents including parliamentary, academic, and administrative documents using trained neural models in full.

The purpose of these tools is not to replace a human translator but to aid you in translating large amounts of text quickly (and for time-sensitive projects). Braj B. Kachru, a prominent linguist, succinctly said that “Technology in language use must serve plurality, not standardisation” (*The Indianization of English*, 1983). Human oversight and context sensitivity therefore continue to be essential in an automated translation framework.

The NEP also highlighted the salience of public-private partnerships (PPP) to bolster the coverage and quality of translation efforts. Pratham Books and the Ek Step Foundation have already shown us what is possible using digital platforms and community translation to unlock learning resources across languages.

- Story Weaver, the open-source digital library for children by Pratham Books, where thousands of openly licensed multilingual stories (including those created collaboratively, through crowd-sourcing and translations reviews by volunteers and educators) exist.
- A digital infrastructure that allows for any content to be created in any language and also shared and adapted can be built — Sunbird, a platform developed by the EkStep Foundation (co-founded by Nandan Nilekani) is an example.

These initiatives supplement governmental efforts by addressing the missing links in early literacy and school level translation, all the while promoting participatory culture embedded and pedagogically relevant models of translation.

The NEPs ambition for translation, coming as it does from a country where language can create links or be a wall — is both grand and urgently necessary. These include reviving the already existing, but underutilised institutions like NTM at SCERTs, establishing decentralised translation hubs in universities, scaling AI for this endeavour with the check mechanism and purposely building on public-private synergies. Contingent upon the way it is done, the success of this framework is not only built on infrastructure or financial commitments but in the ideological belief in multilingualism as an intellectual and cultural act.

Challenges in Implementing Translation Policies under the NEP

Although the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 talks about a multilingual education framework where one language spoken at home will also be used as a medium of instruction in schools and suggests making broad conversation to translate textbooks into various Indian languages, erecting such an imaginative edifice is strewn with enormous and multi-dimensional

challenges that are faced during implementation. These are not just obstacles of logistics or technology, but deeply imbricated within the socio-linguistic, political and epistemological contexts in India. Therefore, assurances of equal knowledge access through translation necessarily intersect with questions about the ability or willingness to translate.

Chief among them is the severe dearth of available skilled translators, particularly in technical areas like science, technology, engineering and math (STEM), law, medicine and philosophy. Unlike its counterpart literary translation, which enjoys a relatively stronger academic status in Indian universities, technical translation is still in its nascent stage.

Refer to Dr. G.N. Devy, who correctly says “Translation in India is often romanticised in literature but neglected in science and social development” (*Indian Literary Criticism: Theory and Interpretation*, 2010). Due to insufficient domain-specific language skills and supported by few training programs and organizations for translation certification, the quality of educational material has been endangered, reducing pedagogical reliability.

One of the biggest hurdles still, is the lack of availability in Indian languages especially technical subjects very few standardised terminologies. Though the Commission for Scientific and Technical Terminology (CSTT) and similar other bodies have tried to prepare bilinguals in Indian languages, this exercise has not met with widespread acceptance or uniformity or actual usage of these terms in the class room. A lot of the times, regional terminologies are either old school, too Sanskritised or simply peachy for students and teachers. This results in cognitive dissonance, and students might end up mugging complex terms without understanding. As Alok Rai comments, “Without organic development, vocabulary-building becomes a sterile, bureaucratic exercise” (*Hindi Nationalism*, 2001).

With respect to education, this concept of translation is obviously far more significant than mere linguistic equivalence. It involves the transfer of epistemic frameworks, which may sometimes not easily translate from English or the classical languages into an Indian vernacular. The downside is a loss of semantics, interpretive inconsistency, and in some cases a watering down of academic rigour. Philosophical concepts like ontology, epistemology get lost in translation when one translates them into Indian languages devoid of indigenous equivalents. As a result, either the ideas are simplified or there is an unintelligible conglomeration of source and target discourses — leading to an academic compromise in both translated texts.

One of the AI driven translation tools proposed to be integrated is Bhashini and Anuvadini (although nascent), focus remains on building capacities for a range of languages. While building a linguistically accurate machine translation system for English or Hindi is relatively simple, a large number of Indian languages have low-resource status in Natural Language Processing (NLP), which can impede the creation of robust bilingual systems. The idiomatic usage, the contextual nuance or proper understanding of disciplinary jargons are all where machine translation tools could buckle down and come back with unintelligible to misleading outputs. And they lack appropriate cultural sensitivity, which is so central to educational and literary translation. As Meenakshi Mukherjee notes, “Translation is not a mechanical act of substitution but a cultural negotiation” (*The Perishable Empire*, 2000).

However, India’s linguistic diversity is also a weakness. It is a site of intense political competition. Because most national translation policies involve a centralised approach that opens up the possibility for Hindi imposition, many states, such as Tamil Nadu, West Bengal,

and Kerala, which do not speak Hindi, have resisted translating toasts and tweets. They consider national translation policies suspicious and believe that harmony and pluralism are potential places for linguistic attunement, and treat them as top-down efforts. More often than not, their distrust seems to be justified. Because translation belongs to language, and language belongs to identity and power, translation is not a place for harmony, but for hegemony. National translation policies must focus on the region, be linguistically plural, and politically sensitive to be possible.

There is a representation that emerges frequently within translation — that of it as an egalitarian tool for the democratization of knowledge, despite it often merely echoing or exacerbating caste and socioeconomic divides. The Minority languages are being marginalized and most of the translation efforts are towards Elite Languages like Hindi, Bangla, Tamil etc. Likewise, metropolitan institutions that have the necessary infrastructure and budget will likely allow enhanced NEP-driven translation policies to rural or semi-urban centres. And the access to these translated materials — frequently digital- relies on socio-economic privilege. A digital translation of a textbook in Telugu or Marathi does not help when you do not have access to devices, connectivity, and teacher support as a student. As Kancha Ilaiah remarks, “Language and translation cannot be democratised until they serve the excluded and not just the included” (*Post-Hindu India*, 2009).

The implementation of translation policies under NEP is met with a plethora of structural, linguistic, technological and ideological challenges. These are not just bottlenecks; they are an outcome of deeper asymmetries in the education and linguistic ecosystem of India. If translation is to live up to its promise of linguistic justice and cognitive enfranchisement, then it needs to be thought of as not merely a technical or administrative task but as an educational challenge and political program. That is the only way how translation, as Gayatri Spivak put it in *The Politics of Translation* (1993), can be “the most intimate act of reading” (*The Politics of Translation*, 1993) and the most transformative tool of learning.

Conclusion

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is an important milestone in India, highlighting the contribution of translation to create a multilingual and knowledge-diverse educational landscape. While India reaches for an “education system rooted in Indian ethos”, translation as a bridge between policy and practice weaves through the ever-present ribbon of linguistic diversity to orchestrate equitable learning. This is not just a case of transcreation of educational material into Indian languages, be it textbooks, reference works or digital content but a philosophical and political commitment to inclusivity.

But this vision is riddled with ideological, linguistic and technical hurdles. The dearth of domain-specific translators, lack of standardization in terminology, the restrictions of digital tools such as AI-based translation and language repression politics-most importantly the apprehension of Hindi hegemony-pose major challenges are major barriers. Meanwhile, ambiguities related to caste and class access remain; translation empowers some but can also entrench inequity if not applied carefully.

The way forward will therefore require long term state and institutional commitment to translator training, a distributive policy approach based on regional aspirations and the participation of civil society anchored in the voice of translation. The NEP asserts that translation should not remain an administrative formality but be really ethical and educative

obligation. Translation can in fact be the lynchpin of creating an equitable, multilingual knowledge society for 21st-century India if it is envisaged and implemented inclusively.

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