
Indian Knowledge Systems in Everyday Life: A Literary Study of Neelum Saran Gour

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Abstract

Indian Knowledge Systems are deeply embedded in everyday life, sustained through lived practices, cultural memory, language, and social relationships rather than formalised texts alone. This paper examines how such everyday Indian knowledge systems are represented in the fiction of Neelum Saran Gour. Through a close reading of select novels and short stories, the study explores how ordinary spaces—homes, neighbourhoods, streets, and intimate social worlds—become sites of knowledge transmission and ethical reflection. It argues that Gour’s narratives foreground lived experience, particularly women’s domestic and emotional knowledge, as a vital form of cultural continuity. By situating her fiction within the framework of Indian Knowledge Systems, the paper highlights literature’s role in preserving everyday ways of knowing that shape identity and belonging in contemporary Indian life.

1. Introduction

Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) have often been understood through classical texts and formal traditions. However, everyday life remains one of the most significant yet underexplored sites of Indian knowledge. Knowledge in the Indian context is frequently experiential, relational, and embedded in routine practices rather than institutional structures.

Neelum Saran Gour’s fiction offers a compelling literary space where such everyday knowledge is articulated. Her narratives attend closely to ordinary lives shaped by memory, domestic routines, emotional negotiations, and social spaces. In *Invisible Ink*, for instance, everyday life is described as layered with unspoken histories, where “the ordinary days carried within them stories that were never written down but always remembered.” Such moments reflect how lived experience becomes a form of knowledge transmission.

This paper argues that Gour’s fiction records Indian Knowledge Systems not as abstract philosophies but as lived, embodied practices rooted in everyday existence.

2. Indian Knowledge Systems and Everyday Practices

Indian Knowledge Systems operate through habitual actions—ways of speaking, caring, remembering, and coexisting. These practices are rarely formalised but are central to cultural continuity. Gour’s fiction repeatedly foregrounds such informal modes of knowing.

In *The Grey Pigeon and Other Stories*, everyday interactions reveal how cultural values are sustained quietly through routine gestures. Characters often rely on instinctive moral judgement rather than codified rules, suggesting a knowledge system shaped by experience rather than doctrine. As one narrative observes, “People did not need to be told what was right; they had learnt it by living.”

This emphasis aligns with IKS frameworks that recognise knowledge as lived and situational, emerging from social contexts rather than textual authority.

3. Everyday Spaces as Knowledge Sites

Space plays a crucial role in Gour’s representation of everyday Indian knowledge. Homes, neighbourhoods, and familiar streets become sites where memory and meaning accumulate. These spaces carry inherited knowledge, shaping how individuals understand themselves and others.

In *Sikandhar Chowk Park*, the park functions as more than a physical location; it becomes a shared cultural space layered with personal and collective memories. The narrator notes how “the park remembered people long after they had stopped coming,” suggesting that space itself becomes a repository of lived knowledge.

Similarly, domestic interiors in Gour’s fiction are spaces where everyday wisdom is practised and transmitted. Kitchens, courtyards, and shared rooms emerge as sites of cultural continuity, reinforcing the idea that Indian Knowledge Systems are inseparable from lived environments.

4. Memory as Cultural Knowledge

Memory functions as a central mechanism through which everyday Indian knowledge is preserved in Gour’s fiction. Her narratives often return to the past not nostalgically but reflectively, treating memory as a source of understanding.

In *Requiem in Raga Janki*, memory is closely tied to identity and belonging. The narrative suggests that remembering is an ethical act, as characters carry forward fragments of lived experience that shape present choices. A reflective moment notes that “what survived was not the event itself, but the feeling it left behind,” indicating how emotional memory becomes knowledge.

Through such representations, Gour’s fiction aligns with indigenous epistemologies that privilege lived remembrance over recorded history.

5. Women, Domestic Knowledge, and Cultural Continuity

Women’s experiences occupy a central place in Gour’s fictional worlds. Their everyday knowledge—shaped through domestic responsibilities, emotional labour, and social negotiation—emerges as a vital form of Indian Knowledge Systems.

In several stories from *The Grey Pigeon and Other Stories*, women characters act as silent custodians of memory and tradition. Their understanding of relationships and

survival is acquired not through instruction but through endurance and observation. One character reflects that “everything she knew, she had learnt without being taught,” underscoring the experiential nature of women’s knowledge.

By foregrounding such voices, Gour challenges dominant epistemic hierarchies and expands the scope of Indian Knowledge Systems to include domestic and emotional wisdom.

6. Literature as a Living Archive of IKS

Gour’s fiction demonstrates that literature functions as a living archive of Indian Knowledge Systems. Rather than preserving knowledge statically, her narratives allow everyday practices to remain dynamic and adaptable.

In *Invisible Ink*, the metaphor of writing that fades yet leaves traces powerfully captures how everyday knowledge operates—often invisible, yet enduring. Literature, in this sense, becomes a medium through which ordinary lives are acknowledged as sites of knowledge.

7. Conclusion

This paper has explored how Neelum Saran Gour’s fiction represents Indian Knowledge Systems as lived realities embedded in everyday life. Through ordinary spaces, memory, and women’s experiences, her narratives reveal knowledge as relational, experiential, and culturally sustained. By situating Gour’s work within the framework of Indian Knowledge Systems, the study highlights literature’s crucial role in preserving everyday ways of knowing that continue to shape Indian life.

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