



## Harbinger of Indian Culture and its advancement toward the New Age: an Unbreakable bond of Past and Present

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**ABSTRACT:** An essential feature of a culture is that its radical beliefs, thinking and principles are traditionally derived established worldviews passed on from generation to generation. Culture consists of the ways in which we think and act as members of a society. It is a practice of life which is essential for the survival of a specific group or people living in a specific society. Indian culture has its own age-old heritage from Vedas to present time and Indian literature no matter in what form has brought the past and present together in one frame. As a harbinger of literature our Indian literature has played a vital role in development of culture. The present paper will focus on the development of Indian culture and its ethical values. Paper will also discuss how Indian values and customs has been passed down through the Indian literature and created an unbreakable bond between two times past and present.

**KEYWORDS:** Culture, Literature, Indian Heritage, Knowledge, Imagination

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### I. INTRODUCTION

Culture may even be described simply as that which makes life worth living. The radical questions that all mankind ask is about their existence, the reason behind their birth, the actual meaning of their life and above all how can they make their life worth living therefore all their queries can be only gratified by the means of culture. I feel the culture of India is like a garland of beads, made of various colors and diversity is its hallmark which makes this Indian-ness possible. Apart from this if we talk about cultural messenger our ancient and rich literature plays a vital role in advancement of Indian culture. Literature has been transmitting and saving culture since the ancient time through books, poems, plays and novels which create the understanding that how a particular people thought and lived in particular time in past and help us to relate our life in present. It is our indigenous knowledge which gives the wings to expand the Indian culture in all arenas. Though India has an incessant flow of stream of indigenous knowledge and imagination a flow of Western knowledge and imagination is also needed in its adequate use. Some "Indian erudite" holds that Indian knowledge and thoughts are obsolete and irrelevant in modern context and believe that all source of knowledge primarily originated in the west which is untrue. The origin of prime sources of knowledge lies in great heritage of India which is the reservoir of indigenous knowledge and imagination of India.

#### Image of Indian heritage through great knowledge

Our Indian knowledge has always reflected the society which in turn has exhibited the continuous up-gradation of Indian culture. The earliest pieces of literature that mankind knows are Vedas which reflects the ideals "Truth is beauty; beauty is truth all that ye need to know" (John Keats). Vedas, the oldest Indian literature considered to be the great reservoir of the early thoughts of human interaction with nature, comprised about 1500 BC. Vedas form the very basis of Indian literature is the culture itself. As described by Prof. Paul Thieme, "Vedas are noble documents not only of value and pride to India, but to the entire humanity because in them we see man attempting to lift himself above the earthly existence."(72)

As far as our Upanishads are concerned Schopenhauer, the pessimist, who is often quoted says: "From every sentence (if the Upanishads) deep, original and sublime thoughts arise, and the whole is pervaded by a high and holy and earnest spirit.... In the whole world there is no study...so beneficial and so elevating as that of the Upanishads.... (They) are products of the highest wisdom.... It is destined sooner or later to become the faith of the people" (Quoted in Nehru, 92-93).

If the foundation of Indian literature is Vedas and Upanishads the structure of Indian culture are two great epics Ramayana and Mahabharata, the impact of which has been insightful and universal on Indian thoughts. Ramayana resolves the uneasy questioning of wavering mind in the simplest ways. On the other hand Ved Vyasa in his epical work has woven an excellent web of characterization, situation, treatment, theology, ethics, politics, diplomacy, and war which allows mankind to solve all their queries in Mahabharata. Lord Krishna preached Arjuna the law of karma in the fact of seeming failure and asked him to dedicate mind, body and soul of pure action. The Puranas play a vitally important role in the construction of contemporary Hinduism for it is in these works that many of the stories and concepts central to Hindu dharma are to be found.

Apart from these above ritual books an ancient work the Natyashastra of Bharata is also a celebrated and authoritative book not only of dance and dance dramas, but it defines Indian aesthetics too. The acting styles in Indian classical arts developed on the basis of the 'rasa' ideas of Bharata, an expert exponent of the art. The Natyashastra is a unique work which discusses almost all aspects of the dance theatre, like nritta, nritya, natya, various forms of drama, various art forms, the formation of the stage and what not! The book defines and describes ten different forms of dramas (the *dasarupas*).

Thus our literature give indigenous knowledge and imagination, which is impregnated with a kind of moral order and happiness, but sometime some educated Indians consider Indian knowledge and imagination is obsolete and irrelevant in modern context and give importance to western knowledge, which aims at acquiring power. But our Indian indigenous knowledge is centered on collective consciousness, the fundamentals of which are: i) Faith in some Higher Power, a Universal Spirit which pervades the cosmos, ii) faith in life i.e. the will to live life fruitfully, iii) belief in the principle of non-duality, of the essential unity in diversity, resulting in a general attitude of harmony, iv) religious humanism, i.e., a recognition of religious and spiritual potentialities of man, v) general tolerance based on an undogmatic and progressive conception of truth. These fundamentals of collective consciousness inform us that our Indian knowledge is impregnated with an ethical goal the welfare or happiness of man and society. This is discernible in the unbroken stream of knowledge which has flowed constantly through the hymns of the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Brahmaṇa treatises, the great Indian epics, the Purāṇas, the didactic literature of Pali, the artistic treasures of Sanskrit, the religious and secular poetry of Prakṛts and Apbhṛns and thereafter through the different phases of the literatures inspired by higher values of life.

Indian eco-centric view is also inherently ethical. Indian metaphysics does not view Nature as resource like the West. Here Nature is treated as a living being to be worshipped. We worship the tree and raise the trees to the level of god. Indian knowledge texts exhibit this environmental awareness clearly. The Vedas say: "Do not disturb the sky and do not pollute the atmosphere." (The Yajurveda, 5:43) "Do not cut trees, because they remove pollution." (The R̥gveda, 6:48:17) We worship the mother earth, the sky, the air, the water by raising them to the level of deities.

Indian society and culture, unlike that of western which is "right" oriented, is duty oriented. For western's right is directed toward one's own self, but in Indian culture our duty is Dharma, we Indians believe in Karmas. Other aspect which is worth mentioning is the structure of society. Here society is an institution which has a definite structure. And accordingly they are addressed with love, affection and respect. You are always a social concern and society is your concern. When you travel, social values travel with you. That's why you do not feel alienated. You do not feel alienated because of cyclic view of life, unlike the linear view of life in the West. The West is always worried for future in which antithesis is going to be synthesized. In cyclic process there is no future, rather past itself is future

In the era of British colonization Indian cultural past had been devalued by Europeans. Lord Macaulay made a very poor judgment of Indian knowledge tradition, saying: “a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia.” On these lines the European colonial power devalued India’s cultural past for centuries. They tried to foster British cultural imperialism here. It devalued India by refusing her traditional knowledge system which provided a wealth of wisdom.

In order to make a regain of the past, Indian English writers now aim at projecting their glorious past. In order to awaken the national pride of the readers, they choose the subjects from their cultural past for their writings. The feeling of the better past than the present again gives a subsequent curiosity in the past. They are aware of the fact that Indians are different from the British whose past was not as glorious as theirs. So they use past as a weapon of a psychological war. The matching of the modern form of novel with the traditional concept of *kathā* (story-telling) based on the legends of epics and mythology in which heroism, valour, love chivalry and adventure have been nativised and humanised.

Contemporary Indian English writers use Indian knowledge texts in their works drawing upon the oral tradition of story-telling and rereading the epic characters. They blend the both earlier conventions and the current usage skillfully. Through characters and different generations, they analyse interpersonal relationships. In order to present this usual subject, they use the story-telling element within the larger narrative. Gita Hariharan in her *Thousand Faces of Night* which is a study of the concept of motherhood done innovatively and makes use of *Damayanti’s* *swyamavara*, the story of *Gandhari* and her sacrifice in life. These writers also take allegorical form from the Indian epics to project modern Indian situation. They use the mythic setting of the ancient epic to foreground the eternal present. In “The Great Indian Novel *Shashi Tharoor* speaks for an India of multiple interpretation of reality. The novel is blending of two great Indian obsessions – culture and politics. He takes the story of India’s freedom struggle and recasts it with characters from the great epic *Mahabharata*. *Ashok K. Banker* has recreated the *Ramayana*, a classical tale of war between absolute Good and Evil, for modern readers everywhere in his *Prince of Ayodhya* (2003) with breathtaking imagination. The novel is the modern retelling of the Indian Epic. The series revolves around the stories of *Rama*, *Lakshman* and *Sita* and their struggles against the demon-king *Ravana*, highlighting the intense love of *Rama* to *dharma*. *Amish Tripathi* in his *Shiva Trilogy* humanizes infinite ‘*Mahadev*’ – the God of gods and destroyer of evil with philosophy as it is underlying the mythology. It is not only these writers but there are host of other writers who use myth and legend as well as folklore and oral traditions of their own cultures to create nativistic images. The use of myth and local legend made by them is a process of freeing their cultures from colonialism’s pervasive influence. The return to roots is an attempt to gain a measure of self-affirmation that is not infected by colonialism. They use Indian classical myths, legends, and images as living vocabulary to narrate the nation.

## II. CONCLUSION:

Indian literature is the soul of India which has been binding the past and the present of country by an unbreakable bound persisting 1500 B.C. mankind have been referring the Indian literature for knowledge, so if we can protect this precious literature which is divine in itself, we will save the mankind. *Salman Rushdie* rightly said that “Literature is where I go to explore the highest and lowest places in human society and in the human spirit, where I hope to find not absolute truth but the truth of the tale, of the imagination and of the heart”. *Salman Rushdie* (1948-?)

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