The Role of Hinduism in Indian Literature

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Abstract:

The religion plays an important role in Indian literature. It occupies the space to illustrate the moral values to the common entity. The values are taught through the characters of myth. Indians believed that the miracles may happen in their life by connecting the myth wholeheartedly. Hinduism is the predominant religion in India. It is the oldest one not because of tradition but also with numerous different traditions. A large group of separate traditions all combined into a big religion. Hinduism is the third largest religion in the world and it has a billion followers. Since Hinduism is mainly practiced in India, the majority of Hinduism believers live here. Hinduism has a large body of scriptures which contains eternal law of all the practices and beliefs. Amazingly, it is the one of the oldest religion with its living tradition. There is no doubt that these practices and beliefs can influence the Indian writers in their writings. The literature of the Hindu people was definitely centered on their busy, bustling, buzzing culture and helped them to preserve their writings for later use. Hinduism shaped India's literature.

Keywords: myth, religion, predominant, tradition

The Vedas, Puranas and Upanishads have continued to be the fountain-head for innumerable literary works. The Puranas and two great epics, Ramayana and Mahabharata hold considerable significance even today. Religious influence upon Indian literature made a transition from oral to written. Hindu mythology portrays the deities Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. The popularity and familiarity of Indian mythology has induced the writers of all eras to retell myths of India to suit the modern context. There is an emergence of a new trend of re-writing, re-creating, re-telling, remembering, re-introducing, re-imagining the myths with contemporary perspective in the present century. Myth influenced many Indian writers like Ashok Banker, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Krishna Udayasankar, Amish Tripathi Devdutt Pattanaik and Nilanjan P Chaudhari. They use myth in a very prominent way. In their works,

myths operate in contemporary Indian context to evolve its new discourse in Indian fiction in English.

The Ramayana is often employed with conjuring ideas of a utopia — but many recent works reflect an unease with this sort of utopia, particularly as it is regarded as a prescription for the present. Nonetheless, we look back to the mythic past as a place of great imaginative power that can shape our political fantasies and destinies. The Mahabharata is among the most potent and consistent of all bodies of mythology that have affected the imagination and resourcefulness of the Indian writer's creativity. The reasons are obvious: these myths have been in circulation for over 5000 years across the length and breadth of the country; they have withstood innumerable interpolations and revisions; they have made inroads into almost all major languages of the world and into the vast literatures of India; they have percolated down the oral tradition to capture the imagination of generations of ordinary, illiterate Indians as being inviolate and unquestionable paradigms of beliefs and ideals. Above all, recited or narrated religiously in homes and outside, they have an aura of sacredness and so of authority in the social psyche. The Ramayana is the celebration of human relationships whereas Mahabharata presents life in its stark and naked realities full of faults and follies, tricks and strategies, temptations and conspiracies, selfishness and sacrifice. Both the epics are relevant to all ages and times. According to Sri Aurobindo, these Indian epics include heaps of moral, religious and ethical content:

> They represent Indian way of life and a view of family system and society. These epics represent an overview of ancient Indian culture and traditions which are still being carried by Indians. They give us mental strength and poise in difficult times. Religion has always been the life force of Indians.

Myths have been used by the authors as a significant tool to expose some crucial debates of contemporary India. Through myth narratives, authors have found a new way to express and discuss multiple issues like casteism, poverty, men-women relationship, economic inequalities, social injustice, extinction of cultural rituals, the problematic of non-secularism, scientific horrors, politics, diseases, communal riots, various movements, extinction of cultural heritage, freedom movement and so on. They are linguistic representations of social concerns and deftly explore the prescription of social relations by means of Indian mythology. The first generation Indian writers represented the culture and

history of India, which is a land of diversity. Such is the impact of religion on Indian literature that today there exists a different genre for Indian spiritual literature from Vedic period. The religious books have provided material for centuries to the writers of India. The elements of narrative structure relate us to the big questions in life that religions have asked and attempted to answer.

In various sections of literature like Drama, Fiction, Poetry, Novels, Short Stories, Criticism like more and variety to offer, literature has prominent in its own style in India known as Indian Literature, whereas the writing comprises in all the above mentioned variations, the embodiment of Indian Literature is framed through the source and the body of Religions in India initially, later it was developed by accessing the religions outside the country. Writings like Puranas, Jatkas, Panchatantra, fairy tales and stories of Gods and Ghost made The Indian literature popular among the readers, since it delivers and understands the mindset of the countrymen. Even Non-Literary works like writings on Administration, Law, Health, Astronomy, Grammar, and the writings that describes the heritage and the life style of country has become popular among the readers, it is obvious when readers get attracted towards a style of book, the prefer themselves into a perspective of unique style in their personal life, since all the writing in the above mentioned types, somewhat prescribe and proclaim the religions of India, the authors and the readers prefer themselves to apply and adapt to expected format both in writing as well as in reading. The Indian modern literature began in nineteenth century, even by that time writers continued their support to religion by giving array of works to the readers, Rabindranath Tagore's 'Gitanjali' is been the inspiration for writers and readers to tend and tilt towards religious writings, from there on authors from different parts of India preferred to write on religions.

Contemporary mythological novels reveal the desire for utopia and its relation to historical reality embodied in its ideological functions. They demystify 'bad' ideology that reflects some deeper anxiety and conflict in the political unconscious. If attended with stereoscopic thinking, the texts reveal the conflicts buried within. Jameson believes that in any literary late capitalist era, it is a need to reconstruct the prior historical or ideological subtext – that is unspoken and unconscious. The original problem which is latent to which the text is symbolic solution can be reconstructed and bring it to the surface and can be resolved logically. Ashok Banker's *Vengeance of Ravana* and Amish Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy* are examples of refraction where the old mythology is translated into the modern day language of

science and technology. They follow the pattern of same characters and different plots. These novels evidently describe the long for utopia and ideological function of myth. Anand Neelakantan's *Asura: Tale of the Vanquished* written from the perspective of Ravana and Chitra Banerjee's *Palace of Illusions* narrated from Draupadi's point of view expose the issue of caste, gender and revolt against conventional norms of the ideology of dominant class. They are 'myth about myth' - 'text within a text' and 'isomorphic' to their core-texts in the globalised Indian semiosphere - already demystified reveal the reality of the society in their political unconscious. In similar light, *Bali and the Ocean of Milk* by Nilanjan Chaudhary is an example of Deva's cheating on Asuras an indirect demeaning of Deva ideology and customs. Devdutt Pattanaik's *The Pregnant King* (2008) also talks about gender issues where the rhetoric device of 'inverted image' becomes very crucial and reiterates such problems in the society. Besides, novels like *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of Mahabharata* by Devdutt Pattanaik and Amish Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy* contain arguments and questions based on author's research and opinion.

Myth becomes consumable commodity in the era of global late capitalism. When studied closely, they demystify historical and cultural reality that is modified by its ideological function. When read as Romances or Magical narratives, these mythological novels reveal the text's relation with history which they symbolically embody. They are the carrier of deeper anxiety and conflicts within the text that can be accessed in Political Unconscious. Both Religion and Literature is a wonderful creation it doesn't matter it is from above or below, but still it enhances and emulates the humanity to have enough intelligence and intellectual to run their daily life which is normally in full of struggle and discomfort, it takes extraordinary skills for every human in order to show themselves to be different from other creatures, hence everyone is in common demand to figure out a way to overcome their burdens, so far with no reprimand both religion and literature provides a constant remedial measure to the entire humanity. Indian literature, when accumulating the most ancient to the still metamorphosing present and the yet to be gauged future, is truly unimaginable and inconceivable to the normal eye and the average brain. Indian literature that has been penned since has been a masterwork of unrelenting geniuses. Literature in India is indeed a production which has reproduced tons and tons of useful and unforgettable materials, borrowing practically from every aspect of Indian indigenous life, both rural and urban. However, when wanting to delineate more and more over the aspect of religious influence on Indian literature, there does not remain any room for describing the domain of 'Indian

Literature' into a separate genre; it does not need any more introduction. The point that needs very much to be established is the fact that literature in the Indian context, beginning from the ancient times, would never have been possible had it not been for the fact that religion and spiritual aspects had impressed upon it most profoundly. Indeed, such has been the impact of religion on Indian literature, that there today does exist a separate genre, 'Indian religious literature', rooted from the period of the Vedic era.

Literature in India is always incomplete without its portrayal of history, which does overlap over and over, in the long run, creating a massive concept to make one comprehend that religious influence is of course one that holds considerable significance. Religious influence upon Indian literature can be mostly counted into that historical period, which had made a transition from oral literature in India into written literature.

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