

Indian Knowledge System in English Studies

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Abstract

The paper aims to lay out the connection between English Literature and Indian Knowledge system. Indian Knowledge System touches wide area of study from Vedic literature to Astronomy, arts to science and technology, medicine to astronomy, philosophy to architect etc. on the other hand, English literature is modern literature. Introducing IKS in NEP will strength Indian Education system and make the student aware of Ancient Indian Education system. It also strengthens the bridge between ancient and modern and always promotes holistic Development of society. This study presents a comprehensive analysis of English literature, Indian English literature and IKS.

Keywords: Indian Knowledge System , English Literature , National Education Policy, Ancient India.

I. INTRODUCTION

India was known as Vishwaguru in terms of Knowledge and still has believed in the philosophy of Vasudhaiva kutumbkam – the Earth is one family. Indian Vedic science can be called the torch bearer of Modern Science. India has been the centre of all learning and spread the light of wisdom in every directions of the world. Megasthenes1 Indica is a description of India's rich culture. Ancient Indians traveled to various parts of the world not only for purposes of trade, but to also propagate their culture. This is how the Vedic influence spread around the world. For example, Kaundinya crossed the ocean and reached south-east Asia. From there, evidence shows that rock inscriptions in the Sun Temple at Jawayuko in the Yukatan province of Mexico mentions the arrival of the great sailor Vusulin in Shaka Samvat 854, or the year 932.1 in the vedic period, education means spiritual Consciousness. Gurukuls were called the place of

education and all the subjects like science, maths, art and craft, languages, literature, astronomy, architecture etc were taught. As the lingua franca, English provides a platform for projecting to the rest of the world the breadth and depth of Indian knowledge in a variety of fields, which is one way to highlight the language's contribution to the advancement of the Indian knowledge system. Many Indian words have been incorporated into the English language lexicon.

The methodical transfer of information from one generation to the next is known as Indian knowledge system. Instead of being a tradition, it is an organized system that is benefitted us from a long time. This heritage of ancient and timeless Indian Knowledge and philosophy is acknowledged as a guiding element in the National Education Policy (NEP-2020). Experience, observation, experimentation and through analysis have all contributed to the development of the gyan, vigyan and jeevan Darshan, which make up the Indian Knowledge system. The fields of education, the arts, administration, law, justice, health, and manufacturing have all been touched by this history of validation and implementation.

Indian Literature has a profound influence on the world and it always contributing in shaping the literature of world. Ancient Indian Epics Like Mahabharata and Ramayana have had lasting impact on literature and storytelling. The Vedas and the Bhagavad-Gita are not unfamiliar to the Western world. Over the years, seekers, writers, poets, philosophers, and individuals from various backgrounds have recognized the depth, inspiration, and wisdom present in Vedic philosophy. For many centuries, the Western fascination with India, the birthplace of Vedic literature, was primarily driven by trade. Items like spices, precious stones, and fine textiles were consistently sought after. Even Marco Polo noted the immense wealth of India and referred to it as one of the most affluent nations. Christopher Columbus, inspired by Marco Polo's accounts, formulated a plan to discover a new route to India, ultimately leading to his accidental discovery of America.

In Vedic time, Sanskrit was very popular language. In order to understand Vedas and purans, one must learn Sanskrit. Sanskrit literature began to gain popularity. Until the conclusion of the American civil war, the impact of Vedic thought continued to grow. This influence was particularly evident in places like Concord, Massachusetts, where figures such as Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Amos Bronson Alcott, Minister James Freeman Clark, and others started incorporating philosophical insights directly inspired by Vedic literature in their writings. Emerson, in particular, was recognized for having read several Vedic texts, including the Bhagavad-gita, Vishnu Purana, Laws of Manu, Bhagavata Purana, and even the Kathopanishad. Ralph Waldo Emerson, the chief architect of American sensibility has also been deeply influenced by *Sanatan* thought. Emerson wrote

Brahma

"If the red slayer think he slays,
Or if the slain think he is slain,
They know not well the subtle ways
I keep, and pass, and turn again.
Far or forgot to me is near;
Shadow and sunlight are the same;
The vanished gods to me appear;
And one to me are shame and fame.

They reckon ill who leave me out;
When me they fly, I am the wings;
I am the doubter and the doubt;
And I the hymn the Brahmin sings.
The strong gods pine for my abode,
And pine in vain the sacred Seven
But thou, meek lover of the good!
Find me and turn thy back on heaven."2

Henry David Thoreau is recognized for his philosophical perspectives in his works. He was a dedicated reader of Vedic literature and candidly shared his appreciation for Vedic philosophy. While residing at Walden Pond, he frequently read the Bhagavad-Gita. Thoreau once remarked, "What extracts from the *Vedas* I have read fall on me like the light of a higher and purer luminary, which describes a loftier course through a purer stratum." and "In the morning I bathe my intellect in the stupendous and cosmogonical philosophy of the *Bhagavad-gita*, since whose composition years of the gods have elapsed and in comparison with which our modern world and its literature seems puny and trivial." (*Walden*, Chapter XVI) Thoreau read a great deal of literature on India and the Vedas, and he took them seriously. He was even acknowledged as his instructor and respected by Mahatma Gandhi.

In Modern age, T.S. Eliot, Paul Elmer More, and Irving Babbitt were other well-known authors who were impacted by Vedic philosophy. They had all studied under the renowned Sanskrit scholar Charles Rochwell Lanman at Harvard, who taught for more than 40 years and wrote books on Hindu and Sanskrit philosophy. Yale has a line of exceptional Sanskrit instructors, just like Harvard, but even earlier. Elihu Yale actually held Vedic thought in high regard. T.S. Eliot in *Christianity and Culture*, said

“Long ago I studied the ancient Indian languages, and while I was chiefly interested at that time in Philosophy, I read a little poetry too: and I know that my own poetry shows the influence of Indian thought and sensibility.”
[TS Eliot, *Christianity and Culture*, pp.190-191]

Eliot's magnum opus poem, *The Wasteland* (1922), reflects the influence of Indian thoughts. Eliot's integration of Indian philosophy was so profound that he mentions the Indian rivers and mountains in original names i.e. Sanskrit:

Ganga was sunken, and the limp leaves Waited for rain, while the black clouds
Gathered far distant, over Himavanth.

The jungle crouched, humped in silence.

Then spoke the thunder". (What the Thunder Said, 395-99)

The Poem ends with Indian word Shanti Shanti Shanti that signifies eternal peace.

John Heywood says in his book *The Ancient World*, “India is the birthplace of two of the world's great religions, Hinduism and Buddhism. Today, nearly half the world's population lives in countries whose cultural development has been influenced by one or both of these religions. Apart from India itself, these countries include China, Tibet, Nepal, Japan, Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, and Indonesia. The influence of ancient India was not just limited to its religions. Indian mathematicians were the first in the Old World to discover the mathematical value of zero, and gave the world quadratic equations and the now universally used system of ‘Arabic’ numerals. The alphabets of Tibet, Mongolia and all of the Southeast Asian languages are of Indian origin. Yet despite their wide-ranging influence, the early civilizations of the Indian subcontinent are the least well known of any of the ancient civilizations.”¹

MaxMullar Says for India and Culture "If I were to look over the whole world to find out the country most richly endowed with all the wealth, power and beauty that nature can bestow—in some parts a very paradise on earth—I should point to India. If I were asked under what sky the human mind most fully developed some of its choicest gifts, has most deeply pondered on the greatest problems of life, and has found solutions of some of them which well deserve the attention even of those who have studied Plato and Kant, I should point to India. If I were to ask myself from what literature we, here in Europe, may draw the corrective which is most wanted in order to make our inner life more perfect, more universal, in fact more truly human, again I should point to India."

Higgins says, ““The peninsula of India would be one of the first peopled countries, and its inhabitants would have all the habits of the progenitors of man before the flood in as much perfection or more than any other nation... In short, whatever learning man possessed before his dispersion may be expected to be found here, and of this, Hindustan affords innumerable traces... notwithstanding ... the fruitless efforts of our priests to disguise it.”⁷ It shows that Indian culture has influenced in all sphere of the world.

Drama is very important art form in literature, Sanskrit in particular. Two great works that examine the fundamentals of theater from many perspective are Aristotle's *Poetics* and Bharata's *Natyasastra*. Greek-language poetry examines the elements of tragic theater and how it affects the audience. Conversely, the Sanskrit text *Natyasastra* talks about Indian customs. However, both of them are effective. One of the major problems is determine or find out the exact date of literary traditions such as Drama. The Vedas has influence our Indian Traditional art in the form of dialogue Hymn and vedic rituals. However, the most extant treatise on Indian drama is *Natyashashtra* by Bharatmuni which emerged in 3rd CE. Some commentators, like Weber, claim that

Greek play has influenced Indian drama as a result of the Greek conquest of the Indian subcontinent. There are undoubtedly some parallels, such as the story's primary focus on mythological character.

However, the addition of supernatural characters like gods and goddesses that permeate the realm of theater is a feature of Indian culture. This Greek influence on all theater is evident in the play's split into Acts and Scenes, the usage of the Chorus, and the character development of the stock cast. But there are also significant variances. Indian drama, where the action moves from earthly to heavenly settings and spans many years, does not precisely adhere to Greek drama's commitment to the Three Unities of time, place, and action. Additionally, dance and song play a significant role in Indian drama that is absent from its Greek equivalent. Other academics emphasize how the formalization of the Indian theatrical tradition was influenced by Buddhist and Jain traditions. It Seems that Indian Drama did not affect all other western theatre too much and vice versa. But In Indian English Drama, one can find the impact of Indian Knowledge system. . Modern theatre came to India with the British and the first production in Bengali was in November 1975, when two plays *Disguise* and *Love is the best doctor* were performed in Bengali Translation .

The narrative and organization of the book are based on modern western drama rather than traditional Indian play. The characters are societal representations of the individuals who inhabit these roles. T.P. Kalisham Played a very important role in shaping the future of Indian Drama. He has chosen his characters and episodes from Indian epic. *The Burden* is based on Ramayana, and tells Bharats Feelings on hearing about his father's death. *Fulfillment* and *The purpose* are based on Ekalaya's story from Mahabharata. Though he looked at epics for these plays but he gives the refreshingly different view of these characters. In Post independence Indian English drama, there is an attempt to highlights old figure in order to construct new India. For example *The Legend of Rama* and *Prince of India*.

In Indian English Novel, *The Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, two greatest epic, hold and unparelled position in creating the philosophical, social and intellectual framework of India. The ancient Indian cultures mandated ideals of life, which are reflected in Indian epics, Puranic tales, myths, and mythologies, are upheld by R.K. Narayan. The middle-class existence of Malgudi, a fictional little town in South India that serves as the backdrop for all of his works, is how he illustrates his ideas about traditionalism. Narayan's books demonstrate that adhering to the Shastras and Vedic principles is essential to pleasure and success in life. The primary goal of human existence is proposed to be a desire for self-identification or freedom from life's hardships. Knowing what life is all about – that is, who I am – is the primary goal of existence. Why have I come here? Knowing that I am a spirit soul – the true ego – is one's everlasting responsibility.

In Indian English Poetry, Indian Tradition can be traced in the writings of Toru Dutta in her poems Lakshman and Sita and Aurobindo Ghosh's Savitri. In Sita, she throws light on the pain and stress of Indian Wife about her husband who caught in trouble because of her. The theme of Prahalad has been taken from Visnu Puran. Indian Spirituality is profoundly present in *Gitanjali* by Rabindranath Tagore. Sri Aurobindo Quotes

"To us poetry is a revel of intellect and fancy, imagination, a plaything and caterer for our amusement, our entertainer the nautch girl of the mind. But to men of old the poet was a seer, a revealer of hidden truths, imagination no dancing courtesan, but a priestess in God's house commissioned not to spin fractions but to imagine hidden and difficult and hidden truths; even the metaphor and simile in the Vedic style is used with a serious purpose and expected to convey a reality, not suggest a pleasing artifice of thought. The image was to these seers a relative symbol of the unrevealed and it was used because it would hint luminously to the mind what the precise intellect word, apt only for logical or practical thought or to express the physical and the superficial, cannot at all hope to manifest."

In Indian English Prose, U.R. Anantamurty and Sri Aurobindo Played vital role in showing the philosophy of Indian thought. Anantmurty's famous work *Samaskara* created a history in Indian English prose. The relevance of the work is that it taks about an ideal society or caste free society. Giving details of his dreams, the character says: 'An Indian would attain real dignity only when it became possible for a Brahmin boy to desire a dark-skinned

untouchable girl with flowers in her hair, only when a Brahmin girl longed to be hugged by coarse-haired and dark-skinned untouchable boy' (203-04).

Hinduism has acknowledged a number of routes to emancipation. The "karma-marga," or road of obligations and acts, comes first; the "jnana-marga," or path of knowledge, comes second; and the "bhakti-marga," or path of devotion, comes third. Any of the aforementioned paths can be chosen, and it is open to everyone. Since action is unavoidable, as stated in the Bhagavad Gita, it is preferable to consider all three routes at once, since this will undoubtedly aid in reaching the objectives of dharma and moksha. One's social and ceremonial obligations, whether related to family or work, may reflect this. This makes it possible to keep the planet more stable overall.

Paul Brunton wrote a significant book titled *A Search in Secret India*. Brunton talks about his travels throughout India in search of a guru. He talks about his experiences with gurus, mystics, and yogis. With Sri Ramana Maharshi, his quest for self-awareness comes to an end, and he achieves serenity. The book's journey is what makes it appealing. The book, which is written clearly, explains commonplace occurrences in India and how spirituality is woven into the fabric of daily life.

There are hundreds of examples from English Literature where structure of thought comes from Indian Knowledge System. The time has come when Indians themselves realize this wealth of Indian Knowledge System and start imbibing its elements in their lives and behavior.

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