

A Condensed Investigation of Indian Indigenous Literature and Philosophy

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Starting with the idea of indigenous peoples as the original or natural residents of a place or territory, indigenous literature may be defined as literature created by indigenous peoples and descendants of them. Poetry, theatre, fiction, and creative nonfiction are all examples of literature. Memoirs and autobiographical writings are especially important as nonfiction forms that may give cultural context for the study and comprehension of indigenous literature. Indian indigenous philosophy is a rich and complicated heritage that includes many different philosophical concepts and schools of thinking. These are Dharma, Karma, Reincarnation (Samsara) and Liberation (Moksha), Atman and Brahman, Philosophical Schools, Ahimsa, four pursuits, Tolerance and Pluralism, and Guru-Disciple Tradition of life.

Indigenous Indian literature and philosophy have a rich and varied history dating back thousands of years. These practises have produced significant contributions to philosophy, literature, and spirituality, and are deeply rooted in India's cultural and spiritual heritage. The researcher performed a study on the following significant topics of indigenous Indian literature and philosophy:

Vedic Literature

The Vedas are among Indian literature's earliest and most holy writings. They are written in Sanskrit and include the Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda, and Atharvaveda. These works, which include hymns, prayers, and rites, form the cornerstone of Hinduism and provide insights into ancient India's spiritual and intellectual ideas. The Vedic period is typically dated from roughly 1500 BCE to 500 BCE, while the precise

dates are arguable among experts. There are four primary classifications of Vedic literature:

- **Rigveda:** The Rigveda is the most ancient and important of the Vedas. It is made up of hymns (Suktas) dedicated to numerous deities. The hymns are written in a poetic and metrical style. The Rigveda is split into 10 books called Mandalas, and it contains hymns to gods such as Agni, Varuna, Indra, and Ushas.
- **Yajurveda:** The Yajurveda is mostly composed of prose mantras that are utilized in rites and ceremonies. The Krishna Yajurveda and the Shukla Yajurveda are the two primary branches. The mantras in the Krishna Yajurveda provide explanations for their application in rituals, however, the mantras in the Shukla Yajurveda do not contain explanations
- **Samaveda:** The Samaveda is an archive of ceremonial chants and tunes used by priests. It is closely related to the Rigveda since many of its verses are based on Rigvedic hymns. The Samaveda is noted for its use of varied melodies (Saman) in ceremonies and concentrates on the musical side of the Vedic culture.
- **Atharvaveda:** The hymns, charms, and incantations in the Atharvaveda set it apart from the other Vedas. It covers a wide range of subjects, including health care magic, and everyday issues. In comparison to the other Vedas, the Atharvaveda is seen to be more diversified in substance and less concentrated on sacrifice rites.

In addition to the Vedas, the following texts are frequently regarded to be part of Vedic literature:

Brahmanas: The Brahmanas are prose works that give explanations and interpretations of the Vedic rituals and ceremonies. They serve as a guidance for correct ritual performance.

Aranyakas: Aranyakas are literature linked with forest hermits and are sometimes seen as a link between the ceremonial Brahmanas and

the speculative Upanishads. They are concerned with the inner, symbolic meanings of the rituals.

Upanishads: The Upanishads, commonly known as Vedanta (“the end of the Vedas”), are a collection of intellectual and metaphysical writings that address the philosophical and metaphysical elements of Vedic thinking. They enquire about the nature of reality (Brahman), the self (Atman), and the ultimate purpose of existence. The Upanishads represent a change from the previous Vedic writings’ exterior ceremonies to interior reflection and spiritual inquiry.

Vedic literature has its philosophical value that is for Rita (cosmic order) exploration, ceremonial practices, and contemplation on the essence of life.

Epic Poetry

- **Mahabharata:** The Mahabharata, traditionally assigned to the sage Vyasa, is one of the world’s longest epic poems. It is a massive story that incorporates parts of mythology, history, philosophy, and moral precepts. The core plot is around the Kurukshetra War, which pits two factions of a royal family, the Pandavas and the Kauravas, against each other.
- **Bhagavad Gita:** The Bhagavad Gita is an important part of the Mahabharata. It is a holy discussion between Prince Arjuna and Krishna, the divinity who acts as his charioteer. The Gita handles profound philosophical and ethical quandaries and has had a significant impact on Hindu thinking.
- **Ramayana:** The Ramayana, another important Indian epic, is often assigned to the sage Valmiki. The Ramayana tells the story of Prince Rama, his wife Sita, and his faithful friend Hanuman. It delves into issues like as obligation, righteousness, and the conflict between good and evil. The Ramayana, like the Mahabharata, provides moral and ethical teachings and has played an important role in moulding Hindu society’s cultural and ethical ideals.

Both the Mahabharata and the Ramayana are epic narratives that also serve as stores of cultural, moral, and philosophical learning. Over the years, they have been repeated and reinterpreted in numerous languages and forms of art, and they continue to be a source of inspiration and direction for people all over India and beyond. Philosophical values of epics are Reflection on duty (Dharma), righteousness, and the moral problems that individuals encounter.

Classical Sanskrit Literature

Classical Sanskrit literature refers to a vast spectrum of literary works written primarily in the Sanskrit language. This collection of writing flourished over a certain historical time, generally spanning the 4th to 12th centuries CE. Classical Sanskrit literature encompasses a wide range of literary forms, including play, poetry, and prose. Each genre serves a distinct creative and intellectual function. During this time, famous poets and playwrights emerged, making lasting contributions to this literary legacy. One of the most respected personalities is Kalidasa, who is frequently referred to as the “Shakespeare of India.” The writings of Kalidasa, such as “Shakuntala” and “Meghaduta,” are masterpieces that display literary brilliance and vivid imagery.

Nataka, or classical Sanskrit drama, is a popular genre. Sanskrit plays were notable for their intricate structure, complex language, and study of numerous subjects. Examples include Kalidasa’s “Shakuntala” and Shudraka’s Sanskrit drama “Mricchakatika” (The Little Clay Cart). Classical Sanskrit poetry is distinguished by its rhythmic and ordered style. Poets used several metres and poetic methods to express emotions, ideas, and storytelling. Aside from Kalidasa, other poets like as Bharavi, Magha, and Bhavabhuti made significant contributions. Prose compositions in Classical Sanskrit, also known as Kavya, are narrative poetry that combine literary and artistic elements. These compositions might be based on mythical ideas, historical events, or love stories. While epics like the Mahabharata and Ramayana belong to a larger genre, they are also important components of Classical Sanskrit Literature. These epics are massive in scale and incorporate philosophical

conversations, heroic tales, and reflections on moral and ethical quandaries.

Aesthetic principles are strongly emphasized in classical Sanskrit literature, including the use of poetic techniques (Alankara), sophisticated wordplay, and a great respect for the beauty of language. Cultural and Philosophical subjects: Classical Sanskrit Literature frequently engages with cultural, moral, and philosophical subjects, providing insights into ancient India's social and intellectual milieu. Classical Sanskrit Literature has a distinct position in India's cultural and literary history, and its impact reaches well beyond the Indian subcontinent. This period's works are still studied, translated, and valued for their creative greatness and profound insights into human existence. Philosophically it helps in Artistic expression is typically coupled with moral and ethical principles, with the goal of studying the essence of reality and love.

Tamil Literature: Sangam Poetry

The Sangam period, which is typically split into three parts: the Early Sangam (300 BCE - 200 CE), the Middle Sangam (200 - 600 CE), and the Later Sangam (600 - 1000 CE), saw a flourishing of Tamil literature. The term "Sangam" alludes to poets' and academics' meetings or academies. Sangam poetry is a collection of traditional Tamil poems written by different poets throughout the Sangam era. The excellent language, topic richness, and investigation of numerous facets of life, love, nature, and ethics distinguish these poems. The social, cultural, and economic components of ancient Tamil society are all reflected in Sangam poetry. Love and the intricacies of human relationships are key topics, as are descriptions of nature and moral and ethical principles.

The Five Great Epics (Aimperum Kappiyangal) are part of the Sangam corpus and are regarded as key works of Tamil literature. These epics are as follows:

- Silappatikaram: A narrative poem about Kovalan and Kannagi that addresses issues of love, justice, and fate.
- Manimekalai: A Buddhist epic that goes into Buddhist theory while exploring the life of the heroine Manimekalai.

- Civaka Cintamani: A Jain epic about a prince and a merchant that emphasizes Jain religious principles.
- Valayapathi: is a love story with adventure and fantasy themes.
- Kundalakesi: is a moralistic text that emphasizes virtue.

Tamil literature, particularly Sangam poetry, exemplifies the literary quality of ancient Tamil civilization. It is still an important component of India's diversified literary landscape, adding to the larger tapestry of the country's cultural history. Philosophically Sangam Poetry reflects the beauty of nature, human emotions, and ethical principles.

Bhakti Poetry and Sufi Poetry

Bhakti is a devotional movement that originated in medieval India and emphasises a personal and emotional relationship with the divine. Bhakti writers used vernacular languages to convey their love and devotion to God, making their poetry accessible to the general public.

Famous Bhakti Poets are:

Kabir: Kabir, a 15th-century saint and poet, wrote poetry that combined Hindu and Islamic ideals. His poetry focuses on devotion to a formless, transcendent God while also criticizing ceremonial practices.

Meera Bai: Meera Bai, a 16th-century Rajput princess and Lord Krishna follower, wrote poetry that depicts her profound love and desire for her celestial spouse.

Whereas Sufi or Sufism is a mystical Islamic religion that emphasizes direct and intimate encounters with God. Sufi poets in India utilized poetry to express their spiritual experiences and teachings, typically using metaphorical language and symbolism.

Famous Sufi Poets are:

Rumi: Rumi was a Persian poet, yet his writings had a significant impact on Sufi poetry in India. His words are about love, togetherness, and the mystical path to God.

Khusro Amir: Amir Khusro, a 13th-century Sufi poet and follower of Nizamuddin Auliya, is famed for his ghazals and qawwalis that both celebrate and describe the agony of separation from God.

Bhakti and Sufi poetry expanded India's cultural and literary fabric, encouraging a feeling of togetherness and shared spiritual ideals beyond religious borders. In addition, Bhakti poets and Sufi poets in India made great literary contributions by using poetry as a strong medium to transmit spiritual truths and build a closer relationship with the divine. Philosophical values of the Bhakti and Sufi are: The importance of devotion, personal relationship with the divine, and the universality of divine love are emphasized. And Mystical contemplation of divine love, oneness, and spirituality's transcending essence.

Regional Literature

India is linguistically varied, having a wide range of languages spoken throughout its enormous territory. Each linguistic area has its own distinct literary traditions, which contribute to India's rich variety of literature. Among the notable regional literatures are:

- **Bengali Literature:** Bengali literature has a rich tradition, with giants such as Rabindranath Tagore (the first non-European Nobel Prize in Literature) and Kazi Nazrul Islam. Tagore's writings, such as "Gitanjali," have had a lasting impact on international literature.
- **Marathi literature:** it has a long and storied history, with giants such as Jnaneshwar and Tukaram, as well as recent writers such as Vijay Tendulkar and Pu La Deshpande, making major contributions.
- **Gujarati Literature:** Gujarati literature includes poetry, dramas, and novels. Gujarati literature has been shaped by writers such as Narsinh Mehta, Umashankar Joshi, and Pannalal Patel.
- **Punjabi Literature:** Poetry and prose abound in Punjabi literature. Waris Shah, Bulleh Shah, and contemporary authors like as Amrita Pritam express the cultural and historical essence of Punjab in their writings.

- **Malayalam literature:** it has a particular character, with writers such as Thunchaththu Ramanujan Ezhuthachan, Vaikom Muhammad Basheer, and O. V. Vijayan making major contributions.
- **Kannada literature:** it has produced notable poets such as Kuvempu and D. R. Bendre, as well as current authors working in a variety of disciplines.

Regional literature frequently reflects the cultural subtleties, historical backdrop, and language quirks of the places in which it flourishes. Each linguistic minority adds to the wider mosaic of Indian literature, keeping its distinct character while contributing to the country's larger literary environment. Reflection of regional cultures and cultural ideals, as well as a platform for social critique, are the philosophical values of regional literature.

Conclusion

Ancient Vedic texts, epics such as the Mahabharata and Ramayana, classical Sanskrit works by poets such as Kalidasa, Tamil Sangam poetry, Bhakti and Sufi devotional literature, folk traditions, and writings of Jain and Buddhist traditions comprise India's indigenous literature. Regional literature in several languages adds to this fascinating tapestry. The literary landscape is being shaped by modern and contemporary authors, especially women writers and those tackling social themes. Indian literature represents the variegated aspects of the country's culture and history, from numerous mythology to investigations of caste, gender, identity, and philosophy.

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