

The Impact of 'The Ramayana' and 'The Mahabharata' on the Works of R.K. Narayan

Abstract

The Ramayana serves as a guide to human conduct in the society. It helps us to create our family relations and duties. The Mahabharata is a whole literature in itself which contains a code of life a philosophy of social and ethical relations.

Keywords: The Ramayana, The Mahabharata, Indian Literature, Lord Krishna, Bhima, Arjuna.

Introduction

Indian epic poetry cannot be described in its fullest glory and enormity without comprehending the epic period and its political scenario and the entire royal households associated with it and their patronage of arts and literary pursuits. Epic India is that portrayal of greater India in the Sanskrit epics, namely the Ramayana and the Mahabharata.

Review of Literature

In Indian literature, like the whole face of nature is balanced upon a gigantic scale. Poetry born amidst the majestic panorama of the Himalayas and fostered in a climate which had inflamed the imaginative potential, had developed itself with oriental extravagance.

The Ramayana¹, is the Adhikavya i.e. the first poem. It does not mean that there was no poetry before but that is the first work of poetry that depicts all the topics and characteristics expected of a great work of art. Besides, it is a Dharma Shastra, an authority on right conduct. It is the story of Rama, the noblest man, and that makes it a guide manual for righteous life. Lord Rama is called the Maryada Purushottam or 'The best among the dignified'. The story of Lord Rama and his comrades is so popular in India that it has actually amalgamated the psyche of the Indian mainstream irrespective of their religion. Valmiki depicts Rama as the embodiment of Dharma. Rama was the personification of satya.

When Kaikeyi for her own reasons asked for the punishment of Rama, it was a redemption² for Rama from dilemma. That was why he readily accepted KaiKeyi's demand in spite of his father's wish to the contrary. No, Rama cannot have any compromise with truth nor can he be a party to the father's attempt to wriggle out of it. Rama sticks to his word at all cost.

R.K. Narayan has proved that his hero is perfect in Dharma and Satya. The Upanishads says, "Tell the truth" and live righteously."³

It is the Ramayana that nurture and nourish the Indian culture and civilization. Culture is the refinement of the mind and the spirit when it is directed to the external aspects of man, it is called civilization.

To conclude this great epic not only serves as a guide to human conduct in the society but it is a book that breathes Indian culture and tradition. It is the strong pillar on which our society has constructed its building of family, human relations, behaviour.

Another great Indian epic the Mahabharata is one of our noblest heritages and it has been an elevated influence for thousands of years.

It is a whole literature in itself containing a code of life a philosophy of social and ethical relations a speculative thought of human problems that is hard to rival. Famous scholar HO.⁴ considers it to be a tussle between the vaishnav and shaivite sects. Maxmuller⁵ addressed the Mahabharata to be a reflection of Greek civilization.

Krishna counsels Arjuna on the greater Idea of dharma. He says that the soul is permanent. Arjuna wishes to abandon the battle to abstain from action. Krishna warns however that without action the cosmos would fall out of order and truth would be obscured. Lord Krishna declares that war against not only the external evils but internal evils too.



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Narayan's character are tied to some invisible power that moves them in consonance with its wishes and desires Narayan saw defeat surrounding the efforts of every man for success. He says about death : "The loss of my wife was sudden and not even remotely anticipated by me although my father-in-law has his doubts while looking into my horoscope earlier. If you have to accept life, you are inevitable committed to the notion of death also."⁶

He further says. "Perhaps death may not be the end of everything as it seems personality may have other structures and other plans of existence and the decay of the physical body through disease or senility may mean nothing more than a change of vehicle."

Narayana's "The dark room"⁷ support our conviction, "Raman and Savitri have come to feel that they are defeated in their respective battles. Strongly enough nobody has the feeling of victory. Savitri left her house of her own accord and she came back without anyone's invitation. Raman too felt guilty when his wife disappeared and no change come over him after her return. It is true that Savitri found it hard to swallow "bare rice, cooked in water, without adding even salt but, it was worth because It enhanced one's sense of victory."

It may be pointed out that domestic disturbances present a situation of conflict in which nobody wins and nobody loses.

R.K. Narayan's leading characters are caught in the web of defeat : their desires, aim, results are shaped and fashioned by the forces of failure and defeat. It is seen the novelist presents desires and puts his characters in their midst aim are made clear by their assertiveness and unpredictable results are brought out to reveal the weakness of human figures. Through it is over simplification, yet these seems, to be some truth in Khuswant Singh's⁸ remark : "A confusion of mental life and habits and even a kind of paralysis is the result. I would gladly be relieved of all this."

It is said that R.K. Narayan wanted to take the load off his mind and get out of the bleak moods of his protagonist. But all through he gives the impression of some who is unable to believe the fact of death. This becomes clear from his *Dateless Dairy* where an American lady said to have invited the novelist for lunch. She thought that he was an expert in the art of communicating with the dead. All that Narayan could advise was, "You should be relaxed before that spirits can come. Thus the cycle of life and death is the negation of death and life."

In his most of works Narayan like *The Guide*, the painter of signs, the vendor of sweet, waiting for the Mahatma, The Bachelor of arts, he proved that the good and the evil are at war with each other. Narayan advises his reader to go slow on the middle way of life.

Conclusion

Narayan's literature is inspired from both two great Indian epics he says to follow the path of virtue and truth. It is true that to tell a lie is easy but one has to support it with further lies and it is the advantage of truth to follow it by naturally emergence of truth.

Thus Narayan through his novels, teaches the lessons of truth patience, perseverance, courage, friendliness, fair dealing and good behaviour. It may be pointed out that defeat in life is natural. It can be won over by righteous thought feeling and deeds. Man ought to do good to others if he wants to pass by defeat and save himself from that forces of defeat.

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