

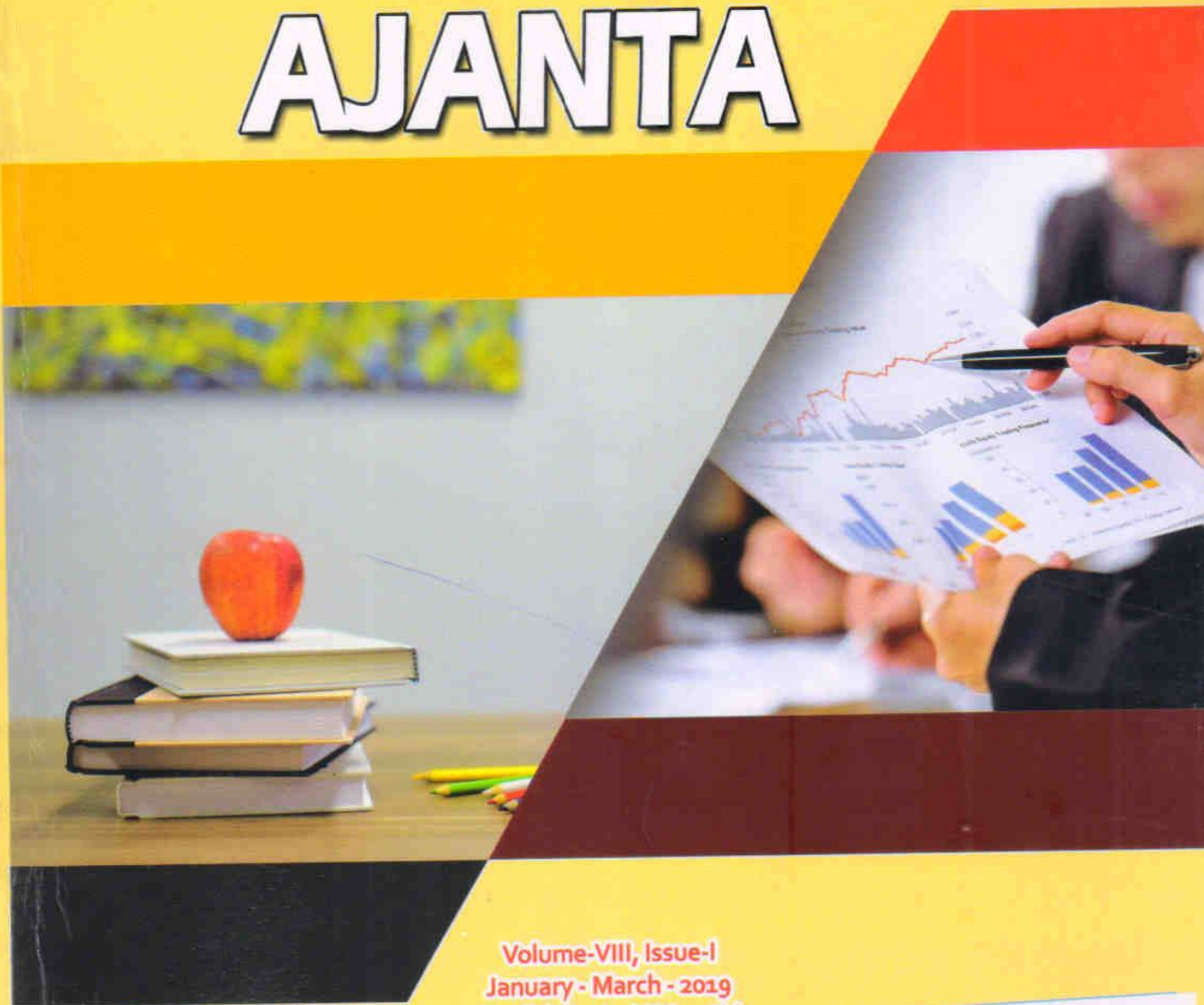


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22. Human Concern and Issues in Indian Religious and Spiritual Literature with Reference to Ancient and Middle Ages

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Abstract

Religion is a manmade institution. It was created for the welfare of human being. All over the world there are around 4000 religions divided into various castes, sub-castes and sect. With the development of agrarian culture, the process of civilization grew up. The settled people started developing the new tools and the new symbols to enrich their day to day life. There were so many things which were remained unanswered for them, for that some mysterious and metaphysical interpretations were done. Later on, the sense of imagination and the different interpretation became the part of various scriptures. In broader term, all the religious and spiritual literature is nothing but the different interpretation of human concerns. The present research paper throws a light on human concern in Indian religious and spiritual literature between 6th to 15th Century. During that period most of the literary output was under the dominance of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata.

Keywords: Mahabharata, Ramayana, Apabhramsha, Bhakti Movement, Saiva and Vaishnava

The Indian literature from ancient time to the contemporary age reflects the human exploration of unresolved mysticism around them. It is said that India does not have one literature, we have so many literature, linguistic culture and sub cultures, in contrast and in proportion with one another. The grave problem is with Indian literature is, we don't have credible history of Indian literature. We have to peep into the Indian literature with the help of epics, folk literature, popular legends, Bhakti movement, etc. but there are certain limitations to track the credibility of literature with these literatures, as all are considered literature of growth, not a literature of art. Most of the Indian literatures were swollen by the scholars from generation to generation. The real renaissance took place after the arrival of British. When Indian came into

the contact with the Western Literature, the modern human issues became the soul of Indian Literature.

It is commonly assumed that ancient Indian Literature means only Sanskrit literature. In fact India has one literature written in different languages. When we said Ancient Indian Literature we ignore Pali, Prakrit and moreover we neglect Tamil and the Southern languages.

The Mahabharata and the Ramayana were the benchmark of Indian Literature. Most of the regional literature revolved around these two epics. The pervasiveness of these two epic is, so many legends were established parallel to the Mahabharata and the Ramayana. Later, it was merged in Bhakti movement. As Bhakti movement was at early part were purely Tamil. Saivism was a hall mark of Tamil Culture but later on mixing and conflict in between the Tamil and Sanskrit language prompted the Bhakti movement.

The Vedas and the Upanishadas are rich heritage but it remained a scholar's job to interpret the quotation from these books. Comparatively, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana remained in the background of Indian culture. Common masses were naturally merged with the translation, paraphrase, myth, philosophy, tradition and legends of the Mahabharata and the Ramayana. The moral sense and ideology were framed out of that. Philosophy, political thought, religious belief, social structure, myth and legends were born. The Mahabharata and the Ramayana were translated in many languages in India. It prompted the Tamil Sangam poetry. Thus, it prompted to a common culture heritage in ancient India.

In 3rd century Bhasa wrote *Madhyamavyayogam*, *Dutavakyam*, *Karnabharata*, *Pancartram*, *Dutaghatolkacam*, *Urubhangam*. The theme of all these dramas are related to the Mahabharata. It was first time in Tamil Literature the reference of Mahabharata came in Kalittokai (414-420).

After the development of Pali and Prakrit language, Sanskrit language was studied as a language of knowledge and literature in various parts of India. During that period, at regional level various language were in the state of formation. The language of common people were different. This was Apabhramsha period (Sub standard or corrupt speech during 6th Cent to 10th Cent) as except Pali language there was only Sanskrit language, in which literary output was available. At regional level after the revival of Hindu religion by Adi Shankaracharya (8th Cent). Translation of the Mahabharata and the Ramayana took place at various regional level. Thus the Mahabharata and the Ramayana framed the unity of India.

Both of this epic has great history of translation. Remarkable translation took place after 8th Century. All these translation prompted the hybrid culture at regional level. The two dominant cultures Sanskrit and Tamil pushed the unique cultural and literary development in India.

In Malyalam Language Madhava Panikkar, Shankar Panikkar and Rama Panikkar during 14th Century composed the translation on the Mahabharata and the Ramayana. Madhava Panikkar wrote translation on Bhagvat Gita, these are Niranam works. Further Thunchattu Ezhuthachan (15th Cent) who wrote *Sri Mahabhartam Kilipattu* and *Adhyatma Ramayana*. In Kannanda Pampa's wrote *Vikramajuna Vijaya*. Nagavarma wrote *Karnataka Kadambari*, whereas Ranna composed *Sahasa Bhima-Vijaya*, Nagchandra wrote *Ramchandra Purana*, In Bengali Krittibass and in Hindi Tulsidam's *Ramcharitmans*. In Marathi Dhaneshwar's *Bhavartha Deepika*, Eknath's *Bhavartha Ramyana*. In Oriya Sarla Das's *Mahabhartata* and *Ramayana* and Telgu Nannay's *Bharata*

As **Shisir Kumar Das** observed that "The Ramayana and the Mahabhartata, and the Puranas helped towards the growth of a perception of a unified India despite its political disunity." In middle period, religious movement played very important role in framing, division and hostilities between various sects, Saiva and Vaishnava sect was one of them. The same vein flew from *Shaktism* which provide the material for Bhakti movement. The work of Adi Shankarcharya who reestablished the concept of non-dualism. Whereas, Ramanujan who worked for dualism. Both of these writers wrote in Sanskrit language and created a link language culture. After middle period, the Bhakti movement became very strong and framed the regional variety.

It is observed that the literature during this ancient and middle period of India clearly dominated by Sanskrit language. The Mahabharata and the Ramayana were the two most translated documents which built the tradition of Indian culture and literature. During that period Abhabransha language were on the stage of development. Most of the regional language started imitating the version of the Mahabharata and the Ramayana. Tamil literature prompted the Bhakti movement on full verge. If we keep aside the Tamil and Pali literature, the Sanskrit literature in between the ancient and middle Indian period in India was completely revolving around the translation and imitation of the Mahabharata and the Ramayana.

The origin and development of this two epic is itself a controversial issue. From 6th to 15th Century literature in India were under the dominance of the Mahabharata and the Ramayana.

As both of the epic dealt with high moral, ideology and philosophy. It became the backbone of Indian philosophy but if we search a human concern or common human being in those epic, one must remember the **Karl Marks** observation that all the literature of world only represents King, Queens and life of aristocratic class.

The study of the Mahabharata and the Ramayana is primarily focused on King, Queen, Prince, Princess, war, ambition, revenge, truth, self-respect, sacrifice and secondarily dealt with the issue of common people, livelihood, tribal life, womanhood, social life of then India.

The Mahabharata and the Ramayana revolved around the war episodes and moral teaching of *karma* behind that. As far as the thematic point of view, there is no doubt that it was high literary creation, sublime in language and characterization. The Mahabharata and the Ramayana give the ideal side of Indian philosophy. The divine existence was extremely highlighted but if we consider the above two epic in literary point of view and try to identify the human concern and issues, we get only marginal description of common man's issue. Either, one has to co-relate and symbolize the episode to common problem. Thus, it becomes the task of interpretation or job of craftsmanship.

In proportion to that whatsoever translation took place during middle and ancient period, from the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, it reflects the same outcome. It became the different interpretation, translation, regional symbolization, transformation, which prompted various versions of the Mahabharata and the Ramayana. These two epics became more comprehensive in translation when it came into the contact with Tamil Saivism, Later in the Bhakti Movement human concern becomes the part and parcel of the literature.

As far as the ancient Indian literature is concerns there are very marginal representation of human concerns. But when the Ramayana and the Mahabharata transformed into the translation at regional languages the issues of common people become the part of parcel of these new writings. It was prompted due to Bhakti Movement which made the different version of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata more comprehensive.

It is concluded that most of literature produced during 6th to 15th Century carried the impression of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. At early period dramas and poetry were written on specific episodes of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. The theme of these literary output was purely God, Goddess, divine representation, supernatural elements, *karma* theory and war episode revolved around that. There were marginal representations of common human

problems or human issues. Although human characters represent through their writings but characterization is only proportionate to the divine character. They do not represent a separate social identity or any social problem of then India.

After beginning of Bhakti movement, whatever translation took place these literature is full of human concern. The saints and neo translator raised the common issues, criticized the evil tradition, spoke against exploitation and discrimination. They favored the path of simplicity. Their path of devotion (Bhakti) was closer to the common day to day life. Hence, it is concluded that only under the impact of Bhakti movement the issue of human concern entered into the Indian religious and the spiritual literature. So credit to raise the modern issues of human concern must goes to Bhakti Movement.

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