

## Echoes of Enlightenment: Tracing Indian Influences in English Literary Chronicles

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### Abstract

Since the ancient period, India has been considered a reservoir of knowledge. Scholars and travellers like Fa Hein and Hiuen Tsang came to India to gain knowledge. This is how the intricate tapestry of English literature is richly interwoven with the thread of Indian philosophies and myths. Thus, the mesmerizing blend of cultural and intellectual exchanges significantly enriched the literary canon and enhanced a multifaceted area of study. The confluence of Indian knowledge tradition and the English language helped to spread out the vastness and richness of Indian philosophical and literary traditions that existed in the Vedas, Upanishads, and mythology. Western writers and philosophers like T.S. Eliot and R.W. Emerson got inspired by the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, and the Bhaghwat Gita, took these philosophical texts as a source for their writings.

In addition, traces of Indian knowledge can be seen in all forms of English writing. For example, the epic tradition in English poetry evolved out of Mahabharat and Ramayana. Panchatantra, a collection of ancient stories, became a primary source for the Aesop Fables and Arabian Night. Further, in order to connect with Indian mythology and local narratives, writers like Grish Karnad, and Raja Rao blended Indian mythology and local narrative forms in their works. This paper explores Indian Influences in English Literary Chronicles by examining key works of Indian and Western authors such as TS Eliot, R W Emerson, Grish Karnad and fables of Panchatantra, this study also elucidates how myth, Upanishad and local narrative form have been adapted, reinterpreted, and integrated into the English literary tradition and transcended to a global audience.

**Keywords:** Panchatantra, Myths, Upanishad, local Narrative Forms

### Introduction

“Educate and raise the masses, and thus alone a nation is possible”

-Swami Vivekananda

India has been considered a source of profound knowledge and wisdom, spanning various fields such as the discovery of zero in mathematics, the Upanishad and Vedas in philosophy, Surya Siddhant in astronomy, and linguistics itself, tracing its roots back to Sanskrit

grammar. The Indian knowledge system encompasses a wide range of thoughts and practices that influence cultures and intellectual engagement. The translation of Indian scriptures and philosophical texts into English introduced a Western audience to the rich tapestry of Indian thought. Moreover, in the 21st century, Indian knowledge system introduced a curriculum that play a significant role in enhancing indigenous genres of writing as well as emphasizing the importance of multilingualism and promoting flexibility in education. The confluence of Indian philosophy and the English language produces a vibrant cross-cultural exchange that reinforces both Indian and global intellectual landscapes. This blending also facilitated the global promulgation of Indian philosophies, sciences, and arts, making them accessible around the world.

### **Indian folklore and philosophy in Western literary Chronicles**

The integration of Indian philosophies and folklore with Western academic disciplines has encouraged cross-disciplinary research and the global exchange of ideas. Indian folklore tradition consists of diversified narratives that pass- through generations, from Panchatantra to Akbar Birbal stories. These didactic tales are an integral part of Indian culture and heritage, but their significance glorifies western literary chronicles. It can be seen in Aesop fables, Arabian nights, and western ballad traditions.

Panchatantra and Aesop fables are considered distinguished fables. These tales attribute human qualities to animals. Such as cunningness toward foxes, timidity towards hares, imbecility toward donkeys, and loyalty towards dogs. Vishnu Sharam, author of Panchatantra, lived in the forest, where he had the best opportunity to become familiar with the innate traits and understand the basic instincts of each forest creature. On the other hand, Aesop, as a slave, resided in the farm house, so he got a chance to observe the domesticated animals. The purpose of writing the Panchatantra was to teach moral as well as political principles, and on the other hand, Aesop's fables were designed to teach honesty, kindness, and humility. Both the fables "The Crow and the Fox" and The Monkey and the Crocodile are based on themes of vanity and deceit. In the fable The Crow and the Fox, the Crow had cheese. Seeing the cheese, the fox starts praising the crow, calling it beautiful, and its voice is lovely. The crow got flattered by the fox's compliments, so cheese fell from its beak, and the fox ran away to catch it. The moral of the story is to beware of curry favor and to

acknowledge deceitful words, which can lead to ruin. "The Sweet Song of the Donkey" and "The Cranes and Tortoise". The titles of the fables vary, but their morals are the same. On one hand, "The Sweet Song of the Donkey" tells the story of a donkey who attempted to sing a song but got criticized for his voice; on the other hand, "The Cranes and the Tortoise", is about a tortoise who wishes to fly like a crane. For a while, its desire was full, but later it fell down completely. Both narratives teach the moral lesson that before doing anything, one should think properly, accept one's limitations, and beware of one's unique talents.

Indian philosophies circumscribe a wide range of thoughts that originate from both the Shamakya, Yoga, Vedas, Hinduism, and Buddhism, which lead people to the path of Dharma and spirituality. The influence of Indian philosophy on Western literary chronicles is profound and extensive, traced back from the 4th century to the 21st century, in the forms of trade, scholarly exchange, and conquest. It is impacting various genres and authors. Over time, Indian philosophical thoughts—Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism—have remarkably shaped Western literature, providing new themes and perspectives. Here are some notable names who played a significant role in popularizing Indian philosophies, such as Charles Wilkins, Sir William Jones, H.T. Colebrooke, and Max Muller. Max Muller is the one who has asserted that the Indian logical system is more ancient than that of Aristotle. Ralph Waldo Emerson was the one who traced Advaita, Vedanta, and Hinduism in his writings. His writing reflects the ideas of the unity of the soul and the pursuit of spiritual enlightenment. FI Carpenter said

“His reading of Indian literature forms one of the most important chapters in the story of his literary development, for not only does he owe his poems “Brahma” and “Hamatreya” entirely to a Hindu work.”

Emerson draws inspiration for his essay *Nature* from *Manu-Smirti*. This book resonates with the themes of individualism and self-reliance.

“Single is each man born; single he dies;

single, he receives reward for his good;

and single out the punishment."

Later, he published passages from the Laws of Manu, the Vishnu Purana, and the Vedas in his renowned magazine, The Dail, which show his gradual interest in Indian philosophy. Moreover, his poem "Hamatreya," adopted from the Vishnu Puran, resonates with and emphasizes spiritualism and opposes the idea of materialistic gains. In 1856, Emerson wrote the poem "Brahma," which he considered to be the supreme form of all energy. Brahma is the only source from which humans get peace and happiness. This same idea resonates in his other essay, "The Oversoul."

T.S. Eliot, one of the renowned authors of the 20th century, wrote multiple works such as poems, verse dramas, and literary criticism. Indian philosophy, Sanskrit, Pali, and Patanjali's yoga sutras all had a spiritual impact on his writing. His Magnum Opus work, The Waste Land, and the Four Quartet echo the themes of eternal recurrences, nondual philosophy, and devotion to enlightenment. Both works got inspiration from the Bhagwat Gita and the Brihadranayak Upanishad. As Eliot said, Brahma is the creation of the world. This same notion resonates in his poem Little Gidding, where he says all the beginning has an end and all the end has a beginning. Moreover, the poem East Cocker is based on the theme of the importance of karma, the same message given by Shri Krishna to Arjuna in the Bhagwat Gita.

"For us, there is only the trying. The rest is not our business."

His work, The Waste Land, explicitly refers to the Sanskrit phrase "Datta, Dayadhvam, Damyata." Datta emphasizes the act of giving and imparting the message of detachment from the materialistic world; Dayadhvam teaches the moral lesson to have compassion and empathy, humanity, and kindness for other creatures; this is the only way that creates harmony among people and nature; Damyata teaches to have control over one's desires and emphasizes inner strength and peace.

## The Confluence of the English Language and Indian Chronicles

In regard to this discourse, Indian authors tried to unveil India's rich cultural heritage and complex social dynamics in their literary writings. Their contribution enriched global literature as well as providing insightful perspectives on Indian identity and history. In the 21st century, international collaboration and exchanges between scholars from India and other parts of the world has opened the door to facilitating Indian culture on a global scale and helping to bridge cultural gaps. In the discourse of Indian English chronicles, philosophers and authors like Swami Vivekanand and Raja Rao emerged as key proponents of popularizing Indian philosophies and local genres. Swami Vivekanand Nand is the first leading figure who introduced Vedanta and yoga at the World Parliament speech in Chicago in the year 1893. His eloquent use of the English language and philosophy completely influenced western thinkers, philosophers, and writers. In addition, Raja Rao, a prominent figure in Indian English tradition, has popularized indigenous genres by blending Indian story-telling tradition with western literary techniques. Rao narratives were imbued with scriptures, local cultures, and social milieus. In the novel, Kanthapura Rao applies the Sathala Purana and Harikatha traditions that are prevalent in Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and Maharashtra.

Continuing further, Salman Rushdie is known for mingling myth, folklore, and magical realism in his literary works, which flourishes in both western and postcolonial literary writings. In his writings, he frequently layered the mythological narrative with various cultures; for instance, in his work *Midnight Children*, he created a character named Saleem Sanai, Shiva, and Parvati—all these characters seem to resemble the Hindu deities. Saleem Sanai is associated with the figure of Lord Ganesha, and his sojourn in the forest represents the exile period of Pandav's in Mahabharat; the character Shiva resonates with the deity Lord Shiva, who is considered a reason behind destruction; Saleem's sister Brass Monkey, whose name itself represents the Lord Hanuman, represents the way Lord Hanuma was loyal to Ram as she was to her brother.

In addition, if we see Indian Theater, we find Grish Karnad's contribution to reinvigorating Indian mythologies in his play that earned international recognition. For instance, the *Yayati* play revolves around the Yayati myth, who was cursed by Shukracharya to die young. Further, in his other play, *Hayavadana*, he applied Vetala Panchavimshati. He applied this myth to describe the complexities of the modern world. In the play God Indira Slayed Demon Vritra, this was earlier mentioned in the Rig Veda. Moreover, the book *The Fire and Rain* continued the Yavakri tale, in which Lord Indira bestowed great knowledge on Yavakri; nonetheless, his hubris ultimately brought his demise. He has harassed the wife of Raibhya, so to take revenge, Raibhya creates a demon from divine fire who killed Yavakri.

This is how the English language played a significant role in globalizing the Indian epic tradition of Mahabharat, Ramayana, and mythology. As well as by amalgamating myth with English, authors and critics have opened new horizons in cross-cultural and stylistic approaches.

## Conclusion

The result of introducing Indian ancient knowledge, in English Chronicles has globalized and diversified the literary tradition and enhanced global integration and cultural consciousness. This fusion enables people to learn about other traditions, cultures, and universal themes and archetypes.

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