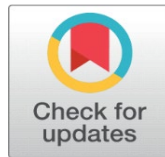


TRANSCENDING THE WESTERN PARADIGMS: RECLAIMING THE INDIAN TEXTS THROUGH 'COSMOCAL PREADING'

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ABSTRACT

The body of the Indian Classical Literature, embodying cultural, spiritual, and philosophical deliberation, remains an emblem of the subcontinent's intellectually charged tradition. Therefore, the approach to read and interpret all such texts has often been spoiled by the modern approaches and pedagogical distortions, obscuring the true essence lying within. This paper seeks to understand the multifarious richness of Indian Classical Literature, examining the pedagogical pitfalls and proposing alternative approaches—such as encapsulated in 'Cosmocal Preading' (Cosmic + Local and Pre + Reading)—to genuinely engage with such texts. By critiquing the paradigms set by the Eurocentrism that define modernity and emphasize the epistemological framework rooted in Indian esoteric literature, this research paper aims to establish a more holistic, multidimensional understanding of the Indian classics. Furthermore, the paper discusses how terms like Dharma, Karma, Moksha and rebirth, crucial to texts like the Mahābhārata and others, must be comprehended within their own cultural and philosophical contexts rather than through reductive or misaligned or rather say distorted frameworks. This paper thus advocates for the re-education of both readers and scholars on how to approach classical texts in a way that honours their intended depth and universality.

Keywords: Indian Classics, Cosmic, Local, Reading, Mahābhārata, Modernity, Pedagogy, Eurocentrism, Dharma

1. INTRODUCTION

Indian classical literature comprising texts like with Upanishads, Vedas, Mimansa, Ramayan Mahabharata etc. represents the body of consciousness having been understood from different altitudes and points of view over the time in the history. These texts have been dealt with from the intrinsic world of order, and from there the understanding has been grasped and the text has been deliberated in a way they look esoteric and difficult to be decoded. Thereafter, it develops a deep connotation for all keywords, symbols, terminologies, jargons and deliberations that, in fact, make the main content of a classics.

The literary world has been dominated by the Western philosophical tradition which is Eurocentric. It has been accidental, or rather say, deliberate, and sometimes rigorous as well that the scholars in the western zone tried their best to work on the corporeal structure of the text which actually contain the soul. The western mind was able to grasp the corporeal structure while leaving off the consciousness within. From this standpoint, the approach that has been

developed prove to be pertinent for some aspects of literary studies but when coming to the Indian classics it drastically fails to achieve the end expected, desired and encapsulated. Regarding the depth of these texts, Prof. Kapil Kapoor (2005) aptly says:

...the texts have high degree of opacity. The primary texts at least are not expository – they do not give the history nor do they explain the methodology of constituting knowledge...only minimal explicit statements are made and hence the texts are more or less opaque.

(Indian Knowledge Systems, p 14)

As the approach to grasp the essence of the Indian text especially esoteric ones is not via horizontal approaches but the vertical ones which can be acquired through only cosmic localized along with going back before the 'reading', hence the concept of 'Cosmocal Preading' comes into existence to appreciate the Indian texts in genuine terms.

2. PEDAGOGICAL PITFALLS AND THE MODERN READER

The modern mind seems to be equipped with all the points of references which are cerebral not intuitive. It may be understood as one of the most important norms which leads the human mind towards Eurocentric methodologies that try to take hold of the entire body of text around the world. This kind of methods are, in fact, to be perceived as obsolete as they may be good only for analysing texts belonging to the extrinsic world but, when coming to the everlasting experience, it fails utterly. It is why the approaches taken acquiesced by scholars in the intellectual world outside the eastern zone prioritize the historical context but they do not seem to navigate through the cosmic and the intuitive dimensions.

The present day tool available to decode the text is generally intellectually charged not intuitively geared up. The text which has nothing to do with the deeper layers of life aligned with the inner world can be easily tackled in terms of grasping their meaning but the concepts like Dharma, Artha, Kaam, Moksha, Rebirth etc. deliberated in the Indian texts often fail to be grasped by such tools. They sometimes are termed as airy and phony. According to Deshpande (2018), Indian classical texts are frequently taught as relics of a bygone era, disconnected from contemporary view point and relevance. This not only alienates students from the texts but also diminishes the cultural significance these works hold in the Indian intellectual tradition.

The pedagogical accentuation on the European model very often damages and distorts the way Indian classics are to be understood and taught, misrepresenting them as culturally static or mythological rather than engaging with their perennial philosophical inquiries. Roy (2020) points out that the failure to engage with these texts in their original languages and cultural contexts further exacerbates this problem. Indian classical literature often contains complex symbolic reverberation, cosmological stuffs, and multi-layered narratives only to be fully understood through an intimate familiarity with the language and cultural context in which they were articulated. The challenge, then, is to develop alternative pedagogical methods that do justice to these texts' cosmic, intuitive, and philosophical nexus. The proposition of the 'Cosmocal Preading' as one such Indian method, an approach which give freedom to the readers to engage with Indian classical literature on its own genuine terms.

3. RECLAIMING INDIAN CLASSICAL TEXTS THROUGH 'COSMOCAL PREADING'

The concept of 'Cosmocal Preading' which is central to this discussion combines the cosmological aspects embedded within these texts with a focus on the local, cultural, and temporal context of their production and interpretation. The approach encourages readers to transcend a purely linguistic or superficial engagement with the text and seek its deeper, esoteric meanings. By dealing with such texts in a multifarious intuitive way, readers can better grasp the complexities in terms of religious teachings and moral exuberance. For example, the Mahābhārata being not just a historical epic is a metaphysical and text of the cosmic nature dealing with profound spiritual discussions about the Karma theory, the existential normative, and the eternal combat between Dharma and Adharma. The game of dicing in this text can be viewed as a metaphor for the struggle between fate and free will, one of the key concerns of the Indian thoughts. From a 'Cosmocal' (Cosmic + Local) perspective, the game represents the cosmic play of forces beyond human control, suggesting that human action, while being significant, is always subject to larger design.

The Cosmocal altitude also irradiates the Dharma equation, for instance, as cited in the Mahābhārata, being not simply a set of moral rules or ethical prescriptions only. It has dynamism evolving into the order of the existence, the individual's role, and the specific historical and cultural context. In this way, the Cosmocal dimension is a threat to the Western norms that often reduce moral dilemmas to simple choices between truth and false. Instead of this, it also reveals Dharma as a multi-layered concept integrating cosmic coherence, individualistic way, and the preservation of the moral order of the universe. As Thapar (2017) notes, the notion of Dharma permeates every facet of the Mahābhārata, and it cannot be understood in isolation from the text's broader cosmic concerns. The Cosmocal approach here calls for a re-read all such texts afresh and deal with them in a design of its own.

4. THE FALLACY OF EUROCENTRIC MODERNITY

A key argument in this paper is that the concept of modernity, as defined by Western intellectual traditions, is often at odds with the multidimensional approach required to engage with Indian classical texts. The assumption that 'modern' necessarily equates to 'Western' has led to the erroneous belief that Indian literature is anachronistic or irrelevant in today's world. This fallacy is rooted in what Chakrabarty (2000) describes as the 'provincialization' of European intellectual traditions, which have been universalized at the expense of other cosmologies. The Western conception of modernity, which prioritizes progress, rationality, and linear historical development, is incompatible with the cyclical, cosmic, and spiritual frameworks that underpin Indian classical literature like the Bhagavad Gītā, often being interpreted through the lens of Western humanism or existentialism, is thus misunderstood. Prof. Kapil Kapoor (2005) states:

It is also important to note that there has been uninterrupted reflection on philosophy, nature and character of knowledge in Indian tradition. Knowledge is not seen as one undifferentiated entity. Depending on what its object is and depending on what effect it has on people, knowledge is classified into sub-sets.

(Indian Knowledge Systems, p 23)

Modern researchers' interpretations of Indian classical texts are prone to distortion because of their disregard for these details. According to Olivelle (2014), contemporary readers frequently read the Bhagavad Gītā via secular or humanist lenses, ignoring its profound ties to the cosmic order in favour of its philosophical lessons. These readings do not grasp the essential meaning of the text(less). To fully be able to understand the Indian classics, moving beyond the Eurocentric norms and encapsulating the Indian interpretive frameworks grounded in the specific cultural, spiritual, and cosmological contexts are required.

5. DHARMA, KARMA, AND REBIRTH

A more pertinent reading of the epic Mahābhārata expresses that the aforementioned concepts Dharma, Karma, and rebirth cannot be at all understood through the Western paradigms. These are deeply intertwined with the Indian worldview of cosmic cycles and moral causality, which operate beyond the linear constructs of time and space. Dharma, for instance, is a complex phenomenon bound by the time and space in relation to the family and the society. The understanding of Dharma can be seen throughout the text of the Mahābhārata, specifically in the decisions made by characters in different situations like Shakuni, Dhritrashtra, Duryodhana, Yudhishtira, Bhishma and others. But it has to be understood that the characters are in a particular situation trapped to behave in the way discussed in the epic, and their proper understating reveals the hidden. Harishchandra Thorat (2009) puts the complexity as:

Rhetorical genres have a special place in the Mahabharata. Different descriptions, philosophical arguments, discursive socio-political-ethical treatises enter easily into the text of the Mahabharata...It tries to achieve this status by revealing the experiential plan of the human mind.

(Reflections and Variations on The Mahabharata, p 244)

Thus, the tool to appreciate any work of literature should be the same as the one that can really be applicable to it. The apparatus should not be used unlikely. In this regard, this is pertinent to understand that it will be a baffling

experience if the western methodologies are applied on Indian texts or Indian theories are applied on the western literatures because it will only create a picture which does not belong to their own worldview, hence distorted.

6. LEXICAL AND INTUITIONAL ENGAGEMENT

It has to be understood that the Indian texts bear the deeper recesses within their bodies. What is most importantly required here is to understand the lexical with intuitional and with an intuitional with lexical. This is why because the words carry the weight of wordless and the wordless wear the body of words. In the very antiquity, the focus has been not just been lexical but phonological and it has to be understood here when the phonemes are transcribed into letters or alphabets, they lose their entity through the translation what has been discussed is never to be graced and that's what has happened with the Indian literature. Indian languages like Sanskrit and Pali possess a depth and subtlety that are often lost when translated into English or other modern languages (Pollock, 2006). Not only this, Ashok Chousalkar (2009), regarding the uncircumscribed periphery of wisdom, says:

Krishna maintained that the true nature of Dharma could not be understood with the help of Vedas alone because every aspect of life was not discussed in the Vedas...It had to be understood on the basis of its results because Dharma stood for universal beneficence and welfare.

(Reflections and Variations on The Mahabharata, p 244)

Alongside the engagement at the level of words, engaging at the level of intuition needs to be taken into consideration and it plays an important role. In this case, when the text is approached intuitively what is found is the tapping of the door of the consciousness which is possible not intellectually, but spiritually. As suggested by Sri Aurobindo (1995), Indian classical texts often work on multiple planes of existence, wanting the readers to connect with the indescribable dimensions of the text. Upanishads are the best examples bearing the profound spiritual truths through symbolic language and metaphors. All meanings that reside in any text is relative to 'time' and 'space' except the ones that transcend it. Picking an incident, a space, from a text and applying it to a different theory or time can only bring such meanings which have never been installed or infused in it. All the readings without exception should be read in their 'con-texts' only. Otherwise, the resulting knowledge and experience undoubtedly will be misleading.

7. CORRECT TOOL FOR THE CORRECT TEXT

There are many methods developed in the literary world through which attempts are made to have the comprehensive knowledge of the world. The westerns methods have been exuberantly dealing with the world to be seemingly successful but the expected outcome has not been the way it has to be or it was expected. The outer way to approach the inner, in the Indian context, has been very damaging and destructive, and it has been in vogue and scholars have been giving undue weight to these methods. Western methods of literary criticism, rooted in post-Enlightenment rationalism, are often unsuitable for the interpretation of Indian classical texts, which operate within a spiritual and cosmic framework (Nussbaum, 2001). It is therefore to be understood that all theories – be it psychoanalysis, feminism, historicism, structuralism, post colonialism, deconstruction etc. fail to address the esoteric texts.

In the same fashion, using Freudian methods of psychoanalysis to understand characters from the Mahabharata may formulate anachronistic impression that may possibly dismantle the cultural and philosophical meanings of the text. Freudian theories related to human consciousness and unconscious emanates from western cultural thoughts and are remotely associated with Indian cultural and philosophical traditions, which articulate entirely different dimensions of human psychology focusing on the relationship between ego and self i, e Ahamkara and Self.

Evidently, scholars can use methods which may be related with the particular cultural and philosophical contexts of aforementioned texts. Pollock (2006) and Bansat-Boudan (1992) are of the opinion that using western critical discourse to the interpretations of Indian classical texts may lead to reductive and inaccurate findings. They suggested to develop certain methodical tools which can truly testify Indian cultural and philosophical echoes.

One of the prevalent methods which I have conceptualized may be termed as 'Cosmocal Preading' that contemplates on the texts from various critical lens. This method leads to the assimilative understanding of Indian classical literature

that glorifies diversities and complexities of these texts while focusing on their contemporary significance in the modern world

8. CONCLUSION

Indian Classics are replete with immense knowledge and wisdom. They have encoded meaningful voices which need proper tool to be decoded. The western methods relying on the extrinsic mode of life and existence do not sufficiently address the normative appropriate for Indian way of understanding them. Approaching it requires accurate diligence and intelligence and dealing with it in the cooperative milieu brings the ways which are able to adopt what is to be acquiesced. The present research paper focused on the Theory of Ram, which I will fully develop in time to come, using the tool of 'Cosmocal Preading' attempts to appropriate the inner dimensions of Indian texts.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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