

CULTURAL HISTORY OF ANCIENT INDIA

Dr. Ambikadevi Belamagi, Assistant Professor, Department of studies in History, Davangere University, Davanagere, Karnataka- 577007

Abstract:

The Indian Culture encompasses the legacy of belief systems, technologies, values, language, social conventions, and customs that originated in India. The cultural aspects encompass musical compositions, visual artworks, spoken performances, and various forms of artistic craftsmanship. Indian art and culture, now deeply ingrained in Indian tradition, originated during the Vedic era. During ancient times, the act of recitation was popular. The paper has following objectives: To understand the Indian ancient history with cultural practices and To know the Indian culture with ancient perspective. The paper prepared on the base of secondary sources like journals, articles, books etc. The paper constructed with descriptive with historical research method used in the paper for fulfillment of the objectives. The ancient literature, including the Vedas, Shrutis, and Smritis, was mostly transmitted orally, with written documentation being introduced at a later stage. The education system rooted in ancient culture should prioritise the development of instructors who possess expertise in cultural practices that acknowledge and validate the capabilities of problem-solving and learning that are derived from cultural backgrounds. Cultural information can be acquired from elders, community leaders, educators, local cultural specialists, and grassroots individuals.

Key Words: Culture, history, Ancient India

Introduction:

The term 'culture' encompasses various elements of a region and its inhabitants. These features encompass language, religion, music, art, dancing, culinary customs, family structure or hierarchy, distinctive architectural styles, beliefs, values, and fashion. The Indian culture has seen significant evolution over time. The rich culture of this region has been influenced by its long history of invasions, colonisation, and governance by various groups over thousands of years. Moreover, India's attainment of independence and its subsequent evolution into a democratic nation have ushered in several transformations in its cultural landscape. The culture of a human community is the fundamental essence that sets it apart from other communities. Culture is the essence of human society, providing vitality and indicating its liveliness. It has the ability to develop and affect all aspects of a community, including customs, traditions, ways of living, mental processes, and especially educational theory and practice. India's cultural diversity stems from a history of invasions and the impact of various rulers over the Indian subcontinent. Following each invasion or shift in power, successive kingdoms introduced their distinct cultures, which assimilated into Indian culture. It may be asserted that every religion, kingdom, and individual has contributed in some way to the development of India's culture, resulting in its current diversity.

India has a diverse array of dances, languages, religions, music, food, architecture, and traditions across its various regions. The cultivation of rice was introduced to India from South East Asia via the northeastern region of the country. Rice production currently constitutes a significant component of Indian agriculture. Sanskrit and Pali were the indigenous languages of India, which were subsequently supplemented by languages like Hindi, Urdu, and English due to

foreign invasions or the evolution of written texts, such as the Devanagari script.

Objective of the paper:

The paper has following objectives:

1. To understand the Indian ancient history with cultural practices
2. To know the Indian culture with ancient perspective

Methodology:

The paper prepared on the base of secondary sources like journals, articles, books etc. The paper constructed with descriptive with historical research method used in the paper for fulfillment of the objectives.

Review of Literature:

The paper titled "Influence of Religion and Culture on Ethical Behaviour" by Mona (2023) explores the impact of religious beliefs and cultural norms on individuals' ethical conduct. Personal ethical conduct is significantly impacted by moral and ethical principles, which are in turn moulded by religion and culture. These principles highlighted altruism, dedication to the common good, and the quest for moral excellence. Additionally, the notion of dharma, which refers to one's obligations and responsibilities, had a significant impact on the development of moral principles in ancient Indian civilization. Singh. R (2023) Indian traditions, hitherto regarded as superstitions, are now being seen as rooted in scientific knowledge, passed down through generations as enduring traditions, as evidenced by the progress and discoveries of science. Sankpal. S.J (2021) asserted that the earliest Indian culture and Ancient Indian Education. Educational institutions typically reflect the ideals of a nation and provide us with insight into the essence of its culture and civilization. The ancient Indian civilization is highly intriguing and significant on a global scale. In order to fully comprehend it, we must thoroughly examine its educational system, which has been preserved, transmitted, and modified over a span of almost 4000 years. This factor enhances the significance and fascination of studying Ancient Indian Culture and Education.

In ancient India, the act of writing history was primarily seen as an artistic pursuit rather than a scientific endeavour. The assessment of the works created by ancient Indian historians should be based on the criteria that were prevalent during their time, rather than using present standards. Texts that reference supernatural powers and stories are situated within a cosmic timeframe that includes a reflection on the current situation, while also providing a historical perspective.

Ancient India acknowledged the paramount importance of moral instruction in the lives of human beings. The ancient philosophers believed that a well-functioning community could only exist if its members were ethically cultivated. They meticulously and judiciously devised an educational plan with the goal of achieving a balanced and holistic development of the intellect and physique. Moral education obligates students and young adults to live their lives in accordance with the standards established and enforced by gurukulas, ashramas, and societies.

Origin of Ancient Indian Culture

The cultural development of ancient India commences with the civilization of Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro. This civilization originated between the years 3250 and 2750 B.C. The Vedic culture, which corresponds to the age of the Vedas, spans approximately from 2500 B.C. to 1500

B.C. During the Vedic period, there was an emergence of tribal chieftainship and democratic assemblies. The emergence of territorial sovereignty and the concept of Bharata Varsha occurred specifically during the Upanishadic era.

India was fragmented into multiple kingdoms during the epic period. The establishment of territorial sovereignty led to efforts to unify the entire country under a single sovereign. Efforts were undertaken by Bharat, Shri Ramachandra, and Yudhisthir. The approximate age of Bharat was around 2250 B.C., Ramachandra was around 1900 B.C., and Mahabharata was around 1500 B.C., as was the Bhagavad Gita. The existence of drama in the tribal society of Vedic Aryans around 4000 BC is widely believed, although no written records have been discovered to confirm this. The Natyashastra once again undertook the pioneering work of documenting the genesis and evolution of play. Lord Brahma was credited with creating the drama in a remarkable manner. Sage Narad extensively elucidated all facets of drama in a detailed manner in his magnum opus. The Ramayana and the Mahabharata are widely regarded as the earliest recognised theatrical works originating from India. The ancient Indian dramatists drew inspiration from these epics. Kalidasa, the court poet of the Gupta period in ancient Indian literature, is well praised for his theatrical works such as Abhijnanasakuntalam and Meghaduta.

During the Classical Age, India saw a significant political and cultural resurgence. Politically, Magadha remained the focal point of attention, with first the Nanda dynasty and later the Maurya dynasty ruling over it. Alexander launched an offensive campaign against the Nandas in 320 B.C. The Maurya dynasty commenced with Chandragupta in 322 B.C. and concluded in 185 B.C. Chandragupta Maurya and Ashoka were the notable monarchs of this dynasty. The political cohesion of India is reestablished during the reign of this dynasty. The political and cultural awareness of the people was significantly elevated as a consequence. Significant experimentation and breakthroughs were observed in the realms of administration and culture.

During the Post-Maurya Era, following the downfall of the Mauryan Empire, India became fragmented into several autonomous kingdoms. The Sunya and Kanva dynasties ruled over Magadha from 185 B.C. to 225 A.D. Concurrently, there was an invasion of foreign ethnic groups such as the Shakas, Greeks, and the Kushans, who were a subgroup of the Yueh-Chis, into southern and central India. Kanishka was the most renowned among the monarchs of foreign descent.

A significant portion of Northern India was consolidated, leading to a notable cultural resurgence in the country. Subsequently, the nation experienced power battles between the Shakas and the Satvahans dynasties. The Gupta Empire emerged sometime around 319 or 320 A.D. Pataliputra served as the capital city. The Gupta period epitomised the zenith of Indian culture during the Classical era. Samudragupta and Chandragupta were the preeminent monarchs of this dynasty. Under their patronage, they achieved the restoration of political unity and the elevation of Indian culture to its pinnacle.

The ancient Indian culture is a repository of classical dance traditions. Historically, the temples supported these dances as a means of pacifying the deities, combining both dancing and religious devotion. The Natyashastra, authored by Sage Narada, is an ancient document that explores the aesthetics of various art forms. It contains references to renowned dance traditions like as Bharatnatyam, Odissi, and Kathakali. The Tandava, a dance form of Lord Shiva, is shown in numerous Hindu temples such as Konark Temple, Rameshwaram, and Nataraja.

The old Indian culture has a long-standing legacy that may be traced back to ancient societies, including the epic societies and the Vedic age. The contemporary traditions, habits, and beliefs are a direct result of the old Indian cultures. The fundamental basis of the Indian ethos, despite the presence of numerous beliefs, remains unaltered.

The Culture of Ancient India:

Ancient India boasts an immensely diverse and opulent cultural heritage. It is the area where Hinduism and Buddhism, two of the world's most significant religions, originated. Additionally, this culture is responsible for numerous inventions and technological advancements that are still in use today. An examination of Indian culture should encompass several major periods in Indian history, namely the ancient, mediaeval, and modern eras. Every age is distinguished by a transformation in political systems, global interactions, and societal dynamics. In order to gain a comprehensive comprehension of Indian culture, it is advisable to assign students the task of conducting research either individually or in small groups. Their findings can then be used to contribute to a comprehensive chronology that will visually depict the nation's history in distinct categories: politics, religion, culture, and technology. One of the key elements of Indian culture is its faiths, as evidenced by the presence of major religions in ancient India. This course aims to facilitate students in acquiring a fundamental comprehension of Hinduism and Buddhism, specifically about their beliefs and practices. This particular lesson is intended to aid in reviewing the material, but it also serves as a useful method for presenting a summary of the knowledge. Shadow puppetry in South India appears to be This skill involves creating shadow puppets in the Indian tradition to effectively depict and animate traditional Indian stories. A Walk Through Harappa offers a comprehensive analysis of the Indus River Valley civilization as it developed in ancient India. Students discuss the governance, religious practices, technological advancements, and everyday routines of this highly productive ancient culture.

Art, Culture, Religion and Civilisation:

Art: Art is the manifestation of an individual's experiences, beliefs, ideas, thoughts, and emotions via artistic expression. It mirrors the principles and advancements of a civilization. It is a constituent of culture. Culture exerts a significant impact on art, and at times, art emerges as a byproduct of the culture.

Culture: Culture refers to the set of fundamental values held by a specific society, which are manifested through its collective institutions and the individual members' dispositions, sentiments, attitudes, and manners. It is also reflected in the meaningful shapes that are given to material items. The genesis of culture According to the Idealistic Theory, the rishis of the Vedic Age gained insight into certain ideas either by divine inspiration or their own intuition. Over time, these ideas developed into an ideal that was well-suited to the social conditions and intellectual capabilities of the Aryan community. In an attempt to implement this concept, they endeavoured to apply it to the physical setting of the Indo-Gangetic valley. As a result, they developed the concepts and establishments that formed the basis of the Vedic civilization. The latter category of theories claim that the physical environment serves as the initial foundation of culture. Proponents of the Naturalistic Theory will elucidate the genesis of the agricultural lifestyle that the nomadic Aryans embraced upon their arrival in India. This lifestyle served as the foundation upon which they subsequently constructed their religious, philosophical, and social systems.

Religious Culture: Religion, in its broader meaning, aligns with and extends beyond culture. In its more specific meaning, it constitutes a significant component of culture. When religion is seen as the internal experience that enlightens the mind about the true significance and objective of life, it becomes the essence of culture. However, when it is reduced to the external manifestation of that internal experience, it becomes merely a component of culture. Religion, when understood as the deep understanding of the ultimate truth, is never in opposition to culture. However, when religion becomes a superficial practice without any genuine meaning, it can often clash with cultural life. The religious and cultural history of India may be traced back to the ancient Indus River Valley Civilization, which dates back 5000 years. Historians have discovered evidence of numerous deities in this civilization. The Aryan migration, which occurred approximately 4000 to 3500 years ago during the Vedic period, had a significant impact on the religious landscape of India.

During the Vedic Period, the Aryans revered various natural elements as deities. They venerated the Earth (Prithvi), Fire (Agni), Rain (Varuna), and other deities. Indra was the deity associated with the natural phenomenon of thunder. Religious sacrifices and ritual acts became more important throughout the later Vedic period, specifically from 1000 BC to 600 BC. The priestly caste began to prescribe the regulations and ceremonies of divine worship. Buddhism and Jainism emerged at the end of this period. The composition of the four Vedas took place throughout the Vedic period. The Vedas served as the foundation for religious rituals and the way of life in Hinduism. Hinduism is classified as a polytheistic religion due to its veneration of multiple deities. Several prominent deities include Vishnu, Shiva, Hanuman, Krishna, Durga, and others. Hinduism is the predominant religion in India. Additional religions encompass Islam, Sikhism, Jainism, Buddhism, and Christianity. The inception of Islam in India can be attributed to the 7th century, when Arab Muslims established their presence in the region, and to the era of the Mughal emperors.

Civilisation: Civilization is commonly understood as a more advanced form of culture. Civilization is the stage of cultural evolution where people start living in huge cities, which signify an elevated level of material existence and a greater standard of living. If a person's way of life contradicts a moral ideal, or if it lacks any moral standards altogether, it will hinder cultural advancement. Civilization can be both a supporter and a detractor of culture.

Family structure and Marriage: The family structure and marriage in Hinduism during ancient India were founded upon the principles outlined in the Vedas. Both monogamy and polygamy were observed during the Vedic period. Polygamy was mostly observed by affluent individuals such as zamindars (landlords) and monarchs. As a result of the patriarchal structure of society, it is expected that the male, typically the father, assumes the role of the household leader. Child marriages were prevalent throughout the later Vedic period.

Ethical Principles in Ancient Indian Culture : The ethical principles that regulated individual behaviour and social interactions were of paramount importance in the ancient Indian culture. These principles were profoundly ingrained in philosophical teachings and religious beliefs. The concept of dharma, which denoted one's moral obligation and accountability, was a critical component of ancient Indian ethics. Dharma was regarded as the cornerstone of a society that was both harmonious and just. It was anticipated that individuals would fulfil their dharma by adhering to moral principles, including honesty, integrity, and compassion for all living entities.

The concept of ahimsa, which promoted nonviolence and compassion towards all living creatures, was another significant ethical principle in ancient Indian culture. The significance of ethical principles in the preservation of a just and efficient administration was underscored in Kautilya's Arthashastra, a treatise on politics and governance.

Ancient Indian rulers and administrators were governed by these ethical principles, which prioritised the welfare of the state and its populace, as well as accountability and fairness. Furthermore, the practice of social responsibility in ancient India was evident in the form of acts of philanthropy and charity. These actions were deemed indispensable for individuals to fulfil their ethical and moral responsibilities to society. The principles of dharma and compassion were inextricably linked with the concept of social responsibility in ancient India. In general, the cultural ethics of ancient India were profoundly rooted in religious and philosophical teachings. Individual behaviour, social interactions, and even governance were influenced by these ethics. Religious and philosophical teachings, such as the principles of dharma, ahimsa, and social responsibility, had a profound impact on the cultural ethics of ancient India. In ancient India, these principles not only regulated individual behaviour but also impacted social interactions and governance. They were deeply engrained in the values and belief systems of the populace, influencing their moral compass and directing their actions towards ethical behavior.

Discussion and suggestions for social implications:

Additionally, it was discovered that individuals in the past engaged in the worship of natural entities as deities, with the river Indus being regarded as sacred. These mathematicians made significant contributions to several areas of mathematics, including the discovery of zero, negative numbers, arithmetic, algebra, and developments in trigonometry. The importance of integrating science and technology with old Indian traditional wisdom is emphasised for the advancement of human progress. Culturally oriented education encompasses courses that are rooted in the native culture and include the history, core beliefs, and values of the people. Ensuring the complete and impactful involvement of traditional knowledge bearers with the scientific community is crucial. Cultural information is preserved in various forms such as traditions, customs, folk music, folk stories, folk theatre, and legends.

Ancient Indian ethics, which encompassed ideals such as dharma and the quest for moral excellence, continue to hold considerable relevance for modern culture. In the contemporary era of globalisation, characterised by frequent conflicts between different cultures and values, the ancient Indian ethical teachings can provide invaluable guidance to people and communities in effectively addressing moral quandaries and promoting amicable interactions. Placing importance on values such as non-violence, truthfulness, and doing one's responsibility has the potential to foster a society that is more peaceful and just. These values can promote individuals to prioritise the welfare of others, to exhibit honesty and responsibility for their acts, and to fulfil their obligations to their family, community, and society at large.

Conclusion:

There is no doubt that India has a long and illustrious history, and the richness of India's past may be attributed to the cultural values of India as well as the traditions and culture of India. If we are able to capitalise on the positive aspects of the nation's past, we have the potential to reclaim our status as the great nation that we once were. The development of Indian culture is hence strongly anchored in the history of the country. Every facet of culture is governed by rules

that have their roots in the past and have been developed over the course of time. An increase in cultural diversity has been brought about by globalisation and industrialization, and it is imperative that this diversity be preserved.

References:

1. Baboo. R(2016). Human Rights and Ancient India. - International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews,3(4) 49-52
2. Mohammada, and Malika (2007), The foundations of the composite culture in India, Aakar Books
3. Mona (2023). Cultural Ethics in Ancient India. International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research, 5(6)1-6
4. Raav and Udaynarayan (2008). Bhartya Kala, Lok Bhartya Publications, Allahabad
5. Rajak.G (2020). Historical Consciousness in Ancient India. International Journalas of Multidisciplinary Research (RAIJMR),8(7) 23-28
6. Sankpal.S.J (2021). Indian Culture and Ancient Indian Education. International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts (IJCRT),9(10) a233- a235
7. Singh.R (2023). Scientific perspective of Ancient Indian Cultural Practices. International Journal of Humanities Social Science and Management (IJHSSM),3(4) 171-174
8. Tharoor and Shashi (2006). India: From Midnight to the Millennium and Beyond. Arcade Publishing,