



Concept of History w.r.t. India : A Cultural Perspective

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The pristine existence of India in this universe has always merited the critical and creative responses of historians, philosophers and writers from times immemorial. At one point of time India was called ‘The Sparrow of Gold’ and ‘Jagadguru’, she was also branded as the country of snake-charmers and magicians at another. The German philosophers – Jone, Max Mueller and Goethe were profoundly influenced by the Indian philosophy, our mysticism, exp. The Vedanta philosophy. The German philosopher Max Mueller claims that if there is paradise on the earth, this is India, India, India. (Muller, 100)



Keywords: Pristine, History, Nation, Culture, Linear, Temporal, Timeless, Spiritual

The very metaphor speaks of the multitudinous beauty and bounty of this ‘Queen of Orient’. It signifies the fact that India has not lagged behind the world in any aspect of development rather as World Teacher, she has guided the entire mankind as friend and philosopher from the very outset. Prof. A.L. Basham, a great scholar of oriental cultural studies famously writes about the excellent cultural heritage of India :

India was a cheerful land, whose people, each finding a niche in a complex and slowly evolving social system, reached a higher level of kindliness and gentleness in their mutual relationships than any other nation of antiquity. For this, as well as for her great achievements in religion, literature, art and mathematics, one European student at least would record his admiration of her ancient culture.

(Basham, 9))

Definitely, artists and philosophers have been wonder struck at the bewildering variety and complexity of Indian culture. In every realm of physics and metaphysics art and culture, religion and mythology, India has been a mother-figure. She has been revered by historians and philosophers around the world as the origin of division splendour in humanity. Walt Whitman, the representative poet of America expresses his unique vision of India’s mature religion and culture in his well known poem, ‘Passage to India’ :

Passage indeed O soul to primal thought,
Not lands and seas alone, thy own clear freshness,
The young maturity of brood and bloom,
To realms of breeding bibles
O soul, repressless, I with thee and thou with me,
Thy circumnavigation of the world begin,
Of man, the voyage of his mind’s return,
To reason’s early paradise,
Back, back to wisdom’s birth, to innocent intuitions,
Again with fair creation. (Whitman, 403)

Really, India has been a spiritual pioneer to the whole world. The entire mankind is indebted to Mother India for spiritual virtues. Needless to say, philosophers and historians have regarded India as ‘Punyakhoomi’ – ‘The Land of Virtues’. If we talk of the German and American Transcendentalists or the Buddhists around the world the whole universe acknowledges the mystic legacy and heritage of India. Noticing the profound cultural influences of India on Asia in particulars, and the world, in general Prof. A.L. Basham writes:

Northwards Indian cultural influence spread through Central Asia to China ... Unlike South-East Asia, China did not assimilate Indian ideas in any aspects of her culture, but the whole of the Far East is in India’s debt for Buddhism, which helped to mould the distinctive civilizations of China, Korea, Japan and Tibet. (Basham, 485)

The German writers (Goethe & Schopenhauer) seem to have been deeply influenced by dramatics and metaphysics of India. Prof. A.L. Basham says that Goethe borrowed a device of Indian dramaturgy for the prologue to “Faust” (P.433). He further infers that the German pessimist philosopher, Schopenhauer himself admitted that he was profoundly inspired by Buddhist philosophy of ‘Shunyawad’. (Basham, 487)