

THE EVOLUTIONARY TRAJECTORY OF INDIAN STORY TELLING

Abstract

Storytelling became more of an auditory a dawn of human history. The past, the present, and the future can all be seen through the lens of narration. However, communication has changed significantly over time. Visual stories, as seen in cave paintings they are the starting point of storytelling, from there they progressed into folk tales, in which stories were passed orally from one to the next generation. This paper focused on the growth and evolutions of Indian classical literary works such as Panchatantra, Jataka stories, Ramayana, and Mahabharata from cave to the recent creative evolution aspects and how storytellers are changing the aspect of storytelling from one generation to another.

Keywords: art, creativity, evolution, Indian classical literature narration, projective morals

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I. INTRODUCTION

The evolution of storytelling is combined with creativity, and it is more effective as well. According to Merriam-Webster, the term “creativity” refers to the ability or quality of being creative (Definition of creativity, n.d.). The term creativity refers to how the most recent theory frequently replaces older theories. The most recent theory is frequently thought to be “more correct” than the previous one (Theories of Creativity, n.d.). Dr. Gervas in his article described “When one thinks of “creativity”, several concepts come to mind that seems related. In most cases, it suggests that someone is creating something new. However, it also implies that whatever is produced must be slightly unexpected or unique from what others may have come up with” (Gervas, 2009, p. 50).

“A short story is thus a short fictional prose sketching a single segment of life against the setting of a single incident; and dealing with only few characters for its pointed, sharp and concise effect at end. Like all works of major literary genre, a short story corresponds to the five-fold structure: the opening action, rising action, development, climax and an apt denouement” (Sen, July - Sep, p. 332). Visual stories are seen in caves as a painting and they are the starting point of storytelling, from there they evolved into folk tales. Stories were passed orally from one generation to the next, subsequently, the focus shifted to narratives composed of words, such as written, printed, and typed stories. Sharing one’s personal and general life experiences with others is a very natural human desire; however, communication has changed significantly over time. The way we humans tell stories and keep things updated has become a richer experience through the use of evolving technologies such as printing presses, cameras, the internet, and social media platforms. Over the years, technology has enabled all types of storytelling, be it a story told in a film or recording, a visual story in a photograph, and a story shared in a blog or social media updates.

People especially children had stopped reading books, but creative art took over and made everybody know the stories. Charles Darwin is widely known as the “Father of Evolution” for his contributions to the evolution hypothesis and it is one of science’s most established theories as well. Species keeps on develop or modification throughout time. The needs of an organism vary as the environment has changed, and organisms adapt to new circumstances. This characteristic of changing through time in response to ecological requirements is known as adaptation. This gradual change occurs over many generations in which creatures, flora, or microorganisms gradually modify some of their physical traits (Prince, n.d.; J. M. Smith, 1993). This paper discusses how the evolutions of the journey of storytelling like the Panchatantra, Jataka tales, Ramayana, and Mahabharata from oral, written, and visual into creative arts.

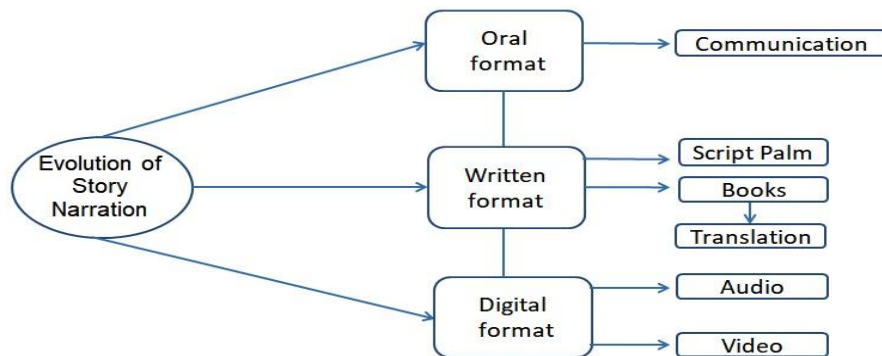
II. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Ramayana, and Mahabharata, the two traditional Sanskrit epics, are collected in the Itihasa or Mahakavya. These two of India’s major epics were composed first in Sanskrit and then later translated into a variety of Indian languages. They are both incredibly well-known in India and have influenced writers from all around the world throughout the decades. The religious and cultural lives of the whole Indian subcontinent and a large portion of the rest of Asia have been profoundly influenced by Hinduism’s two great epic poems. The contrast between Ramayana and Mahabharata is only in the verses count. Ramayana has 24,000

verses, but Mahabharata is the largest poetry ever written, with 100,000 verses. It is real that the Mahabharata is the world’s longest poem, according to the Guinness World Record Book. Following decades of oral transmission, such stories were improved and rephrased as Sanskrit masterworks Ramayana and Mahabharata a little more than 2,000 years ago.

The Panchatantra is more than a collection of interconnected stories, many of which use animal analogies to represent human vices and virtues. For the advantage of three naive princes, this story serves as an illustration of the fundamental tenets of Niti. The well-known Jataka and Panchatantra both contain fascinating stories about people and animals that children will find to be entertaining to read. The classic Jataka stories tell about the Buddha’s earlier lifetimes to make readers different. These tales are meant to impart kids’ to learn important life lessons. When the Buddha spoke of the world as a realm of pain he taught renunciation of desire, renunciation of human society, and life as a hermit in search of identity forgetfulness - Nibbana (Pali for nirvana). He named this worldview “dhamma” which is the Pali word for “dharma” in Sanskrit.

“According to statistics, children’s stories account for 15% of the 1200 crore books published in English each year. This 15% would include all children's literature, activity books, and comic books. The most popular literature among this 15% are mythical stories including the Panchatantra and the Jataka Tales” (“Everything You Need to Know About Children’s Literature and Publishing,” 2016). Compared to other modern Indian pieces of literature, most people in India believe that these two epics and fables would convey moral and life lessons more effectively. Both the Panchatantra and the Jataka Tales are morality and value-based tales that were created for regular people and animals have a significant role in entertaining.



Source: The authors

III. ORAL NARRATION

“Oral education has been practiced in India since the Vedic period” (Kulkarni, n.d., p. 201). Dr.A.Parimalagantham describes “the great epics Ramayana and Mahabharata are now available in printed editions, but many stories from oral literature still need to be included” (Parimalagantham, A, 2013, p. 230). Every time a group of public gathers to interact, outdated storytelling through word of mouth still occurs, and it has influenced new studies in the areas of communications. Education experts have demonstrated that narration as a medium of instruction can instruct one on useful ways of life. Depending on the culture, many periods of history may be traced to the origins of oral storytelling. Myths were initially

conveyed by spoken word. For instance, native American civilizations are those where oral myths are maximum prevalent in the United States. The creation myth of the Cherokee tribe (one of the Southeastern Woodlands natives) is being told today, even though it might vary depending on who is telling it.

Even the classical tale Panchatantra is also derived from oral communication, according to Nadwi's research "most of the stories contained in it have "gone down" into the folklore of the story-loving Hindus, whence they reappear in the collections of oral tales gathered by modern students of folk-stories." (Nadwi, 2013, p. 33).

IV. WRITTEN SCRIPT

Printed symbols that date back at least roughly 9,000 years have been discovered. Whether on paper, stone, or clay, the first stories were hand penned. Writing first took the form of drawings, as previously mentioned, before evolving into the script. Older writing systems, such as the Phoenician alphabet, served as the basis for the modern alphabet. According to History of Information, experts believe that Homer's "The Iliad" is the earliest extant work in the Greek language that was derived from oral tradition. Unfortunately, only the educated elite could read and write stories because most people were illiterate in the olden days. So, plays were also used to tell stories at this time. Mass printing, which would increase public access to news and other information, will be the next major turning point in written communications history.

Printing contributed to a rise in general population literacy. The printing press is credited to Johannes Gutenberg in the 15th century; however, Chinese monks developed a block printing system that used wooden blocks to transfer ink to paper 600 years earlier. The poet Valmiki wrote the Ramayana in Sanskrit, probably before 300 BCE, and it now consists of approximately 24,000 couplets split into seven books. Krishna-Dwaipayana Vyasa, the writer himself a personality in the epic, wrote Mahabharata; as per heritage, he governed the verses and Deity Ganesh recorded them. It is the lengthiest poetry ever written, with 100,000 verses, and is thought to have been written in the fourth century BCE or before that.

V. BOOKS AND TRANSLATIONS

One of India's major contributors to the field of storytelling is the Panchatantra, which must be taken into consideration while discussing Indian storytelling. It may be the only piece of secular literature that can legitimately make this claim. The Panchatantra is the most-read Indian Scripture between Java and Iceland, and it is generally agreed that it was written a few centuries before the Common Era. Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Syriac, Latin, English, Spanish, and other languages have all been used to translate the original Sanskrit text. Much like all Indian wisdom, the book traveled across West Asia from India to Europe. The book was extensively borrowed by people in India before it was translated into other languages. Panchatantra had a significant impact on the Jataka Tales, which are accounts of Buddha's earlier incarnations. Other than Sanskrit, the Ramayana has also been translated into several languages. Kirtee Bass wrote the first English version in 1802 and divided it into five volumes. Some English versions were published in 1899 by Rames Dutt and in 1952 by Hari Prasad Shastri. Another edition, written in Italian by S. Goressio and slitted into ten volumes, is available (Wedhowerti & Scolastica, 2014, p. 35).

VI. VISUAL FORMAT

In ancient Egypt, hieroglyphs (symbols) were a popular method of sketching that was used to convey narratives. Pictographic characters were used in this type of writing as both sounds and symbols. One of the first writing systems in the history of the planet, the hieroglyphic language has been around for roughly 5,000 years. It was also used to write messages for the next generation on the walls of temples and graves, in addition to sacred papers. Drawings have long been a powerful tool for communicating with others because we are good visual beings. According to Morriss “visual arts are intimately intertwined with music, dance, ritual and language” (Morriss-Kay, 2010, p. 158).

Maybe painting is as old as time itself, but it is also the art of storytelling. It is fair to conclude that the ancient cave painting of Bhimbetka (a word derived from ‘bhimbaitika’ meaning the sitting place of Bhima from Mahabharata) represents India’s earliest effort at a graphic narrative. In the caverns’ deep crevices, the scenes of battle and hunting have been preserved. According to estimates the oldest drawings in the Bhimbetka caves are maybe 15,000 years old. The Jataka stories had such an impact that they were recognized as canonical literature by numerous Buddhist sects. With the development of Buddhism, the Jataka stories reached Central Asia, Tibet, China, and Japan. The Jataka stories are mostly shown in the artwork in the Ajanta caves. These are Buddhist stories that detail the Buddha’s earlier incarnations.

The fables and tales in Hindu and Jain literature also contain old values and cultural traditions that are incorporated into stories. The Ajanta Caves are 30 rock-cut Buddhist cave buildings near Aurangabad, India, from 200 BCE to 480 CE, considered Buddhist holy art masterpieces. Most reports say the caverns were created in two phases, the first beginning about the second century BCE and the 2nd occurred from 400 to 650 CE, or in a short period of 460-480 CE, according to a subsequent study. The site is a protected memorial under the care of the Archaeological Survey of India, and it has been a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1983.

VII. DIGITAL STORYTELLING

Digital storytelling was previously used to describe the principles of filmmaking, but it is now used to describe storytelling in ads, promotional efforts for-profit and non-profit organizations such as social media tales, blogs, podcasts, etc. The study of humanities subjects including literature, philosophy, history, and arts is done using digital technologies and resources in the developing field of digital humanities. The primary and preferred method of instruction in the humanities is no longer print. The way information is obtained and distributed has altered as a result of computers, even in sectors like the humanities that have historically relied on print culture. With digital storytelling, audiences may take an active part in tales across a variety of media, produce original material, and organize into online communities around the stories that most appeal to them. These groups are notable for addressing taboo topics and societal difficulties without regard to age, culture, or language. They also work to increase awareness of these issues. With its compelling nature and ability to help students retain topics for a long time, digital storytelling is currently regarded as a crucial instructional tool. It is helpful in non-formal education as well, as spiritual tales are recounted to instill moral principles and mould a person’s character. Thus, the ability of

storytelling to address issues may be crucial in the fields of business and healthcare. “Digital storytelling is a promising technique that intersects all levels of education and enriches the educational process. It is currently integrated in the educational system of many countries, providing new results and fruitful discussions” (Maria et al., 2018, p. 107).

VIII. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Indian storytelling's evolution is awe-inspiring and reflects the subcontinent's complex cultural, social, and historical tapestry. Indian storytelling has evolved from oral traditions and mythology through literature, cinema, and digital media to remain engaging for viewers across generations. Early Indian storytellers like the Vedic bards and traveling minstrels established a long-standing oral tradition. Classical Indian epics like the Ramayana and Mahabharata, which combine morality and fantasy, became eternal masterpieces after written literature. Indian storytelling continues to reflect society, preserve culture, and entertain. Its power to entertain, educate, and inspire remains, making it part of India's colorful cultural mosaic. In conclusion, Indian storytelling shows how stories can link people across time and cultures. As India moves forward while honoring its past, storytelling will continue to shape its narratives.

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