

## Visualizing Essence of Boons from Epic Literature: A Panorama of Glorious Indian Tradition



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**ABSTRACT:** In the digitalized world encircled with chaos, stress, anarchy, social evils, conflicts, tyranny the ethical message of 'Dharma (righteousness), Karma (action) and Moksha (liberation)' echoing equanimity of mind & togetherness is quite imperative for human consciousness and inner commitment. The quest for exploring the inner meaning of human life is deeply embedded within the layers of Indian epics – the core foundation of Indian tradition and value System. The paper unfolds on the glorified ideals of Indian epics, moral implication of boons and Indian tradition, harmonizing Indian tradition with past and present. The epic depicts the elevated ideals of compassion and after all life is all about managing self in the journey beginning from birth and ending with death. The epicenter of the paper focuses on the revitalizing insights of boons depicted in Ramayana and Mahabharata acting a perennial source of living for the entire mankind. The life-learning doctrines of Indian epics paves as a torchbearer of knowing one's own self and provides direction towards controlling human mind for individual growth and upliftment. The geminal treasure of Indian epic is equipped with diverse lessons connecting unique aspects of human attributes exploring the pathway of good and evil. Keeping in tune with the epic's universal message of humanity the paper throws light on the meaningful lessons of sacrifice, humanity, patience and commitment - all life-enrichment doctrines of ancient Indian wisdom. The paper makes a realistic attempt in mirroring timeless truths and morals of blessings and boons as enshrined in Indian epics by following the right direction and paving pathway for holistic progression of Indian tradition and culture.

**KEYWORDS:** epic, boon, tradition, Ramayana, Mahabharata

### UNCOVERING THE ROOTS OF INDIAN EPICS: AN INTRODUCTION

Across ages the Ramayana and Mahabharata has emerged as the twin geminal sources of Indian tradition and the epic's relevance transcends religious and geographical boundaries. The time-less essence of the epics offering life-learning are still pertinent in present digitalized era of technology and global modernization. The epic Ramayana emphasizes upon the validation of righteousness or dharma epitomized through Lord Rama. The epic showcases the ways and means to uphold the moral values and teachings in the critical situation of adversity and hardship in one's own lives. The episodes of Rama's exile, abduction of Devi Sita and the battle against Ravana projects the paradox of human life that every individual confronts in duty with personal desire and ultimately paves the path of loyalty, patience and devotion towards dharma. The illuminating morals of the epic teaches that Dharma is not essentially a smooth-sailing pathway but one should always strive to follow uprightness with integrity at every phase of life. The unparalleled character of Sita of Ramayana inspires to keep our strength and loyalty unbroken despite facing grave situations of abduction and *Agni pariksha* symbolising the challenges faced by a woman from all walks of life in a predominantly patriarchal society. The glorified epic reflects Sita's unwavering faith and dignity for her husband in the life-struggling journey citing the unparalleled lessons of patience, resilience and purity. On the contrary the epic Mahabharata centred on the theme 'larger-than-life' concentrating around two factions, the Pandavas and the Kauravas – the congruence of dharma and adharma. The life-enrichment practices of duty and honour epitomized with the characters of Bhishma, Yudhishtira and Bidura poses a glaring exemplifier of handling critical circumstances with a balancing solution with due regard to self-respect and moral duty. The life-management teachings of Bhagvad Gita acts as a torchbearer towards earthly detachment by not focussing on the fruits of the action but concentrating on the path of self-realization and bliss. The magnificent eighteen chapters of Bhagvad Gita in Mahabharata narrativizes Lord Krishna's life-enrichment teachings to Arjuna paves the way of achieving peace and self-actualization in human lives. Both Ramayana and Mahabharata remain timeless in their moral and philosophical implications across generations. Both Ramayana & Mahabharata portrays a unique extravaganza of human emotions of grief, anger, love and jealousy representing the impact and essence of emotions in our every living and livelihood. The humanistic and moral aspects of the epics act as a vibrant guide for everyone across cultures

## Visualizing Essence of Boons from Epic Literature: A Panorama of Glorious Indian Tradition

in their personal lives, societal roles and leadership duties imparting lessons of justice, loyalty, duty to lead and live an elevated life of wellness and wellbeing.

### ***Harmonizing Moral Implications of Boons and Indian Tradition***

In Indian culture and tradition, the concept of Boons (*Varas*) transmits deep moral, spiritual and philosophical implications. They are considered to be life altering, powerful and divine gifts having the power of changing the course of a person's life and vision. According to Hindu mythology and epic sources boons are generally granted by the divine power of Gods-Goddesses-Sages-Spiritual Personalities which in turn promote, grace and recognize the values of acceptance, patience and understanding the limits of human control and emotion. They carry great responsibilities since the person who is receiving the blessing must use the divine gift in an ethical manner which aligns with their *Dharma* and Goodness. There were instances from the epics that when the boons offered by the Divine supremacy were not applied in the rightful and ethical way then they can lead to the downfall of the recipient with negative consequences. The character of Ravana from Ramayana serves as a testament to the fact that even though boons fulfil the personal desires of a person, they should never be used out of greed or selfishness. This example depicts how an individual should make use of gifted supremacies attained as Boon with humility and avoid harming other living beings which detrimental and destructive to the society at large. Boons are intricately related to *Karma* which postulates that '*good action yields fruitful results and the evil desire results unpleasant consequences*' – embedded in the very root of rich Indian culture and tradition. The far-reaching impact of boons as portrayed in Indian epics has the ability to provide immediate relief of the boon-seeker but such Boons never override the natural law of cause and effect for the sake of mankind. The real essence of Boons of Indian epics always serves as a life-learning reminder for people to always focus on cultivating positive actions and following the path of righteousness in life-learning-living.

### ***Relevance of Indian Culture and Tradition: Bridging Past and Present***

As Swami Vivekananda once said, "*The land where humanity has attained its highest towards gentleness, towards generosity, towards purity, towards kindness – it is India*". Indian Culture holds immense significance in a world that has witnessed rapid technological and social advancements by continuing to offer timeless wisdom and valuable insights that helps people from all walks of life in personal growth, promoting harmony and spreading the message of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*. Because of its pluralistic society, a wide range of languages, art forms, food habits and traditions co-exist together which propagates the ideas of Unity in Diversity and teaches everyone to have a holistic view of life. The concepts of meditation, yoga, mindfulness and *ahimsa* which offer paths of mental peace, stress management, and personal development have been propagated throughout the world via the rich cultural and spiritual heritage of India which is home to different religions like Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism. Being home to some of the earliest and most advanced civilizations like the Indus Valley, India offers impressive architectures which have not only stood the test of time but also serve as an specimen for scientific and sustainable construction containing the ancient knowledge about the magnetic meridians and position of sun during equinoxes. The precision and intricacy in majority of these architectures leave everyone awe struck about the knowledge and skills people carried back in the day. Harnessing ethical doctrines with digital advancement is the call of the hour. The philosophical lessons and teachings of the Indian epics offer insights into the complexities of human life which remains still relevant even in the present fast-changing global ecosystem.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

- To analyze the concept of Boons illustrated in Ramayana & Mahabharata
- To evaluate the contribution of Boon insights in rebuilding the foundation of Indian Tradition

## **METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY**

The study is conceptual, extensive, analytical and descriptive in nature. Qualitative research method has been applied. The conceptual literature concerning Indian epics and ancient philosophical knowledge along with its application for human well-being has been explored. The study is based on secondary data only and secondary data has been collected research has been collected from texts, books, journals, e-resources of Ramayana and Mahabharata. No statistical tool has been applied in the study.

## **FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS**

### **Findings I**

*Traditional Value: Sacrifice – Boon Resulting Sacrifice of Life*

*Connotation:* Sacrifice (*Tyaga*) in Indian ethos is not only limited to material offerings but also extends to the ideas of selfless devotion to the supreme personality of godhead, renunciation of one's ego and wants, towards animals and other related factors that bind a human being in the clutches of the material creation. It is more often than not self-imposed and is believed to provide liberation spiritually. The epics Ramayana and Mahabharata magnificently illuminate characters portraying the immortal value for the greater good even if one has to undergo through immense waves of sufferings and pain. The story of Bhishma in the epic Mahabharata is a glaring exemplifier of 'selfless-sacrifice' and meaningfully throws a light on the significance of sacrifice in the Indian tradition.

## Visualizing Essence of Boons from Epic Literature: A Panorama of Glorious Indian Tradition

*Quotes:* “इच्छामृत्युःसमाश्रित्य यः शान्तं पितरं प्रति ।  
अलंकर्तुं महाभागं धर्मराजं च पाण्डवम् ॥”  
(Source: Adiparva, Chapter 63, Shloka 246 of Mahabharata)

*Meaning:* “Taking refuge in the desire for death, he (Bhisma) peacefully prepares to honor the great Dharma Raja (Yudhishtira), the Pandava”

*Explanation:* The above verse appears in epic Mahabharata. Bhisma undertook a severe vow to facilitate the marriage of his father Santanu to Satyawati and even renounced his claim to the throne despite being the heir to the throne. Due to this Bhisma received the boon from his father king Shantanu of Hastinapur of voluntary death or *Ichchamrityu*. The boon allowed Bhisma to choose the time of his death thereby making him immortal until he himself chose to leave his body.

*Implications:* This boon played a crucial role in Bhisma’s actions during the Kurukshetra War where he chose to stay alive despite being severely wounded. His life was filled with hardships and sacrifices underscoring the theme of duty over personal wants and desires which represents the richness and ethical nature of Indian values.

### Findings II

*Traditional Value: Humanity- Curse Converted to Boon of Human Welfare*

Humanity (*Manavta*) is a core value of Indian Culture that emphasizes the ideals of empathy, kindness, compassion and the inherent dignity of all living beings. Humankind encourages everyone to practice non-violence (*Ahimsa*) in their lives by following the path of righteousness (*Dharma*) and practicing interconnectedness with all forms of lives *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*- The whole world is one family. The episode of Nal and Neel in Ramayana is symbolizes an encouraging and moral message in depicting the idealistic aspect of humanity.

*Quotes:* नलनेलसमेतं हरिण्मण्यमयूखलम् ।  
लङ्कापुरीतिरस्कृतेराघवस्यवधारिणि ॥  
(Source: Yuddh Kanda, Canto 41 of Ramcharitramanas)

*Meaning:* This (bridge), constructed by Nala and Neela, is adorned with precious jewel like deers (stones), which were disregarded by Ravana, in the city of Lanka, by the destroyer of Ravana, the slayer of the demon, Lord Raghava.

*Explanation:* The above verse connotes elevated heights of devotion, strength and skills exemplified by Nala and Neel while extending their whole-hearted support to Lord Rama. Both of them were cursed by Sage Sutikshna that whatever they throw in water would float. When Hanuman gave the idea of constructing a bridge, Ram Setu, across the ocean both Nala and Neel helped Lord Rama selflessly by arranging the stones and hence even the biggest of the boulders didn’t sink into the ocean.

*Implications:* The motivational story of Nala & Neel conveys the universal message of overcoming the most critical challenges of life through dedication, collaboration and selfless service with faith in Divinity. It also teaches a moral lesson about living in harmony with nature disregarding selfish gains and depicts unparalleled instances of humanity enshrined in Indian Tradition.

### Findings III

*Traditional Value: Patience- Boon Epitomizing Yearning and Devotion*

Patience is an essential virtue in Indian culture and is deeply embedded in the philosophy of many religious and spiritual traditions focussing on living a balanced, fulfilling and harmonious life. It is not merely seen as the ability of tolerating difficult situations in life and performing such act without losing one’s composure and faith thereby leading to spiritual freedom and maturity. This unique attribute is depicted with humane character of Shabari in Ramayana symbolizing unwavering faith, devotion and patience.

*Quotes:* ताहिदेइ गति राम उदारा । सबरीके आश्रम पगु धारा ॥  
सबरीदेखि राम गृहँ आए । मुनि के बचन समुझिजियँ भाए ॥  
(Source: Aranya Kanda, Canto 50 of Ramcharitramanas)

*Meaning:* “Rama, the noble-hearted, gave them the path (of Salvation). He followed the path of Shabari to her hermitage. Upon seeing Shabari, Rama entered her humble abode. Understanding the words of the Sage, he was pleased.”

*Explanation:* The above quote portrays Shabari’s patience, purification and devotion towards her Lord. She led a life of austerity and spiritual practice under the guidance of Sage Matanga. The sage blessed with the boon of her deepest wish the Lord Rama will be visiting Shabari’s hut and her earnest urge would be fulfilled. She used to adore Hari and daily collected new and fresh fruits

## Visualizing Essence of Boons from Epic Literature: A Panorama of Glorious Indian Tradition

and kept them carefully. Shabari eagerly waited for years enduring the harsh life of forest showcasing the supreme test of patience and Lord Rama who arrived her hut and was moved by her profound devotion. She gets so emotional by Rama's arrival that she is rendered speechless and continuously bows down to his lotus feet. She also gathered berries from the forest for her Lord to offer it to him and even tasted each one to ensure its sweetness. Her unconditional love and submission for Lord Rama depicts an exceptional lesson about humility and devotion towards all living creatures projects glorified ideals of Indian Tradition.

*Implications:* Shabari belonged to Bhila caste and was a kind hearted and affectionate host who fed Lord Rama and Lakshmana. The motivational self-esteem example of the Shabari's episode highlights when Rama spoke to Shabari "You ask for anything you desire" Shabari said "Oh Lord grant me your lotus feet of salvation" and then voluntarily relinquished her life and proceeded to Vaikuntha - the eternal abode of Vishnu. This exemplifies the unmatched lesson of humility, devotion and selfless service of Indian Tradition.

### Findings IV

*Traditional Value: Commitment- Boon transformed to righteousness*

Commitment is an integral human quality which is intricately rooted in the ethos of Indian Knowledge system impacting diverse aspects of our lives ranging from social responsibilities, spiritual practices to professional lives. In Indian cultural tradition commitment is not just considered as fulfilling one's duties and responsibilities but also uphold values constituting Dharma, loyalty, integrity and dedication. The very nature of commitment depicts loyalty and perseverance towards one's family, friends, colleagues and exhibiting moral principles with spiritual pathway. Ghatotkacha, son of second Pandava Bhima and demoness Hidimbi is an unparalleled example from Mahabharata whose life deeply reflects the value of commitment.

स यत्र गच्छत्रधीमान् योजयित्वा महाशरम्।  
दिव्यं महाक्रिया स्वर्गं यास्यति फलं प्राप्तमहम्॥

(Source: Bhishmaparva, Chapter 43, Shloka 43 of Mahabharata)

*Meaning:* "The great Ghatotkacha, the son of Bhima, with his immense strength and valiant spirit, Will go to heaven after performing extraordinary feats in the battlefield, achieving a divine victory."

*Explanation:* The magnificent quote narrates how Ghatotkacha because of receiving the boon from Lord Krishna fully unleashed his powers thereby overwhelming his enemies through act of solidarity and valour. He received a boon from Krishna which allowed him to change his size and fight with extraordinary power and ultimately sacrificed his life on the prestigious bed of commitment and integrity. However, he was finally killed by Karna who uses Vasavi Shakti, a divine weapon granted by Indra which could only be used once to kill any enemy. Though Ghatotkacha died but his demise put forward strategical advantage in favour of Pandavas in the Kurushetra war ensuring that Karna's deadly weapon cannot be applied against Arjuna later on.

*Implications:* Ghatotkacha's self-esteem story highlights the significance of the sense of duty and commitment existing who expresses unstinting loyalty merged with righteousness in any situation of life. He fought for the Pandavas even when the odds were stacked against the and even when knowing that death was inevitable for him, he kept fighting without any fear or self-centred desire. The glaring example of dedication and commitment of Ghatotkacha stands as a golden pillar of Indian Tradition and value system.

### Findings V

*Harmonizing Epics and Indian Tradition*

For sustainable well-being for future generation the immense impact of Indian epic on Indian Tradition is depicted in figure 1.

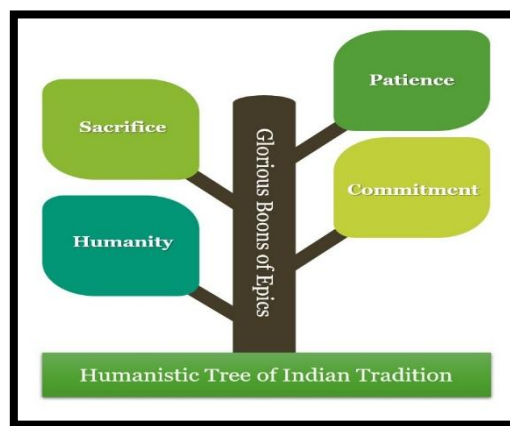


Fig1. Essence of Epic-centric Boons in Indian Tradition (Source: Authors Creation)

### IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

Indian epics are a collection of timeless treasures of life-enrichment learnings that are deeply woven into the fabric of Indian culture and tradition. The central theme of the paper portrays valuable insights of boons of Indian epics as they serve profound sources of life-line doctrines of sacrifice, patience, commitment and humanity acting as a torchbearer in the present socio-economic global landscape. In the fast-changing world which is turning individualistic day-by-day the relevance of epic's wisdom will promote collective consciousness, social cohesion and universal harmony. The authors made a realistic attempt to visualize the lives of diverse characters of Ramyana and Mahabharata and thereby upholding the magnificent Indian tradition of integrity, perseverance and compassion for all ages to come. It can be unanimously agreed that "Dharma (*righteousness*) is more important than any divine boon." - Lord Rama

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

Indian epics are regarded as the treasure-house showcasing the magnificent extravaganza of culture, knowledge and tradition offering valuable visions of peace, harmony and brotherhood. Being characterized with a pluralistic society, a wide range of languages, art forms, food habits and traditions co-exist together and the epic propagates the ideas of Unity in Diversity which teaches everyone to have a holistic view of life. The universal message of mindfulness and renunciation as depicted in the epics have been propagated worldwide visualizing the rich cultural and spiritual heritage of India- the homeland of world religion and culture. The paper portrays a unique glimpse of glorious Indian culture and tradition as can be rightly connoted in the words of Swami Vivekananda "The land where humanity has attained its highest towards gentleness, towards generosity, towards purity, towards kindness – it is India".

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