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Turning Back: Indian Mythology and its Eternal Power in the Indian Classroom

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Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, in his book "Decolonizing the Mind," argues that language is the most powerful instrument of colonization as it is closely knitted to cultural identity. When the East India Company was colonizing the country, teaching English in order to create an "educated class of Indians," a slim volume appeared in London under the title "Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan" in 1882. Toru Dutt, the author of this very thin verse, had grown up being drenched in English literature, French poetry, and a colonial education system that was put together to deliberately shape Indians who think in English idioms and adore the English literature canon. Yet, in the final years of her very short life, she turned back to Savitri's Argument with Death, Sita's Exile, amongst other multitudes of stories that she had heard in her childhood.

It deems it important to sit with the choice because it tells us something that the Indian education system has not fully absorbed: that mythology does not stand as an opposing giant to modern education but as one of its casualties and that recovering it should be treated as an act of deliberate will rather than cultural sentiment.

In the modern classroom, we have forgotten to tell stories of Indian mythology. Education in India can be traced back to classes that were conducted under trees, and stories were passed down from generation to generation. Since then, Indian mythology has acted as a repository of the civilization's collective memory. Our Indian literary heritage, such as the Ramayana, Mahabharata, our puranas, and regional folklores, has worked as a bridge for values, culture, and language.

National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020), the road map for every teacher in the country, calls for the integration of the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) in education. It is also seen emphasizing repeatedly storytelling, Indian national traditions, and ancient Indian literature, highlighting their value in language development and imagination.

UNESCO has emphasized how cultural heritage and indigenous languages help shape culturally and environmentally cautious individuals. Storytelling of mythology in the modern classroom of Generation Z, Alpha, and beyond can aid in the cognitive and psychological development of the students. This idea is backed by the study of Bruno Bettelheim's work "The Uses of Enchantment" (1976). In her work, she was able to discover that recitation of traditional stories and fairy tales shaped the students' ability to cope with fear, understand emotions, and build moral reasoning.

Researchers like Roger Schank and Jerome Bruner have been able to prove through their research how information shared in the form of stories is remembered better as compared to isolated facts. Their work is of the view that storytelling in the classroom paves the way for long-term memory and increased engagement and helps learners form connections between newly absorbed information and existing, retainable information. Use of stories of Indian mythology and regional legends in the Indian classroom will produce a set of avid students who are not culturally detached from their society's history in a fast-paced, digitalized world.

Rabindranath Tagore, in *Personality* (1917), shares how the highest form of education is not an education that gives us facts but teaches us to live in harmony with all existence. To restore mythology in the classroom is not an attempt to romanticize the past or minimize scientific temper but to rightfully acknowledge that a truly holistic education cultivates both reason and

imagination. Therefore, recovering mythology should not be seen as a display of cultural nostalgia but as a conscious educational action that will connect the young learners of Generation Z, Alpha, and beyond with their civilizational memory while shaping them to think critically.
