

## Oriental and Asian Literature

### INDIA

#### Historical Background:

India's history has been clouded by obscurity. During the early days of conquest and intrusions, about 2000 B.C. the Aryans invaded the Indus Valley. They belonged to the white race, known as Caucasian and spoke Sanskrit. Successively, they migrated from the north and drove southward the dark-skinned Dravidians, India's aborigines. Consequently, the Aryan conquerors founded small kingdoms in the fertile plains of North India and brought the Vedic literature, Hindu religion, the caste system and the Sanskrit.

At the beginning, the Aryan's religion was more of nature worship, praying to gods for certain favors. Their gods and demigods represented the moon, sun, storm, fire, and other natural phenomena. As their life gradually transformed from tribal and indigenous to a more complicated survival, they also began to be interested in life after death. Hence, the foundation of Hinduism, which is now the religion of 85% of the Indian people, can be attributed to the Aryans. The rest are Buddhists, Sikhs, Jains, Muslims, and Christians.

Being one of the most densely-populated countries in the world, India is known as "the world's largest democracy". Hindi is the official language and English is used in legal transactions, in government offices, industries, and education sectors. Hindi and English remain to be the official languages of the present-day India, despite diversity in tongues and dialects. The natives resort to English if they need to deal with Indian-written texts.

#### Overview of Hindu Literature

Among the most prominent characteristics of Hindu literary outputs are the Hindu mind and essence of spirituality. India's literary gems bring to the fore the *Vedas*, the early epics – the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*; the Indian drama, *Natyashastra*; the Sanskrit drama, *Shakuntala* by Kalidasa. Most Indian literary writings manifest clearly that religion and philosophy are inseparable in India. The *Vedas* are sacred books of ancient Sanskrit hymns with comments believed to have been revealed by Brahma and have become the basis of Brahmanical caste system. Each Veda consists of *Mantras* (hymns), *Brahmanas* (doctrines and ceremonies) and *Upanishads* (commentaries on Vedic or Vedanta philosophy).

Among the Vedic books, the *Rig Veda*, with 1,000 hymns is the most literary, which reflects a mortal's intoxication with God, and the yearning of the Individual Soul to be in union with the World Soul, being the primary aspiration of Vedic advocates.

The Upanishads developed from the Vedic hymns and contain the roots of all the spiritual and intellectual life of India. There were about ten chief Upanishads written before the time of Buddha. Some of these beliefs gathered from the Upanishads are the following:

1. The ultimate reality is Brahman, incomprehensible and surpasses all understanding.
2. The Individual Soul or self within is identical with the soul without. By discovering the real self, man achieves freedom and emancipation from illusion.
3. The famous Trinity of Hindu Gods which maintain the rhythm of this vast universe are Brahma the Creator, Vishnu the Preserver, and Shiva the Destroyer.
4. The development of the Soul is a continuing process broken into stages by the baptism of death. This is the belief in transmigration of the soul or reincarnation. The Soul of a good man is reborn in a person of higher status while that of an evil person is reborn into a lower form of being. After this cycle of births and rebirths, the purified soul is finally absorbed into Brahma, thereby achieving Nirvana or perfect happiness.
5. The philosophy of ethics must be transcended by divine revelation or realization. Ethics are no end in themselves but simply a condition of the road upon which man must travel, to the point where he develops wings and takes to the sky.
6. No one can understand things human who does not first understand things divine.
7. The intellect fails in the conception of Truth or Reality. Only by divesting oneself of the panoply of reason does intuition become possible. Intuition does not contradict human reason but expands into hitherto

unknown directions by spreading another form of emotion, the super-consciousness. Only this makes possible that flash of realization which destroys all doubts and restores man to the knowledge of the truth that he himself is divine.

### Hindu Poetry

Even today, poetry recitals in India are common occurrences, especially in small towns and villages where illiteracy is still prevalent. These simple, spontaneous gatherings help to preserve the ancient religious hymns and also encourage creative expression. Often the verses are sung or chanted to musical accompaniment, thus, helping to keep modern poetry close to its ancient roots.

From its earliest beginnings to the present, Indian poetry has been essentially lyrical in nature, marked by a peculiarly Indian blend of subjectivity and detachment.

### The Epics

The epic is the longest and most complicated form of narrative poetry. Presenting a view of life on a vast and magnificent scale, the epic rises to the grandeur of its subject through an elevated style, polished diction and dignified tone. The epic is focused on a central character who typifies the salient qualities of a race or nation. His exploits and adventures may embody the struggles and aspirations of a whole race or nation. Supernatural and religious elements are usually involved in an epic. Their presence lends further dignity and impressiveness to the loftiest of narrative poems.

The Indian epics, *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, stand out not only because of their length (the *Mahabharata* is about eight times the combined length of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*), but also because of their grandeur in concept and structure. Divided into 18 books or sections, the *Mahabharata* is usually attributed to Vyasa, but obviously it went through a process of evolution so that the version handed down to posterity has been altered and lengthened from the original in form and scope. For example, many interpolated parts add no variety, complexity and impressiveness, though they have not completely avoided a tinge of dullness. An overview, however, reveals that the various legends, myths, tales, homilies, allegories without being organically or directly related to the central story, nevertheless infuse undeniable beauty and charms variety and interest to the narrative. Most significant of these additions are the inspiring *Bhagavad-Gita*, the delightful *Saavitri* episode and charming play *Shakuntala*. The short narratives acquired by the epic in its development amount to almost four-fifths of the entire work. Reading the epic furnishes the reader an insight into the life, ideas, rules of conduct and religion of the people of India. In fact, an added significance of the work is its illustration of the tenets of Hinduism. It is a characteristic of Indian literature that philosophy and religions are entwined not only with each other but also with literary ideas and expression. Didactic and ethical in spirit, these interpolations emphasize *dharma* or the important duties of persons. No wonder that *Mahabharata* has the distinction of the “*fifth veda*.”

The composition of the *Ramayana* is attributed to Valmiki. Its salient qualities are mostly responsible for its immense popularity. Prominent among these qualities are those of plot, characterization, style and the wealth of wise sayings liberally present in the epic. The plot itself is not as complicated as that of the *Mahabharata*, but has a touch of grandeur in its development, its choice of heroic action and its narrative power. Characterization, especially the major characters Rama and Sita, has comprehensiveness and warmth. Rama, the hero, reminds one of the gallant knights who were “without fear and without reproach.” Capable of great and noble deeds, he is unfailingly gallant and dutiful. Sita, the lovely princess who became his wife, is in every aspect, worthy of him – gentle, faithful and noble.

Valmiki's gift of description equals his narrative skills. The pictures of palaces and gardens, of hills and plains, of city and life and life in the countryside, the changes brought about by the four seasons proclaim and dignify, now and then lapsing into the ornate and elaborate. Figurative language adorns this style and infuses charm into it. The flashes of wisdom scattered throughout lend depth and dignity to the epic.

A comparison between these Indian epics is inevitable. They possess a similarity of form. Both are undoubtedly national epics. Obviously, the *Mahabharata* is much longer and therefore exhibits more complicated structure. Both authors possess firsthand knowledge of their action, character and experiences. Both epic features, at the opening of the narrative, court scenes ushering in the periods of almost the same direction. Exiled parties in the narrative made a wise use of time by gaining the friendship and protection of rulers. Battle scenes are frequent

and their telling increases excitement and interest. The trend of the narrative stresses the saying, "Vice may rise for a time, but ultimate success crowns the head of virtue."

Although the *Ramayana* is centered on only one hero, the *Mahabharata* like the *Iliad*, portrays a hero surrounded by other figures no less heroic and impressive as himself. The characters of the *Mahabharata* are not only numerous, but are also strikingly bold, high-spirited, outspoken and independent in spirit. Like those of the *Ramayana*, they too are subjected to difficulties and trials, and are very individualistic. In both epics, the characters are convincingly and vividly portrayed as heroic; but as in Homer, the defects and weaknesses are not forgotten. They are not perfect characters, but are made understandingly human as well as heroic.

The *Ramayana* is said to be an ideal poem written in uniformly chaste. The *Mahabharata* demonstrates different styles because of the presence of various narratives probably created before the composition of the epic itself. For example, one finds the narratives on prose in the longer epic, along with those in verse. The *Ramayana* includes no stories or writing in prose. The characters of the *Ramayana* live up to the lofty principles and standards of behavior advocated in the *Mahabharata*. The rigid observance of the rules of caste illustrated in the *Ramayana* is apparently more relaxed in the *Mahabharata*. The doctrine centered on the Vedic *Dharma* is central to the *Ramayana* whereas the *Mahabharata*, while incorporating it, stresses more strongly the doctrines and practices of Hinduism. Both epics choose incidents and characters to illustrate significant truths of life. The epics are also considered as **secondary scriptures** containing dominant precepts and beliefs of orthodox religion and philosophy made palatable because of literary artifice. Indeed, these epics rank not only as an **encyclopedia of knowledge** but also as India's history. In short, these epics shaped and molded the personality of the nation.

#### Indian Drama

The origins of Indian drama are rooted in Indian mythology. Brahma invented the drama for the pleasure of the deities. But apart from the mythical origin, however, the elements of drama can be found in *Vedas*, the most ancient of the sacred scriptures of India. Dramatic dialogue can be traced to the *Rig-Veda*, the elements of the song to the rituals of the *Yajur Veda*; the sentiment from the incantations of the *Atharva Veda*. Moreover, dance is believed to have been introduced by *Shiva*, god of destruction; and the four types of drama to have been invented by *Vishnu*, the Preserver. The gods, furthermore, were supposed to have fashioned a fifth *Veda* as the sacred textbook of dramatic theory. This is presumably preserved in part in the *Natshayastra* (a rough analogue to Aristotle's *Poetics*), attributed to the sage *Bharata*.

The Ancient Indian drama has four basic types:

1. *Nataka* – considered the highest dramatic type; it drew from the epics *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* and the *Puranas* poetic tales about the gods *Vishnu* and *Shiva*.
2. *Prakaranas* – these were plays about the domestic life of mortals, their virtues and their foibles.
3. *Prahasanas* – in contrast to the first two which were plays of the upper class, these were vulgar farces of the lower castes which ridiculed the upper castes
4. *Yatra* – these originated in Eastern India and began as a form of religious entertainment, later on adopted by travelling bards who dramatized the amorous escapades of the god *Krishna*.

#### Sanskrit Drama

Classical Indian drama, like the Sanskrit drama is bound by tradition as established by three dramaists: *Bhasa*, *Sudraka*, and *Kalidasa*.

Indisputably the chief representative of mythological Sanskrit drama is *Shakuntala*, written by *Kalidasa*. It is known for its lovely poetry, playfulness, and uninterrupted humor. *Kalidasa*, however, is only one of the great triumvirates of major Sanskrit dramatists, the other two being *Bhavabuti*, and *Harsha*.

At the very core of the aesthetics of Indian drama is the theory of *rasa* or flavor, sometimes translated as sentiment. An aesthetic relish: resultant passions elicited in the audience.

*Amiya Kumar Das* goes on to define *rasa* thus:

“Rasa is viewed as pleasant sentiment belonging to the reader whose dominant emotions, derived from experiences or inherited instincts are evoked by the reading of poems into an ideal or impersonalized form of joy; an appreciation or enjoyment, consisting of a pleasant mental condition. This sentiment thus evoked is essentially universal in character, and the aesthetic pleasure resulting from it is not individual but generic and disinterested, being such as would be common to all trained readers”.

### Indian Theater

Performed on a simple platform in the hall or courtyard of the royal palace amid sumptuous hangings and impressive architecture, the play made no pretense to realism. The actors made no great attempt to create the illusion of reality. A curtain sufficed to conceal them as they dressed for their parts, waited for their cues, and supplied the appropriate sound effects. There was no proper scene, except for decorations and props like seats, thrones, and chariots. One concession to realistic staging appears to have been the employment of real animals for drawing a chariot across the platform. Ordinarily, however, the entrance of a horse was stimulated by the actors, whose movements were fairly conventional and could be foreshortened when the action required considered travel between their lines. Female roles were generally assigned to women, there being no prohibition against actresses in India, but boys and young men would substitute for parts which required too much exertion.

### Modern Indian Drama

Modern Indian drama has not evolved into a new dramatic form that could carry on the tradition of Sanskrit drama which is now a dead form. British colonization has brought a very strong influence on the drama. Its main contribution consists of numerous well-equipped theaters in Calcutta. Original plays were subsequently written patterned after English models. The Indian People's Theatre Association at present is trying to evolve a distinctly Indian theater form based on indigenous folklore.

Among the scores of modern Indian dramatists who have written plays in the fifteen major Indian languages and locally in some five hundred dialects, Rabindranath Tagore remained preeminent despite the tendency of young contemporary playwrights to rebel against him. His writing in the dramatic form (he is also a great lyric poet) extends from his earliest verse plays in the 1880s through serious plays and light comedies on social issues to the color and imaginative dance dramas of his later years.

## CHINA

### Historical Background:

One of the countries with the oldest and richest civilizations is China. The first Chinese dynasty, Hsia, was founded by Emperor Yu in 1105 B.C., the period around which the Chinese were already civilized and had their government, society, philosophy, music, literature, and industries. The blossoming of Chinese philosophy reached its golden age during Chou Dynasty (112-256 B.C.) with the emerge of three great philosophers, namely; Lau Tzu, Mencius, and Confucius. China's first emperor was Shih Huang Ti; the Chin rulers had first completed the Great Wall in 207 B.C. which extended along the northern frontier, giving stalwart protection and preserving what truly were Chinese and warding off intruders and foreign ideas as well.

The Han period is the most inspiring epoch in the history of China. Thus, the Chinese called themselves Sons of Han. Chinese literature became prominently richer in both form and content; with Confucius of the fore, the Chinese mind was conquered and the first standard historical documents and literary manuscript with a truly Chinese mind were collected in the archives of an imperial library.

Four centuries after the fall of the Han, China gain rose to greatness with the Tang Dynasty, founded and ruled by Li Yuan. Tang rulers manifested God-given talents, and had strong political consciousness. Buddhism and other religions were subjected to the State.

The Tang period witnessed the flourishing of Chinese poetry with Tu Fu who was given the title, god of Poetry. Li Po, his friend also rose to fame with his romantic lyrical poems, and was called “plot fairy”; and Tu Fu was

the poet sage” who was known more as an intellectual poet with much restraint and refinement. Other poets contributed to the periods of the great age of poetry were Po Chiu, Wang Wei, and Wei Ying Wu.

Generally, Chinese literature extensively includes all forms of writing such as historical books, political, sociological and philosophical treatises, tales, letters, lyric poetry and plays. A collection of ancient lyrics, the *Shin Ching* or *Book of Odes* can be attributed to Confucius. Chinese Ancient poetry is the largest and oldest collection of poetry in the world. This offers a wide anthology of verse which can be compared with Chinese paintings. The poem are certainly like a panorama of Chinese rural paintings having subjects such as cherry, bushes like sentinels, soldiers marching to war, all put artistically in picture-painting words with vivid imagery and clarity of expression. The bible of Confucianism consists of the ‘Five Classics’ and the Four Books. The Five Classics include: 1. *The book of Changes*; 2. *The Book of History* (2400-619); 3. *The Book of Poetry* (Three hundred poems of the Chou Period); 4. *The Book of Rites*; and 5. *The Spring and Autumn Annals*, (a history of the state of Lu).

The Four (4) Books were selections from classical literature: 1. *Analects* or dialogues of Confucius with his disciples; 2. *The Book of Mencius*, saying of the sages; 3. *The Great Learning*, Confucian ethics; 4. Doctrine of the Mean.

Confucianism presented Chinese humanistic philosophy, an indigenous material for lyrical and didactic literature; and emphasized that the true bases of society are not just social, but mundane and divine as well.

## JAPAN

### Japan Literature

Related in blood to the Korean, Malays, and Chinese, and Japanese are basically Mongols. The snow-capped famous Mt. Fuji is so majestic and instill love of nature. The chronicles of Japan include the “Kojiki” or Record of Ancient Matters and “Ninon Shoki” or “Nirjongi” which are official histories, proven to be accurate historical accounts of Japan after 400 A.D. Likewise, these present Japan’s traditional and rich mythology before their arts, letters, philosophy and other school of thoughts were greatly influenced by the profound Chinese learning. The ancient city of Nara in the eighth century became the first permanent capital and stood as a strong evidence of Chinese influence. It has been phenomenal, however, and queer that despite the impositions and intrusion of China, Japan has distinctly evolved her own culture and civilization, and has contributed to the world civilization the following refinement of ideas – arts and culture: 1. *Kana* alphabet, 2. The Bushido, or code of chivalry, 3. Shinto religion, 4. Japanese kimono, 5. Japanese gardens with exquisite landscape, 6. *Ikebana* (flower arrangement), 7. Delicate ceramics, 8. *Cha-no-yu* (tea drinking ceremony), 9. Zen meditation on *zabuton* (pillow), 10. Various sports such as ‘judo’ (art of self defense), ‘kendo’ (fencing), and ‘sumo’ (wrestling), and literary forms such as the *Tanka* (31-syllabled poem), the *Haiku* (17-syllabled poem), the *Noh* (lyrical play) and the *Kabuki* (classical play). The *Manyoshu* (collection of one thousand Leaves) which appeared during the great age of Nara included lengthy poems in refined literary language.

The *Kokinshiu* (Ancient and Modern Poems) came out during the great age of Kyoto (922). The age also produced Lady Murasaki Shikibu, one of Japan’s greatest writers, author of *Genji Monogatari*. Other literary forms such as the novel, poetry and essays also flourished during the age, written in a sophisticated native language.

Japanese poetry is mostly lyrical and basically an expression of emotion. Themes include nostalgic yearning for the home and beloved, extolling or praising love, elegies on the dead, lament over loss of someone so dear, and grieving over the flitting brevity of nature, waves, seasons, purling or sluggish streams, chirping birds, algae drifting, rugged shorelines, frogs croaking or hovering winged moths and butterflies, or blossom signaling spring.

It is noticeable though that wars, chaos and bloodshed are never used as themes.

### The Haiku

How haiku developed and raised to the level of literature can be attributed to the introduction of haiku in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Haiku meaning “light-hearted” or “free verse” became the stepping stone to haiku.

During the Samurai Period in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Matsuo Basho (1643-1694) developed and perfected the haiku from the crude prosodic form 'haiki' which originally used colloquial language.

Basically, the haiku is a rimless, short 17-syllable poem which is intended to express and evoke emotion. It is shorter than the tanka, a short lyric poem which expresses an impression in five lines. Using the free verse, Japanese haiku writers alternated lines of 5-7-5 syllables in three lines as rhythm to capture the highest moments, emotion or impression. 'Haiku' is characterized with varying qualities from shallow or deep; formal, heavy or flippant; humorous or sad; religious or satirical. Yet in its brevity it is able to capture fleeting moments. Hence, it is recognized as an aspect of Zen meditation, Buddhism; emphasizing the world in its natural state, and man as an integral part of nature.

The haiku makes one aware of nature, a keen observer of nature and evokes in him to see what is unnatural or freak in nature. It has the power to create in a person a deep sense of concentration, intensifying emotion and triggering ideas in him. Hence, the person or observer becomes imitative and depth is achieved. Masters of haiku use picture-painting words or sensory words that assault the senses; thereby suggesting mood and establishing a starting point for trains of thought. The main objective of haiku writing is to show awareness of senses through nature. A mood is captured and vivid imagery is implied. A subtle falling of leaves suggests autumn, and a crow perching on a bare snowy bough indicates winter.

Basho's technique in haiku writing is prominently written in a "new style" and his verses were taken as a model by haiku poets. Taking a close look at most of his haikus, the following elements or pattern can be description or vivid imagery; the second line presents a movement or action; and the third line usually is a reaction or result of the movement which may be a sound or imagery that completes the picture.

#### Japanese Dramaturgy

Uzume's dance trying to lure the Sun Goddess from hiding is the first dramatic performance ever recorded which constitutes the myth preserved in the *Kagura* dances. From the fusion of dance and narration, a crude primitive form emerged. The *Dengaku* which originally associated with planting and harvesting festivities also culled some forms of ritualistic dances from Korean *Gigaku* and Chinese *Bugaku* (7<sup>th</sup> Century); hence, the fusion of *Dengaku* and *Sarugaku* (dance drama) gave rise to Noh drama in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The Noh of No Drama is viewed as exotic with traditional costumes and recitation using the archaic dialogue. A minor Buddhist priest Kwanami (1333-1284) gathered dramatic forms from secular sources to expound Buddhist doctrines; and he introduced the *monomane* retaining the usual recitation in impersonation. Kwanami's son continued his dramatic craft and wrote a Japanese treatise on dramaturgy basically dealing with the production of the Noh plays which were classified into five: god plays; warrior-ghost plays; women play; plays of insanity; demon plays.

Japanese husbands usually perform in the Noh plays with a firm belief that doing so would lessen the labor pains of their wives in giving birth. The Noh dramatist defines time and space in a peculiar manner, suggesting the passing of a season or several days, and a journey to some place by just making a few steps. It is also noted, that each Noh performer observes absolute silence some three or more hours before the actual performance begins. This allows deep concentration and meditation to set in, and the performers emote their roles to ensure successful performances. Modern Noh plays have been produced such as those written by Yukio Mishima who tried to retain the traditional dramatic situations and conventions but freely experimented on various themes and materials.

Japan's Kabuki originated from Kyoto in the 17<sup>th</sup> century as an offshoot of Noh. It is a loose term applied to the entire popular theater, which evolved out of public recitations known as *Itaiheiki*. The Kabuki caters to the needs of the populace whereas, the Noh is for the elite. It underwent various stages of evolution and included forms developed into dramatized stories recited by a single actor to the accompaniment of music supplied by a three-stringed guitar and the tapping of clogs synchronized with the flapping of a fan. The modern presentation of Kabuki is characterized by exaggerated movements and highly stylized acting, elaborate backdrop or scenery and is performed solely by men.

## PHILIPPINES

### Filipino Epics

Filipinos should be proud of their two surviving epics: The *Biag ni Lam-ang* (Life of Lam-ang), a pre-hispanic Ilocano epic; and *Indarapatra at Sulayman*, a Maranao epic. The original source of *Biag ni Lam-ang* is now lost in the clouded tradition of the past. Though written in several versions, the original text must have been added and altered; and had been conjectured to have been the work of several poets of different generations, hence, the available text includes 300 stanzas. The Father of Ilocano Poetry, Pedro Bukaneg was the first to write it in both Ilocano and Spanish, which became the basis of all other versions by Parayno Hermanos, Canuto Meina Ruiz, Isabelo delos Reyes and Leopoldo Abes.

Being close to Indonesia, Mindanao had become geographically a target of conquest and invasion. The strife of the Maranaos to defend their land from invaders was aptly depicted in their epic, *Indarapatra at Sulayman*. The intruders were presented allegorically in symbolic monsters which brought havocs in some Mindanao regions including Cotabato.

Both epics present supernatural heroes possessing extra-ordinary powers, which are characteristics of epical conventions. For example, Emperor Indarapatra of the kingdom of Mandapuli had a magic spear that could fly and return to his hand. In both epics, the heroes' bones such as that of Lam-ang and Sulayman's when retrieved came to life again with a god's intervention.

## AFRICA

**African literature**, the body of traditional oral and written literatures in Afro-Asiatic and African languages together with works written by Africans in European languages. Traditional written literature, which is limited to a smaller geographic area than is oral literature, is most characteristic of those sub-Saharan cultures that have participated in the cultures of the Mediterranean. In particular, there are written literatures in both Hausa and Arabic, created by the scholars of what is now northern Nigeria, and the Somali people have produced a traditional written literature. There are also works written in Ge'ez (Ethiopic) and Amharic, two of the languages of Ethiopia, which is the one part of Africa where Christianity has been practiced long enough to be considered traditional. Works written in European languages date primarily from the 20th century onward. The literature of South Africa in English and Afrikaans is also covered in a separate article, South African literature. See also African theatre.

The relationship between oral and written traditions and in particular between oral and modern written literatures is one of great complexity and not a matter of simple evolution. Modern African literatures were born in the educational systems imposed by colonialism, with models drawn from Europe rather than existing African traditions. But the African oral traditions exerted their own influence on these literatures.

### Oral Traditions

#### The nature of storytelling

The storyteller speaks, time collapses, and the members of the audience are in the presence of history. It is a time of masks. Reality, the present, is here, but with explosive emotional images giving it a context. This is the storyteller's art: to mask the past, making it mysterious, seemingly inaccessible. But it is inaccessible only to one's present intellect; it is always available to one's heart and soul, one's emotions. The storyteller combines the audience's present waking state and its past condition of semi-consciousness, and so the audience walks again in history, joining its forebears. And history, always more than an academic subject, becomes for the audience a collapsing of time. History becomes the audience's memory and a means of reliving of an indeterminate and deeply obscure past.

Storytelling is a sensory union of image and idea, a process of re-creating the past in terms of the present; the storyteller uses realistic images to describe the present and fantasy images to evoke and embody the substance of a culture's experience of the past. These ancient fantasy images are the culture's heritage and the storyteller's bounty: they contain the emotional history of the culture, its most deeply felt yearnings and fears, and they therefore have the capacity to elicit strong emotional responses from members of audiences. During

a performance, these envelop contemporary images—the most unstable parts of the oral tradition, because they are by their nature always in a state of flux—and thereby visit the past on the present.

It is the task of the storyteller to forge the fantasy images of the past into masks of the realistic images of the present, enabling the performer to pitch the present to the past, to visualize the present within a context of—and therefore in terms of—the past. Flowing through this potent emotional grid is a variety of ideas that have the look of antiquity and ancestral sanction. Story occurs under the mesmerizing influence of performance—the body of the performer, the music of her voice, the complex relationship between her and her audience. It is a world unto itself, whole, with its own set of laws. Images that are unlike are juxtaposed, and then the storyteller reveals—to the delight and instruction of the members of the audience—the linkages between them that render them homologous. In this way the past and the present are blended; ideas are thereby generated, forming a conception of the present. Performance gives the images their context and ensures the audience a ritual experience that bridges past and present and shapes contemporary life.

Storytelling is alive, ever in transition, never hardened in time. Stories are not meant to be temporally frozen; they are always responding to contemporary realities, but in a timeless fashion. Storytelling is therefore not a memorized art. The necessity for this continual transformation of the story has to do with the regular fusing of fantasy and images of the real, contemporary world. Performers take images from the present and wed them to the past, and in that way the past regularly shapes an audience's experience of the present. Storytellers reveal connections between humans—within the world, within a society, within a family—emphasizing an interdependence and the disaster that occurs when obligations to one's fellows are forsaken. The artist makes the linkages, the storyteller forges the bonds, tying past and present, joining humans to their gods, to their leaders, to their families, to those they love, to their deepest fears and hopes, and to the essential core of their societies and beliefs.

The language of storytelling includes, on the one hand, image, the patterning of image, and the manipulation of the body and voice of the storyteller and, on the other, the memory and present state of the audience. A storytelling performance involves memory: the recollection of each member of the audience of his experiences with respect to the story being performed, the memory of his real-life experiences, and the similar memories of the storyteller. It is the rhythm of storytelling that welds these disparate experiences, yearnings, and thoughts into the images of the story. And the images are known, familiar to the audience. That familiarity is a crucial part of storytelling. The storyteller does not craft a story out of whole cloth: she re-creates the ancient story within the context of the real, contemporary, known world. It is the metaphorical relationship between these memories of the past and the known images of the world of the present that constitutes the essence of storytelling. The story is never history; it is built of the shards of history. Images are removed from historical contexts, then reconstituted within the demanding and authoritative frame of the story. And it is always a sensory experience, an experience of the emotions. Storytellers know that the way to the mind is by way of the heart. The interpretative effects of the storytelling experience give the members of the audience a refreshed sense of reality, a context for their experiences that has no existence in reality. It is only when images of contemporary life are woven into the ancient familiar images that metaphor is born and experience becomes meaningful.

Stories deal with change: mythic transformations of the cosmos, heroic transformations of the culture, transformations of the lives of everyman. The storytelling experience is always ritual, always a rite of passage; one relives the past and, by so doing, comes to insight about present life. Myth is both a story and a fundamental structural device used by storytellers. As a story, it reveals change at the beginning of time, with gods as the central characters. As a storytelling tool for the creation of metaphor, it is both material and method. The heroic epic unfolds within the context of myth, as does the tale. At the heart of each of these genres is metaphor, and at the core of metaphor is riddle with its associate, proverb. Each of these oral forms is characterized by a metaphorical process, the result of patterned imagery. These universal art forms are rooted in the specificities of the African experience.

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