

## From Colonial Outpost to Cultural India: Folk Epics of India

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**Abstract :** Folk epics of India are found in various Indian languages. The study of folk epics and its importance in folkloristic study in India came into prominence only during the nineteenth century. The British administrators and missionaries collected and documented folk epics from various parts of the country. The paper is an attempt to investigate how colonial outpost appears to penetrate the interiors of Indian land and society and triggered off the Indian Renaissance. It takes into account the compositions of the epics of India and the attention it received during the nineteenth century, which in turn gave, rise to the national consciousness shaping the culture of India. Composed as oral traditions these folk epics are now seen as repositories of historical consciousness whereas in earlier times societies without literacy were said to be without history. So, there is an urgent need to re-examine the British impact on Indian literary traditions. The Bhakti poets through their nuanced responses in their efforts to change the behavior of Indian society gives us the perfect example of deferment in the clear cut distinction between the folk and the classical in the context of India. It evades a pure categorization and classification of the classical and constitutes part of the folk traditions of the cultural heritage of India. Therefore, the ethical question of what is ontologically known as ordinary discourse in the case of the "folk" forms metaphors and folk language gains importance once more. The paper also thus seeks simultaneously to outline the significant factors responsible for shaping the destiny of folklore in South India particularly the four political states of the Indian Union: Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu, what could be termed as South Indian "cultural zones".

**Keywords :** colonial, folk, folklore, tradition

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