Chapter VI. Conclusion

After critically going through the epic works — Rāmāyaṇa, Mahābhārata and the Analects of Confucius, I have arrived at the following conclusion.

The Rāmāyaṇa is a celebration of the family life. It shows how each member of the family by meticulously following his duty brings joy and happiness to himself and to all those around him. It also reveals how by following just the reverse, one brings about his own doom and that of all who are around. Rāma and his four brothers are shining examples of brotherly love, familial values and high moral principles. Those who abide by the values propagated by the Vedas and perform the prescribed rituals and follow the good traditions and customs remain morally immaculate become exemplary figures leaving footsteps on the sands of time. Their contemporaries and the posterity alike try and follow their example and live life by the precedent set by them.

Rāma, an incarnation of Viṣṇu with his charismatic yet compassionate and untainted moral principles has been the ideal man for ages in India. From religious heads to social reformists as well as political heads all consider him as a great man, a brave hero and a wonderful benevolent king. A part of Rāma’s charm is his emotional nature, his intense mourning at the loss of his beloved appeals to the Indian psyche. He is ruthlessly brave when he has to destroy his mortal enemy Rāvaṇa. Again we find him very just and fair in his dealing with the Rākṣasas’ kingdom and inhabitants once their king is dead. He is no heartless invader, or plunderer. He had come to rescue his abducted wife and to clear his honor which was tarnished when the dastardly Rāvaṇa abducted his chaste wife Sītā. After Rāvaṇa is slain Rama does not go about destroying the kingdom of Laṅkā. In fact he ensures that the villainous king is given a proper last rites ceremony and his kingdom is justly ruled and the people are looked after by Rāvaṇa’s brother Vibhīṣana.

The importance of piety and devotion is also stressed through the marvelous character of Hanūmant. And Hanūmant because of his sincere devotion has also become a legendary character for the Hindu believers who hold him in high regard and religiously pray to him for protection from all adversities and hardships.
Vālmīki the author of Rāmayaṇa he is considered to be the creator of the classical meter or chanda called the “anuṣṭubh” consisting of 32 letters/syllables.

Though from the time of the Rg-veda age a continuous stream of lyrical poetry had been in existence of which some were religious and many secular, but there had been no fixed standardized meter that could be taken as a benchmark of poetic language and expression. It was Vālmīki who gave a formal shape to poetry by adopting and effectively using a standardized poetic metre for his grand epic, the Ramayana. His metre gained popularity among the ordinary folks and it exceeded the boundaries of religiosity and also emerged as a mode of entertainment with moral lesson.

The Mahābhārata highlights the devastating impact personal envy and unrestrained greed can have on an empire. The myopic Kauravas headed by Duryodhana brought about the destruction of thousands of people only because they were envious of their godly cousins the Paṇḍavas. The seed of enmity it seems was instilled when their father Dhṛtarāṣṭra had to step down from becoming the king of Hastināpur as he was blind and a king should not have any physical challenges. He had to give the throne to his younger brother Paṇḍu. So the Kauravas from birth felt they were not rightfully treated by the system or principles of kingship. After Paṇḍu’s death Dhṛtarāṣṭra ascended the throne but it was understood that after him the empire should be divided between his sons and that of Paṇḍu’s.

But this was an unacceptable proposition to his son Duryodhana. He refused to share the empire that he thought rightfully was his inheritance. This strong vehemence in Duryodhana’s reluctance to share resulted in the decisive battle of Kurukṣetra. Animosity in family especially in the powerful families causes havoc. The war though devastating couldn’t be averted as the Lord Kṛṣṇa a manifestation of Viṣṇu wanted to establish the values of following the path of truth, selflessly doing one’s duty, and showing benevolence and charity to all beings.

Further the advises in the Mahābhārata by different characters like Bhīṣma, Dhṛtarāṣṭra etc. also remains largely applicable even in present day India. The most significant aspect of the advises is that they provide a kind of insight into the accepted norms and principles of those times.

These Indian epics also show how divinity or the Divine being takes the human form and through direct communion with the divine incarnations like Kṛṣṇa, Rāma ordinary beings like Arjuna,Viśiṣṭa understand the meaning and the true purpose of life. The focus here is not just to stoically accept our
present material existence on earth with its sufferings and maladies, it is to make us realize how our previous lives’ actions and karma and deviation from the path of duty or Dharma has affected this life. If we are not conscious of our actions it will only lead us to continue with our unhappy lowly existence in future lives. In every sphere of life one must be engrossed in the pursuit of Dharma as it is the sinful and non-meritorious acts that bind us to this world of cyclic existence and endless suffering. And the only true aim of man should be to seek liberation from the cyclic existence.

The Analects also like the two Indian epics speaks about the importance of following traditions and being morally upright and benevolent, but it seems to prioritize the society above the individual. The book aims at making people better social beings and the rulers are advised to be pro-people nowhere in the book has democracy been advocated.

Confucius considers the role played by every member of the family is crucial to the building of a good healthy society, and in turn a strong nation, and the concept that he propagates to achieve this end is that of ‘a complete virtuous man’. Confucius implies that people should try to ultimately reach the level of ‘a completely virtuous man’ by being aware at all times of all his behavior and follow a path of learning all through his life.

Unlike Indian epics, Confucius hardly ever talks about the supernatural or about things that exist beyond this world. He does not explain what the Heaven is or what could be the awards for righteous behavior or awards that one may have after deathetc. But it is implied that if man is restrained in his behavior and whole heartedly exerts to follow the righteous path and endeavors to be a complete virtuous man he will derive immense his inner joy and satisfaction. Ultimately he will also get to understand the Heaven’s way and fulfill his destiny.

Man is encouraged in all three books to develop his innate propensities of goodness and virtue and shun meanness and vice. The main point of diversion in the Analects is that it does not talk of after life or of attaining liberation or Mokṣa that is the main purpose of human life according to the Indian epics. Instead it stresses on how man must aspire to be a complete virtuous man. Thus it may appear to some that the Analects of Confucius is more realistic in its approach as it is primarily concerned about improving the existing social conditions.

Thus I have tried to show similarities and dissimilarities through the main tenets of the three books by presenting the concepts of Dharma, virtue,
ethical values nurtured in the family, the ideal man and the ideal ruler, government, education, rites and rituals and devotion etc.

These concepts are important to the Korean and the Indian society and if the ideals and precepts upheld and followed by one society is understood and appreciated by the other it will lead to better understanding of each other’s culture and heritage as well as the distinctive behavioral pattern that have grown from abiding by the principles and models stressed in one’s country. So we can communicate better which in this 21st century emphasize on.

Hence cultural exchange and understanding between the two countries can be much enhanced and strengthened through the respectful perusal of the Indian epics and the Analects of Confucius.