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Indian culture as reflected in the Puranas: An elucidation

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Abstract

Vedas are the primary and most important source of knowledge and these are eternal and impalpable or authoritative. The Vedas provide auspicious inspiration for living an ideal life in all three periods, and the various streams of later times have greatly benefited Indian culture from time to time. Vedas are the foundation of whole Indian culture. According to Brahmanusasanam, the Puranas are known as the fifth Veda- this does not mean that they are literally identical to the Vedas. However, Puranas have become indispensable for proper understanding of the obscure Vedic doctrines. The Puranas are the only simple, easy and best means of understanding the true nature of the oldest India. They acted as the golden thread connecting past and present society. According to the Indian religious tradition, the Puranas were recognized after the Vedas and Puranic literature is such an asset of India that it is very important to evaluate it today. The structure of Indian society is beautifully depicted in the Puranas. In Indian society, the Puranas are as useful as the Sruti smriti, and that is why our ancestors have given great strength to the study of the Puranas to understand the essence of the Vedas. Thus, the Purana provide the puranic code for the entire society. Hence, the importance of the Puranas for a better understanding of the meaning of the Vedas is undeniable. Vedas and Puranas are complementary to each other. Without the study of Puranas, as no one can understand the meaning of Vedas, besides, the study of Puranas is indispensable for understanding the esoteric meaning of the Vedas. So, Vedas should be expanded by history and Puranas.

Keywords: Veda, purana, literature, Indian society, culture, religion

Introduction

The development of Indian culture has been marked by the widespread influence of the Vedic ideology, which has flowed at an uninterrupted pace since time immemorial. The glory of the Vedas is described in many ways in Sanskrit literature. The Vedas have been guides on the duties of all living beings since the beginning of creation. The Vedas provide auspicious inspiration for living an ideal life in all three periods, and the various streams of later times have greatly benefited Indian culture from time to time. The grand spirit of Vedic thought and its comprehensive view of the duty of human life in Indian culture is unparalleled. That is why, despite various adverse circumstances, it flows unbroken and exerts its influence on the development of Indian culture for the development of the nation in all its forms. It is essential that all its limbs be developed and that the whole people be awakened to a sense of happiness and prosperity, the Vedas alone are considered to be the root of religion-exists. The Puranas contain details of the same subjects which are briefly described in the Vedas. The Puranas are the only simple, easy and best means of understanding the true nature of the oldest India, the ideal and Indian culture. That is why the Purana is called the golden urn of the Indian Sanskrit literary temple.

Discussion

In the Puranas, reverence and devotion towards any god or goddess has been emphasized by explaining the method of worshipping them. Only the deity for whom there is a law of worship is considered supreme and other deities are also described as secondary. The special importance of worship of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva is mentioned in various Puranas. The main Puranas describe various incarnations of Vishnu or various stories of Shiva and his family. There is excessive propagation of incarnations, idol worship and devotion among them.

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An attempt has been made in the Puranas to socialize the common people by showing the results of fasting and fasting rituals. The society was uplifted through the knowledge of Puranas. Therefore, knowledge of Puranas is necessary for social life.

‘Vedohaakhilo dharmamulam’ (Manu smriti 2/6)

The Vedas are the root of all religions for those who discriminate between varna and ashrama

‘Vedah mulang hi dharmanang varnarshrambibeknam’
(Padma Purana, 5/14)

Even Lord Manu has accepted that the Vedas as the basis for the practice of Dharma, and the Dharma which he has represented is based on the Vedas, because it is all-knowing that whatever religious duties of anyone are described by Manu. That all is described in the Vedas for he is the embodiment of all knowledge. Similarly, by following the Dharma enshrined in the Vedas, a human being attains fame in this world and the fruits of Dharma in the next world, in the form of excellent happiness such as heaven and liberation. A human being who follows the religious principles enjoined by the Vedas and Smritis, he attains fame here and supreme happiness after death.

‘Shrutismrityuditang Dharmamnutisthan hi manavah|
Eha kirtimvapnoti pretya chanuttamang sukham||
(Manu smriti 2/8)

Similarly, it is said in the Bhavishya Purana that, the good of righteousness is the sign of prosperity mentioned. That eternal root of the Vedas is said to be of five kinds. By the proper practice of this, heaven and salvation are attained. The lord of the birds there is incomparable happiness and wealth in this world.

Dharmashreyah samuddistang shreyoabhudayalakhsanam|
Sa tu panchavidhah prokto vedamulah sanatanah||
Asya samyaganusthanatswargo mokshoscha jayate|
Eha loke sukhoishvayarjamtulang cha khagadhipa||
(Bhavishya Purana 31/12-13)

The place of the Vedas in Sanskrit literature is unparalleled, and there is no subject, worldly or transcendental, which has not been discussed in the Vedas. For the sake of true knowledge of the Vedic mystery, it is very helpful to review the Puranas underlying it.

Purana literature is a mirror of Indian social life, although the Puranas use in simple, refined and natural Sanskrit language which represents popular expressions of many eras, poetic expression is found in some Puranas. The mixed form of both prose and poetry is important from literary point of view. An attempt has been made to emulate the literary beauty of the Bhagwat Purana in some of the texts here, which throws light on the literary value of the Puranas. Purana literature is a literature that is very helpful in producing a vibrancy of constant innovation. A good example by his own pureness makes society pure and presents a true, auspicious and beautiful model, and it is certain that Purana literature.

In Indian society, the Puranas are as useful as the Sruti smriti, and that is why our ancestors have given great strength to the study of the Puranas to understand the essence of the Vedas. Overall, Puranic literature is such an

asset of India that it is very important to evaluate it today. Unless the Puranas are studied, Indian studies remain inferior. The Smritis declare that the literature of the Puranas is said to be the principal source of the fourteen sciences and religion since ancient times, and therefore the word Purana is first mentioned here by the yogi Yajnavalkya. In Yajnavalkya Smriti, it was established that the Puranas, law and mysticism are mixed with parts of the scriptures of religion and the Vedas are the fourteen places of knowledge and religion.

In the Skanda Purana, however, in the Reva Khanda, the three Vedic knowledge, these three vidya are the chief in the judgment of all scriptures. The Puranas and the Dharma-shastras are accepted as the chief in the determination of all scriptures. The Puranas and the fifth Veda are accepted, and the knowledge of the Vedas of the Self, created by God. Again, according to Brahmanusasanam, Purana is the fifth Veda.

Puranas are a priceless gem of Indian life literature and a golden series to connect the past with the present. In the corpus of Sanskrit literature contains eighteen Puranas, incomparable and the best gems. And even the oldest ones convey the latest vitality. There is a distinct place for Purana literature in Indian literature, and in the religious tradition, after the Vedas, the Puranas are the only ones recognized. In the absence of mythological knowledge, it is absolutely impossible to understand the meaning of Vedic literature:

‘Edang Vishnurvichrakme tredha nidadhe padam
samudamasya pangsure’

(Rigveda 1/5/22/13)

Even the commentaries on this mantra, such as Sayanacharya, correctly state when, how and in what manner Vishnu measured the universe in three steps, but in the Puranas, when the story of Bali-Vamana gives the meaning of the mantra, the meaning of the mantra is correctly described. For example, -

The meaning of the mantra "Namoh Nilgrivaya" is prescribed by Mahidhara in his commentary, salutations to that Shiva, whose throat has become a trill for eating poison. But this commentary does not make it clear when, how and in what manner Shankara ate poison. But in the Puranas, in the case of the churning of the sea, the solution of this is born in its entirety, and therefore it is not possible to solve the mystery of the Vedas without the help of mythology.

In ancient times, the people of India mostly were deprived of formal education. The education of Vedas was very limited. Still, the people of our country cannot be called completely stupid, irrational or uncultured because the teachings of the Puranas were accessible to them. The stories of Puranas were organized in the main areas, which the entire public used to listen to without any discrimination. There was a system of informal education in these stories. This is the reason why classical and scientific subjects like philosophy, theology, poetics, architecture, Ayurveda, grammar, astrology, physiology etc. were presented in some Puranas. As a result, even the people without literacy received education and culture through Puranas, only by listening. He got a beautiful opportunity to make his life ideal through stories. Even today's education resources are not producing the same results that the simple stories of the Puranas used to produce.

The Vedas are the basic refuge of all the scriptures on all subjects written in India since ancient times, either directly or by tradition. The word Veda is derived from the suffix gñi karane in the Panini formula "halascha". Thus, the main meaning of the word Veda is knowledge, but even the texts that give knowledge are treated as Vedas, by the Lord in describing the characteristics of the Vedas. And there is no means by direct or inferential means. They all know this by the Vedas; therefore, the Vedas are Vedic.

How can a man not be even greatly intelligent, but he does have the possibility of delusion and negligence. That is why one cannot have definite and complete knowledge by studying a man-made text. The Vedas are neither composed by any man nor created by God, but by the breath of God they are eternal, infinite and impersonal. First of all, Brahma is the Vedas, he attains knowledge. Similarly, the Sruti says:

‘Jo brahmanang bidadhati purbang jo boi vedangscha prahinoti tasmoi’ |

(Shweta/ Upa/6/18)

In the beginning, after receiving the Vedas by Brahma, a part of the Vedas appears according to the kind of austerities performed by a sage. Then the sage teaches the Vedas to his disciple, and thus the disciple teaches the disciples without interruption.

Even in the beginning of the Guru-disciple tradition, the preaching and dissemination of the Vedas is the most important and if the austerities of the sages are extremely rare, the mantras appear in the beginning and in the end. These sages have explained the Vedas in various ways. The Vedas became branches of those disciples and their disciples.

The great sages have taught the Vedas and the history of the Sages, which have disappeared at the end of the ages. Permitted by Svayambhuva, they obtained it by performing austerities in the past.

The hordes of great sins do not touch a best of the Brāhmaṇas who is well versed in the branches of the Vedas and performs the duties appropriate to Brahman. Manu in the Manu Smriti state that the best austerity for Brahmins is the practice of the Vedas, and this is called the supreme austerity of a brāhmaṇa.

‘Vedameba sadabhyasyet tayorupastapyan dwijottamah |
Vedabhyaso hi biprasya tapah paramihouchhayate ||
(Manusmriti 2/166)

Moreover, it has been proved that the words of Brahmins without study of the Vedas, even of all the sciences of the scriptures, acceptable and unbelievable.

Thus, it is the duty of a Brahmin to do charity, yajna and self-study, to get others to perform yajna for his livelihood, to teach others and to be a beneficiary as per justice. He had superiority in every sphere of society and life. He enjoyed educational, political, social, religious and economic privileges. He had the right to follow the entire religion and perform all religious activities.

He composed Ramayana, Mahabharata and Puranas in simple Sanskrit language to properly understand the hidden meaning of the Vedas. Therefore, by these three, an effort should be made to understand the truth of the Vedas. Thus, the same subjects which are subtly stated in the Vedas are discussed in detail in the Puranas. And those who try to

understand the meaning of the Vedas without studying the Puranas and others, their knowledge is not real, and the Vedas are not stable in the presence of the Puranas because they are few. That's why the Vedas should be expanded by history and Puranas.

Conclusion

In this context, the social and cultural importance of the Puranas is specifically described. The structure of Indian society is beautifully depicted in the Puranas. Thus, the Purana provide the puranic code for the entire society. But now a day's the modern educated man has lost respect for mythology and has consequently forgotten his ancient history. To know the background, he has to wait. There is a need for the explanation of Puranas in a modern way for the educated people pointing out the sources of Purana's exaggeration. If such a modern version of Purana is published, they will see how many precious gems remain in the Purana. There is no doubt that many unknown facts of ancient India will be discovered if the respect of the scholar in Puranas returns.

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