

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PURĀṆAS IN CONTEMPORARY SANSKRIT LITERATURE: A BRIEF STUDY.

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Abstract: The purāṇas has acquired an incomparable disposition in Indian literature. As a literature it has been connected with miscellaneous subjects like religion, philosophy, history, geography, sociology, politics, medicine, domicile, astrology, astronomy, and sacrificial rites etc. the purāṇas are the vast literature which has computed at four lakh verses respecting for Vedic authority to restate the ideals of ancient Indian culture and customs. The Puranas are called the fifth veda. The author of all purāṇas is Vedavyasa. The Purāṇas are as superior as Veda. There are many more works have written on the basis of Paurāṇic legends. The purāṇas are the vital store-house of all subjects. The present paper highlights the importance of the purāṇa in contemporary Sanskrit literature. In this paper the religious aspect, historical aspect, educational aspect, ethical aspects, geographical aspect, social aspect, philosophical aspect and literary aspect are briefly discussed.

Keywords: purāṇa, contemporary, Atheism, geography, national unity and integrity etc.

The purāṇas has possessed an incredible position in contemporary Sanskrit literature. As a religious literature, the purāṇas are deeply connected with subjects like ancient Indian region, philosophy, ancient history, geography, sociology, politics (Rājñītiśāstra), medicine (Āyurveda), Vāstu-śāstra, Sacrificial rituals and so on etc. Besides it deals with the subjects like arts, science, grammar, dramaturgy, music, astrology, astronomy etc. The purāṇas delivers the whole information about the whole subjects to the Sanskrit literature. Many regional literatures develop by acquiring the vital information from the purāṇas in later times. In one word, the purāṇas are the vast literature which has computed at four lakh verses respecting for Vedic authority to restate the ideals of ancient Indian culture and customs. The Puranas are called the fifth veda (Chāndogya Upaniṣad-7/1/2). The author of all purāṇas is Vedavyasa. The Puranas are as superior as Veda. According to Atharva veda, the purāṇas were originated with the Rg, Sama, Sanda and Yajus. According to Satapatha brāhmana, the purāṇas are called the Veda. For explaining the Vedic stories, there are some literatures originated, which are known as purāṇa and it was happened when the Vedic mantras assimilated. Brhadaranyaka Upanisada has stated that, the Itihasa and purāṇa have originated from the breath of supreme Brahman. The Itihasa and purāṇas has located the same stages in ancient literature. The Mahabharata has stated that, the meaning of Veda should be explained by the Itihasa and purāṇa.

Simply the term Purāṇa means old narrative or old events. But some ancient authors have derived the term Purāṇa as (i) पुराभवम् (ii) पुरानीयते (iii) पुराअनति etc. The Vāyu mahāpurāṇa has explained the term Purāṇa as 'पुरा' and the root 'अण्'. This has been the accepted meaning of the Purāṇa since ancient times. According to the great grammarian

Pāṇini, the word 'पुराभवम्' is framed by the termination of 'त्यु' and the addition of the indeclinable term 'पुरा'. The author of Aṣṭādhyāyī (Pāṇini) used the word in his text more than once. Besides, the eminent grammarian Bhānuji Diksita has also derived the term 'पुरा' with the suffix 'यु' (त्यु) which becomes changed into 'अण्'. Both the word and the affix amalgated and becomes the meaning of 'Purāṇa'. In the Brāhmanakalpa literature it is said to be 'पुरातन' when Pāṇini has used this term, then it could be corrected by the conventional usage 'निपातन'. Another derivation of the term 'Purāṇa' has given by the eminent grammarian Bhānuji Diksita that पुरा + अण् + अच् = पुराण, which generally indicates that to record of the past and future events or affairs is recognised as Purāṇa. Yaksa, the author of Nirukta who have explained the term 'पुराणम्' is as 'पुरानवम्'. It indicates that the old facts gradually new again. 'Purāṇa' means old but the Purāṇas are described the vital thought of 'oneness' among the general masses, which is modernized in every aspect of life.

The Purāṇas are organizing as a sub – subjects of the Vedic literature in one side. However the Purāṇas are directly related with the ancient history and the Mahākāvya. In the Mahābhārata Ādiparva, a verse clarify that the inner meaning of the Veda is concluded by the Itihāsa and the Purāṇa. It means that to deciding the core meaning of the Vedic ceremonies and rituals, the knowledge of the Purāṇas and the Itihāsa is so vitally necessary. There are four

literature have originated for pleasing the Vedic rituals and ceremonies. These are – Itihāsa, Purāṇa, Gāthā and Nārāsongsi.

The Purāṇas are divided into two – 1. Mahā-purāṇa. 2. Upa- Purāṇa. Both the Mahā-purāṇas and the Upa- Purāṇas are eighteen in numbers. The Purāṇas are the storehouse of all knowledge. All the Mahā-purāṇas and the Upa- Purāṇas are explained of all subjects separately.

Basically in the Maha-puranas, the descriptions of primary creation, secondary creation, genealogies of Gods and patriarchs, reigns of various Manus and the history of ancient dynasties etc have discussed hugely. It has a big cultural impact in Hinduism. Many more Sanskrit texts have originated on the basis of these purāṇas. Bharata Natyam is also inspired in part by Bhagavata purāṇa.

The purāṇas are the wonderful text which offered so many contributions in Sanskrit literature. It is connected with various subjects like religion, philosophy, history, medicine, astronomy, geography etc. By reading purāṇas, one can gain vital knowledge. The importance of the purāṇas is highlighted in various aspects like religious, historical, educational and ethical value also. The importance of the purāṇas is mentioned below:

1. Firstly, the magnanimity of all purāṇas has motivated on Atheism. The discussion of all deities and their worships are obtained in all purāṇas. Especially the deities like Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Śiva, Ganeśa and Āditya and their procedure of worships are mentioned respectively in all purāṇas. The vital root of Hinduism has indicated on the basis of the purāṇas. According to Nārada-purāṇa the importance of the Sanātana dharma purāṇa is supreme than the Vedas and the magnanimity is also more supreme. The Vedas are deeply dependent on the Purāṇas since ancient times for their publication and explanation. That is why the authenticity of the purāṇas is higher than the Vedas.

2. The dynasties of ancient kings and their kingdoms have mentioned in the purāṇas according to the Vedic authenticity. Similarly, the story of the ancient kings likes Parikshit, paramānanda and many others have found in the purāṇas according to the ancient historical data. There is some discussion got about the dynasty of those kings of that time through these purāṇas. The discussion of Maura, Andhāra, Āvira, Gadarva, Śaka, Yaban, Tushār, Huna and Gupta dynasty have mentioned in the Matsya, Vāyu and the Viṣṇu purāṇa also. It may say that, there are some historical epic and drama have written by the great Sanskrit scholar in later period according to the historical data which is acquired from the purāṇas.

3. Most of the people of India were uneducated in ancient periods. Because, the people of India were completely depend on the Vedic education. At that time the theme of the purāṇa were offered through religious assembly. Some of the purāṇas were combined various subjects like philosophy, Dharmaśāstra, kāvyāśāstra, Vāstu-Vidyā, Vrata-tattva, Āyurveda, Vyākaraṇa, Astrology and medical science etc. The preceptors were delivered those subjects through the religious assembly at that period. The people of the present era have gained that knowledge which was elaborated in the purāṇas. These subjects are developed day by day on the basis of the Paurāṇic knowledge.

4. The purāṇas have delivered the knowledge of the rituals tasks according to the Vedic discipline. The purāṇas have divided that tasks into two sections- ‘sin’ and ‘pious’. This procedure has been continued since the Vedic period. The discussion of that procedure has obtained in the Dharmaśāstras also. The purāṇas have discussed the fruitful results of the ‘sin’ by dividing the religious acts, and ‘pious’ according to the righteous tasks presented by the peoples. The purāṇas are discussed the existence of ‘Heaven’ and ‘Hell’ with the references of that acts. Thus, the people of present era have gained the spiritual and ethical knowledge from the purāṇas.

5. The discussion of geography (Bhubanakoṣa) has prescribed specially in all purāṇas. The peoples of different countries have gained the knowledge of geography from the geographic illustration of the purāṇas. The writers of the different countries offered that knowledge according to the imagination or conventional data in present times. The people have found not only the illustration of the geography of India, but also the description of holy rivers, mountains, hills, historical forest, deserts, towns, countries and the nations comparatively. In the Matsya, Vāyu, Mārkaṇḍeya and Viṣṇu purāṇas, the discussion of geography (Bhubanakoṣa) has illustrated extremely.

6. Besides, the purāṇas have played a great role for the formation of national unity and integrity among the general masses. The Bhāgavata and Viṣṇu purāṇas have stated about the fame of the India in their text. The Deities, who wishes to born in the holy Place Bhāratavarsha (Viṣṇu purāṇa-2/3/24) & (Bhāgavata purāṇa-5/19/21). Thus the purāṇas have expressed the gratification of the nation and distributed the spiritual and ethical knowledge among the general masses of India. However, the purāṇas have given more importance on the pilgrimage along with the fruitful results of the pilgrimage. The purāṇas have stated the fame of the pilgrimage which establish in all the place of India.

7. The purāṇas have stated the ancient social system (Varṇa system and Caste system) in their respective text. The purāṇas have explained the ideal socialism along with their rules and regulations of ancient India. The religion and duties of the Varnāshrama, various reforms, Rājadharmā, Stridharma and the relation between preceptors and

descendants are beautifully explained in the purāṇas. Thus it may be realize that the purāṇas have played vital role for establishing ideal socialism in the society.

8. The philosophical aspects has stated in all purāṇas. Especially the creation, destruction and recreation of world are presented in the purāṇas. The creation theory of sāmkhya philosophy (मुलप्रकृतिविकृति) has adopted by the purāṇas. At the same time in the Viṣṇu purāṇa, the vital nature is depend upon viṣṇu and God viṣṇu is considered as 'Vyākta' and 'Kāla'.²⁸ Similarly in the Śaiva purāṇa, the entire narrative is basically depend upon God Śiva. The greatness of Śiva are illustrated there. Taking the philosophical data from purāṇas, many more Sanskrit works had published in later times. Thus the purāṇas have delivered the philosophical knowledge among the people of the world.

9. In the literary aspects, the language which was used in the purāṇas is easy, simple and standard. Many great epic and drama has originated on basis of the Paurāṇic legends in later periods. The literary beauty of the Bhāgavata purāṇa is incomparable and this literary beauty has got in other literatures also.

Conclusion: In the conclusion it may be said that the purāṇas are incredible wealth of Indian literature which have a great importance since the Vedic period. Many more Sanskrit works have done on the basis of Paurāṇic legends. The purāṇas have a great value in the present era. For achieving more and more knowledge about the religious activities and other subjects, one must read the purāṇas. The purāṇas have played a vital role in the improvement of the ancient literature in contributing the foundation of religious tasks, philosophical ideas and customs etc. The importance of the purāṇa conquers in the cultural and history of India. However, for increasing our deep awareness on every subject, we must regularly read the purāṇas. It offers completion to understand the actual theme of life and donate vital spiritual information in every aspect of life.

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