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INDIAN CULTURE AS REFLECTED IN PURANAS

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Abstract:

Ancient Indian Scriptures offer vivid information on societal art, culture, tradition, and practices. The significance of these age-old recorded practices lies in their popularity at the present age, symbolic and deeper meaning, and scientific explanations added to their events.

This research focused on the analysis of Indian culture and its presence in the Puranas.

Keywords: Indian Culture, the tradition of India, Indian cultures in Puranas

Introduction:

The Puranas in this regard appear as an extension for Vedas to explain the latter's cryptic and typical language. Puranas supposedly were brought to break down the coded knowledge of Vedas into simpler, easily comprehensible, and commonly available incidents. Hence, the usual nature worship of Vedas was slowly done away with, and a more complex system of worship with the use of images, icons, and definite forms was introduced.

Do these usually proclaim 'mythical' figures actually had some significance or symbolism or were just part of fancy imagination is a matter of debate to date?

Mythological Figures in the Scriptures

Some of the most mythical figures from Puranas are their anthropomorphic characters such as Ganesha, Hanuman, Garuda, Narsimha, Sharabh, Varaha, Haygriva, etc. Others are the human representations of several natural elements such as Rivers (Ganga, Yamuna, Narmada, etc.),

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Mountains (Himalaya, Mainak, Sumeru, etc.), Planets (Surya, Chandra, Mangal, etc.), Trees (Ashvattha, Vat, Tulsi, Parijata, etc.) And animals (Nandi, Sheshnaga, Garud, etc.)

Scientific Revelations from Puranas

The universal theory of creations presented in Puranas too has some scientific and realistic significance, but the language used therein is still very cryptic and difficult to be unfolded so easily. The cosmological details describing the motions of the planet, their distance from the Sun, and their arrangement in the universe are equally fascinating.

Moreover, the mysterious numbers which are used repetitively in particular incidents or with the life of any principal character are also exciting. e.g., 18 in Mahabharata, 8 in Krishna's life, and 12 in Ramayana. The recently unveiled Dashavatar theory has already triggered the much-awaited scientific research to logically satisfy the events and phenomena mentioned in Puranas. More detailed research on the subject will easily segregate the myths and the facts of the incidents in Puranas.

Differences in Oral & Written Traditions

The oral culture too seems to have been inspired by the written accounts of largely acclaimed historical events. The prominent figures of folk worship such as Mansa Devi, Sasthi Devi, Aravan Devta, Venkateshwar, and Lakulisha also trace their origin to the Puranas and Epic. The dissimilarities and contradictions found in oral and written narratives may be attributed to the misinterpretation, adulteration of texts, passing of misleading information, later additions and interpolations as well to social and political motives.

Similarly, the popular festivals of Mahashivratri, Lolark Chath, and Vat Savitri Pooja also find a place in the reason of their origin in Puranas. Here, also we can find discrepancies in the oral and written traditions of worship, celebration, and causes behind the festivals.

These Puranas are also noteworthy for the geographical, astronomical, political, and social data they provide of the era in which they were written with the ancestry of the present people according to the places they inhabited.

Modern Perspectives in old scriptures

Another notable feature of these scriptures is their positive approach towards some of the taboos mainly created around the medieval period and are now reflecting the modern and contemporary outlook, e.g., the Transgender community who are still thriving for their individual identity and respect in society were treated much benevolently in puranas and also were made parts of several important incidents. The gender transformation of such historical/mythological figures, such as Shikhandi- Shikhandini and Sage Bhangaswan shows

the remarkable attempt of Purana writers to treat the third community as equally and normally as the other two communities of males and females are treated.

Their discourses on time, grammar, and universe as a composition of 14 Bhuvanas are also appreciable and seems to be referring to different atmospheric space in an indirect manner. Again, the science of architecture presented by them holds the essence of present-day constructions and buildings.

The discourses on the menstrual cycles of women, the modes of marriages, principles of making love, and reproduction of offspring through the practice of Niyoga are some of the groundbreaking customs of the ancient age as presented by Puranas that are really open-minded and progressive in their approach.

Conclusion

These were some of the incidents where Puranas have proved that they are much more than the works of fiction and why they are relevant for the present era. There is need to look into the deeper aspects of these ancient scriptures and unfold the mysteries they had been holding for so long. This can help us in constructing a clearer picture of our past and setting a better scenario for our future. These Puranas hold an almost definite picture of India at different period of time and can be really instrumental in understanding the country's culture and traditions better. More and more study of the different versions of several Puranas, thus, should be encouraged in order to bring people closer to their ancient literature and make them realize their worth.

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