



Matsya Purana and its relevance in today's life

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Submitted- 15/December/2022 Reviewed- 25/January/2023 Accepted- 26/February/2023 Published-10/March/2023

Abstract

One among the eighteen Maha puranas, the Matsya Purana, a highly regarded ancient Indian literature written in Sanskrit and is generally credited to the sage Vedavyasa. It is termed after the God Vishnu's fish incarnation, Matsya. A vast array of subjects, including cosmology, mythology, religious rites, pilgrimage destinations, temple construction, and the lineage of gods, sages, and kings, are enclosed in the Purana, which is renowned for its encyclopaedic style. The text is divided into 291 chapters and contains about 14,000 verses, called shlokas. The story starts with the Matsya avatar, in which Vishnu, disguised as a fish, saves the Vedas and the wise Manu from a massive flood. This legendary story prepares the audience for more general talks about cosmology and religion. The creation, preservation, and annihilation of the universe, also the cyclical structure of time in Hindu cosmology, are all elaborately described in the Purana. The Matsya Purana is an essential source of religious and cultural knowledge for Hindus. It is a crucial text for comprehending the complex interplay between ancient Indian spirituality and social standards because of its unique combination of mythology, ritual instructions, and historical narratives. The continuing significance of this ancient scripture is shown in the ways in which its teachings continue to shape Hindu religious practices and cultural customs. Reading the entire paper will provide you a thorough grasp of this fascinating scripture and invaluable insights into the rich fabric of ancient Indian culture and religion, allowing for an in-depth study of these varied and complex issues.

Keywords- Maha puranas, Vedavyasa, cosmology, mythology, Manu, creation- preservation- annihilation.

Introduction

Against a background of modern challenges and age-old wisdom, the Matsya Purana shines as a source of everlasting wisdom. One among the eighteen major Puranas of Indian literature, it is named after Vishnu's fish incarnation and offers a complex blend of cosmology, mythology, and cultural history. The Matsya Purana offers insights that are remarkably appropriate to the modern world through its complex storylines and practical teachings. Its teachings on compassion, education, dharma (righteousness), and environmental stewardship are in mark with contemporary ideals of social responsibility, sustainability, and lifetime learning. In light of contemporary concerns like as social injustice, climate change, and moral quandaries, the Purana's emphasis on reverence for the natural world, truthfulness, modesty, and tenacity provides a moral foundation for individual and collective development.

The text's emphasis on elderly respect and community service fosters social cohesion and intergenerational harmony, both of which are essential for sustainable humanities. Its nonviolent and self-disciplined tenets tackle mental health and conflict resolution, promoting a peaceful society. People can develop moral rectitude, compassion, and a strong sense of community and environment by incorporating the ageless wisdom of the Matsya Purana into their daily lives. This will help to create a more equitable and sustainable world.

Objectives

1. To acquire the practical instructions on life, architecture, law, and rituals.
2. To learn about ancient Indian Traditions and Cultural Practices.
3. To deepen spiritual understanding and connection.

Methodology

The article employs a qualitative analysis of secondary sources, including scholarly books, journal articles, and ancient texts. This approach involves systematically reviewing and synthesizing existing literature to examine the themes, significance, and cultural impact of the Matsya Purana within Hinduism, providing a comprehensive understanding of this ancient scripture.

Results and Discussions:

In Hinduism's holy literature, a purana is any of several widely read encyclopaedias that compile myth, folklore, and family history, with dates and origins that vary widely. The sacred Puranas are an immense reservoir of spiritual and

literary wisdom that illuminate the past, present, and future. The Puranas are regarded as the world's richest source of mythological knowledge. All told, the Eighteen Puranas provide knowledge about ancient mythology and folklore related to spiritual wisdom. Every one of these Puranic texts contains hymns, tales, wisdom, and guidelines for performing religious rites and leading a moral life. It includes information on the cosmos and how it impacts our daily lives. There are said to be eighteen major puranic traditions (REDDY).

The term Maha purana, which means great, refers to the eighteen main Puranas. A number of additional minor Puranas, or *up-puranas*—the term *upa* meaning minor—also exist. There is a belief that there are eighteen *up-puranas* as well. The Matsya Purana is the sixteenth Maha purana among the eighteen. The five requirements (*Panchalakshana*) that a text must meet in order to be designated as a Maha purana are described in the Puranas themselves. In other words, a document of this kind needs to cover five distinct topics. These are the histories of the solar and lunar families (Surya and Chandra), the initial formation of the cosmos (*sarga*), the periodic process of destruction and re-creation (*pratisaryga*), the many periods (*manvantara*), and the royal lineages (*vamshanucharita*).

According to tradition, the sages Valmiki and Vedavyasa are credited with writing the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, respectively. The sage Parashara and Satyawati were the parents of Vedavyasa. Krishna Dvaipayana was his true name. Since the word "Krishna" means "dark," he got the name because of his dark skin tone. The term "*dvipa*" means "island," and as the sage was born on an island, he went by the name Dvaipayana. There are one lakh shlokas, or couplets, in the Mahabharata. It is thought that Vedavyasa wrote the eighteen Maha puranas after writing the Mahabharata. Despite their differences in length, these writings include four lakh shlokas in total.

With fifteen thousand couplets, the Matsya Purana, a medium-length Purana. The Skanda Purana is the longest Purana, with eighty-one thousand verses. Furthermore, the Markandeya Purana, the shortest Purana, contains just nine thousand. Occasionally, the eighteen Maha puranas are fragmented into three collections, each containing six Puranas. The Hindu pantheon is composed of numerous gods. However, Shiva, Vishnu, and Brahma are the main gods. It is believed that Shiva is the destroyer, Vishnu is the preserver, and Brahma is the creator. Any sacred literature will exalt all three since they are significant gods. However, the relative emphasis frequently changes between texts. A *rajasika* Purana is a literature that devotes many chapters to the act of creation and tends to exalt Brahma more than other characters. A *sattvika* Purana is a book that goes into general depth about Vishnu's incarnations, or avatars, and tends to exalt Vishnu more. A *Tamasika* Purana is a literature that focuses on customs and rituals and tends to give more significance to Shiva.

Around 500 A.D., the majority of them reached their ultimate form, but their oral heritage dates back to the time of Krishna (around 1500 B.C.). The Chandogya Upanishad, written 500 BCE, has an early mention of the origins of the Indian Puranas. The Puranas aimed to provide the common man with access to the substance of the Vedas, which were primarily written for common people rather than scholars. They use fables, parables, allegories, and stories, as well as historical event chronologies and the lives of rulers and other prominent figures, to convey the wisdom and lessons of the Vedas. Hinduism's tenets are explained in a very straightforward manner in the Puranas.

The goddess Lakshmi holds a major position in all of these Puranic writings, and this is undisputed. In the Vaishnavite Puranas, Shiva begins by alerting Goddess Parvati about Vishnu's effectiveness. Vaishnavites place Goddess Lakshmi at Vishnu's heart, as if it were a lotus (*Hridaya kamala*), but Shaiva mythology positions Goddess Parvati, Shiva's wife, as one half of His body (*Ardhanareshwara tattva*). This demonstrates how seed and field, male and female, or Universal Purusha and Prakriti are intricately intertwined.

Of the eighteen holy Puranas in Hinduism, the Matsya Purana is the sixteenth. In the hierarchy of Puranas, this one about Lord Vishnu's fish incarnation is ranked sixteenth. Because of its connection to Vaishnavism, Matsya Purana is also recognized as Vaishnava Purana. This Purana is called Matsya Purana because of the fascinating tale of Lord Shri Hari Vishnu's "Matsya avatar." In the guise of Matsya, Lord Vishnu provided the Sapt Rishis and King Vaivasvata Manu with extremely helpful guidance while saving their lives.

Manu was the name of a former ruler. He stood the sun god's son. Manu gave his son the kingdom when it was time for him to go into retirement into the jungle. After that, Manu proceeded to the bottoms of Mount Malaya and began to meditate, or Tapasya. An endless number of years elapsed. The supremacies of Manu's concentration were so great that Brahma materialized before him. Brahma is happy that he prayed and asked for a blessing. There will eventually be a devastation (*pralaya*) and the world will vanish from existence. As requested by Manu to Brahma, please bestow upon me the favour that I shall be the one to save the world and that it begins at the moment of destruction.

This blessing was quickly given by Brahma. Days went by. Manu used to conduct ablutions in a pond close to his hermitage on one specific occasion. In order to give his ancestors some water, he submerged his hands in the water. He discovered a fish swimming in the water when he lifted his cupped hands. Manu did not want to harm the little. With caution, he put it in his kamandal (water pot). However, the minnow began to grow after a single day. The fish gradually multiplied to the point that they filled the entire ocean. Manu enquired, "Who are you?" "I've never heard of or seen such marvels.

Then Vishnu disclosed that, in fact, he was the one who had taken on the shape of a fish. He warned Manu that a flood of water would soon cover the planet. The gods had constructed a boat for Vishnu. Manu had to put all living things on the boat when the earth flooded in order to save them. Manu was to tie the boat to the fish's horn when Vishnu himself appeared in the appearance of a fish. The creatures would be spared as a result. And Manu would be able to populate and control the earth again once the flood waters subsided.

There was a horrible drought on earth for a hundred years after Vishnu vanished. People perished from famine brought on by the drought. The planet was set on fire by the sun's ferocious conflagration. After everything had burned to the ground, ominous clouds appeared in the atmosphere. These clouds, which are referred to as Samvarta, bhimananda, Drona, Chanda, valahaka, vidyutapataka, and kona, are those that arise during the period of destruction. Rain started to fall from the sky, and soon the whole planet was covered in water. It was a flooded land mass. Manu gathered all the living things inside the boat as Vishnu had directed. And he fastened the boat to the fish's horn when it surfaced. Thus, he saved them and started a new life with them.

Major contents of Matsya Purana

The Matsya purana contains eight chapters (the 252nd, 253rd, 254th, 255th, 256th, 257th, 269th, and 270th) that deal with architecture (Vaastu). The extensive study of architecture in the Matsya purana demonstrates that it comes from a period of notable advancement in sculpting and art. The discussion revolved around Vaastuvidya's origin. This Purana, chapter 252, states that Visnu taught Manu the art of architecture when he was a fish, or in Matsyaavatar. Manu then taught Suta, who subsequently passed the knowledge on to the sages of Naimiṣaraṇya. It covers topics including architectural principles, site selection and planning, creating holy images, constructing temples and palaces, and more.

The Matsya purana has mentioned about the eighteen preceptors of architecture. They are:

1. Bhṛgu,
2. Atri,
3. Vasiṣṭha,
4. Visvakarma,
5. Maya,
6. Narada,
7. Nagnajit,
8. Visalakṣa
9. Purandara,
10. Brahma,
11. Kartika,
12. Nandisvara,
13. Saunaka,
14. Garga,
15. Vāsudeva,
16. Aniruddha,
17. Sukra
18. Vṛhaspati.(Kalita, 2018)

Hindus worship Vastudeva, the presiding deity of Vaastu, before beginning any new construction, despite the fact that vastu, or architecture, is considered a worldly science. Vastudeva is the earthly deity of all that we construct. The Matsya purana have provided a clear account of Vastudeva, stating that Lord Śiva once killed the demon Andhaka in a battle. Drops of sweat streamed from Śiva's forehead throughout the war. An attendant with a terrible appearance was born from this sweat. The attendant ingested the Andhaka blood that was strewn around the floor. Subsequently, he began to perform meditation in order to appease Lord Śiva and ultimately absorb the three areas. With pleasure, Śiva gave him the boon. The attendant then collapsed to the ground, having covered the three domains of heaven, earth, and atmosphere with his body. However, he was captured by the gods, demons, rakshasas, Brahma, and Śiva from every direction. He stayed there, confined in his cell. After that, because the gods lived there, he became known as Vasudeva. The Matsya purana stipulates that building creation shall not begin till the Vasudeva has been glorified. Vastupuruṣa faces the earth with his head turned towards the northeast, according to Bṛhatsaṃhita.

The building of several kinds of residential homes for kings, princes, commanders-in-chief, ministers, tributary princes, artists, chamberlains, courtesans, messengers, astrologers, preceptors, physicians, and residences for four castes, among other people, has been extensively conversed in the Matsya purana. A prudent monarch, according to the Matsya purana, should reside in an area encircled by forts with his family, all the individuals who can assist him, and his fellow countrymen, together with all the comforts required for a safe and secure life. Furthermore, it provides accurate measurements for building thresholds, pillars, doors, windows, halls, and other structures.

It clearly demonstrated the benefits of building each of these house components in the appropriate direction and with the right measurements. It has also discussed the beneficial and bad effects of placing doors, trees, and other features in certain locations. To put it succinctly, the Matsyapurana provides every little detail needed to build a dwelling house, from measuring the building to putting trees in the surrounding area and from evaluating the soil to entering the finished structure. It has addressed every facet associated with building a house in great detail. Additionally, this Purana has a lengthy discussion about building a temple.

The Matsya Purana covers many topics that are unconnected to Vishnu. Its mixed encyclopaedic character prompted Horace Hayman Wilson, a well-known Purana scholar and translator from the nineteenth century, to claim that "it is too mixed a character to be considered a genuine Purana" and that it is essentially a compilation of unrelated topics. The book devotes a section to the goddess Shakti and explores the history of the gods Shiva and Vishnu in a similar fashion. The text's chapters 54-102 discuss the significance of Hindu holidays and family reunions, such as the Samskara (rite of passage).

While chapters 252-257 of the text provide a technical explanation of how to find stable soil for home construction, various house architectural designs, and construction-related ritual rites, chapters 215-227 explain the text's views regarding king duties and good administration. The Matsya Purana, like all other Puranas, is divided into chapters known as the Mahatmya. Ariel Glucklich describes these as "promotional works aimed at tourists from that era" of ancient or medieval India.

The Matsya Purana's most detailed collection, contained in chapters 189-194, details the monuments, cultural significance, and temples along the Narmada River in what is now Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Gujarat. Another tour guide in the text is the Prayaag Mahatmya, which contains lyrics on the Kumbh Mela and encompasses chapters 103-112 of the Matsya Purana.

The tour guide sections of this Purana feature additional Tirtha (pilgrimage) areas, such as those involving the Goddesses (Shakti) in India's eastern and southern states. The book Avimukta Mahatmya, a travel guide for Banaras (Varanasi, Kashi), is divided into chapters 180-185.

The existence of the Cosmos:

What caused the cosmos to exist, how did it start, and why? Since the beginning of time, people have been intrigued by such inquiries. How the creator constructed our universe is one of the key themes that has been raised. The philosophical idea came to us from hypotheses regarding cosmogony, or the notion of the universe's genesis, and cosmology, which represents the universe's original structure. The Matsya purana presents multiple creation theories. One hypothesis of creation states that this Universe remained in complete darkness, as if it were in a deep sleep, at the moment of the global breakdown.

At that time, it was unknown and unpredictable. Subsequently, the universe manifested and the darkness vanished, according to SvayambhuNarayana, also known as the unmanifested one (avyakta). He first generated the waters and the semen in them through meditation, wanting to create beings of all types from his body. It matured into a silver and gold egg. It was as brilliant as a thousand suns. It became permeable as Swayambhu himself got into it. From the egg was born Aditya, who was also called Brahma since he was born reciting the Vedas (Brahma). He was named thus because he was born at the beginning. The earth and heavens were formed from one half of this egg. The space and sky were created in the centre. After that, the animals, the main mountains—including Meru Mountain—the clouds, lightning, rivers, the patriarchs, the Manus, and the seven oceans teeming with precious stones all emerged. Subsequently, he revealed himself as Prajapati. He was brilliant, and the Sun was born. The Matsya purana narrates how Prakriti is created.

The equilibrium state of three gunas is called prakriti.

- tamas, rajas, and sattva.

Other names for this Prakriti include Pradhana and avyakta. The entities are created and destroyed by this Prakriti. The Trinity of Mahesvara, Visnu, and Brahma appears when the three gunas are disturbed. Individually of these three represents the same Ultimate Reality. Mahiti is the source of Mahat (intellect). Mahat is the source of ahamkara, from which eleven sense-organs are derived: the mind, five motor organs, and five cognitive organs.

The five jnanendriya, or organs of cognition, are:

- ear, skin, tongue, eye, and nose.

The five motor organs are as follows:

- the hands, feet, speech, reproductive organ, and excretory organ.

The mind, which possesses the capacity for both knowledge and action, is the tenth organ. Tanmatras, or subtle elements, are the components of the senses of cognition that are subtler (astroera, 2024).

The following lessons from the Matsya Purana are relevant to the modern era:

- **Dharma (Righteousness):** Preserve moral and ethical principles in both your personal and work life.
- **Respect for Nature:** Keep the environment safe and treat it with reverence, understanding that all life is interrelated.
- **Importance of Education:** Seek knowledge and education, appreciating its contribution to both individual and collective development.
- **Charity:** Help those who need support by performing charitable deeds.
- **Self-Discipline:** Apply discipline and self-control to your everyday activities.
- **Non-Violence:** Adopt non-violent attitudes, statements, and deeds.
- **dedication:** Regardless of your religious views, cultivate a sense of spirituality and dedication.
- **Gratitude:** Show appreciation for others' efforts and for what you have.
- **Honesty:** Always act with integrity and honesty.
- **Respect for Elders:** Show consideration and reverence for senior citizens and their wisdom.

- **Patience:** Remain composed under pressure and refrain from making snap judgments.
- **Perseverance:** In the face of difficulties, maintain your resolve and perseverance.
- **Humility:** Be humble and steer clear of conceit or haughtiness.
- **Healthy Lifestyle:** Make healthy eating and exercise a part of your daily routine.
- **Community Service:** Take part in volunteer work to improve the welfare of the community.

Conclusion:

The Matsya Purana, a valuable source of traditional knowledge, ethical guidance, and cultural heritage. Its lessons are timeless, providing important insights that apply to the quickly evolving world of today. Through its emphasis on values like justice, reverence for the natural world, learning, almsgiving, self-control, non-violence, and modesty, the Matsya Purana offers a moral framework that can direct people toward living morally upright and satisfying lives.

Applying the lessons of the Matsya Purana to the current generation can promote a society that is more just, compassionate, and sustainable. The potentials of appreciation, deference to elders, endurance, patience, and community service are strongly ingrained in modern society and inspire people to make meaningful contributions to both their local communities and society as a whole. Accepting these lessons can assist in addressing contemporary issues including social injustice, environmental deterioration, and the deterioration of moral principles. The Matsya Purana's lasting significance ultimately stems from its capacity to encourage people to lead morally upright, wise, and compassionate lives. Today's generation can develop a wisdom of purpose, harmony, and resilience by incorporating its timeless principles into everyday life, cultivating both their own lives and society at large.

The Matsya Purana offers ageless knowledge and insight that makes it extremely relevant in today's world. Its stories highlight how life is cyclical, promoting adaptability and resilience. Hindu customs and social behaviour are still influenced by the moral and principled standards it offers. In accumulation to preserving cultural legacy, the text's in-depth descriptions of temple construction and pilgrimage destinations promote communal and spiritual interaction. The Matsya Purana is an essential resource for understanding old wisdom in the present world because it can teach us about sustainable living, the value of knowledge preservation, and the consequence of religious and cultural traditions.

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