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Glory of Bharath » Bharatheeya Samskrithi

'Bharatheeya Samskrithi', Samskrithi means culture which cleanses the metal, shapes in the mould, melts in the crucible to purify, brightens and straightens. Indian culture removes the dross of animality thereby enbling man to devote all his time towards the piligrimage to God within him. The Indian culture has been flowing through time like the Ganges river has been flowing in a clean and clear manner. It does not get contaminated, remains everlasting and flows permanently.

This great culture traces its origins to the scriptures. The scriptures lay down various stages of spiritual development and the rigour of the discipline for each stage is tuned to the level reached by the aspirant. Collectively referred to as the Shastras, there are two types of sacred writings in the Hindu scriptures: Shruti (heard) and Smriti (memorized). Sruti literature refers to the habit of ancient Hindu saints who led a solitary life in the woods, where they developed a consciousness that enabled them to 'hear' or cognize the truths of the universe.

Shruti literatures are of two parts: the **Vedas** and the **Upanishads**. There are four Vedas:

- The **Rig Veda** -"Royal Knowledge"
- The **Sama Veda** - "Knowledge of Chants"
- The **Yajur Veda** - "Knowledge of Sacrificial Rituals"
- The **Atharva Veda** - "Knowledge of Incarnations"

The study of Vedas is the highest type of learning. The Vedas show the path to the realm of eternal bliss. All our culture and the manner of our living is contained in our Vedas. What is contained in the Vedas is 'Pramana' or authority.

The sages of India sought to know that, which if known, all else can be known. The **Upanishads** lay down the process of this discovery. There are 108 extant Upanishads, of which 10 are most important: Isa, Kena, Katha, Prashna, Mundaka, Mandukya, Taitiriya, Aitareya, Chandogya, Brihadaranyaka.

Smriti Literature refers to 'memorized' or 'remembered' poetry and epics. They are more popular with Hindus, because they are easy to understand, explains universal truths through symbolism and mythology, and contain some of the most beautiful and exciting stories in the history of religion world literature.

The three most important of Smriti literature are - **Ramayana, Mahabharatha and Bhagavad Gita**.

The Ramayana and Mahabharata which are the most precious jewels of India are like vast oceans. They are sacred books, which will directly tell us about many things, especially the ways in which we have to conduct ourselves. Bhagavad Gita is designed for the holy task of self realization by man. The essence of Gita is 'Thath thwam Asi'.

The **Puranas** are of the same class as the Itihasas (the Ramayana, Mahabharata, etc.). The Puranas were written to popularise the religion of the Vedas. They contain the essence of the Vedas. The aim of the Puranas is to impress on the minds of the masses the teachings of the Vedas and to generate in them devotion to God, through concrete examples, myths, stories, legends, lives of saints, kings and great men, allegories and chronicles of great historical events. The sages made use of these things to illustrate the eternal principles of religion. The Puranas were meant, not for the scholars, but for the ordinary people who could not understand high philosophy and who could not study the Vedas.

There are eighteen main Puranas and an equal number of subsidiary Puranas or Upa-Puranas. The main Puranas are: Vishnu Purana, Naradiya Purana, Srimad Bhagavata Purana, Garuda (Suparna) Purana, Padma Purana, Varaha Purana, Brahma Purana, Brahmanda Purana, Brahma Vaivarta Purana, Markandeya Purana, Bhavishya Purana, Vamana Purana, Matsya Purana, Kurma Purana, Linga Purana, Siva Purana, Skanda Purana and Agni Purana.