INTRODUCTION

‘Veda’ means knowledge. Rigveda is the oldest work in the world. It is the major source of all the religions. So it is said ‘वेदक्षिलो धर्ममूलम्’ ‘Vedokhilodharmamoolam’. Vedas are the root of all the religions. Vedas were created by the Lord Vishnu at the very beginning. However, there is no composer of Veda. It was transferred from generation to generation. There were many sages who observed the Vedas. In this context, the Vedas are Apaurusheya. In reality, the Vedas were created by the Lord Vishnu and given to Brahma, the creator of the universe. It was created to enlighten the human beings. Tiwari (nd) has stated that environmental science was originated from the Vedas. Vedas have given a message for protecting and preserving the environment. Jnawali (2010) has recorded fire, light, water, precipitation and air as the five geographical elements described in the Vedas.

The root of Adhyatma Vidya or spiritual science based on Hindu Philosophy is Veda. This Adhyatma Vidya has three parts. They are Jnanakanda, Karmakanda and Upasana or Bhaktikanda. Atharvaveda is Jnanakanda, Yajurveda is Karmakanda and Samaveda is related to Upasana or Bhaktikanda (Jnawali, 2005). Rigveda is the biggest work among the Vedas. It is the oldest work in the world. It is Vijnana Kanda. It is the root of all the four Vedas. It includes other components of Jnana, Karma and Upasana (Pandeya, 2002). Vedas are very difficult to understand. The subject-matter stated in the Vedas has been made simple in the Puranas.

Vedas are also known as Shrutis. They are the root of all the schools of Hindu philosophy. Since Vedas are the most difficult, Vedavysa composed Puranas in order to simplify their subject matter and make it more understandable among the people.

For remembering the name of the Puranas, following mantra or sloka is available in the Vamanpurana and Devibhagavat:

माृण ब्रह्म च ब्रह्म च व चतुर्तंक।
अनापलिङ्गकृष्णानि पुराणानि पुष्यं पुष्य ॥
Ma dwayam bha dwayam chaiva bra trayam va chatustakam

Anapalingakooskani puranani prithak prithak

In this sutra, ma indicates two Puranas. They are Matsya and Markandeya. Bha represents two Puranas. They are identified as Bhagavat and Bhavishya. The letter Bra is used for three Puranas Brahma, Brahmanda and Brahmavaivarta. Va is used for four which are known as Vaman, Vishnu, Vayu and Varaha. The terms Vayu and Shiva are synonymously used. Anapalingakuska represents seven Puranas. They are Agni, Narada, Padma, Linga, Garuda, Kurma and Skanda.

Present paper is an attempt to introduce Vedas and Puranas in brief. It describes the types of the Vedas and Puranas. The central focus of this paper is on the geographical elements like mountains,
rivers and places mentioned in the Puranas. The Bhagavatamahapurana has mainly been consulted for this purpose.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

The paper is based on the secondary information available from the documents published. An attempt was made to review selected references and papers. For this purpose, the Bhagavatamahapurana published by Geeta Press, Gorakhpur was consulted. Its fifth canto deals with creation of the universe. Similarly, the tenth canto was also reviewed for the explanation of the universe and living beings. Descriptive and analytical approaches have been adopted for arranging the materials.

GEOGRAPHICAL ELEMENTS IN THE PURANAS

Introduction to Puranas

Puranas are ancient texts, but it seems that they provide us new and updated knowledge. We can develop this type of feeling while reciting Bhagavatam. The author of this paper has recited all the texts of Bhagavatam eighteen times. Now he has a feeling that he has just entered into this Mahapurana for the first time. This is a dramatic surprise. It one starts to recite Bhagavatam, he/she will develop this feeling. The Puranas represent the status of culture and civilization of the human beings. In spite of this, they are the sources of history and geography. The drama of history is played at the stage of geography. The activities of kings and warriors are the components of history. Each of the puranas deals with some components of geography. Padma Purana is Satwika Purana. It contains 55,000 Shlokas. One of its sections is known as Srishti khandha. It deals with the creation of the universe.

The eighteen Puranas are classified as follows (Jnawali, 2005):

Satwika - Padma, Vishnu, Varaha, Bhagavat, Narada and Garuda. These are closely related to Lord Vishnu, the creator of the creator.

Rajasi - Brahmmanda, Brahma, Brahmanda, Markandeya, Bhavisya and Vaman are categories as Rajasi Puranas. They are related to Lord Brahma, the creator of the universe.

Tamasi - Shiva, Agni, Linga, Skanda, Kurma and Matsya are identified as Tamasi Puranas. Lord Shiva is God in these puranas.

There are some characteristics of Puranas. Generally they are five and described as (Dikshit, 2004):

Sarga, pratisarga, vansha, manwantara, and vanmshanucharitra are the five characteristics of the Puranas. These are common properties. In the Bhagavatam, the ten characteristics are mentioned. They are explained as Sarga, Visarga, Sthana, Poshana, Uti, Manwantara, Ishanukatha, Nirodha, Mukti and Ashraya (Shrimadbhagavat /2/10/1).

Little knowledge is a dangerous thing. The persons who have not studied Sanskrit deeply or who do not have attachment with Lord Krishna will not be able to develop positive thinking about Bhagavatam. Without the blessings of Lord Krishna and Radharani, no creature is able to devote himself/herself to this great work of Vedantadarshanam.

Geographical Elements in the Puranas

There are a number of geographic elements in the Puranas. These elements are available in various Puranas like Padma, Vishnu, Bhagavata, Brahmanda, Brahma and others. The term ‘Bharatvarsha’ is well explained in the Puranas. It is a geographical term whereas the narration of Yaduvansha or Kuruvansha is related to the history. Based on the Puranas, the earth is divided into seven parts which are known as ‘Dvipas’. This word indicates the continents. The seven parts of the earth in the Puranas are identified as Jambu dvipa, Plaksha dvipa, Salmali dvipa, Kusa dvipa, Krauncha dvipa, Saka dvipa and Puskara dvipa. This is the core concept of geography stated in the Srimadbhagavatamahapurana (Panchamaskandha).

The Srimadbhagavatamahapurana is at the top among all the Puranas. It is used in the Saptaha Jnanamahayajna. These days, it has been widely utilized for social and educational services like schools, hospitals and ashrams for elderly people. The devotion and activities of Late Pandit Narayan Pokhrel are its example. Now Pt. Deenabandhu is devoted to this activity. The works and activities performed by Lord Krishna in the Bhagavatam works as the source of inspiration for those who cannot devote their time to performing duties and responsibilities. The indecision of Arjuna in the Bhagavatgeeta is a great example for the whole humanity.

There is one section in the Bhagavatam mainly related to the creation of the world. All the seven dvipas are beautifully mentioned in the Panchamaskandha (Canto 5) of this Purana. Many rivers, mountains and sarovars (lakes) are mentioned in the Bhagavatam. It has been stated that the great
rishi Jadabharata performed meditation at the bank of the Krishnagandaki. Rurukshetra as one of the most famous pilgrimages is located at the bank of the Kaligandaki River.

The story of Kardama Devahuti Vihar is closely linked to Vindusarovara tirtham.

During the process of explaining Vedastuti in the Bhagavatam, it is stated:

एकदा नरादो लोकान्य प्रयंतस्तु भगवानः ।
सनातनमुखः इत्य यस्य मार्गायामसः ॥

‘Ekada narado lokan paryatan bhagavatpriyah
Sanatanmrishim drashtum yayau narayanashramam.

Shrimadbhagavatam 10/87/5/

Once when Narada, the beloved of the Lord was traveling in different planets, he desired to personally meet the ascetic Narayana in Badarikasrama and offer him his respects. Here, Kalapgrama near Badrikashrama has been mentioned as a holy place where the people used to gather for discussing about the subject of the Vedas.

Bharatavarsha is again mentioned in the fifth canto. Bharatavarsha was named after the reign of King Bharata. Bharata was a great king. He was the son of Dushyanta and Shakuntala. Another Bharat is well identified as Jadabharat, a great scholar and enlightened one. Jadabharat was brought to Bhdrakali temple for offering sacrifice to the Goddess. The Goddess appeared in real feature/vigraha and saved Jadabharata. Later on, Jadabharat gave enlightenment to the King Rahugana who was approaching Kapilhaashrama.

There is a long dialogue between the king and Mahatma Jadabharata. A beautiful example of the words expressed by Rahugana is presented here.

Kastvam nigood hascharasi dwijanam
bibharshi sootram katamovadhoota.

King Rahugana was very much pleased and said:

“Who are you? You are wearing a sacred thread. Are you Avadhoot who has challenged all the worldly things? Are you sage Kapila whom I want to meet? I am not afraid of thunderbolt of Indra or the trident of Lord Shiva. I am not afraid of the rod of Lord Yama, nor of the weapons of fire-god, the sun, moon, wind and Kubera. However, I am very afraid of the insult of persons of the Brahman community.

In a reply to Rahugana, Mahatma Jadabharata replied:

अकोविदः कविविवश्याति वर्षयो नातिविदा वरिष्ठः ।
त सूरयो हि व्यवहर्येन तत्ववाच्येन सहमानितः ॥

O king, you have no knowledge to distinguish right or wrong. However, you utter words like a scholar (Pandit). But you cannot be counted among great scholars. One who is tattwajnani does not discriminate persons as master and servant. Such a person cannot realize the reality.

After listening such words, Rahugana was surprised. He became very polite and said:

Namo nam: कारणविवश्याय चूर्णपुनुष्ठीतिविवश्याय ।
Namo:व्रतविवश्यायनिगुहविवश्यायतुभयम ॥

The king said, O Brahman, I greet you. You have taken this incarnation for the welfare of this world. You are in the form of Brahman Avdhoota. You are experiencing great pleasure in this form. I again and again greet you.

In a reply to Rahugana, Jadabharata further added:

जानविवश्याय परमाञ्चकः व्यवहिष्कः सवयः ॥

Prayak: Prashatam bhagavahds crop yaddurdev karyo bhari ॥

Jnanam visuddham paramarthamekam
manantaram tvabahirbrahma satyam
pratyak prashantam bhagavachchhabdasa jnam
yas vasudevam kavayo vadanti.

King Rahugana was very much pleased and said to Jadabharata:
One of the statements related to creation is presented in the following extract of the fifth canto of the Bhagavatam:

The extract mentions the names of the rivers. River Kaveri and Krishna are located in south India. Krishna is also another name of Kaligandaki in Nepal which is world famous for Shaligram. Kaushiki is Koshi of Nepal; Yamuna flows through Delhi and Vrindavan; Saraswati is in Allahabad; Gomati is in Lucknow; Sarayu is in Ayodhya which is known as Karnali in Nepal. Thus, the rivers are well explained in the Bhagavatam. Rivers work as a source of inspiration for literary work. Kavivara Madhv Ghimire of Nepal states in Kaligandaki Poem as:

In this Bharatavarsha, there are a number of mountains. Malaya, Mangalaparashtra, Mainaka, Strikuta, Shrishaila, Venkata, Mahendra, Vindhya, Chittrakuta and Gobardhana are the major mountains mentioned in this chapter. Malaya is also known as Malayachala. Some poets have composed poem stating wind blowing through Malaya. For example Malaya is stated:

This stanza is in Malini Chhanda. It indicates that with the dawn of autumn, the light of moon was spread. The group of clouds disappeared with the movement of wind through Malayachala. This way, the poets are very much influenced by geographical objects like mountain and wind in composing new poems. This is known as romanticism. William Wordsworth of England and Laxmi Prasad Devkota of Nepal are great romantic poets.
This line is a portion of the poem Kaligandaki composed by Madhav Ghimire. It is in Mandakranta prosody (Chhanda) that may be compared with a sweet sound of waterfall. The poem is very beautiful. Mukunda Sharan Upadhyaya has composed a poem known as Nari in the same prosody. These poets are very popular in the area of Nepali literature. Nari won gold medal in literary competition. Madhav Ghimire is widely known for Mandakranta prosody. His poem 'Navayuvaka' works as a source of inspiration for youth. He says, "He tanneri uthana prthivi tina bitta uchali." This way, literature is also influenced by geographical objects like mountain and wind.

In the literature, the Nayaka ie, major character is highly appreciated. Such appreciation is available in many parts of the Bhagavatam. The appreciation of Lord Vishnu is made by the Vedas. The 87th chapter of Dashamaskandha contains Vedastuti. Vedas are termed here as. It Shritis. Vedas appreciate the Lord as:

\[ \text{The same Samhita has been stated by Bhakti Vedanta Prabhupada as:} \]

Jaya jaya jahyajamajita doagibha gua 
Tvamasi yadatmana samavaruddhasamastabhaga 
Agajagadokamakshinchakshavatohoka te 
Kvachidajayatmana ch chorti,nuvarinignah.

\[ \text{The statement in the Bhagavatam related to the} \]

\[ \text{structure of the universe and living beings is:} \]

\[ \text{This Samhita of Bhagavatam states that the universe} \]

\[ \text{looks like a Ghatakash. When we observe it, it looks} \]

\[ \text{that the sky is just on the mountain. If we march} \]

\[ \text{ahead, it again appears same from another place.} \]

\[ \text{One cannot find out its starting and ending points.} \]

\[ \text{Who are the creators of such world? Who are the} \]

\[ \text{parents of Prakriti and Purusha? There is no correct} \]

\[ \text{answer. They are birthless (ajanma). Every human} \]

\[ \text{being accepts the role of nature. Nature is all in all.} \]

\[ \text{When Prakriti and Purusha come together, many} \]

\[ \text{living beings are created. Their shapes and structure} \]

\[ \text{are quite different. There are more than seven billion} \]

\[ \text{people in this world. No one is similar to another} \]

\[ \text{person. These creatures are like the drops in the} \]

\[ \text{ocean. At last, all these living beings merge into} \]

\[ \text{the nature as the streams into rivers, rivers into sea and} \]

\[ \text{sea into the great oceans and nectars of flower into} \]

\[ \text{honey. The small water bodies flow into the ocean.} \]

\[ \text{Then their existence is no more. The honey bee} \]

\[ \text{collects nectar from the flowers and prepares honey.} \]

\[ \text{When the honey is formed, there is no existence of} \]

\[ \text{nectar/ juice of the flowers. The meaning is that the} \]

\[ \text{God or Nature is Almighty. He creates everything} \]

\[ \text{and at the end all the living beings like the drops of} \]

\[ \text{the Ocean merge into the God. This is a universal} \]

\[ \text{truth and may be applied to each of the religions} \]

\[ \text{and philosophies.} \]

\[ \text{Many geographic elements are available in the} \]

\[ \text{Puranas (Dikshit, 2004). Some of them have been} \]

\[ \text{reviewed in this paper. Vedas are interpreted in} \]

\[ \text{the Suktas. The subject matter has been illustrated} \]

\[ \text{through Sutras. In the Puranas, the same subject} \]

\[ \text{matter has been explained in detail.} \]
In the Bhagavatam, it is stated:

इतिहास पुराणज्ञ पन्चमो वेद उच्यते।

Itihas-puranam cha panchamo veda uchyate.

In this Mahasankalpa, the terms bharatavarsha, Bharatakhanda, Jambudwipa, Aryavarta, Srikrishna Gandaki, Bagmati and Pashupatakshetra are used. All these are the geographical terms. The geography of today is different from that of Puranas. However, some of the elements are similar even today. The geologic history is an evidence to prove that the Antarctica was once a place of coal mines and Rajasthan was a region of glacier. This is an example of dramatic change in geography.

CONCLUSION

The paper was prepared with an objective to throw light on selected aspects of Vedas and Puranas with specific reference to brief introduction and geographical elements in them. The three types of Puranas are explained but the Bhagavatamahapurana was given central focus for this purpose. The paper has mentioned some of the rivers and mountains included in the Puranas. Their names are similar even today. It has also been stated that no one can find out the exact knowledge about the universe which is well identified as Vedic Cosmology. It has no limited boundary. It is endless. All the living beings are created by the God and at last merge into the God. The atheists do not believe the God. However, they accept the nature as all in all. All the living beings are created by the nature and their end also takes place in the icy hand of nature or Prakriti.

REFERENCES


