

propagating vedic knowledge

In every Dwapara Yuga, the one who is desirous of propagating the Vedas, Lord Vishnu, takes the incarnation of Veda Vyasa. He wants to organise and compile the Vedic Mantras for the well-being of humanity. Out of the twenty one incarnations of Lord Vishnu, Veda Vyasa is the seventeenth Avatara.

Voice of Veda Vyasa

Excerpts from the Speech, delivered on Guru Purnima day

Guru Puja is celebrated on Aashada Pournami, which fell on 9th July this year. This Guru Purnima is also called as Vyasa Pournami, because Vyasacharya is the one who represents the oral tradition of teaching for the entire Guru Sishya Parampara. Therefore, we celebrate Guru Puja as Vyasa Puja also.

The original name of Vyasa Bhagavan is Badaraayana or Krishnadwaipaayana. He was the compiler of the Vedas, who re-arranged the Vedas into four branches or Shaakhas—**Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, Saama Veda and Atharvana Veda**. He further classified them into four parts: Mantra, Samhita, Aranyaka and Upanishad Bhagas.

How did this title come?

वेदान् व्यस्यति इति वेदव्यासः ।

Since he was the one, who arranged and codified the Veda Mantras, he was named as Veda Vyasa. He has done great contribution to the Vedic propagation and hence he is taken to be the link between the first teacher, who is the Lord himself, and the later Gurus in the lineage.

He wrote the 555 Brahma-sutras for high intellectuals. Not only that, to educate the common people, he wrote the 18 Puranas and 18 Upa puranas. He also wrote the Mahabharatha with one lakh verses. He gave us the tradition of Vedic teaching and imparted the Vaidika Dharma. Therefore he was given the status of Vyasacharya. But, he is not a particular person at a particular time, at a particular place.

Origin of Veda Vyasa

द्वापरे द्वापरे विष्णुः व्यास रूपेण सर्वदा ।

(Devi Bhagavatam)

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By Swamini Satyavratana Saraswati

Why only in Dwapara Yuga?

अल्पायुषो अल्पबद्धीश्च विप्रान् ज्ञात्वा कलौ अथ ।
पुराण संहिताम् पुण्याः कुरुते असौ युगे युगे ॥

(Devi Bhagavatam)

In Kali Yuga, generally, people have a lesser span of life and limited intellect. Therefore, in every Yuga, before Kali Yuga, i.e., at the end of Dwapara Yuga, this arrangement is made by the Lord, by taking an avatara as Veda Vyasa.

श्री हरि व्यास रूपेण जायते च युगे युगे ॥

(Brhannaradiyam Ch. 92)

Lord Vishnu Himself takes incarnation in the form of Veda Vyasa, age after age.

अयं साक्षात् महायोगी व्यास सर्वज्ञ ईश्वरः ।

(Suta Samhita)

So he is a great Yogi and he himself is Ishvara

कोहन्यः पुण्डरीकाक्षात् महाभारत कृत्भवेत् ।

Who can write the great epic Mahabharatha, other than Pundarikaksha or Lord Vishnu!

Out of the twenty one incarnations of Lord Vishnu, Veda Vyasa is the seventeenth Avatara.

Therefore, we chant the prayer verse:

व्यासाय विष्णुरूपाय व्यासरूपाय विष्णवे ।
नमो वै ब्रह्मनिधये वासिष्ठाय नमो नमः ॥

Vyasa Bhagavan's Contributions :How do we benefit from them?

Vedas are nothing but Dharma. Vyasacharya aims at the righteousness of people. He wants that Dharma in everyone's heart. But, how do we know what is right and what is wrong? Lord Krishna says thus in 16th Chapter of Bhagavad Gita:

तस्माच्छास्त्रं प्रमाणं ते कार्याकार्योन्वयवस्थितौ । (B.G. 16.24)

Therefore, Dharma Shastra is a valid source to know what is to be done and what is not to be done by human beings.

“Hurting others is sin and helping others is merit”. Vyasacharya puts the essence of Itihasa and Puranas in one line.

“What I don’t want others to do to me, I should not do to others”.

विदन्ति अनेन धर्माऽधर्मान् इति वेदः ।

Veda is that, through which, we know what is right and wrong.

What is Dharma?

धारयति इति धर्मः ।

That which supports the entire universe is Dharma. Veda never says why you should follow Dharma. It only lays the rules that are to be followed. To understand why we should follow Dharma, one has to study Itihasa and Purana. Veda is called “Prabhu Sammitam”. It is like a king, who commands and orders. Reasons are not given, because the rules are just meant to be followed. It is only Purana/Itihasa that tells us the benefits of following Dharma and the loss of violating Dharma, through its characters. Purana Itihaasa come under “Suhrut Sammitam” (like a well-wisher). Mahabharata is the brain-child of Veda Vyasa and Ramayana is the brain child of Valmiki.

वेदोखिलं धर्म मूलम् । (Manu Smriti 2nd chapter)

The entire Veda is the law of Dharma or righteousness.

वेद प्रणिहितो धर्मः ।

Whatever is said by Veda is Dharma.

Difference between Purana and Itihasa

Itihasa revolves within one story—Ramayana is the story of Lord Rama and Mahabharata is the story of the Pancha Pandavas. On the other hand, in the Puranas, there are many stories that elaborate on values, like Satya Harishchandra, Dadhichi, Shibi, Bali for the values of truth, sacrifice, compassion, charity respectively. All values are picturised in different stories. Therefore, Purana/Itihasa teaches overall values, based on Vedic teaching. Because Vyasacharya wants to bring Dharma in the hearts of the people, he has authored the Itihasa and Puranas. Therefore, study of Itihasa and Puranas is as good as studying the four Vedas.

भारतं पञ्चमो वेदः ।

Mahabharata is considered as fifth Veda.

परोपकारं पुण्याय पापाय पर पीडनम् ॥

“Hurting others is sin and helping others is merit”. Vyasacharya puts the essence of Itihasa and Puranas in one line. Thus, Vyasacharya has done a great contribution to humanity.

“What I don’t want others to do to me, I should not do to others”.

We have to develop respect towards Ramayana, Mahabharata and Puranas with full humility. There may be a lot of fiction in the stories, but we have to look into the message and learn to live a righteous life and focus on the absolute truth, but not on the fiction. By focussing on fiction, we cannot get spiritual knowledge. The spiritual teaching of Bhagavad Gita, which comes in Mahabharata, is lost, if one concentrates on the spurious part of the story. Even a slight fiction, deviation from the absolute Truth has been made with a good intention only.

We have to understand the “dignified dictum” and the values hidden in the Puranas, Ramayana and Mahabharata. That alone is the voice of Veda Vyasa. Only then, we can know the absolute Truth. We have to remember him and follow his teachings. We should offer our salutations to the entire Guru Parampara. It is our prime responsibility and need of the hour to protect the Vedic culture by following the righteous way of life.

Vyasa made it easy for us to understand the scriptural teaching through mythological stories etc. All our Acharyas are striving to propagate and preserve the Vedic culture. Therefore, it is our duty to show our gratitude to the entire Guru lineage, on this auspicious Guru Purnima day.

Sri Gurubhyo Namaha!

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