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THE PURANIC MENTIONS OF PARASURAMA

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Abstract

This research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the ancient Indian history through an analysis of the Puranas, with a specific focus on the significance of the sage Parasurama. The research problem centers on the question of whether the actions of Parasurama, such as the destruction of the Ksatriya race and the murder of a mother, can be justified within the context of his incarnation as a form of Lord Vishnu. The methodology involves a qualitative analysis of Sanskrit writings and epics such as the Ramayana and the Mahabharata to explore the portrayal of Parasurama and his interactions with other significant figures in Indian mythology. The results reveal that Parasurama's actions were seen as a means to combat the prevailing anarchy and establish the rule of virtues, as per the concept of incarnation in the Gita. Furthermore, the implications of this study shed light on the complex moral and ethical dimensions of ancient Indian mythology, and the rationale behind the incarnations of divine beings.

Keywords: Puranas, Parasurama, Vishnu, incarnation, ancient Indian history, mythology, Ramayana, Mahabharata, morality.

Understanding ancient Indian history requires familiarity with the Puranas. Old tale is what the word "Purana"

refers to. We possess a total of twenty-eight Upapuranas and eighteen Mahapuranas. The Puranas depict a wide range of figures significant to Indian culture and heritage. Some Mahapuranas and Upapuranas feature the sage Parasurama.

The sixth Dashavatara avatar of Hindu preserver deity Vishnu is Parashurama, who is also known as Rama Bhargava, Virarama, and Rama Jamadagnya. A member of the Chiranjivis, or Immortals, he is said to be the guru of Kalki, Vishnu's tenth and last incarnation, who will make an appearance at the conclusion of the Kali Yuga.

There are a number of Sanskrit writings that acknowledge Parasurama as an incarnation of Lord Visnu. There are five human incarnations of Lord Visnu that can be found in the list of his incarnations through history. In this group, Parasurama stands up as a notable figure. As was previously mentioned, incarnations have been divided into three distinct types, each of which has been briefly examined. The third one, which is a partial incarnation of a transient nature, that Parasurama belongs to is the third one. In contrast, Parasurama is compared to Krishna in the Vibhuti yoga of the Bhagavad Gita, which may be found in chapter 10.31 of the Bhagavada.

Vishnu took the form of Parasurama in order to accomplish his goal of destroying the entire Ksatriya race. Parasurama was born within the caste of brahmanas. As a result,



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the story of Parasurama paints a realistic picture of the conflict that existed between Brahmanas and Ksatriyas throughout that period of time.

The question that arises in relation to the legend of Parasurama is whether or not the murder of a mother and the destruction of a caste are both crimes that cannot be forgiven. Parasurama, however, has the potential to become an incarnation after committing both of the crimes. In this context, it is possible to assert that there must be a rationale behind each and every incarnation that takes place in the background. According to the Gita, the concept of incarnation states that anytime there are malicious acts in the society, the Lord takes on the form of a human being in order to establish the rule of virtues. It is not considered a criminal act, according to this perspective, for Parasurama to have wiped off the Kshatriya people.

The vicious anarchy of the Kshatriyas was prevalent in the society at that time, and Parasurama, in his capacity as an incarnation of Vishnu, was obligated to carry out this course of action. However, the murder of a mother is a crime that there is no excuse for. In spite of the fact that he was an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, Parasurama was forced to endure a great deal of suffering for a considerable amount of time. After what seemed like an eternity, the axe that had been heaped in his hand as a result of the transgression was finally released.

The Ramayana and the Mahabharata are two of the most important epics in India, and both of them contain references to Parasurama. There is a magnificent event that can be found in the Adikanda of the Ramayana. On this particular occasion, Parasurama, who was one of the human incarnations of Vishnu, engaged in combat with Rama, another human incarnation. They are both formidable warriors. Within the context of this conflict, Rama's superiority is established.

Once more, Parasurama battled alongside a large number of other famous and courageous warriors in the Mahabharata. It is possible to draw the conclusion from this that the majority of the courageous heroes of the epic period, in order to confront some of the most influential persons of that era, initially attempted to create a hostile relationship with them.

Parasurama is portrayed as a superhero in the epic poem Mahabharata. Bhishma, Drona, and Karna are the names of some of the most powerful warriors involved in this epic. Parasurama served as the advisor to each and every one of these individuals. There is a widespread consensus that Bhishma is one of the most important characters in the Mahabharata. And in addition to that, he was Parasurama's disciple. Parasurama and Bhishma were adversaries in the Udyogaparvan of the Ambapakhya. They engaged in combat in the Kurukshetra for a total of twenty-three days. Parasurama's admission of defeat marked the day that the war was finally brought to a conclusion. The celestial bow known as Vijaya was a gift from Parasurama to Karna. As stated in Mahabharata 1.21, Drona, the son of Bharadvaja, was able to acquire the knowledge of special missiles from Parasurama. As a result of Drona's acquisition of all of Parasurama's techniques, he emerged as the most influential warrior during the Kurukshetra conflict.

The story of Parasurama is mentioned in different Puranas as follows-

Vishnu Purana

This is how Parasurama came to be, according to the Vishnu Purana. An embodiment of Indra himself was the man known as Gadhi. A passage from the Vishnu Purana states (4.7.10-11) Satyavati was her name. A descendant of Bhrigu named Richika desired to wed her. As a wedding gift, the monarch requested from the Brahmana a thousand white horses, each with one black ear. As stated in verses 4.7.10-0.14 of the Vishnu Purana Richika married Satyavati after fulfilling it with



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Varuna's help. Richika fed his wife a mixture of rice, barley, pulses, butter, and milk in the hopes that it would bring about the birth of a son. At Satyavati's request, Richika made a similar combination for his mother-in-law. He then proceeded to the jungle after finishing it. The request came from Satyavati's mother, and she exchanged their plates without first obtaining permission from Richika. Upon learning this, Richika's husband claimed to have imbued his mother-in-law's meal with heroic traits and his wife's with virtues befitting a Brahmana. Therefore, he told Satyavati that her son should act like a fighter and carry a weapon. "If it is so, let it be my grandson and not my son," Satyavati pleaded with her husband as she knelt at his feet in a state of terror at hearing the news. Richika gave her approval. A few days later, Satyavati became the Kausiki River after giving birth to Jamadagni. Parasurama was the fifth son of Jamadagni. He belonged to Narayana.

Bhagavata Purana

This Purana tells the tale of Parasurama as follows: The ruler of Kanyakubja was Gadhi. Richika, the sage, had his heart set on marrying his daughter Satyavati. Richika, in Gadhi's view, was an unsuitable spouse, therefore he asked for a thousand white horses, each with one black ear, to give to the bride as a wedding present because they are Kausikas (Bhagavata Purana 9.15. 5-6). After Richika complied with her request, she wed Satyavati and had a son they called Jamadagni. As the youngest of Jamadagni's five sons, Parasurama was born to Renuka. An urban legend has it that Vishnu, in his guise as Parasurama, was born to wipe out the Haihayas. (Bhagavata 9.15.13-14, Bhagavata Purana On twenty-one occasions, he wiped off the Kshatriyas entirely. Here, the question of why Parasurama actually killed the Kshatriyas emerges. Kartaviryarjuna, a king of the Haihaya, had a thousand arms, and his story contains the answer to this question. His extraordinary abilities had been

bestowed upon him. The monarch visited Jamadagni's hermitage on a certain day.

With the aid of his sacred cow, Jamadagni graciously welcomed him. In the king's estimation, Jamadagni possessed superior power. So he took the cow and calf captive by force. Parasurama slaughtered Arjuna after learning about the occurrence. The cow and calf were retrieved by him. Jamadagni then told Parasurama to visit sacred sites to atone for his transgression. God is quickly delighted with people who are patient in this matter. Additionally, he claimed that Brahmanas have earned respect via their patience (Bhagavata Purana 9.15. 39). Hearing this, Parasurama set off to tour sacred sites and returned a year later.

It is mentioned in the Bhagavata Purana that Parasurama murdered his mother on orders from his father, Jamadagni. Because Renuka's filthy longing caused her to descend from her previous holiness.

Also written here is the reason Parasurama swore to wipe out the Kshatriya people. The sons of Parasurama Kartaviryarjuna murdered the pacifist sage Jamadagni while their father was away. Parasurama returned to the hermitage, summoned his axe, and exacted his revenge for this injustice. An end to the Kshatriya people was his solemn promise. He first killed Arjuna's son and then their followers to fulfil it. According to Bhagavata Purana 9.16.19, he created five blood lakes in the Samantha Panchaka of Kurukshetra. After that, he sacrificed his father by joining his head to his own. Here he bestowed the Hotru priest with the eastern half of the planet, Brahma with the southern half, Adhvaryu with the western half, and Udgatru with the northern half. According to Bhagavata Purana 9.15.21-22, he divided the central areas among Kashyapa and upadrashtu the Aryavarta, while others received the intermediate districts.



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Then, he washed himself in the Sarasvati, the river of Brahma, to remove his sins through the avabhrutha ablution. Without any clouds, he resembled the sun. Siddhas, Gandharvas, and Charanas greeted him as he ascended the Mahendra mount, and he then departed. In this fashion, Parasurama vanquished the earth-burdening rulers.

Skanda Purana

There is a striking similarity between the Skanda Purana and the Bhagavata Purana accounts of Parasurama's narrative. In this section, we highlight the main features of both the similarities and the differences. According to Bhagavata Purana 9.15.23, King Kartavirya willingly made his way to the hermitage of Jamadagni. That being said, the monarch in the Skanda Purana accepted the sage's invitation and came.

The Skanda Purana once again provided a general account of the conflict that erupted between Jamadagni and the monarch, this time over the king's request that Jamadagni designate his sacred cow. During this conflict, the king assassinated the peace-loving sage Jamadagni. However, the battle is not detailed in the Bhagavata Purana. The sons of Kartavirya raided the hermitage and killed Jamadagni in retaliation for Parasurama's murder (Bhagavata Purana 9.16.9-11).

Vamana Purana

According to the Vamana Purana's 34th chapter, Lomaharshana used an up-close view of the sacred area of Kurukshetra to reveal the names of the seven rivers, seven forests, and all of the tirthas. This is where the Ramahrada tale comes in. Using the blood of the Kshatriyas, Parasurama created five lakes. In that place, he appeased his ancestor.

Kalika Purana

After killing his mother on his father's orders, Parasurama visited the Brahmakunda. Here in this Purana, we

hear Aurva recounting Parasurama's birth narrative. After Bhrigu's son Richika wed Kanyakubja princess Satyavati, he paid the nuptial fee with a thousand moon-white horses that he could get by appeasing Varuna (Kalika Purana 85-54). After a while, Bhrigu paid a visit to his daughter-in-law. In front of Satyavati, he voiced his desire for a grandson. The ideal son for Satyavati, according to her, would be an accomplished scholar of the Sastras. She desired a masculine hero of unmatched valour once again for the sake of her mother. Two varieties of charu emerged from Bhrigu's sigh when he learned the wishes. One had a white hue, while the other was red. After a bath and before ingesting the red charu, Bhrigu told Satyavati that her mother should embrace an Asvatha tree when she was menstruating. After embracing an Udambara tree, Satyavati was to personally take the white charu. However, inadvertently, she did the inverse. Consequently, she would have a kid who is a Brahmana at birth and a Kshatriya in action. However, her mother would have a son who is a Brahmana by profession and a Kshatriya by birth. Then Satyavati wept bitterly and asked Bhrigu to be her grandson so she could continue the family line. She was assured by Bhrigu that her wish will come true. A few months later, Visvamitra was born to Satyavati, and Jamadagni to her mother. After marrying Renuka, Jamadagni had five sons of his own. The fifth was Parasurama. His grandmother's error made him so vicious.

At one point, Renuka took a dip in the Ganga River. Water activities were also enjoyed by King Chitraratha and his women. As a result of her intense feelings for the king, Renuka returned with a disturbed state of mind. Jamadagni became enraged and gave the order to have her killed to his sons after learning about her mental condition. Except for Parasurama, the other sons had turned him down. They became dullards because Jamadagni cursed them. With an axe in hand, Parasurama severed his mother's head. Parasurama was told by Jamadagni to



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grant any request because she was so happy. Parasurama hoped that his mother would find a new lease on life and be able to put the dying incident out of her mind. In his prayers, he asked God to break the curse on his brother and grant him success in every battle. Following his father's counsel, he granted all the boons and then proceeded to the Brahmakunda. There he cleansed himself of his sins by washing his axe and taking a bath. After that, he used his axe to carve out a passageway, which allowed him to lower the Brahmaputra, who was Brahma's son. Brahmaputra emerged from Brahmakunda and plunged into Lohita, a lake on the Kailasa Mountain. Afterwards, it hurried eastward, sliced through a Himalayan peak, and emptied into Kamarupa's core. Brahmaputra was given the name Lohitya by the divine being Brahma since it emerged from the lake known as Lohita. After this, the Brahmaputra plunged into the southern sea.

The Bhagavata Purana also contains the narrative that was told above, beginning with Richika's marriage and continuing until Parasurama was born. On the other hand, a few tweaks have been discovered. According to the Kalika Purana, Bhrigu gave Satyavati the two charus, which are white and red, but according to the Bhagava Purana, Richika made two charus for his wife and mother-in-law as a result of their prayer, and the colour of the charus is not mentioned (Bhagavata Purana 9.15.8). The Puranas taught us that Satyavati's mother was very crafty when she took the charu, which caused her children to change their appearance.

Sanskrit was widely spoken throughout the time of the Kalika Purana (c. 10th to c. 14th century), according to scriptures. This is where the tale of Parasurama was restated. For fear of Parasurama, the Sanskrit-speaking Kshatriyas started speaking the Mleccha (low-born) language. The Jalpaiguri region in modern-day West Bengal was a safe haven for some of

them. Jalpisa was so named because it was the site of a Shiva linga.

Agni Purana

Vasistha sought information on Lord Vishnu's incarnations from Agni, including the fish, in chapter 4 of the Agni Purana. For the first time, Agni portrayed Vishnu as a fish, tortoise, hog, man-lion, and dwarf. Parasurama was the subject of his subsequent descriptions. In order to alleviate Earth's suffering and bring about harmony, Vishnu took on the form of Parasurama. The Brahmanas were shielded from the haughty Kshatriyas by Parasurama. Bhargava was his birth name; his parents were Jamadagni and Renuka. Thanks to Dattatreya's favour, Kartavirya became extremely powerful with his thousand weapons. During combat, he eliminated Jamadagni. The entire Kshatriya tribe was wiped out by Parasurama in an act of vengeance. According to Agni Purana 4.23, he constructed five wells at Kurukshetra and sacrificed animals to honour his ancestors who had passed on. Following his transfer of land to Kasyapa, he established his permanent residence atop Mount Mahendra.

Brahma Vaivarta Purana

Legend has it that Parasurama severed Ganesha's jaws, making him a true son of Siva and Parvati. Narada inquired of Narayana about this occurrence in this Purana. Narayana recounted Parasurama's entire life story, starting with Kartavirya's visit to the ashram of Jamadagni. Many of the puranas have previously told us the tale of Kartavirya. Here, then, is a synopsis of Parasurama's stay on Kailasa Mountain. It was Parasurama's intention to wipe off the Kshatriyas. As Bhrigu had advised, he began by making his pledge known to Brahma. Subsequently, Brahma stated that he could not accomplish his current mission without Siva's assistance. He could only get his wish granted by Siva, who possessed the Pasupata weapon. After that, Parasurama followed Brahma's



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instruction and travelled to Kailasa to see Siva. He was bestowed the Sangtraka, a weapon, by Lord Siva. All the Kshatriyas were dispatched by him with this weapon. According to Brahma Vaivarta Purana (46.37), he even targeted the elderly and unborn children. After that, he returned to Kailasa mountain. Parasurama and Ganesha had a lengthy discussion at that time. Parasurama sought Ganesha's blessing in order to meet Siva, his guru, from whom he received a wealth of information, including numerous sastras and combat tactics (Brahma Vaivarta Purana 57.3). No, Ganesha would not let it happen. Consequently, Parasurama's wrath led him to consider murdering Ganesha. Then Ganesha's brother Kartika warned him not to do so because he was a son of a guru. One of his teachers was Ganesha's sons. Harming Ganesha is thus equivalent to harming Siva (Brahma Vaivarta Purana 57.57). Unfortunately, Parasurama lost control and attacked Ganesha with his parasu. Ganesha felt down with one of his teeth. Parvati was incensed by her son's plight and instructed Siva to chastise Parasurama. She used a trisula to murder him as well. When Parasurama saw Parvati in this state, he prayed to Vishnu. Coming to Kailasa as a Brahmana, Vishnu was resolute in his mission to grant Parasurama's plea. In an effort to rescue his devotee, Vishnu presented Parvati with a number of arguments. After much deliberation, Parvati finally forgave Parasurama. Ever since then, Ganesha's reputation as ekadanta has grown.

Brahmanda Purana

Of the eighteen Mahapuranas, one is the Brahmanda Purana. A considerable chunk of the Mahapuranas is devoted to the presentation of genealogy and the histories of ancient rulers, sages, and the like. When seen in this light, the Brahmanda Purana makes a substantial contribution. It provides important information about the history of ancient India. It includes brief biographies of numerous famous wise men and women. This

Purana describes the life and tale of Jamadagnya Parasurama in chapters 21–48 of section III, part II.

Narasimha Purana

Among the several Vaisnava-upapuranas, the Narasimha Purana ranks high in both age and significance. It is expected that this Upapurana will be completed no later than 500 A.D. Reason being, it is well-versed on the eleven avatars of Vishnu but understands very little about the Buddha. However, it is believed that the Buddha was recognised as an incarnation of Vishnu not long before 500 A.D., according to examinations. Markandeya swears in chapter 36 that he will tell the tales of Vishnu's eleven incarnations. From chapter 37 to chapter 54, he recounted the stories of each of these incarnations, with the exception of Buddha. The legend of Parasurama is found in chapter 46. Gods and great sages prayed to Vishnu while he slept in the milky ocean, and as a result, he was born as the son of Jamadagni, as is revealed in this chapter. To destroy evildoers, the Lord took human form as Parasurama and lived among us. The Purana tells the tale of Kritavirya's son Kartavirya, who became ruler of the world through worshipping Dattatreya.

Similarities between this Purana's narration of Parasurama and those in the Bhagavata and Skanda Puranas are striking. Included in this account are details of Kartavirya's stay at Jamadagni's hermitage, Jamadagni's hospitality, their confrontation, Jamadagni's death, Parasurama's promise and assault on the entire Kshatriya tribe, and related events.

According to this, the mighty Parasurama slew every ruler on Earth in a fit of wrath. In doing so, he relieved Kasyapa of the earth's burden, and the story continues even now, with Rama radiant in all his glory atop Mahendra Mountain (Narasimha Purana 36-43).

Nilamata Purana



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An old Sanskrit book that discusses Kashmir is the Nilamata Purana. An Upapurana is what this is called. The narrative of Parasurama is told in this text from verse 1211 to verse 1274. "Why was the image that Bhrgu had built, transported from Gridharkuta, the finest of the mountains, to the area near his hermitage?" Gonanda queried Brihadasva at this point. According to the Nilamata Purana (1521). Then, in response to the question, Brihadasva told the following tale of Parasurama:

Parasurama deprived Haihaya Kshatriya of his presence on Earth twenty-one times after he killed his father Jamadagni. He eliminated the Kasmira Kshatriyas in his twenty-first assault. Some of the Kshatriyas managed to flee from Kasmira, who was terrified of dying, and made it to the area around the Madhumati and Rajanirmala rivers. Parasurama still caught up to them and violently dragged them down, even at that moment. After this, he made the now-famous Rajavasa image of Kesava. Legend has it that a monarch can glimpse that image and immediately see success in his endeavours. There is always a ferocious Hari since Parasurama created that image while he was in a violent temper. The inhabitants of Kasmira would offer sacrifices of animals to Kesava as a form of worship. Parasurama subsequently visited Kurukshetra, where he found fulfilment in paying homage to the ancestors. The patriarch had told him to seek solace in the sacred sites. He had been physically corrupted with sin as he slew the kings who had fled in terror. Therefore, he visited all the sacred locations. He made it to Kasmira on his pilgrimage and took a dip in every sacred spot there. Afterwards, he arrived close to Gridhrakuta. His hand washed clean at the spot where the Suddha and Sarasvati rivers converge. Once he reached Pathesvara, he embarked on a rigorous penance until he reached the Punyoda River, which flowed downstream from the Brahmasara. The river became known as Ramahrada after Parasurama touched it.

He went to the base of Gridhrakuta for penance and austerities for a year there. In the home of the virtuous Naga king Ananta, he built an image of the deity Sarangl and endured severe penance. A virtuous Brahmana named Vasistha once took a cow to see the Asramasvami. To that deity, he intended to sacrifice the cow. Climbing the mountain, however, was no picnic for a cow. After abandoning the cow, the Brahmana returned with a heavy heart. He confided in Parasurama about everything. According to Parasurama, this cow was once a beautiful woman who became a cow after being cursed by Narada. She had been cursed, but she was released after visiting these sacred sites. However, following this event, Parasurama could empathise with the animals' plight. In order to appease Vishnu and have the Kesava sent down to his hermitage, he engaged in penance for a year. Vishnu was pleased and bestowed the boon of desire. Finally, as part of the enormous sacrifice known as the Vajimedha, Parasurama took the earth and brought it to Mahendra Mountain.

In places like 2.12–15 and 8–149–155 of the Mahabharata, it is mentioned that Parasurama seems to have been a Saiva, an avatar of Vishnu, in the beginning. A devotee of Vishnu as well as an incarnation, he is portrayed in the Nilamata Purana. The fact that Parasurama used animals to worship Vishnu's image lends credence to this claim.

Padma Purana

According to the Bhumi khanda chapter of the Padma Purana, Aditi was overjoyed to have Lord Vishnu as a son. The three major incarnations of Lord Vishnu—Parasurama, Rama, and Krishna—are also named here. Vishnu promised Aditi that she would assume human form if she were to carry out the deities' will. Then, while she was still pregnant, Aditi would be rewarded with the birth of her son, Vishnu. Vishnu would reincarnate as Parasurama in the 12th Yuga with the purpose of



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eliminating the Kshatriyas. Before taking on the role of Krishna in the 18th yuga, he will reincarnate as Rama in the 17th yuga.

It is for this reason that the account of Parasurama is mentioned in a variety of puranas, albeit with some minor adjustments. With the exception of the Nimalata Purana, which is the only Purana that describes the relationship between Pasurama and Kasmira, none of the other Puranas make any reference to this particular event.

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