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Vishnudharmottara Purana and Indian Art

Ridhi Sarraf 'Riddhima'

Internationally renowned artist and awarded fellowship by the Indian Ministry of Culture - Government of India

Raja Man Singh Tomar University Gwalior, M.P, India

ABSTRACT: Being an artist, my many years of study have inspired me to know the various writings on the art of our Vedic period done by Indians, the oldest civilization in the world. There I found details about art, especially about paintings in the Chitrastura section of Vishnudharmottara Purana.

KEYWORDS: Vishnudharmottara purana, visual arts, Indian heritage, Scriptures, Art and Culture, Art education

I. INTRODUCTION

We found ancient source of painting in India in 'Vishnudharmottara Purana' (An Indian scripture). Vishnudharmottara Purana is written by Markandeya Muni. It contains approximately 16 thousand verses which were compiled around 650 AD. It has three sections. There are 269 chapters in the first volume, 183 chapters in the second volume and 118 chapters in the third volume. In the chapter named 'Chitrastura' of Vishnudharmottara Purana, the importance of painting has been explained.



Importance of paintings:

In Vishnudharmottara Purana it is said-Kalanaam pravaram chitram dharmarth kaam mokshadam.

Mangalya Pratham Dotad Grihe Yatra Pratisthanam || Painting has an important place among the arts which helps in attaining religion, Artha (money), karma (wishes) and moksha (salvation). The presence of goodness is always considered to be present in the house where paintings are highly respected.

About Vishnudharmottara Purana:

Vishnudharmottara Purana is a sub-purana. Its nature is encyclopaedic. Apart from arts, the first section has 269 chapters and there are topics like origin of the world, geography, astronomy, astrology, division of time, pacifying angry planets and constellations, customs, penance, duties of Vaishnavas (devotee), law and politics, war policy, treatment of human and animal diseases, food, grammar, Poetry, dictionary, oratory, drama, dance, music and many other arts have been discussed. It is considered to be an appendix to Vishnupuran and sources like Shankar Geeta, Pururva, and story of Urvarshi, Shraddha, and Vrit etc.

In the 183 chapters of the second part, there are topics related to daily life of human beings like religion, politics, ashram, theory of astrology, medicine science etc.

There are 118 chapters in the third section. In this, not only the literary subjects like Sanskrit and Prakrit grammar, dictionary, prosody, poetry etc., fine arts like dance and music and fine crafts like Vastu have also been discussed in detail.

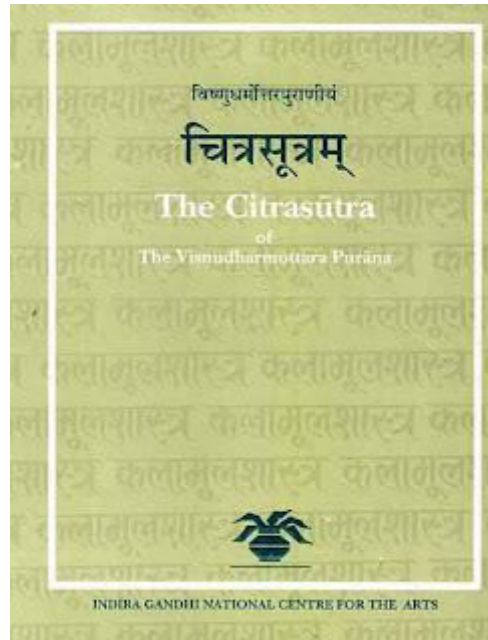
It is noteworthy that in it the technical knowledge of arts, especially sculptures and paintings, has been detailed perfectly. In its preface, it has been told that this book is a re-edition of 'Chitrasutra' scripture that is described by ancient Narayan Muni. This is not very big, but whatever is presented in it in small or concise form, remained the only basis for the contemporary and future art generations.

The term Chitrasutra is derived from the Sanskrit words chitra, meaning "painting," and sutra, meaning "rule or principle." This chapter discusses the art of measuring and giving proportions to various parts of the body, as well as colors and other distinctive features, postures.

The order of its nine chapters is as follows:

1. Dimension value description,
2. Proof description.
3. General value description,
4. Image characterization.
5. Decay.
6. Rangavyatikal,
7. Vartana,
8. Form-making
9. Shringaaraadi expressions.

If we look carefully, these names appear to be similar to Shadanga (Six Limbs), that 'Yashodhar Pandit' had told in 'Jayamangala', the main principle of Indian art. I have discussed this in detail in my previous general.



The era of the book:

Scholars like Parjitar and Hazara etc. have described 'Vishnudharmottara Purana' as being from the sixth century. Bular has confirmed this with many evidences and established that the said Purana was composed in Kashmir. Kashmir also had a name among the learning centres of Gupta era in India. In those days Gupta era was in Kashmir, there was poet named Matragupta, who was appointed by the Gupta emperor of that period. Therefore, it seems more logical that



Vishnudharmottara Purana was composed in Kashmir and at the same time it also proves to be undisputed that the credit for its contribution goes to the Gupta era only.

II. CONCLUSION

Which talks about the art of image making called iconography, which are the principles of paintings. This fifth-century text, the Vishnudharmottara Purana, is an important book on Indian art in general and painting in particular.

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