

Ancient Indian Cosmological Concepts During Vedic and Puranic Era: A Literature Survey

Ms. Shruti Sharma

Master of Arts, Department of Geography
Sophia Girls' College, Ajmer (Autonomous)
Email: shrutisharmahkh@gmail.com

Abstract

Ancient Indian cosmological concepts from the Vedic and Puranic eras reveal profound insights into the universe's nature and origins. Swami Vivekananda emphasized the importance of understanding the past to shape the future, underscoring the need for a comprehensive analysis of Vedic literature. This survey explores various facets, including ancient Indian astronomy, the significance of celestial entities, and creation theories in key texts like the Vedas and Puranas. By examining these concepts, we can appreciate the interconnectedness of geography, mythology, and spirituality in ancient India.

Introduction

The cosmological views articulated in Vedic and Puranic texts provide a rich framework for understanding the universe. This literature survey aims to elucidate these concepts by analyzing significant ancient texts, focusing on their geographical, astronomical, and cultural implications.

Methodology

This study employs a literature review methodology, drawing from historical texts, academic articles, and online resources. It utilizes descriptive research to analyze the significance of ancient texts and their contributions to cosmological understanding. Secondary literature, including various editions of Vedic texts, supports the findings.

Vedic Cosmological Concepts

Creation Theories

1. **Artistic Origin:** In the *Rigveda*, deities are depicted as craftsmen of the universe, engaging in creative acts that shape the cosmos.

2. **Mechanical Origin:** The concept of *Adi-Purusa* illustrates the universe's origin through a sacrificial act, where the disintegration of the primordial being results in the formation of various elements.
3. **Instrumental Origin:** Celestial bodies, particularly the Sun and Moon, are viewed as essential instruments in the cosmic order, influencing the structure and functioning of the universe.
4. **Philosophical Origin:** Philosophical interpretations emphasize the eternal and dynamic nature of existence, where the universe emerges from potentiality.

Celestial Bodies and Cosmology

The *Rigveda* enumerates celestial bodies, including the Sun, Moon, and planets, and elucidates their roles in the cosmic order. Ancient Indian astronomers accurately identified astronomical phenomena and detailed planetary movements, contributing to a sophisticated understanding of the universe.

Conclusion

The survey reveals that ancient Indian cosmological concepts are deeply interwoven with geography, mythology, and spirituality. Vedic texts serve as foundational sources for understanding creation and the significance of celestial entities. This research underscores the enduring legacy of ancient Indian thought, which continues to influence contemporary cosmological perspectives.

The Sun in Ancient Indian Astronomy

The Sun was considered central to the ancient Indian astronomical model. The universe was perceived as divided into three realms: Earth, Antariksh (firmament), and heavens. The Sun's movement was thought to illuminate these realms, marking time and seasons.

The Lunar Calendar

The Moon, referred to as *Chandrama* or *Soma*, was crucial in the Vedic lunar calendar, which tracked the moon's phases and its influence on earthly cycles.

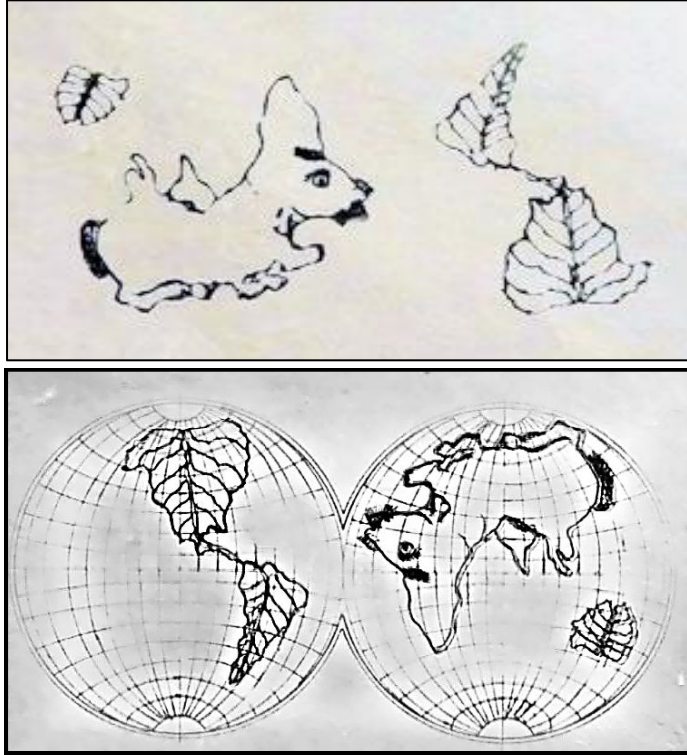
Mahabharata's Cosmological Insights

The *Mahabharata* provides a unique perspective on geography, suggesting that the earth's reflection can be seen in the moon. This metaphorical insight reflects the advanced understanding of spatial relationships and celestial observation among ancient Indian sages.

Final Thoughts

The exploration of ancient Indian cosmology reveals the sophisticated understanding of the universe developed during the Vedic and Puranic periods. As scholars continue to study these texts, new insights into ancient civilizations' knowledge systems will emerge, enriching our understanding of geography, history, and science.

Fig leaf map



(Source: Mahabharata map by Ramanujacharya)

References

1. Burges, E. (1936). *Surya Siddhanta* (Eng. Trans.). Kolkata.
2. Birley, R.N., & Tripathi, V.B. *Bhugolik Chintan ka Vikas*.
3. Hussain, M. (Year). *Evolution of Geographical Thought*. Rawat Publications, New Delhi.
4. Jatt, B.C. (2014). *Bhogolik Vichardharaye Tatha Vidhi Tantra*. Malik and Company, Jaipur.
5. Jain, S.M. (2018). *Geographical Thought and Methodology*. Sahitya Bhavan Publication, Agra.
6. Munshi, K.M. (1978). *The Cultural Heritage of India / Volume V: Languages and Literature*. Shree Saraswati Press Limited, Kolkata.
7. Pal, T. (2012). *Physical Geography during Vedic Civilization: A Literature Survey*. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*.
8. Talageri, S.G. (2000). *The Rigveda: A Historical Analysis*. Aditya Prakashan, New Delhi.