



OUR SCRIPTURES

Part: - 4

So far we have concisely discussed about the *Sruthis*. As mentioned earlier the *Sruthis* are the most authoritative and authentic scriptures. *Sruthis* are often appear paradoxical and sometimes giving esoteric meanings. One has to learn the *Sruthis* from a preceptor, who is steeped in the tradition to understand the *Sruthis* in the right sense. The great Spiritual Preceptors understand, interpret and explain the *Sruthis* with the help of other scriptures as explained by Sri Pillai Lo:ka:cha:rya i.e., "Veda:rtham arudhi iduvadhu smruthi ithiha:sa pura:nangala:le" in his *Sri:vachana bu:shanam*. That means one has to understand the meanings of the *Ve:das* i.e. the *Sruthis* with the help of *Smrithis*, *Ithiha:sas* and *Pura:nas*. We need to understand a little about the *Smruthis*.

The *Smrithis* are more authoritative than *Ithiha:sas* and *Pura:nas*. They are also called as *Dharma Sa:sthras* and *Upa-brumhanams*. The term '*Smruthi*' means that which is recollected. The great sages who perceived the *Sruthis* revealed them to their disciples. Few of those disciples recollected and reflected on those teachings and practiced them. They recorded the same along with their

realizations hence these treatises are called as *Smruthis*. Manu *Smrithi* is the foremost of all the *Smruthis*. There are eighteen recognized *Smruthis* other than the *Manu Smruthi*. They are

- 1) *Athri Smruthi*,
- 2) *Vishnu Smruthi*,
- 3) *Ha:ritha Smruthi*,
- 4) *Ousanasa Smruthi*,
- 5) *Angirasa Smruthi*,
- 6) *Yama Smruthi*,
- 7) *A:pasthamba Smruthi*,
- 8) *Samvartha Smruthi*,
- 9) *Ka:thya:yana Smruthi*,
- 10) *Bruhaspathi Smruthi*,
- 11) *Para:sara Smruthi*,
- 12) *Vya:sa Smruthi*,
- 13) *Lihitha Smruthi*,
- 14) *Sanka Smruthi*,
- 15) *Daksha Smruthi*,
- 16) *Gauthama Smruthi*,
- 17) *Sa:tha:thapa Smruthi* and
- 18) *Vasistta Smruthi*.

The knowledge acquired through the senses that are imperfect might also be imperfect in all probabilities. The *Sruthis* that are divine revelations are considered to be perfect and hence they are regarded as the most authentic and authoritative scriptures. *Smruthis* are compiled by the great sages who followed the teachings of the *Sruthis* and experienced their results. Hence they are granted the second position in terms of authoritativeness and authenticity. Only that portion of these *Smruthis* that are in accordance with the tenets of the *Sruthis* are accepted as authoritative.

The *Smruthis* deal with all aspects of the human life. They explain the various rituals that are to be performed and the practices followed by people at different times. They prescribe various rituals right from *Ja:tha Karma*, *Na:masamska:ra*, *Upanayanam* etc., that are to be performed from the conception of a child. They lay down set rules and prescribe certain rituals that are to be followed and performed right from the birth of a child, marriages and even after death.

The *Varna:srama* system as an institution is unique to the Vedic culture. Everybody in the society is supposed to comply with it and thereby should lead a disciplined order in the life. In the *Varna:srama* system, the people in the society are entrusted

with the responsibilities basing upon their *gunas & samska:ras*. Different rituals are prescribed at different situations by *smruthis*.

Each and every individual was supposed to go through the four stages i.e. *A:sramas*. For the first twenty five years of a person is supposed to acquire knowledge by being a bachelor. This stage of life is called as *Brahmacharyam*. After acquiring knowledge he is supposed to get married and lead the life of a family man for another twenty five years. This stage of life is called as *Gruhastha:sramam*. A person is supposed to renounce everything and proceed to the forest, in old days, to a calm and quiet place, away from the unwarranted responsibilities, after reaching fifty years of age and spend the next twenty five years of his life as an anchorite. This stage of life is called as *Va:naprastha:srama*. After reaching seventy five years of age a person was supposed to lead the life of a recluse. This stage of life is called as *Sanya:sa:sramam*. A person is permitted to adopt any *A:sramam* from the *Brahmacharyam*. The *Smruthis* enumerate the rituals and practices that are to be followed and practiced by people according to their status in the ladder of *Varna:srama* system.

After *Smruthis* come *Ithiha:sa:s*. Let us know about the *Ithiha:sas* in the coming issue.

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