

The Science of Upa-Veda

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1. Introduction

There are four upa –Vedas or subsidiary Vedas:

- The Ayurveda (Science of life health)
- **The Dhanurveda (science of war)**
- The Gandharva Veda (Science of music)
- The Arthashastra (science of polity)

Dhanurveda, the standard work on Vedic Military Science being lost, the dissertations on the science is found in the Manusmrti, Mahabharata, Sukraniti, Kautilya's Arthashastra, Akasa Bhairava Tantra, the Agni Purana, Matsya Purana, Vasistha Dhanurveda, Sadasiva Dhanurveda and Nili Prakasika are the sources of information on the subject left to us.

Many of the popular sports mentioned in the Vedas and the epics have their origins in military training, such as wrestling (malladvandva), chariot-racing (rathachalana), horse-riding (ashvarohana), boxing (musti vuddha) and archery (dhanurvedya), Competitions were held not just as a contest of the player's prowess but also as a means of finding a bridegroom. Arjuna, Rama and many kings won their consorts in such tournaments.

Svayamvara of Sita

In the Ramayana Balakanda, King Janaka announces that one who had the prowess to string the bow would be bestowed with Sita.

Then all the kings tried to string the bow, but left without success. Then Janaka ordered his ministers to bring the wonderful bow furnished with unguents and garlands.

Commanded by Janaka, the ministers placed the bow in their front and deposited the bow in a case on a cart borne upon eight wheels drawn with difficulty by fove thousand stalwart persons of well developed frames.

Then Rama at the command of Visvamitra says "This divine bow I will touch with my hand and I shall also strive to wield and draw it"

Then in the presence of countless thousands of spectators the righteous descendent of Raghu with exceeding ease took hold of the bow by the middle and fixed the string upon it, and having fixed the string, drew it snapped the bow in the middle

On seeing this Janaka says "In accordance to my promise I will confer Sita upon him that who will bend the bow, has

been fulfilled, O son of Kaushika, this Sita, my daughter dearer to me will confer upon Rama"

Thus Rama won the Svayamavara by bending the bow and got married.

Svayamavara of Draupadi

In the Adi Parva – Vaivahika Parva of the Mahabharata the Svayamvara of Draupadi was announced and the Pandavas who had escaped from the lac palace reached Panchala from Ekchakra and came to know about the festivities of the Svayamavara in which large sum of money will be spent

The daughter of Yajnasena will select a husband in the svayamvara, in which there will be great celestials-like be spent. The daughter of Yajnasena will select a husband in the svayamavara, in which there will be great celestials-like celebrities. Then Arjuna stringed the foremost of bows and brought down on the earth the matk set high, and was soon surrounded by all the foremost of the brahmanas, who offered him their homage for the feat he had achieved.

In the Mahabharata Narada enquires Yudhishtira about the study of the sciences and its benefits. Narada asks him whether you follow all the sutras of the sages especially those in respect of elephants, horses and chariots, the sutras regarding the science of arms and those regarding instruments necessary for attacking fortified towns carefully studied.

Vasistha's Dhanurveduasmhita besides providing the account of the training of the archers, deals with the process of making them, different steos in practice teaching, adoption of tantric ways for winning the battle, worship of different gods for victory, application of herbs, charms as preventive measures in war, formation of arrys, duties of kings and army commanders, training of the elephants, horses have also been dealt with.

The Vasistha's Dhanurveda Samhita has divided into four sections. The first part gives instructions on the second part contains the rules for collection, and the third part describes the ways of cating the bows, while fourth part tells about the application of the weapons. All the treatised on Dhanurveda available so far confirm that the whole millitary science comes under Dhanurveda not simply bow and arrow

Characteristics of a teacher

He who knows the seven ways of fighting is entitled to teach the art of warfare and is eligible to become the Acharya. He who is accustomed with four ways of fighting is Bhargava. He who know two types of fighting is the Yodhya (warrior)

and the person who knows only one of fighting is termed as Ganaka (Astrologer)

To start with the teaching, the Acharya should offer gifts to God and also arrange for putting up an oblation of fire whose offering of clarified butter is made along with the chanting of hymns. Thereafter the disciple will worship his teacher by offering food and also decorate him with garlands, clothes and ornaments.

The teacher then in order to destroy the evils and sins to bring success to his disciple should touch different parts of the body along with recitation of different incantations as mentioned by Lord Siva. The teacher now prays to Lord Brahma on the navel and Lord Ganesha his thighs.

The teacher can offer the bow to his disciple after purifying it with hymns mentioned in the Dhanurveda and also with the sacred hymns kaandat kaandat and the same is found in Yajurveda also.

Characteristics of a good bow

The bowman is precious than bow. If the archer is troubled by the bow, he cannot see and shoot at the aim easily. Hence the size of a good bow should be in proportion to the strength of a bowman. The length of a common man's bow should always be shorter than the divine bows.

The bows made up of unripe bamboo break up easily, bows made up of very fragile bamboo do not possess the elasticity. Hence these are considered to be of inferior quality. Again, the bows used by the family ancestors should never be used, since these may bring disputes among the friends.

The Bow of Vishnu – Sarnga

The divine Sarnga bow is the great weapon of Lord Vishnu and measures seven vitasti. It was made by Visvakarma (the divine architect)

Nobody in heaven, earth or hell except Lord Vishnu can bring under control the Sarnga bow.

Gold, silver, copper and steel are utilized for making the sarnga bow. The Sarnga bow is made out of vuffallo's or Sharabha's horns. It is an octopad that possesses big horns and almost looks like a camel. The trees useful in making bows are sandal, cane, dhanava, sala (timber tree), Salmali (silk cotton plant), Seganum (leak wood), Kakubha (penta petra Arjuna), bamboo and Arjuna tree.

Skilled Archer

The person becomes skilled archer if he is able to shoot about four hundred arrows per day i.e., from sunrise to sunset, If the warrior can shoot three hundred arrows per day, then he is a medium archer, while who is able to shoot only two hundred arrows is an inferior archer. The archer should be placed on a moon shaped or round wooden piece placed at the top. In the Mahabharata Adiparva Parva Dronacharya tests the skills of the Pandavas. He instructs

them to aim at head of the bird on the tree. When questioned by his teacher Arjuna states that he sees only the head of the bird and nothing else, which exhibits the concentration of Arjuna in fixing his eyes on the target only,

Desaratha-Sabdavedhi

In the Ayodhyakhanda of the Ramayana, Dasaratha achieved from the pangs of separation from Rama who had departed to the forest along with Sita and Lakshmana ponders over the curse of Sravanakumara's parents. Dasaratha recalls to Kausalya about his skill in archery as a Sabdavedhi as he pierces his aim by hearing the sound alone and procured a cure.

A perfect archer is he who knows the act of casting missiles as well as the act of warding off or counteracting a missile thrown. An intelligent person should not apply the weapons for a simple cause.

Various types of weapons

Brahmastra- A missile presided over by Brahma. It was used either to kill the enemy or imprison the enemy alive.

Brahmastra- It was used mainly to kill enemies in large mass and also to cut off the Brahmastra

Brahmastra sura- a very powerful weapon which Acharya Drona presented to Arjuna.

Pasupatastra- An astra which Arjuna received from Lord Siva, capable of killing enemies in large numbers.

Vayavyastra_ It was used to create a great and heavy storm to destruct the enemies.

Agneyastra- It was used to create fire for killing the enemies.

Narasimhastra- To destroy all enemies.

Hence one should know in detail about the science of weapons, how to cast and also the act of warding off the missiles. The warrior, who is able to protect himself completely from the enemy's missiles, will not be killed even by the strongest enemy.

Victory

The warrior should fight with great patience and kill the enemies, while fighting; he should keep in mind the fact that if he wins over the enemy, he will be a wealthy person. In case of death, he will attain heaven and will be known for his deed.

Krishna says in the Bhagavadgita "Slain you will gain heaven, victorious you will enjoy the earth.

The heroic warrior who meets death in the battlefield for the sake of religion is sure to gain eternal salvation, This single action is equivalent to other religious rites like penances and pilgrimage,

The earliest extant information on Dhanurveda is available in the Agni Purana chapters 249-252 (dated to between the 8th and the 11th century). It divides the art into weapons that are thrown or unthrown. It enumerates the various postures in archery, the position of the bow and arrow, target practice, the thirty- two sorts of gaits of a soldier, eleven

ways of manipulating a noose, the ways of manipulating a gada etc. in an elaborate manner.

Indian martial arts underwent a period of decline after full establishment of British colonial rule in the 19th century, More European modes of organizing police, armies and governmental institutions, and the increasing use of firearms, gradually eroded the need traditional combat training.