

# SCOPE OF ŚAUCĀ IN SMṚTIS

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## Abstract

Ancient Indian tradition was deeply concerned with purification in any form. It was the basic requirement for the accomplishment of worldly as well as religious and spiritual activities. Sauca was a virtue, which was expected to be followed at every stage. Ancient Indian sages contemplated upon the various aspects of sauca. In due course of time sphere sauca was expanded

Some of the aspects of purity were related to hygiene. Economic honesty, freedom from psychological impurities like greediness, anger, hatred etc. were concerned with the psychological functioning resulting in mental health. Purity of food was considered essential for maintaining emotional as well as physical balance.

Smṛtis were the text responsible for preserving law and order in the life of an individual and the society. Rules as well as prohibitions formulated by the smṛti writers were designed in accordance with various branches of Sciences. External cleanliness (bahya sauca) and internal purification of the body by proper food (ahar suddhi) were directly based on the ancient Indian science of medicine (ayurveda).

Demands for healthy life speak about the aspirations of common people too. Therefore in this paper it is proposed to have a closer look at the significance and scope of sauca in smṛti literature.

All the religious sects in the world have accepted physical cleanliness and mental purity as the necessary precaution at least in all stages except the final liberation. Concept of śauca (purity and cleanliness) was necessary component of Dharma and it was included in religious literature for various reasons.

Observance of śauca was the cause of material as well as spiritual progress. Good health was the worldly benefit of it.

### Definitions of śauca:

Br̥haspatismṛti<sup>1</sup>- Avoiding the forbidden food items; keeping in touch with only un-censure persons and sticking to the duties of one's own class. A version to the prohibited food signifies internal purity. Whereas avoiding contacts amount to external purity and avoiding bad psychological impacts. Observing the religious duties included practice of prescribed healthy routine.

According to age Atri<sup>2</sup> purity comprises in the effective stability and management of religious practices as well as practices for cleanliness.

### Types of śauca:

The Yoga system refers to the two main varieties of purity i.e. Internal purity i.e. Ābhyantara śauca and external cleanliness. i.e. Bāhya śauca. Dakṣasmṛti<sup>3</sup> has mentioned these divisions. It is clearly declared that out of these two varieties, the internal purity is more essential and superior. It is related with the purity of emotional sphere or psychological conditions. The most significant guideline by Dakṣa<sup>4</sup> is, "Person reluctant to cleanliness signifies that his mind is defective and he is depressed".

### Significant aspects of śauca:

1. Purity and clarity of intellect-According to Vasiṣṭha and Viṣṇusmṛti<sup>5</sup> it is to be acquired by knowledge.
2. Purity of mind-cittaśuddhi- It is the very purpose of religious activities. It is significant for spiritual .



activities leading to liberation. According to the modern psychology cittaśuddhi i.e. emotional equilibrium is essential for physical and mental health. It leads to the control of glandular secretions resulting in a balance of hormonal levels. It is needed for both prevention and cure of psychosomatic disorders.

3. Physical cleanliness:- It is included significant aspects like daily health routine prescribed by various Smrtis as saučācāra<sup>6</sup>.

#### **Annaśauca or Āhāraśuddhi:**

Purity and cleanliness of food is the major subject matter of Smṛtis. Psychological impact of the psychological status of the own of food is speciality of Indian culture. Dietary habits prescribed by the Smrtis are mostly related with health and hygiene. They provided a major prevention from infectious diseases and digestive disorders. Viṣṇusmṛti<sup>7</sup> regards purity of food as the superior most. Smṛtis were aware of the assumption of *Āyurveda* that *wrong food can cause ill health as it is pointed out by Samvartasmṛti*<sup>8</sup>.

#### **Cleanliness of Garments- Vastraśuddhi :**

Smṛtis advice regarding essentiality for clean garments are related with hygiene. The rules are formulated on two main principles<sup>9</sup> a) The clothes should be clean and well-washed b) One should not use clothes used by others and used previously. The restrictions were necessary for prevention for respiratory diseases, allergic infections, skin diseases etc.

#### **Purification of various substances - Dravyaśuddhi:**

The hints about cleansing different substances are part of external cleanliness. They are directly related to the health and hygiene. Cleansing substance is a major aid to prevent skin infections and infections by food contaminations. They point out the methods and means of purification.

#### **Economical honesty-Arthaśauca:**

Manusmṛti<sup>10</sup> has highlighted Arthaśauca as the sauca of prime importance. Honesty is very much necessary for social purposes. Purity of means to acquire wealth was also the foundations of mental peace. It was prevention against emotional imbalance, guilty consciousness and psycho-somatic disorders.

#### **Special features of means of Purifications :**

##### **Aspects of environment-**

Generally cleaning medium was water, in the form of drinking water, taking bath, washing clothes, washing utensils. It was regarded by Yamasṛti<sup>11</sup>, always auspicious because in natural conditions it is heated by sunrays in day time and at night it is cooled because of winds and constellations. Earth in the form of clay was advised by Smṛtis for cleaning various organs specially the lower genital organs and excreting organs. Smṛtis<sup>12</sup> characterized water and earth as means of external cleanliness.

Being exposed to the sun was the methods to kill germs and insects in the storable grains. The same method was used in the case of killing germs and insects by heating the garments for purification.

Smṛtis have also spoken about the qualities of water required for cleansing and for intake. For instance, according to Manusmṛti<sup>13</sup>, a person seeking purity (*śaucepśu*) should always consider over boiled, frothy water as unworthy for sipping and cleaning of bowels. According to Śaṅkhasmṛti<sup>14</sup> the water for the use of cleansing purpose must not be too overheated on fire, without excessive minerals, without the foam and bubbles.

Fire as a means of cleanliness and purity was greatly recognized by smṛtis. The grains and pulses were fried on fire. The food items prepared by this method were light to digest according to smṛti of Atri<sup>15</sup>. The fire was also used for boiling eatable substances and purifying them by killing germs, worms and insects.



## Superior means of purification- Moral values:

There were means to purify intellect, psyche, digestive system, breath and the complete body. Visnumṛti<sup>16</sup> mentions them as follows. Knowledge, austerity, fire, food, clay, mind, water, anointing with cow dung, sun, death and proper time.

According to Manusmṛti and Viṣṇusmṛti<sup>17</sup>, the learned persons are purified by the forgiving disposition. Those who perform prohibited deeds are purified by charity. Those who conceal the sins are purified by chanting mantras and knowers of Vedas are purified by the austerities.

Vaśiṣṭhasmṛti<sup>18</sup> has explained the yogic process of purification of mind. The suppression of the fluctuations (nirodha) results into enraging the internal vital power. Because of the pressure, the digestive fire is enkindled. The heat of this fire results in the appearance of water as divine nectar. The three principles together cause of purifications of psyche.

### The gradation of purification :

Smṛtis were aware about the limitations of the cleanliness of water and soil. According to them it was primary and external<sup>19</sup>. According to Viṣṇusmṛti<sup>20</sup> limbs are purified by the waters; the mind is purified by truth. the soul clinging to the five elements is purified by the intuition and austerity. The intellect is purified by knowledge.

### Śauca- A value of social significance:

The social significance has been depicted by Smṛtis broadly from following perspectives.

- I) Śauca should be admired from any social strata<sup>21</sup>.
- II) A value, common duty to all-sādhāranadharmā<sup>22</sup>.
- III) Characteristic of Brahminhood<sup>23</sup>.
- IV) Priority for a student<sup>24</sup>.
- V) Śauca was highlighted as Niyama<sup>25</sup>.

### Religious significance of Śauca:

All the religious activities, which were prescribed by the scriptures were supposed to be performed only after the person has purified himself externally by bath and internally by sipping water.

Physical cleanliness, clean place, clean clothes, clean water, pure food were the essential requirement of any religious performances; including rites for fore fathers.

Śauca was the basic qualification of the guest to be honored in religious rites<sup>26</sup>.

Śauca was highlighted as a value, granting long life, preventing decay and death. Unhygienic behaviour was condemned. Hygienic behaviour was praised as purificatory.

### General guidelines for Śauca:

Guidelines provided by Smṛtis are universal.

1. According to Manu<sup>27</sup>, “let him put down his foot purified by his sight, let him drink water purified by straining it by cloth; let him utter the speech purified by truth, and let his entire behaviour be admitted as pure by his mind.
2. The things used by others such as bed, clothes, wife, offspring sandals, garlands, water jars are impure. They should not be used<sup>28</sup>. They are pure and clean only if they are one's own object.
3. The cleaning material such as water and clay should be fetched from the clean and hygienic places<sup>29</sup>.
4. The contact with unhygienic persons should be avoided on each social and religious occasions.

Such suggestions are relevant even today. At all times for everybody the advices of Smṛtis are relevant for their preventive value; in respect of human-health.

### References:

1. Bṛhas. Smṛ.
2. Atri. Sam. 35.



3. Dakṣa. Smṛ. V. 3-4;10.
4. Dakṣa. Smṛ. V. 10.
5. Viṣṇu Smṛ. XXII.93, Manu Smṛ. V. 109., cf. Vaśiṣṭha Smṛ. III.56.
6. Atri Smṛ. 135; Auśauca Smṛ. III.1.
7. Viṣṇu. Smṛ. XXII. 89
8. Samvarta Smṛ. 97
9. Viṣṇu. Smṛ. 64.13-14.
10. Manu. Smṛ. V.105.
11. Yama Smṛ. 96-97.
12. Dakṣa Smṛ. V. 3; Manu Smṛ. V. 132, Yājñā Smṛ. 1.8. 191, Atri. Smṛ. 32
13. Manu Smṛ. II.61.
14. Śaṅkha Smṛ. 10.6
15. Atri Smṛ. 24.
16. Viṣṇu Smṛ. XXII.89.
17. Manu Smṛ. V. 106. Viṣṇu. Smṛ. XXII. 90.
18. Vaśiṣṭha Smṛ. XXV.6.
19. Dakṣa. Smṛ. V. 4.
20. Viṣṇu. Smṛ. XXII.93.
21. Manu Smṛ. II.240.
22. Bṛhas, Smṛ. II.1.489.
23. Atri Smṛ. 33. Dakṣa. Smṛ. V/2
24. Śaṅkha Smṛ. III.1, Manu Smṛ. II.69.
25. Yājñā. Smṛ. III.5.313; Atri Sam. 49.
26. Auśana Smṛ. IV.12.
27. Manu Smṛ. V.1,4.
28. Manu Smṛ. IV.66.
29. Vaśiṣṭha Smṛ. III.36.cf. Ausana. Smṛ. II.11-14, Gobhila Smṛ. II. 45.