INTRODUCTORY:

The Purāṇas are a type of mytho-historical literature which have for many centuries played a unique role in the development of Indian Society and culture. They are now accepted as one of the important sources of Indian history, as "they constitute an important source of the cultural history of India as they throw a flood of light on the various aspects of the life and time. They occupy an intermediate position, broadly speaking between the Vedic age and the period of classical literature. They have been influencing the life of the people throughout the centuries and are valuable as

supplying the materials for the study of such diverse subjects as religion and philosophy, folklore and ethnology, literature and sciences, history and geography, politics and sociology."²

The MKP is no exception to the general nature of the Purānas as stated above. It supplies valuable data on various aspects of ancient Indian culture. In the present thesis the social, religious and mythological material which is predominant in the Purāṇa is critically studied and evaluated. Besides, this Purāṇa is considered as the 'Bible' by the followers of the Devī-cult which is as important an aspect of Hinduism as Vaiṣṇavism and Saivism. The Devī-worship forms a very important section of Indian religion with a great influence on Indian society which can even be seen in present times.

The study of the Purāṇa from the abovementioned three points of view is thus very useful for understanding and evaluating Indian culture as well as modern Indian

Before we start to examine the Purāṇa in details it is necessary to see whether the Purāṇa is a unitary composition or if it's capable of dividing into its later and earlier parts. The detailed study of the Purāṇa shows that it is divisible into five parts, viz.:

(I) Chaps 1-9, in which Mārkaṇḍeya directs Jaimini, Vyāsa's disciple, to four learned and wise Birds living in a cave of the Tindhya mountain, and they solve

---

3 This has already been noticed by Dr. K. M. Banerji (The Mārkaṇḍeya-Purāṇa, BI, Introduction, p.1), Prof. F. E. Pargiter (The Mārkaṇḍeya-Purāṇa, E.Tr., Introduction, pp. IVff) and Dr. V. S. Agrawala (The Mārkaṇḍeya-Purāṇa, Eka Śāṁkr̥nika Adhyayana, Gitā-Sandesā).
to him the four questions about the Mbh, and some allied topics.

(II) Chaps. 10-41, where, though Jaimini asks some further questions and the Birds reply them, the real narrators are Sumati alias Jaḍa and his father.

(III) Chaps. 42-77, where, though the Birds are the nominal speakers, the real interlocutors are Markandeya and his disciple Krauṣṭuki.

(IV) Chaps. 78-90, the DM in which the real interlocutors are sage Sumedhas and King Suratha, and the dialogue is only narrated by Markandeya to Krauṣṭuki.

(V) Chaps. 91-133, where Markandeya and Krauṣṭuki resume their dialogue from chap. 77.

The concluding 134th chapter is a necessary corollary to the first part of the MKP.

It has already been concluded by F. E. Pargiter that only the third and fifth of these parts constituted the original MKP and the first and second parts and the DM were composed afterwards and then added to Purāṇa
proper. Over and above his arguments the following points also tend to supplement his view as regards the first, second, third and fifth parts:

The first and second parts (i.e. first forty-one chapters) although they make some reference to Markandeya, are related by the Birds to whom Jaimini was directed by Markandeya. But actually, they are neither the words nor a report of the words of Markandeya. While in third (Chaps. 42-71) and fifth (Chaps. 81-133) parts though the Birds are relating, they are giving a report of what Markandeya once related to his disciple Krauštuki. Moreover, the proper topics of the Purāṇas viz. sarga, pratisarga etc. start here only. Obviously it is clear that the first and second parts form a separate section added to the Markandeya-Krauśtuki dialogue (i.e. the third and fifth parts) which formed probably the original MKP.

Furthermore the considerations of language and style of the above-mentioned sections strengthen the

---

4 For his arguments vide The Markandeya-Purāṇa, E.Tr., Introduction, pp. iv-viii. Dr. R. Bhandarkar does not approve of the existence of the DM as independent of the MKP; vide his article on "the Date of the MKP", JBBRAS, Vol. XXIII, pp. 73ff.
above view, e.g. the first and second parts abound in many 'compounds'\textsuperscript{5} and 'rupakas',\textsuperscript{6} which are comparatively few in the third and fifth parts.

\textbf{DATE:}

Amongst the eighteen Mahā-Purāṇas the MKP is probably one of the oldest works of the whole Purāṇa literature.\textsuperscript{7} The problem of its date has already been discussed by certain eminent scholars like H. H. Wilson, F. E. Pargiter, Dr. R. C. Hazra and others, and except H. H. Wilson, almost all of them are agreed at least to assign it to a period of 7th century A.D. or even earlier. There are, however, minor differences in the assignment of dates to certain chapters of the present Purāṇa and they are noted here.

\textsuperscript{5} A few samples of compounds are noted here, viz. vismayotphullalocanah (1.23 etc.), mithonis-pāḍya-vastuṣu (2.7), kṣerakṣatajabibhatsam (2.9), kopa-marṣavivrttakṣah (2.11), ātāmravaktranayanam (2.14), nirvāṇāṁgāravaraçasam (2.24).

\textsuperscript{6} 1.10-11; 1.43; 3.58ff; 16.9\textsuperscript{cd} -11; 35.6ff etc.

\textsuperscript{7} Winternitz M., History of Indian Literature, Vol.I, p.559; vide Hazra R.C., Studies in the Puranic Records on Hindu Rites and Customs, p.8; Majumdar R.C. and Pusalkar A.D. (Ed.), The Classical Age, p.293.
It was H. H. Wilson who for the first time tried to fix the date of the MKP. He opines that the Purāṇa is later than the Mbh but it is anterior to the Brahma, Padma and Nāradīya Purāṇas and conjectures that it may be placed in the 9th or 10th century A.D. But this date was challenged by F. E. Pargiter who assigned three different periods to three layers of the MKP. Thus according to him the DM (chaps. 78-90), the latest part of the MKP was certainly complete in the 9th century and very probably in the 5th or 6th century A.D. The third (chaps. 42-77) and fifth parts (chaps. 91-133) which constituted the original Purāṇa, were very probably in existence in the 3rd century A.D. and perhaps even earlier; and the first part (chaps. 1-9) and the second part (chaps. 10-42) were composed between these two periods.

Dr. R. C. Hazra remarkably agrees with F. E. Pargiter as he assigns chaps. 12-15 and 25-32, except chap. 30.8ff to 3rd century A.D. and chap. 30.8ff to the latter half of the 5th century A.D. or even earlier.

8 The Viṣṇu-Purāṇa, E.Tr., Preface, p. lviii.
10 Studies in the Purānic Records on Hindu Rites and Customs, pp. 8-12.
the earlier portion of the MKP (i.e. chaps. 42-77 and 91-133) and the DM portion (chaps. 78-90) between 200 A.D. to 500 A.D. 10 MM. Dr. P. V. Kane places the MKP between 300 A.D. and 600 A.D. 12 M. A. Mahendale also assigns it to a period earlier than 7th century A.D. 13 Durgashankar Shastri puts it in the 7th century A.D. D. R. Bhandarkar also asserts that the MKP in its recast form was in existence long before 608 A.D. 14

From the foregoing brief survey of the date of the MKP it is quite clear (as already noted above) that inspite of the minor individual differences about the probable dates of the three different layers of the MKP, all the scholars agree at least in assigning the present Purana to a period of 7th century A.D. or even earlier.

It may be noted here that the considerations of following two some of the religious points in the MKP also tend to

12 HDS, Vol.IV, Chronological Table, p. X.
14 Vide his article on "The Date of The Markandeya-Purana", JEBRAS, Vol.XXIII, pp. 73ff.
support the above view of assigning the MEP to the beginning centuries of the Christian era, e.g., the Purāṇa alludes to the concept of vyūha (4.43ff) which is datable to the second century A.D. Further it also alludes to Dattātreya-worship which can not have originated later than the first centuries of the Christian era.16

**HOME:**

The problem of the place of origin of the MKP has already been discussed by F.E. Pargiter and MM. Dr. H. P. Shastri. Their views are as follows.:-

F. E. Pargiter opines that chaps. 1-77 and 91-133 of the MKP plainly emanated from western India in the middle portion of the Narmadā and Tapty valleys whereas the DM originated at Māndhātā17 on the Narmadā.18 V. R. R.

15 For details see under Viṣṇu, Chap.IV, Sec.V.
17 Its another name is Māhiṣmatī and it was the capital of South Avantī. It is situated on the river Narmadā between the Vindhya and Ṛkṣa mountains; for details vide Law B.C., Historical Geography of Ancient India, p.322.
Dikshitar also puts forward a similar view with reference to the home of the chaps. 1-77 and 91-133.19

MM. Dr. H. P. Shastri positively asserts that the MKP was certainly written in the Vindhyar regions where the Birds - Opening narrators of the MKP - used to live and where the heroes of Candra or DM, King Suratha and the Vaisya Samadhi worshipped. Durga in the Autumn season on the banks of Narmada.20 It may be noted here that the latter point is not strictly warranted by the textual evidence, since the DM nowhere specifically speaks of the King and the Vaisya to have worshipped the Devi on the banks of Narmada. It merely states that both of them worshipped an earthen image of the Devi (Amba) on the sandy banks of a river (90.6). 21


20 A Descriptive catalogue of Sanskrit MSS in the collections & the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Vol.V, (Purâna MSS), Preface, p. CXIV.

21 For details see under the Devi-worship, Chap.III, Sec. I.
THE MKP AS A PURĀNA, ITS PLACE ETC.:  

A brief synopsis of the MKP is given in Appendix I of the present thesis. Let us now see how far the MKP fulfills the classical Pañca-Lakśaṇa definition of the Purāṇas. According to the classical definition, a Purāṇa is supposed to deal with five topics (Pañcalakśaṇa), viz. (1) Sarga or creation of the universe; (2) pratisarga or recreation after destruction; (3) vamsa or genealogy; (4) manvantara or the great periods of time with Manu as the primal ancestor; and (5) vamsānucarita or the history of the dynasties, both solar and lunar. But the texts that have come down to us under the title Purāṇa hardly confirm to this definition since they contain either something more or something less than the limitations set by it. It is happy to note that the MKP fulfills these Pañca-Lakśaṇas. For example, the sarga is dealt with in chaps. 42-44; the pratisarga in ch. 45-49; the materials regarding the vamsa in chap. 50. The chgs. 50, 58-64, 66

22 cf. Sargac ca pratisargac ca vamdo manvantaranic ca / vamsanucaritam caiva puranam panchalaksanam // MKP 134,13. The same definition is also found in other purāṇas, e.g. KP 1.1.12; BrP 1.1.37-38 etc. Amarasimha (5th century A.D.) says 'puranam pañca-lakṣaṇam', Amaṛkosa, 1.6.6.
66, 77, 91-97 deal with the manvantara and insert stories about the birth of the Manus. The vamsanucarita is dealt with in chs. 98; 108-133.

There are also chapters on the bhuvanakosavarnama (61-57). The chapter 55 called Kurmanivesa contains a list of countries and people of India arranged according to the position of the Bharatavarsa conceived as a tortoise looking eastwards. "This conception fits well with our present knowledge of the topography of India."23 This arrangement is based on earlier astronomical works like those of *Pāṇḍya* and *Varahamihira*.24

The Purana contains reference to only the Vaisala dynasty that descended from Svayambhuva Manu's son Diśta. The chief princess of it were Vatsapri, Khanitra, Khaninetra, Karandhama, Avikṣit, and Marutta, (chaps. 140-133) and Rājayavardhana (chaps. 106-107). This dynasty is also given by

23 Law B.C., Historical Geography of Ancient India, Introduction, p.2.
24 Vide Appendix III, fn. 1.
six other Purāṇas viz. BrP 3.61.3-18 & 8.35.7; VP 8.3-22; LP 1.16.53; ViSP 4.1.15-19; GP 1.138.5-13; and BGP 9.2.23-26). The MKP narrates at length the doings of these kings but only down to Rājavarman.26

Besides the traditional topics of the Purāṇa, the MKP contains a good deal of information on rājadharma (Chap. 24), varṇasramadharma (chap. 27), sadācāra (chap. 31), vārja-vārjya (chap. 32), śraddha (chaps. 27-30). It is thus a rich mine of dharmaśāstra matters, it sheds a flood of light on_

25 For details vide Pargiter F.E., AIHT, pp. 96-97.

26 MKP, chaps. 106-107, 110-133.
development of religious beliefs and practices in the ancient, medieval and modern India. It is needless to say that these topics are also dealt with in other Purāṇas also.²⁷

The Dharma-śāstra material of the MKP has been drawn upon by later Dharma-śāstra writers like Aparārka in his commentary on the YS, Ballālasena in his Adbhutasāgara, and Dēnasāgara, Devanabhāṭṭa in his Smṛti-candrikā, Hemāddri in his caturvargacintāmanī, and Śrīdatta Upādhyāya in his Kṛtyācāra and others.²⁸

It may be noted that some of the verses of the MKP regarding social, religious and mythological data etc. are either identical and verbatim or approximate to those of the MBh, Rām, BG, Pāraskara and certain other Grhya-sūtras, VDS, CAG, YS, Śrāddha-sūtra of Katyāyana etc. It also appears that in certain places the views of the MKP are similar to those of some of the Grhya-sūtras, the Dharma-śāstras or the Smṛtis. This has been shown in the course

²⁷ For the concordance of the contents of different Purāṇas, vide Tandan Yashpal, A concordance of Purāṇa-contents; MM. Dr. P.V.Kane has also given a table showing which Dharma-śāstra topics are dealt with in which Purāṇa, Op.Cit., Vol.I, pp.164ff.

Incidentally the classificatory nomenclature of the Purāṇas may be briefly alluded to. The Mahā-Purāṇas have been subdivided into sattvika, rājasa and tāmasa according to their preferential treatment to Viṣṇu, Siva and other deities. Thus in the MP 53.68-69, the Purāṇas glorifying Hari are styled as sattvika, those glorifying Brahma as rājasa and those glorifying Agni and Siva both as tāmasa, whereas those glorifying Sarasvatī and manes as sākārṇa.

The PP-distribution is as under:

(1) Sattvika - Viṣṇu, Naradiya, Bhāgavata, Garuḍa, Padma and Varāha;

(2) Tāmasa - Mātsya, Kūrma, Liṅga, Siva, Agni and Skanda;

(3) Rājasa - Bhrahmāṇḍa, Brahmavaivarta, Markandeya, Brahma, Vāmana and Bhāviṣya.

29 Satvikeṣu purāṇesu māhātmyamādhikam hareḥ / rājaseṣu ca māhātmyamādhikam brahmaṇo viduḥ // Tadvadagnes' ca māhātmyam tāmaseṣu śivasya ca / sākārṇesu sarasvatyāḥ pitrām ca nigadyate // MP 53.68-69.

30 Mātsyam kaurmam tathā laṅgam saivaṃ skāndam tathaiva ca // Āgneyam ca saḍeṭāni tāmasāni nōbodha me / Vaishnavoḥ naradiyam ca tathā bhāgavatam subham // Garuḍam ca tathā padmaṃ varāham subhadarsane / sātyikāni purāṇāni vijñeyāni subhāni vai // Bhrahmāṇḍam brahmavaivartaṃ markandeyam tathaiva ca / bhāviṣyam vāmanam brahmaṃ rājasāni nibodha me // PP, Uttarakhanda, 263.81-84.
The SKP enumerates ten Purāṇas as describing the greatness of Śiva, four of Brahmā and two each of Devi and Hari.31

MM. Dr. Haraprasad Shastri divides the eighteen Mahā-Purāṇas into six groups according to their character:

1. Encyclopaedia of literature: Garuḍa, Agni, Nārada;
2. Tīrtha and Vrata: Skanda, Padma and Bhavisya;
3. With two revisions apparent: Brahma, Bhāgavata and Brahmavaivarta;
4. Historical: Brahmāṇḍa, lost Vāyu and Viṣṇu.
5. Sectarian: Linga, Vāmana and Mārkandeya;
6. Old Purāṇas revised out of existence: Varāha, Kurma and Matsya.32

It may be noted here that the MKP is comparatively free from the sectarian element which so often predominates in the other Purāṇas. Among the deities, Indra and

31 Astādasapurāṇesu daśabhīr giyate śivah / caturbhīḥ bhāgavāḥ brahmā dvabhīyām devi tathā hariḥ // SKP; Kedārakaṁda, 1.

32 The Mahā-Purāṇas, JBOBS, XIV, pp.330-337.
Brahma are mentioned oftest; next stand Visnu and Siva; then Dattatreya, Sun and Agni; and last Dharma and others. Indra is mentioned most often in the first and fifth parts, and Brahma in the third and fifth parts; while Visnu and Siva do not show any particular preponderance. Dattatreya is mentioned in second section. If the Devi-Mahatmya is put aside, the Sun is the deity that receives the most special adoration, and his story is related twice, first briefly in chaps. 74 and 75 and afterwards with fullness in chaps. 99-107. To this may be added the cognate worship of Agni in chaps. 96 and 97.

From the above it would be quite clear that the MKP occupies an important place in the Puranic literature and it plays an important role in the study of ancient Indian culture from several points of view.