Chapter XVII

PURANIC LITERATURE

The Srauta practices gradually developed into the Smarta religion till the Puranas became its authority. The Puranas are an ancient literature. Some even hold the view that they are as old as the Vedas and came to be recognised as the Fifth Veda as the Atharvaveda was admitted as the Fourth. In fact the Atharvaveda notes the Purana and it was the Chandogya that recognised the Purana as the Fifth Veda. However, it is definite that the Puranas developed into an independent literature by the time of the Sutras.

Originally, the Puranas dealt with the ancient history, based upon the Gathas and the Harasamsis (ballads and heralds). According to the Lexicographer, Amarasimha, a Purana possesses five Laksanas. But, gradually the Puranas were revised and enlarged several times till a two-fold classification of the Puranas as the Mahapuranas and Upapuranas became necessary. The Mahapurana possesses ten whereas the Upapurana possesses only five as above. Dr. Haer has successfully shown how different

3. Chandogya, VII, 1, 2.
6. Sargasa Pratishargasa Vamco Narmantarana
   Vancanadaritan, Caya puranas Pancalaksanas.
7. The ten characteristics are: (1) creation, (2) details of devotees; (3) duties of ancient beings, protection of devotees;
   (4) ages of Manu, (5) dynasties of kings and rulers; (6) careers of individuals; (8) dissolution of the world; (9) cause of
   creation, (10) Brahma.
   Mr. H.P. Sastri quoted by A.D. Pushkari, op. cit.,
   P. xlvii, Note 73.
sections dealing with orthodox rites and customs were added to the different puranas at widely different periods.

Several factors were responsible for this revision and enlargement: (1) it is already pointed out that Brahmanism, with a view to arrest the progress of the non-Vedic religions, especially Buddhism, was prepared to reconcile with Bhagavatism represented by the sectarian religions of Vaishnavism and Saivism. These two were originally non-Vedic and anti-Brahmanical. It was therefore necessary for Brahmanism to bring the doctrines and practices of Bhagavatism within the pale of orthodoxy by combining them with a respect for Vedic rituals, customs and beliefs especially the orthodox ideas of caste and order.

(2) During the centuries that immediately preceded and followed the Christian era, there was a steady influx of foreigners — Greeks, Parthians, Sakas, Kshatragas, etc. — into the country, creating a two-fold problem. In the first place the caste system that was disturbed by the influx was to be reorganized and revitalized, and secondly the foreigners must be weaned away from the attraction of Buddhism and be absorbed into the Hindu fold. In such circumstances the puranas were rendered into a popular literature, reconciling the different or divergent elements in the society and religion and giving allowance to the popular beliefs and practices. The Visnupurana makes Vyasa declare

1. Puranic Records on Hindu Rites and Customs, Chs. II & IV.
2. Vedic Sutras, PP. 202-203.
that the Sudras and women are blessed in the Kali Age because they get immense merit by a little effort of reading or listening to the Puranas. The Devibhagavatam states that women, Sudras and mean-born Dwajas are not eligible for Vedic studies and for them the Puranas were written.

Dr. Hazra has indicated two different stages in the growth of the Puranas. In the first stage between the 3rd and the 6th centuries A.D., "the Purana dealt only with those topics on Hindu rites and customs which formed the subject of matter of the early sattris, like those of Manu and Kajnavliya. In the next stage from about the 6th century A.D., they dealt with new topics relating to gifts, glorification of holy places, Vrata (vow), puja (popular worship), consecration of images, sacrifices to the planets and their appeasement", etc. As a result not only the number of Puranas increased but the range of them became encyclopedic. Mintermitz was correct in remarking that the Puranas

3. Puranic Records on Hindu Rites and Customs, Ch. IV & IV.
4. The Samhita Chapters of the Puranas include the following:

   Agni
   Abhika
   Asauca
   Asrama Dharma
   Bhaveyabaksha
   Brahmana
   Dana
   Dvaivyasuddhi
   Dvina-Pravara
   Kalisvarupa
   Kalivarjya
   Karna
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"afford us far greater insight into all aspects and phases of Hinduism — its mythology, its idol-worship, its theism and pantheism, its love of god, its philosophy and its superstitions, its festivals and ceremonies, and its ethics, than any other works! The knowledge of the Vedas is held incomplete without a thorough knowledge of the Puranas. Gradually the Puranas come to be extolled as older and by implication superior to even the Vedas. The Vayupurana says that "of all the Sastras, the Purana is the first having been originated in the memory of Brahma; afterwards, the Vedas emanated from his face." Acarya Jankara recognised the authority of the Puranas in his Brahma-sutra. In his Sri Bhasya, Ramakusumya declared: "The incontrovertible fact is as follows: The Lord who is known from the Vedanta Texts — recognising that the Vedas are difficult to fathom by all beings other than himself, with a view to enable his devotees to grasp the true meaning of the Vedas, himself composed the Pancaratra Sastra". In a short time the Puranas became such an incontrovertible authority that those who questioned them were condemned. The Naradapurana declares "All the Vedas always rest on the Puranas. — the person who looks on the Puranas in any other light would be born as a lower animal".

1. Winternitz, History of Indian Literature, I, P. 529.
4. I, iii, 22.
Essence of Puranic Religion

The Puranas hold the four purusarthas — Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksa — as the aims of life. In the scheme of life's eternal values (purusarthas), Dharma occupies premier and basic place. Dharma may simply be understood as religion. It includes the rules and regulations for individual well-being and social harmony as well as for the achievement of happiness in the other world and for reaching the final goal, Moksa. Artha and Kama—acquisition of wealth and satisfaction of lust—which are aims purely mundane are also to be achieved through Dharma or subject to the conditions prescribed by religion. The concept of Karsa, transmigration of soul, sin and punishment and merit and reward are fundamental to the Puranic religion. The Puranas do not overlook Brahmaical rituals but concentrate mainly on the popular religion, which consists mainly of Vratas, pilgrimages to Tirthas, good acts such as gifts to Brahmans and temples and finally devotion to a personal god, Siva or Vishnu or Krama. A major portion of each purana is therefore devoted to the description of the above.

Another important feature the puranic system is the importance it attached to the caste system. "The scheme of Varna and Asrama dharmas, which the Puranas advocate is based upon the

2. It is laid down that one gets merit even by reciting or by listening to the puranases. The Andhra M.B.R. says that by listening to the M.B.R. one gets as much merit as by giving one hundred good cows with gold-ornamented horns to learned Brahmans. Andhra M.B.R. Avatarika, Verse
duties of the individuals of a class and has as its aim the efficiency, welfare, smooth working and material and spiritual perfection of the society as a whole.

The violation of the puranic injunctions would lead to sin and the consequent punishment in hell. But there is provision for the expiation of sin with penance and with vows or gifts.

According to the quality and degree of merit one acquires he enjoys happiness in Sarga and be born in a higher stage of life till he attains final deliverance or Moksha.

Epic-Puranic Literature in Andhra

Andhradesa was in contact with the puranic literature from very early times. It is noted above that the great Andhra Sutra-kara, Apastamba, not only mentions puranas but also recognised them as authority on religion. The Basil inscription of Salasri compares Gautami-devta with great puranic heroes like Rama, Kesava, Arjuna, Bhishma, Bhrigu, Nakula, Sahadeva, Yajnavalkya, etc., and Ambarisa. The Saptasati tells us that the people in the Dakam were having in their houses pictures or paintings, depicting the fidelity of Laksmana and the chastity of Sita. It contains references to Samudramathana, Balabha and Aruna,

1. Col. Htrv., IV, P. 258
2. K.H.R.S., V, 2, P. 357.
3. Ibid., I, I, P. 417.
4. Vide Supra, P. 265.
5. Ladd's List No. 123.
7. Ibid., I, 43; II, 17; III, 51; IV, 25; IV, 96.
8. Ibid., I, 88.
Yasoda-Krśna and Gopikas, the marriage between Siva and Parvati,  
Dakṣa and to Vasana-Trivikrama. Thus the evidence of the Cappasati points to the popularity of the Bhagavata puraṇa in the  
Dekkan. The erotic elements of the Krśna saga, which forms the  
kernel of the Bhagavata and the amorous adventures of Krśna  
with Gopikas are attributed to the influence of the pastoral and  
nomadic cultural habits of the Abhiras on the Vasudeva cult.  
The Abhiras were a powerful tribe in the Satavahana empire and  
later they had been in alliance with the Ikṣvaku of Vijayarūpa.  
Curiously, one of the officers of Abhira Vasusena installed the  
image of Astabhja-Narayana in a temple at Vijaya-puri during the  
reign of Ikṣvaku Bhūvala Kantamala. According to the Bhagavata  
Puraṇa, Dakṣa after he was revived to life, conceived Viṣṇu as  
Asthabhja-Narayana.

From about the beginning of the Eastern Calukyan period,

1. Ibid., II, 12; II, 14; VII, 60.  
2. Ibid., I, 63.  
3. Ibid., V, 43.  
4. Ibid., V, 6; V, 12; V, 25.  
we frequently hear about the Itihases, Puranas, and Agamas in the
inscriptions. Mannaya, the court poet of Rajaraja Nareendra
(11th century A.D.) claims to have possessed knowledge of the
Brahmanda and many other Puranas whereas Rajaraja himself had
an interest in the Saiva or Isvara Agamas. It was in the time
of these two that the Epics and Puranas came to be translated
into Telugu, the first being the Mahabharata by Mannaya himself.

The popularity of the Puranas is attested by the sculptures
found in the caves of Undavalli and Mogalrajapuram that belong to
the Vaisakamad and early Eastern Calukyan periods.

Vrataas - Tirthas - Tanas

Vrataas:

From inscriptions we learn that the Puranic theism was
practised in Andhra from early times. The Nanaghat inscription
of Naganita marks a landmark in the history of the development
of religion in the Deccan and South India. It furnishes the
first recorded evidence to the compromise between Vedic ritual-
ism and Puranic theism. The aim of the inscription was mainly

1. The following inscriptions mention the Puranas & Itihases:
   Cipurupalli plates of Visnuvardhana I, [L.], XX, PP. 15-18.
   Bidnapuru grant of Jayasimha I, [L.], XVIII, PP. 55-62.
   Pallivada grant of Visnuvardhana II, [L.], VII, PP. 31-92.
   Satuluru grant of Vijayaditya III, mentions 100 Brahmins
   well versed in the Puranas and Itihases, [L.], 18, 7,
   PP. 101-105.
   Hayur inscription of Pallava Narasimhavarman, [L.], XIX,
   PP. 80-97.
   Provision was made for instruction in the Puranas.
   Pittapuram inscription of Viracoda, [L.], 7, PP. 70-100.
2. Vide supra, 277.
to proclaim the sacrifices performed by Satakarni I and the Dakasinas he gave on those occasions. But the inscription begins with the invocation of the Vedic gods Indra along with the non-Vedic gods like Dharma, Sankarsana and Vasudeva. Besides, Eganika gives an account of the austerities in which she was interested. She described herself as: MANDOPAVASINVA, ORNATA-PASA, CAHITA BRAHMACARYATA and DINGHA VRATA YAJNA SAUCANDANIYA. The term Bigha Vrata may hint at the existence of Vratas spread over a number of days. Another illustrious lady of the Satavahanan dynasty, Gunatmi Balsari calls herself as TAPO DHA MA UYARTHAT UPAVASA TATPARAYATA and by observing such austerities, he tells us that she deserved the title Rajasmi.

Such austerities like Upavasa and Vrata are not a new development in the country. The Brahmanical literature especially the Satapatha Brahmana refers to Upavasa as preparatory to sacrifices and the period of such Upavasa was known as the Days of Vrata. It is found out by Tylor that fasting was observed in all primitive cultures and there was a belief in the mystic connection between the fasting and communion with gods. Even the Satapatha Brahmana says that during the period of Upavasa (Upa = near; Vasa = dwell) the gods dwell with the intending sacrificer. The Buddhists and Jains developed fasting into the Upasatva and Posa ceremony. Taking advantage of its universal nature, Upavasa was made the central feature of the puranic neo-Hinduism by its leaders.

3. SATAPATHA BRAHMANA, 1, 1, 1, 8.
4. Tylor, Primitive Culture, II, Ch. XVIII, p. 410 ff.
5. SATAPATHA BRAHMANA, 1, 1, 1, 7.
6. raila MUK, Early Buddhist Monachism, pp. 57-63.
The Septasati refers to several Vrata, the most important appears to be Sabalavrata, which consisted of entering fire and water alternately. The Septasati mentions Phalgunotsava and the Vrata in which gifts were distributed to the whole village.

From the Eastern Calukyan inscriptions we hear about Karpati- vrat. Its performer was known as Karpatika. The Vrata involved continuous celibacy, truth-speaking, purity, liberality, forbearance and kindness. The Kalatiya inscriptions introduce to us many more Vratas: Lakshinaraavan, Jalasayana, Sanyasaya, Ananta, Arundhatiyam, Asitedvadi and Sitadvadasi. The Caurivrata was celebrated on the full moon-day in the month of Yesta. Gradually the number of Vratas increased and Hemadri in his Vratahanda deals with more than 1000 Vratas.

A Vrata comprehends several austerities such as Amna, Upavasa, and Brahmacarya besides distribution of gifts, feeding Brahmans and the worship of a deity -- Visnu, Siva, Laksmi or Durga. There were Vratas to be performed on one day, or a fort- night, a month, a season or even a year. The puranas enjoin on lavish expenditure on the occasions of Vratas. In short the

2. Ibid. IV, 63.
3. Ibid. IV, 22.
7. Corpus of Telengana Inscriptions, No. 50.
8. Salaka, IV, No. 7403.
10. Ibid. V, II, P. 56.
11. Ibid. P. 40.
Wata was looked upon as a sacred vow, a code of conduct to be observed by a person as a member of a community or as an individual. The vratas can be offered even by Brahmans and women.

The aim of the bulk of the Vrataas is to secure some object in this world or some time in the next world or both. Have remarks that the Vrataas "breathe a frankly materialistic attitude; they are meant to appeal to the ordinary human cravings that rule the whole world".

**Tirthas:**

Another important feature of the puranic theism is pilgrimage to sacred places -- Tirthas and Ksetras -- and making gifts to Brahmans and religious institutions such as temples. Each of the Puranas devotes large sections to the description of the holiness of the Tirthas and the efficacy of the Damas.

The practice of visiting Tirthas and making gifts did not suddenly spring up in the Puranas. It has been noted in above chapters that the rich and the poor alike visited the Buddhist and Jaina Tirthas and made gifts according to their respective means. Such popular old practices were successfully grafted to the neo-Hinduism by the Puranic literature. Though the context

1. Ibid. I, 1, P. 22.
2. Ibid. V, 1, P. 32.
3. Ibid. P. 55.
4. The Vanaparva of Mahabharata states that one does not secure these rewards even by performing solemn sacrifices in which fees paid to priests are large as one secures by pilgrimages to holy places.
5. Ibid. I, 1, P. 412. Hopkins remarks "pilgrimage is made to pool and plain, to mountain, tree and river." The Religions of India, P. 372.
changed the practices remained the same, but with a definite promise of happiness in the other world or Swarga. More frequently than not, the places also remained almost the same. It was an ingenious blow delivered by the puranic theism at its rivals especially Buddhism.

1 Tirthas in the West: The Nasik inscription of Usavadata, the Ksharatra, gives a list of the Tirthas in Western Daksina. It was issued at the beginning of the Christian era and says that the Ksharatra visited holy rivers such as Durvasa, Tapi, Damana, Dahanuka and Nentras like Prabhasa, Naruksheta, Dasapura, Govardhana, Suvroshmukhi, Surapaka, and Nanatirtha. At these places he built Catussalas; opened water-sheds (Udapas); planted gardens; dug tanks; distributed gold among Brahmins; gifted cows and villages to and married a few of the Brahmins.

Commenting on these pious deeds of Usavadata, K. Ciplachari is inclined to conclude that "Brahmanism was more flourishing outside the Satavahana dominions, viz. Gujarat, Kathiawan, Rajputana and Ujjain". But this conclusion cannot be accepted. It may be pointed out: (1) Usavadata visited the above Tirthas because they were within the Kshatrapa dominions. This does not mean that there were no Tirthas outside the Kshatrapa empire. (2) The regions in which the above Tirthas were located, originally formed parts of the Satavahana empire. They were conquered by Nahapana, the father-in-law and master of Usavadata, or his immediate predecessor, i.e. not long before the pious deeds of

2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Bibl. p. 123
Usavadata. (3) It cannot be assumed that the above places became Tirthas all of a sudden, on their occupation by the Ksatrapas. It is reasonable to assume that they were old sacred places attracting pious pilgrims over a long period, even under the Satavahanas.
(4) The gifts recorded by the inscription no doubt reveal the piety and religiosity of the Ksatrapa prince. At the same time they might reveal the political sagacity and statesmanship as well of the Ksatrapa rulers. Being foreign conquerors they were looked down upon by the orthodox natives as Meccans and even as the enemies of the native religions. It was therefore necessary for the Ksatrapa conquerors to assuage the fears of the powerful Brahmin community and conciliate them in order to consolidate their own rule. It might be with that purpose Usavadata lavished patronage on the Brahmins, the recognised leaders of the community in religious matters. The records of Usavadata may be taken therefore to have an advertisement value. The Satavahanas required no such advertisement as their overt faith in Brahmins was too well known. Satavahana I, the Daksinapathapati was a Brahman.
There is no evidence to show that his successors patronised any other religion other than Brahmanism. Gautamiputra was Brahman. He too deserved the title Daksinapathapati. Despite the fact that no records of his gifts to Brahmins are so far available his title Dvijavakrautumbavivechana is sufficient to convince us

1. Usaghat Inscription, op. cit.
2. op. cit.
3. His conquests give us the impression that the entire Daksinapatha was included in his empire. The Nasik inscription says that his horses drank water from the three oceans.
4. Ibid.
about the bounteous patronage he bestowed upon Brahmanism. It is not unreasonable to suppose that the Satavahanas deemed the patronage of Brahmanism as part of their duty as kings and followed the same policy throughout their empire, i.e. Devasina-patish which included Andhradesa.

The inscriptions of Usavadata only indicate the lines on which the neo-Hinduism was developing in the Deccan. His devotional acts "were typical of practical observance of the puranic teachings. It may be assumed that ordinary people practised similar acts of religious merit on a smaller scale according to their means". One interesting feature about the gifts is that they were all made to Brahmins but not to any religious institution. It may be inferred from this that temple worship did not yet become popular in the Deccan. The Tirthas that Usavadata visited were those that were extolled by the Puranas and the gifts he made were included in the Mahadasa of the Puranas.

Kestras in Andhra: The early Hindu Tirthas of Andhra were almost the same as the renowned Buddhist Centres. By the side of Sri-parvata-Nagarjunakonda, was developed a great Hindu Ksetra with

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1. G.V. Rao, R.H.D., I, P. 141.
2. Tatasuwarakas gauchha jamadagnya masevitam

Kamatirths narah sahita Vindhyat bahusuvarama.
M.B.L., III, 25, 42.

3. Kanyasa tala haga dasa ratha mali grha

Kanyasa kapiladhamu mahesananivaidasa.
Agnipurana, 239, V. 23.
Kul.R&.a, II, 2, P. 369.
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numerous temples dedicated to Siva, Mahasena and Narayana. Yele-
waras, on the northern bank of the river Krishna, just opposite to
Sriparvata, grew up into another important Hindu Ksetra. Tala-
mra, modern Alampur in the Mahaboobnagar district on the river Tun-
ghadra, began to attract pious Hindu pilgrims. A short time after-
wards, under the Pallava-Salankayana hegemony, the Pancaramos
including Amaravati became famous Saivite Tirthas. Srisailam
(Kurnool district) also appeared at the same time. The Vanaprava
of the Mahabharata describes the holiness of Srisailam in unequi-
vocal terms: "At Sriparvata on the Srisailam hill, the resplendent
Lord Siva abides with his consort Parvati, immersed in divine
delight. Brahma also stays there along with other gods. One
bath in the sacred lake with purity and self-control of mind, has
the same efficacy as the performance of an Asvamedha sacrifice.
Not only the pilgrim is benefited, but his entire race is
liberated."

1. There are some of the Hindu temples found at VijayapurS, the
   capital of the Ikavakus:
   Pla. LIV, A; LIV, H; LV, E & C.
   Temple of Athangirswamy: E.I., XVI, PP. 24-27.
   Temple of Svaradeva: E.I., XXXIII, PP. 147-149.
   Temple of Astabhujavayana: E.I., XXXIV, PP. 197-199.
5. The oldest temple at Srisailam is assigned to the 7th or 8th
century A.D. It bears striking influence of the Pallava-Western
Calukyan architectural features. H. Ramesa, Temples of
6. H. Ramesa, Temples and Legends of Andra Pradesh, Ch. I.
From about the 9th century, we come across in the inscriptions of Andhra, great Tirthas of all India importance such as Banaras, Gaya, Prayaga and Kuruksetra. Srisailam and its four gateways, the most important being Alampur and Tirupantakam are included. In one of the Kakatiya inscriptions mention is made of Hidimbatirtham and Samvartakeswaram. Gradually the seven sacred cities of India and Kedara, Badari and Satva or Ramakrishna became the most important places of pilgrimage for the Hindu. Especially, Banaras and Gaya were the places where the Sages are pleased.

Holy places of local importance included the Sama Aramas, Gebrolu, Pithapuram, Vijayawada, Bapatla, Konidena, Sambasalam, Srikurma, Agastyeswaram, and Vemulavada. Tirupati also became an important place of pilgrimage.

At the holy places, the pious pilgrim distributed gold with the hope of getting merit. For the Hindu the Tirthas became so

1. Tel. Ins., II, PP. 21, 23, 26, 30 etc.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., I, PP. 12-17. From the Siddhawara Caritra of Kusa Sarasvappal, it is learnt that Hidimbabatirtham was very near Amakonda, the early capital of the Kakatiyas. Siddhawara Caritra, P. 23.
4. Anuasanaaparga says that in Gaya a man is purified of the sin of three murders of Brahmans if he visits the Asmapra or the Pratishala.
5. Ibid., I, 1, P. 413.
6. Ibid., II, P. 67.
7. Ibid., VI, No. 620.
8. Ibid., VI, Nos. 692-1215.
9. Ibid., V, Nos. 1150-1341.
10. Tel. Ins., II, PP. 77-82.
11. Ibid., I, PP. 116 and 120.
12. Ibid., II, P. 97.
important that one need not actually visit them; even hearing an account of the Tirtha will expiate him of all sins.

Besides the distribution of gold at Tirthas, the inscriptions of the period mention different gifts to Brahmins and religious institutions. Santamula, the founder of the Ikshvaku dynasty is said to have given away crores of gold (coins), thousands of cows and ploughs. It is not possible to say whether these were given in connection with the Vajapoya, Agnistoma and Asvamedha performed by him. As the ploughs and cows were associated with the gold, they might have been given with a view to promote and encourage agriculture in the kingdom. From the time of his grandson, Bhuvana, gifts to temples became a common feature. Perpetual gifts in land, in villages and even in money were instituted. It is strange that during the Ikshvaku period we rarely come across gifts to Brahmins. Since the beginning of the Pallava period, gifts to Brahmins once again became popular. The Pallava inscriptions record gifts mostly to Brahmins and occasionally to temples. The Visnukundins claimed to have gifted land, cows, maidens and gold probably to Brahmins — all the Ten Mahadanas. The Amoghapura king Danaravardhana and the Visan-

1. The Telugu work, known as Mahucaritra of the 16th century declares the merit of listening to the greatness of Tirthas. Canto 1, Verse 63.
2. EJ., XX, M.K.D. Inscriptions, No. 322.
3. Ibid.
4. EJ., XXIV, PP. 17-20 and EJ., XV, PP. 4-7.
7. Cikkailla Plates, op. cit.
and a purificatory significance. The Eastern Calukyan King, 1
Vishnuramchana IV is said to have performed many Tulapurasas. 2
In a damaged inscription of Anantapala, it is stated that his
master the Western Calukyan King, Tribhuvanamalla performed every
3
day Mahadanas including Hiranyakagbha and Tulapurusa.

Of all the gifts, land gift is considered the highest and
4
violation of such a gift as the most heinous of sins. People
with means tried to offer all the gifts sanctioned by the
5
Puranas. As temple became more and more the centre of religious
life, gifts to temples became more popular and widespread. In
all important temples we find numerous inscriptions recording
gifts of lamps to the God.

Gifts are generally made to Brahmans of respectable family,
6
of good character and of profound scholarship. The donee by his
character and attainments should deserve the gift and it was inter-
ded to enable him to discharge his religious duties as a Brahmin

1. Abhanakaran Ins. of Vijayaditya I, Ina, IV, PP. 134-137.
2. S.I., I, No. 25.
3. The following are the 80sana (16) Mahadanas according to
the Matsya Purana:

- Tulapurusu
- Hiranyakagbha
- Brahmanda
- Kalpavriksha
- Goschatra
- Kasadayu
- Hiranyasva
- Hiranyasvarata

- Namasista
- Pancalanga
- Dharma
- Visvavakra
- Kalpalata
- September
- Kasthambu
- Mahabutaghata

4. Bharadvajasri nasti suhamsamudaraka nava
Nacapi bhurdefarasa param ratna pateka mauryate
Corpus of Telangana Inscriptions, No. 9.
5. Ibid. No. 65.
6. Ibid. No. 66.
(Satkarmanas and Pancayajanas). Gifts are also made to maintain Chatikas or colleges and to Mathas and Satras. The temple gifts were intended for the maintenance of the temple staff including two priests, workers, dancing girls and the musicians and to carry on the different festivals and functions connected with the temple. (Generally gifts are made on festive occasions or on auspicious days such as eclipses or Sankrantis. Dharma sastras ordain that the gifts are to be made by pouring water or the hand of the receiver.

Gifts are made with different aims by different individuals. Some made them with purely mundane objectives, to fulfill the earthly ambitions and aspirations, such as long life, prosperity and glory of the family or the kingdom. Generally the aim of a

2. Vide infra, Ch. on Temples and Mathas.
3. Ibid.
4. Some important occasions recorded by inscriptions:
(a) Vaisakha Purnima, Tel., Ins., II, pp. 4, 7, 31 et al., (b) Yek-
tika Purnima, Ibid., P. 19, (c) Yesta Purnima, S. I., IV, 1934, (d) Uteravasa, Tel., Ins., II, pp. 23, 34, 42, 45, 47, 33;
(e) Bherata, Ibid., P. 63; (f) Pulasankrami, S. I., IV, 1909; (g) Solar eclipses, Tel., Ins., II, pp. 36, 40, etc.;
(h) Aswamedha Ekadesi, Tel., Ins., II, pp. 25, 26, 47, etc.
(i) Agnivesha Ekadesi, Ibid., P. 31; (j) Manusamvatsara, Ibid., P. 53; S. I., IV, 1104; (k) Vratagavasa. This is explained differently. According to Vṛddha Veda, Vyrtipata is that when the Amavasya, at the commencement of one of the Mahatras—Svayambhu, Bhukta, Artha or Jitakama or Aslemma, is joined with Sunday. F. Kleinhorn, A.A., XII, pp. 202-203.
5. Sarvanyadalapurna dhana etc.
N.P. S., II, 4, 9, 9.
The British Museum Plates of Corudevi clearly says that the purpose of the gift was "ayurbyaursedha neyam".
E.I., XX, pp. 100-101.
7. Tel., Ins., I, p. 7.
gift is to gain merit which enables the donor to enjoy a happy life in Swarga or the other world. The Vyasagita at the end of the records tells that the donor of land would live for 5,000 years in heaven. Some made gifts for the merit of their kings or masters. Another widely prevalent practice was to make gifts for the merit of their deceased parents. In his Coral inscription, the Amantastra king Decodaravarna hopes that by the gift he was making seven generations of his family including himself would be liberated. Eternal merit or never-ending life in heaven was the aim of some whereas some desired Moka or final emancipation.

The inscriptions that record the different gifts reveal certain important points about the religious life promoted by the Puranas:

1) Faith was developed in the concept of transfer of merit.

That was the idea underlying the gifts made for the merit of one's own master or one's parents, deceased or alive. It may be recalled that this idea was widely prevalent among the Buddhists of Andhra.

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1. According to the Cikmulla plates of the Vismukundina the aim of the gifts was "punya jivitopa bhogasya".
   R.I., IV, 193 ff.
2. Sastivarasa sahasranA swarga tistati bhumidah etc.
3. G.L., IV, No. 705.
5. ibid., II, PP. 102-103.
7. The Puranas say that a gift of a maiden to a Brahmin would lead to Moksa.
8. Vide Supra, PP. 110-111.
2) As a logical consequence of the above belief, there developed the practice of the priests officiating for the Brahmins. In order to offer oblations to their own pitaras, people used to send on their own behalf Brahmins, to Benares and Caya. Some Brahmins undertook for money pilgrimages to Sarna, Alaspur and other Tirthas and even austerities like circumambulating Arisalita.

3) The foregoing account of the Puranic ideas and practices would convince how people of the age were steeped in superstition. One cannot but agree with Prof. Sathianathaier that "though they have contributed to mass education and religious instruction, their extravagances and superstitions can never conduce to the enrichment of the intellect of balanced judgment." In fact some of the Jaina writers of the 9th and 10th centuries criticised the practices like offering rice balls to the deceased parents, bath on eclipses and in holy rivers, and donas. They tried to convince the people of that the sorti literature is not infallible and one should be guided by one's own reason. The Jaina writer Somadeva of the 10th century

1. Tel. Ind. II, p. 67.
2. Ibid.
3. Siddhaswara Caritramu also refers to this practice. P. 107.
4. Nijaieca kucharvadi bhakta mannam
   Haran pitra tarpayate paratra
   Purarjitan tat pitrhur vinastam
   Subhunubham to nahi kara ena.
   Varangacarita, 26, quoted by Handique in Y.I.C., p. 361.
5. Somatayuktii nirnakte loke bhega
tattva alichanta kasya bhavedvri jayvahah
   Santo gunasa tuvyanti naviceresu vastusu
   Padana kusyategrava ratnau maaulu nidiyate
   Y.I.C., p. 363.
who ridicules many Hindu practices, justifies his attitude
to the Hindu gods and religion by saying "no one who speaks
out the truth in regard to the Bhramanical deities and other
concepts, exercising his own judgement, can be called a
slanderer; otherwise the sun, and even the lamp, which
reveal things as they are would be slanderers too."

Finally it may be concluded that the superstition of the
people was so deep and strong that the priestly class not only
utilised to its own advantage but still fortified it. There
seems to be much truth in what Dr. Ksara has said in his paper
entitled "Puranic Rites and Customs as influenced by the Economic
and Social Needs of the Sacerdotal Class." The imperative verses
in inscriptions which declare that the property of Brahmin is
more dangerous than poison, lends much support to the above view.

1. Suryarghyo grahanasannama sankrantau dravinaudyayah
sandhya devagni satkarao geha dehaanvidih
nadi nade samudre su majaanm sharma cetasam —
gopustanta namaskara tamutraaya nisavanam etc.
Ibid. P. 259, Note. 5.

2. Devesu charyasu vicaracaksu ryadartha vakta kisu namakasayat
evam nacottarkhi yadorthdessi bhanuh pradipopica namakasayat
Ibid. P. 363.


4. Brahmasaram visam ghoram navisam visamucyate
Visam ekakina huti brahmasram putrapaunikam.