CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Introductory:

There is a class of Indian literature called "Purāṇa" which contains rich materials reflecting various aspects of Indian culture. R.C. Hazra writes, "The extant Purāṇas presents a very rich collection of materials for the study of the development of Hindu rites and customs during the centuries intervening between Yājñavalkya and the Smṛti-Nibandhas. During this long period, the Hindu society passed through numerous vicissitudes, so much so that in many respects the Hindu rites and customs found in the Nibandhas differ from those in the Codes of Manu and Yājñavalkya. Hence, the study of the Purāṇas is of immense importance for a clear understanding of the whole course of the development."¹ They are next in importance only to the Vedas and therefore they are said to be the fifth Veda. They claim for themselves an equal antiquity and sanctity with the Vedas.² The DP. (III.19) states that from the Vedas

¹ Hazra R.C., Studies in the Purānic Records on Hindu Rites and Customs, Preface, p.1.
and their auxiliaries emerge the Purāṇas. They cover so vast a subject that they are considered to be "a popular encyclopaedia or ancient and medieval Hinduism, religious, philosophical, historical, personal, social and political." The study of the Purāṇas helps in understanding clearly the meaning of the Vedas. "It is now becoming increasingly clear that the meaning of the Vedas was clearly comprehended by those who were attempting its re-statement in the pattern of the Purāṇic style", writes V.S. Agrawala.

The term "Purāṇa" is used in India for a long time in the sense of "ancient story". The term is loosely used to denote Itiḥāsa, which also narrates the old story. The Indians have used the terms Purāṇa, Ākhyāna and Itiḥāsa in a loose way and often they are used as synonyms.

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4. Agrawala V.S., Vāmana Purāṇa - A Study, Intro., p. IX.
According to traditional views, there are two classes of the Purāṇas, viz. the Mahāpurāṇa and the Upapurāṇa, each of which numbers eighteen. Oyer and above this, there is a class of Indian literature of the same character, which gives, in particular, the ancient stories accounting for the origin of certain castes. B.J. Sandesara and R.N. Mehta are inclined to classify them as Caste-Purāṇas. These Purāṇas occasionally claim to be the part of some Mahāpurāṇas; but often stand in their own right as Purāṇas. Numerous castes in Gujarat have their own Purāṇas. The following is a small list of the caste Purāṇas: Dharmārya puraṇa for Moṣha Brahmins and Banias, Śrīmālāpurāṇa for Śrīmāla Brahmins and Banias, Nāgarāṇa puraṇa for Nāgaras, Anāvila puraṇa for Anāvila Brahmins, Vāyu puraṇa for Vāyadh Brahmins and Banias, Kālikā puraṇa for Coppersmiths, Nāpita puraṇa for the caste of barbers, Vālakhilyapurāṇa for Jharola Brahmins and Banias.


A.D. Pusalkar admits that there is no uniformity in the enumeration of the Upapurāṇas (Op.cit., p.25). According to R.C. Hazra, there are more than a hundred Upapurāṇas. (vide his introduction to the Viṣṇu Purāṇa tr. by H.H. Wilson, p.(a); Cf. also Hazra R.C., Studies in the Upapurāṇas, Vol. I, pp.2ff.).


8. Ibid., Intro., p.2.

9. Ibid., Intro., p.2, fn.3.
Sācīhara-māhātmya for Sācorā Brahmins, Siddhavaṛtikāmāhātmya for Dīsādīsāval Brahmins and Banias, Koṭayarkamāhātmya for Khadāyata Brahmins and Banias, Brahmaksetramāhātmya for Khedāval Brahmins, Kandulapurāṇa for Kandol caste, and Ekaḷingamāhātmya for Mevādā caste.¹⁰

Considering their extent and the lack of room for them amongst the Mahāpurāṇas, the caste-Purāṇas may be classed with the Upapurāṇas so as not to violate the traditional view that accepts the existence of only two classes of the Purāṇas, viz. the Mahāpurāṇas and the Upapurāṇas; the former number eighteen; and the latter, more than a hundred, according to R.C. Hazra.

The importance of the study of the Upapurāṇas, especially the caste-Purāṇas:

It seems that A.D. Pusalkar is not prepared to accept the importance of the Upapurāṇas when he says that "There is a very little of historical value in the Upa-purāṇas."¹¹

R.C. Hazra, however, points out "that the Upapurāṇas are rich as much in number as in content, that some of them are much earlier than many of the so called Mahāpurāṇas, and that, like the extant Mahāpurāṇas, they are of capital importance not only for the study of the social and religious institutions of the Hindus from the pre-Gupta period downward but also for varied information of literary, historical, geographical, and cultural interest." The importance of the Upapurāṇas is brought out by M. Winternitz when he states that "The Upapurāṇas........... do not in general differ essentially from the Purāṇas except in as much as they are even more exclusively adopted to suit the purpose of local cult and the religious need of separate sect." P.V. Kane also reiterates that the Upapurāṇas that have already been published "do not differ much in the matter of subjects from some of the principal Purāṇas." It is, therefore, needless to say how important the study of the Upapurāṇas should be and it is 'erroneous', as R.C. Hazra puts it, to believe that the Upapurāṇas are 'later and inferior works' and scarcely deserve any serious attention.

Some of the caste Purāṇas give not only the stories accounting for the origin of certain castes but also, like major Purāṇas, data concerning religion, customs, beliefs, society, political conditions, history, art, geography etc. It is, therefore, self-evident that what is applicable to the Mahāpurāṇas and Upapurāṇas should also be to the caste-Purāṇas, i.e. their study is of immense importance to understand clearly various aspects of Indian culture and trace its development as well as the local history and culture.

It is regrettable that the caste-Purāṇas hardly attract the interest of scholars. Very few of them were taken up for critical study. Veena Das has studied collectively the caste-Purāṇas in her thesis entitled "A Sociological Investigation of the Caste Purāṇas of Gujarat", submitted to Delhi University in 1971 for Ph.D. degree. B.N. Parmar has studied Srimālā-Purāṇa in his thesis entitled "Cultural and Critical Study of Srimālā-Purāṇa" submitted to the M.S. University in 1969 also for Ph.D. degree.
Dharmaranya Purana: It is the caste-Purana of Modha Brahmins and Banias. It consists of 69 chapters and the metres used therein are Anustup, Upendraajra, Vasantatilaka and Sardulavikridita. It was first published and translated into Gujarati by Pramhashankar Jayashankar Pathak in 1924. According to the colophon at the end of each chapter, it claims to be the part of Patalkhandha of the Padma Purana, but the printed Padma Purana which is available does not contain Dharmaranya in the Patalkhandha nor in other Khandas. This claim seems to suggest that the DP. was composed after the Padma Purana had been established as it is in the present printed form. The Padma Purana is published by Anandasrama and Venkatesvara Press. In both these editions it has six Khandas, viz. (1) Adi, (2) Bhumi, (3) Brahma, (4) Patala, (5) Srsti (also called Prakriya) and (6) Uttara in the Anns ed., and (1) Srsti, (2) Bhumi, (3) Sverga, (4) Brahma, (5) Patala and (6) Uttara in the Venk. ed. All the Khandas are not latter than 1400 A.D. The date of the DP. is some what later than

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16 Vide Hazra R.C., Studies in the Puranic Records on Hindu Rites and Customs, pp. 107-8. There is also the Padma Purana edited by Pandit Sriram Sarma Acarya and it is published in 1968 by Sanskriti Samsthana, Khvaja Kutub (Veda Nagar) Barelli. It is incomplete.

The Padma Purāṇa is believed to have been composed in Western India, Maharastra or Rajputana in particular. Hence, it must have exerted its great influence on the people of this part of India, so much so that it tempted the author of the DP. to claim the DP. to be the part of the Purāṇa with the objective of raising its importance and of vesting it with the authority equal to the Purāṇa.

The DP. records the fall of Moheraka; it is, therefore, quite certain that it was not composed at Moheraka (=Modhera), because after the fall of the city the Brahmins residing there must have left the city. Even now-a-days there is not a Moṣha Brahmin at Modhera. J.N. Trivedi opines that the DP. seems to have been composed in some habitat on the bank of the Sābarmati.

"The Purāṇas may be classified into several categories, viz. (1) encyclopaedic like the Agni, Garuḍa and Nārādiya, (2) those mainly dealing with tīrthas such as Padma, Skanda and Bhaviṣya, (3) sectarian, such as Liṅga, Vāmana, Mārkaṇḍeya, (4) historical such as Vāyu and Brahmāṇḍa." Or these, the DP. may fall under the categories 2 and 4.

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18. Chaterji Asoka, Ibid., p.60.
Date of the DP.: The DP. (LXVIII) contains the account of Ala-ud-din's invasion of Gujarat which took place in 1297-98 A.D. and the fall of Patan and Modhera was brought about by this invasion. This helps to assign, with great certainty, the DP. to the date not before this date. Now let us survey the view of some scholars regarding the date of the DP.

On the above-mentioned ground K.B. Dave is of the opinion that the DP. was composed in the end of the 14th century or in the beginning of the 15th century whereas J.N. Trivedi opines that it was composed in the 14th century. B.J. Sandesara and R.N. Mehta date the DP. in 15th century. The above-mentioned dating is further

21. The earlier chronological order of some personages and important events in the DP. is as under:
   (1) Amarāja: date ranging from about 725-834 A.D. (Vide Ch.II).
   (2) Vanarāja: date ranging from about 746-796 A.D. (Vide Ch. VIII).
   (3) Sūrya temple was probably built in 1026-27 A.D. (Vide Ch.VII).
   (4) King Kumārapāla: date ranging from 1133-1174 A.D. (Vide Ch.VII).
   (5) The first temple of the goddess Bahucarāji was built in 1152 A.D. (Vide Ch.VII).

supported by the fact that some historical accounts appearing in the DP. seem to follow that of Vicāraśreni (1344 A.D.) or Merutunga, e.g. the inclusion of Cāmunda-rāja in the Cāvada dynasty and the betrayal of Mādhava, as discussed in ch. VIII.

The stress on the worship of Kṛṣṇa and Rāma, as discussed in ch. V, however, seems to push forward the date of the DP. to the 16th century, considering the dates of the respective propounders of the two sects, viz. Vallabhācārya (1473-1532 A.D. or 1479-1531 A.D.) and Rāmānanda (from 13th century - 1470 A.D.).

Dharmāranya Purāṇa and Pañcalaksana:

Most of the Purāṇas declare that a Purāṇa should treat of five subjects: original creation (sarga), dissolution and recreation (pratisarga), the periods of

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25 See ch. VIII under "Cāmunda".
26 Shah J. G., Shri Vallabhācārya his Philosophy and Religion, pp. 4 and 52.
27 Naratāta M. I., The Philosophy of Vallabhācārya, p. 8; see also ch. V. under "Avatāras or Viṣṇu".
28 See ch. V. under "Rāma-worship".
the Manus (manvantara), ancient genealogies (vamśā), and accounts or persons mentioned in the genealogies (vamśānucarita). Because of the five subjects being treated in the Purāṇa, the word "Pañcalakaśana (having five characteristic subjects)" was sometimes used as a synonym of a Purāṇa. It is interesting to note that the Dharmarāṇya Purāṇa, though a minor Purāṇa, fulfills the Pañcalakaśana. For example, sarga is dealt with in chs. III. 9 ff. - IV. 56; pratisarga, in chs. LXIII. 33 ff. - LXIV. 54; manvantara, in ch. LXIII. 20 ff.; vamśā and vamśānucarita, in chs. I. 9 ff., XXX. 7 ff. and LXVI. 37 ff. These subjects are dealt with in this thesis at their proper places. About the Pañcalakaśana P.V. Kane makes the following remarks:

"From the definition given in the Purāṇa and the Amarakośa it does not at all follow that those five topics alone were the constituent parts of the very ancient Purāṇas, as Kirfel holds. What could be said at the most is that five were the distinctive topics that differentiated the Purāṇas class of works from other branches of literature and probably cognate works called Itiḥāsa or it may be that the five are generalized as an ideal for Purāṇas and that the very early representatives of this class (that existed before Ap. Dh. S.) had not these five as characteristics." 31

29. Sargāṃ ca pratisargāṃ ca vamśo manvantaraṇī ca / vamśānucaritam caiva purāṇam pañcalakaśanam //
In order to draw a demarcation line clearly between the Upapurāṇas and the Mahāpurāṇas, some Purāṇas mention the former as treating of five subjects mentioned above; and the latter as treating of ten subjects, i.e. in addition to the five subjects mentioned above the following five subjects, viz. vṛtti (means of livelihood), rakṣa (incarnations of gods), mukti (final emancipation), hetu (jīva, unmanifest) and apāśraya (Brahman) are treated.

It is seen that the DP. fulfils the Pañcalaksana; it, therefore, deserves to be called an "Upapurāṇa" over and above a "caste-Purāṇa".

Dharmāranya Purāṇa and Dharmāranya Māhātmya:

There is a work called Dharmāranya Māhātmya (=DM) which is a part of the SKP. Brahmakhanda. It consists of 40 chapters. The extant printed SKP. of the Veṅkatesvara Press contains this portion. The DM. is also published independently with Gujarati translation by Manikyārām Durlabhārām Śaстрī.32


There are works kindred to the DP. called "Modha Purāṇa" and another version of "Dharmāranya Māhātmya". The former consisting of 36 chapters, belongs to Pātalakhaṇḍa of the SKP. It is published and translated into Gujarati by Vaidya Manekram Durlabharam Śastrī in 191+. The latter, P.T.O.
After examining the contents of both the DP. and the DM., one finds that there are many stories which are common to both. The DP. distinctly differs from the DM. Only in that it contains historical accounts of Gujarat from the foundation of Patan by Vanaraśa upto the fall of Patan and Modhera at the hands of Muslims. K.B. Dave dates the DM. not later than 8th century but this date requires reconsideration, as the reference to the king Kumārapāla in chs. 36 and 38 may lead one to assign this Purāṇa to a much later date, i.e. not before 1143 - 1173 A.D. (the date of the king Kumārapāla). Consid- ering the subject-matters in both the works, one feels that the DP. is the result of the improvement upon the DM. This may be one of the reasons why the author of the DP. claims it to be the part of the Padma Purāṇa instead of the Skanda Purāṇa in accordance with general tendency of claiming a work to be part of the SKP. in order to avoid rivalry between the two works.

consisting of 10 chapters, which forms the first part of the whole work, belongs to Dharmarānyakahanda of the SKP. It was published by Popatlal Hamsarāj Sheth of Jamnagar.