I - INTRODUCTION

The Purāṇās, which belong to the class of religious literature, are in fact, a supplement to the Vedas.1 The principle tenets of Hinduism are depicted in the Purāṇās, the old traditional accounts of the popular forms of Hindu Dharma and the Purānic deities and the two great epics. The Rāmāyana and the Mahābhārata that are anterior to the Purāṇās. Almost all the Purāṇās are sectarian in character. They are valuable from the historical point of view not only because they give the lists of the dynasties but also because they record the traditions prevalent among the masses. They offered us for greater insight into all aspects of Hinduism, love of gods, philosophy, its theism and pantheism, its mythology, its god, worship, superstitions, festivals, ceremonies and its ethics.2 Almost they occupy a unique position in the sacred and secular literature of the Hindus being next in importance only to Veda.3

The word “Purāṇa” meant originally nothing but “Purāṇamākhyānam” i.e. old story4. The another meaning is “Historical event” and another probably means, “Mythological and legendary lore”. The Purāṇās themselves, declare their own importance thus.

“Caturdaśāsu vidyāsu purāṇamādipau uttamaḥ 1
andhopi na tadalokāt saṁsārabdhau kvacit patet ii”5

Thus study of the Purāṇās is very important. Purāṇās constitute a vast sector of the rich Sanskrit literature and are a great literary public property. Their importance and relevance lie in several directions. It is well-known that main sources of ancient and medieval Indian history culture are literary sources, archeological sources and foreign travelers accounts. The archeological sources include inscriptions, coins, pottery, monuments etc. whereas the literary sources include the Veda, literature, classical Sanskrit literature in various forms, Pāli & Prākrit literature etc. Purāṇās undoubtedly reach back in great antiquity and rooted in Vedic literature.6 From this point of view Purāṇās gain

1
significance and deserve a careful, systematic and sympathetic study and consideration in collaboration with other disciplines of knowledge.

The *Purāṇās*, though, a contribution of the same tradition, present a distinct stage. It may be stated, if such a large generalization can be hazarded, that the *Purāṇās* are concerned more with consolidation than with fresh exploration and adventures of philosophical speculation, more to fix the central doctrines of Hinduism by these gathering, a definite shape, into the collective culture and memory of the race, the doctrines of *Karman*, the transmigration of the soul, the fixed and functional cum hereditary structure of the four castes and the four *Āśramās*, the worship of the one God in many forms etc. One may even go so far as to state if the *Vedās* and *Upaniṣadās* provided a common body of philosophy, which was shared by a intelligentsia all over India, the *Purāṇās* gave a common body of myth, legend, fable and folk lore shared by the laity throughout the country. Even ancient stories, *Itiḥāsa*, geography are included in *Purāṇās*. Hence following sentences define *Purāṇās* as follows:

1. पुराण आद्वान्य पुराणम्
2. यमान्त्र पुरा हि अर्थि संद्र पुराणम् - Vāyu.P. 1. 103
3. जग्ना: प्रमावस्थानुक्रम्य सर्प्प्रतिपादकं वाक्यमात्रं पुराणम् - सायण, एतरेष ब्राह्मण
4. पुराणेव आन्वयतीतिः पुराणम् Padma pu.
5. पुरा परस्परं वक्त्रु पुराणं तेन द्वै स्मृतम् - Vāyu Pu.1.2.53
6. विन्यमुख्ति विरितिहासे: पुराणम् -पुराणोत्पत्तिः प्रसङ्गः

The great sage *Vyāsa* pin pointed this with the well known words - ‘one should endeavour to know the subtle meaning of the *Vedās* by the study of the history and the *Purāṇās*. Infect, the *Purāṇa* not only formed the ethical core of *Purāṇa*, even not only formed the ethical core of later indian society but also fostered the sense of a general appreciation of the goodness of the common man of this vast country and taught him the lesson.
It is in this sense that many times it stated that the Hindudharma of the present day has its roots in the Purāṇās. Whatever is said above, regarding the importance of the Purāṇās, in general is also true in case of the SK. P., the most voluminous of all the Purāṇās and in fact, second only to the M.B. in Volume. Besides, it has got its own peculiar importance.

The SK.P. itself declares:

\[ Sargaśca pratisargaśca Varṇo manavantarāṇica I \]
\[ cheti varṇśānucaritam Purāṇam pañcalakṣaṇam. II^8 \]

The Purānic tradition, has all along been floating and dynamic and the texts have undergone tremendous changes due to the numerous revisions, additions omissions and modifications. The eighteen Purāṇās are classified under three heads. Viz

1) Those which are devoted to the praise of Brahmā
2) Those relating to Viṣṇu
3) Those chiefly on Śiva.

They deal with the various aspects of the trinity Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva, the three great Gods of the Hindus and their consorts. The name itself, Purāṇa, which implies 'old', indicates the objects of the compilation, a purpose in the present condition of the Purāṇās very imperfectly fulfilled. All Purāṇās have, certain common characteristics of form, method of presentation, and content.

The lexicon of Amarasinha gives as a synonyms of Purāṇa, Pañca-lakṣaṇam, that which has five characteristic topics and there is no difference of opinion amongst the scholastic as to what these are.

They are, as Colebrook mentions

1) Primary creation or cosmology
2) Secondary creation or the destruction and renovation of Worlds, including chronology.
3) Reign of the Manus or periods called Manavantarās.
4) History, or such particulars as have been preserved of the princes of the solar and lunar races and their descendent & to modern times. 

Apart from the etymological meaning, we find certain characteristics of Puranic lore pointed out in various Sanskrit Works. Thus, the Amarkosa described as- “The Purâñas are a type of mythological literature which has 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”.

**Importance of Puranic Studies:**

_Purâñas_ 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 important 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. It was at the starting of the Indian studies in the last decades of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries that the _Purânas_ were regarded as of historical value on account of the confusion and conglomeration of legendary and historical events in the _Purânas_ as also their peculiar ideas of ages and cosmography.

**Purâna: Meaning, Definition & Characteristics**

The term _Purâna_, according to its etymology, as given in the _Vāyu Purâna_ means, that which lives from ancient times. The _Matsya Purâna_ also describes the _Purânas_ as containing records of past events. originally therefore, the term signified “ancient tale” or “Old narrative” in the _Brahmana_ literature, as compared with _Itihāsa_, and _Nāra Sarhī_, before it became associated with _Purâna_ as a class of literature. _Purānas_ in the form of legendary lore existed from times of antiquity, even prior to the revelation of the _Vedas_, and this was handed down to posterity. Though references in the _Atharvaveda_ imply that the _Purānas_ had assumed some independent form of composition, it is not definite whether _Purānas_ meant actual books at the time of the _Atharvaveda_.
The *Chando Up* shows that a definite work was intended by the term\textsuperscript{18} by Amarasimha (fifth century A.D.) which is also found in some *Purāṇas*, as *pañcalakṣaṇa*, i.e., having five characteristics, which are *Sarga* (Creation), *Pratisarga* (dissolution & recreation), *Vamsa* (divine genealogies) *Manvantara* (ages of Manus) *Vamśanucarita* (genealogies of kings).

\textit{Sargaśca Pratisargaśca Varṁśo Manvāntrani ca}

\textit{Vamśanucaritāṁ Chaiva Puranam Pañca lakṣaṇam\textsuperscript{19} I Amor 16.5}

None of the existing *Purāṇas* is in complete agreement with this definition. While others scarcely touch these and deal with other topics. It is further found that *Pañca lakṣaṇam* occupies but an insignificant part of extant *Purāṇas*. Thus, it appears that religious instruction was not one of their primary aims, nor were they origionally composed for sectarian purposes. The other later additions such as *Dāna* (gifts), *Vratās* (religious observances), *Tirthās* (sacred places), *Srāddha* Crites in honour of the manes), etc., which form the bulk of the contents of the extant *Purāṇas* and which are not covered by the definition, render the *Pañcalakṣaṇā* definition merely a theoretical things not an actual fact. In order to get over this difficulty the *Purāṇas* themselves stated that the *Pañcalakṣaṇa* definition was intended morally for the *Upa-Purāṇas* (minor *Purāṇas*) and the *mahā-Purāṇa* (Major *Purāṇa*) has to satisfy the *Dasalakṣaṇa* (having ten characteristics) definition, which includes these additional topics.

1. *Vṛtti* (means of livelihood)
2. *Yakṣa* (incarnations of gods)
3. *Mukti* (final emancipation)
4. *Hetu* (*Jiva* unmanifest)
5. *Upasarga* (*Brahman*)

*Purāṇas* : Origin & Development

The *Purāṇas* contain different accounts of their origin. According to the *Viṣṇu Pu.*, after dividing the *Veda* and entrusting it to his four disciples Vyāsa compiled a *Purāṇa Samhitā* with tales, anecdotes, songs and ancient lore.\textsuperscript{20} And taught it to his fifth disciples,
Suta, Lomharśaṇa, who divided the Purāṇa into six various divisions and taught them to his disciples, three of whom each made a further collection. The six fold, Purāṇa of Suta is known as Romharsanic collection, and the collections of his disciples are named after them, Kaśyapikā, Sāvarnika and Sāṁsāpāyanika. These four were regarded as the ‘root Samhitās’. None of these is the existent at present and Suta had a son named Ugraśravās and he taught a Samhitā to him also, The Lord Viṣṇu thus accounts for four root Samhitās of the Original Purāṇās.21

Modern scholars also have expressed different views regarding their origin. But tracing the genesis and development of the legendary lore from the earliest times to the period when the Purāṇās attained the status of 18 Mahā Purāṇās. It appears that up to the period of the Athṛvaveda, the Purāṇās, signified only tales of yore and were allied with Itihāsa, Gātha, Nāraśaṃśis, etc. It is doubtful whether the term then conveyed any class of Purānic literature. The Purāṇās in the Vedic age were compiled by the Suta from the Vedic Varṇāsha, Ākhyāṇa, etc. The Bhārata war was an important landmark in the development of the Purāṇās, because their canon was fixed same four generations after the war and the genealogical accounts subsequent to this period were designed as ‘future’ in the Purāṇās.22

The next stage may be found in the Upaniṣadic period, when chapters on cosmogony, which incorporate the Śāṃkhya and Upaniṣadic ideas, were added in the Purāṇās along with those on the ages of the Manūs. The self contradictory title Bhaviṣhyaṭ purāṇa, employed by Apastamba, indicates that in the period of the Sutrās the term Purāṇa had become so specialized as to have lost its proper meaning and become merely a designation for a particular class of books. The Purāṇās of those days probably gave rise to the Paṇcalakṣaṇa definition, and discussions of Hindu rites and customs, such as Varnāshravam-dharmā, Shrāddha, Dāna, Vratās, Tirthās, etc. which are strictly the domain of the Smritis and Dharma, Śāstrās, were incorporated in the Purāṇās not later than the middle of the 4th century A.D. Liberties have all along been taken with the text of the Purāṇās, the particular ambition of the later compilers being to make the Purāṇās all comprehensive and encyclopedic. Like the M.B. and every successive generation has tried to make the Purāṇās up-to-date by various devices.
Panca - Lakṣaṇa Definition

In the Amarakośa Purāṇa is called Pañcalakṣaṇa, and is defined as comprising five characteristics.

Sargaśca Pratisargaśca Vaiṁśo manvantarānica l

Vamśānuçaritäm Yasmin Purāṇam tatprakirtitiam ll

These five characteristics are also referred to in most of the extant purāṇas. Anonimus without any explanatory meaning could be assumed as a socially accepted terminology. According to above definition a Purāṇa must deal with five topics viz.

1) Sarga - Creation

Creation of the universe and its small atoms

Avyākrutgunākṣyobhat Mahātstri Vruloham l

bhutmātredriyarthanam Sarbhavah Sarga Uchaye l(Bha. 12/7/11)

Mahat is produced from the Mula Prakṛti and Puruṣa. Tāmas, Rājas and Sāttvika Guṇas are produced from the Mahat. From this three fold Guṇas (Ahamkāra), five gross elements and five Subtle element etc. are produced.

2) Pratisarga : Recreation

The periodical annihilation and renewal of the worlds. Pratisancār word is used in place of Pratisarga in Viṣṇu Purāṇa and Sāstha word is used in place of Pratisarga in Śrimad Bhāgavatam.

Naimmitikah prakṛutiko Nitya Atyāntiko Layah l

Samstheti Kavibhiniprokta Chaturdhāsyya Svabhāvatah ll

Which is four types

1) Naimittika (2) Prākrutika (3) Nityā (4) Atyantikā

3) Vaiṁśa : Genealogies of Gods and Sages

Ragnam brahmapraśutanam Vaiṁśāstrey Kaliko nyāyam ll Bha. P.12.7.16
(4) **Manvantaranī**

The *Manu*-periods of time i.e. the great periods, each of which has a *Manu* or primeval ancestor of the human race. *Manvantara* is 14 and each *Manvantara* has its special *Manu*.

*Manvantaram Manurdeva Manuputra Sūreśvara || Bha. 12.7.15*

(5) **Vamśānucharita**

The history of the dynasties. Viz. The early and the later dynasties, the origins of which are traced back to the Sun and the Moon, consequently known as Solar and lunar.

*Vamśyānucaritam teśā Vṛutam Vamśdrascya ye || (Bha. P. 12.7.16)*

When the extant *Purāṇas* are examined in the light of this *Pañcalakṣaṇam* definition, it is clearly seen how most of them do not keep near the definition, while some of the earlier ones viz. the *Vāyu, Viṣṇu, Matsya* and *Brahmāṇḍa*, keep close to the *Pañca-Lakṣaṇa* ideal but are not in entire agreement with it.27

**Ten characteristics**

This new phase in the development of the *Puranic* literature necessitated a new definition for the *Purāṇas*, Hence, efforts were made at replacing the old definition by new one. The *Bhāgavat* and like wise mentions ten characteristic in two places where the original definition is amplified to meet to new requirements.

*Sargascath Visrgasca Vṛtti rakṣantarani ca || Bha. 12.7.16*

(1) **Sarga** - Creation

(2) **Visarga** - The creation of individual souls *Vividha Srṣṭih*

(3) **Vṛtti** - Sustenances of human life

(4) **Rakṣa** - The protection given by the lord to the people through His *Avatārās*
Thus, it appears that religious instruction was not one of their primary aims, nor were they originally composed for sectarian purposes. These and other later additions such as descriptions gifts, religious observances, sacred places, etc., which now form the bulk of the Purāṇas, render the Pañcalakṣaṇa definition merely theoretical.

The Purāṇas overcome this difficulty by stating that the Pañcalakṣaṇa definition applied only to the Upapurāṇa (minor Purāṇa) and that the Mahāpurāṇa (Major Purāṇa) should have ten characteristics or dasalakṣaṇa as mention above, which include the following additional topics: Vṛitti etc. These characteristics, however, leave out of account several features of the Purāṇas such as glorification of Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Suryā and Rudrā, dissolution and preservation of the world, Dharma (religious conduct), Artha (economic and polity) Karma (erotic) and Mokṣa (emancipation).

The Purāṇa tradition, like that of M.B., has all along been floating and dynamic, and the texts have been subjected to numerous revisions, additions, omissions and modifications.

Authorship of Purāṇas

The Purāṇas are not unified works written by individual authors at particular time. These are composite texts evolved through centuries. Portions of the some work appear to have been composed or compiled at widely separated periods of time. Traditions e.g. (Matsya Pu - 50/73) attributes obviously to impact a holo of sanctity, all the Purāṇas
to Sage Vyāsa. It is said that he taught the *Purāna-Saṁhitā* to his disciple, Romā (or lomā) Harṣaṇa who, in his turn, taught it, in six versions to his Six disciples, Ātreya Sumati, Kaśyapa, Akṛta-Vraṇa, Bhāradvāja, Agnivarcaś, Vaśiṣṭha, Maitra-Varuṇa, Śaṁvarṇi, Somadattī and Susarman, Śaṁsaṁpavaṇa. He taught the original *Purāṇās* to his Son Ugraśravas also.

So for the Authorship of the *Purānic* literature, it is very difficult to come to any definite conclusion.

**Date of Purāṇa**

The earlier literary work to refer to *Purāṇa* are several *Brāhmaṇas*, *Upaniṣadās* etc. So the post *Vedic* works mentioned above, belong to pre-Christian time. From the foregoing account, we can say that the *purānic* tradition existed in at least Six or Seven Centuries B.C. We are not in a position to say precisely when *Purānic* literature originated. The problem of the dates of the *Purāṇās* is also very intriguing and controversial. No particular date or period can be assigned to a particular *Purāṇa*. The problem of date can best be solved by evolving a chronological setting for the *Purānic* literature in general, special attention being paid to the individual *Purāṇās*. Thus the etymological explanation of the term *Purāṇa* given by Yaska "*Purānavarṇabhavati*" seems more a befitting that *Purāṇa* though old becomes new again. In a sense, *Purāṇa* is old, but retains the spirit of newness by emphasizing the essential oneness of all men irrespective of their Caste and Creed, a sentiment which is modern in every age. The use of the term *Purāṇa* in the sense of a religious book dates back to the days of the *Cha. Up.* where in *Purāṇa* was declared to be the fifth *Veda*. The word *Purāṇa* in the plural appears to have been mentioned first in the *Āśvalāyana Gṛhya Sutra* (4.6).

They are legends and annals of ancient times, as well as allegories and stories, seeking to present the deeper truths of Indian religion in a popular grab, and more easily intelligible form to people who can not grasp them in their own natural glory and pristine purity.

These *Purāṇās* are broadly divided into two classes as

1. *Mahāpurāṇās*
2. \textit{Upapurāṇās}

(1) \textit{Mahapurāṇās}:

The \textit{Purāṇas} in their extant form are called \textit{Mahāpurāṇās}. They are of encyclopedic nature, embodying several cultural and chronological strata, for in them are put together tradition and cosmogony, religion and mythology, philosophy and sociology. Perhaps, the growth of the \textit{Uppurāṇās} may have given rise to the nomenclature of \textit{Mahapurāṇās}, by which the eighteen \textit{Purāṇās} came to be subsequently known; the name \textit{Mahā-Purāṇa} does not seem to be very old. A critical perusal of the extant \textit{Purāṇās} shows that the name \textit{Purāṇa}, or \textit{Aṣṭādaśa-purāṇa} is generally adopted by various \textit{Purāṇās}, the \textit{Viṣṇu}, the \textit{Bhāgavata} and the \textit{Brahmavaivarta} being excepted, but even there the names \textit{Purāṇa-Samhitā} and \textit{Aṣṭādaśa - Purāṇās} occur in the earlier verses. A critical study of the context in which the word \textit{Mahā-Purāṇa} occurs in the \textit{Bhāgavata} and the \textit{Brahmā - Vaivarta} clearly shows that the term \textit{Purāṇa} was commonly used and the term \textit{Mahā-Purāṇa} had just been used to avoid confusion with the \textit{Up-Purāṇās}.

Sometimes, an effort is made to distinguish between \textit{Purāṇa} or \textit{Up-Purāṇa} and \textit{Mahā-Purāṇa}. The \textit{Bhagavata} tries to distinguish between the two on the basis of five and ten characteristics, whereas \textit{Up-Purāṇa} merely five.

The \textit{Mahāpurāṇās} are eighteen in number and the names of these \textit{Purāṇās} along with the number of the verses are as laid below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Name of Purāṇa</th>
<th>No. of Verses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>\textit{Brahma Purāṇa}</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>\textit{Padma Purāṇa}</td>
<td>55,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>\textit{Viṣṇu Purāṇa}</td>
<td>23,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>\textit{Vāyu Purāṇa}</td>
<td>24,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>\textit{Bhāgavata Purāṇa}</td>
<td>18,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>\textit{Nārada Purāṇa}</td>
<td>25,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>\textit{Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa}</td>
<td>9,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8. Agni Purāṇa 10,500
9. Bhaviṣya Purāṇa 14,500
10. Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa 18,000
11. Liṅga Purāṇa 11,000
12. Varāha Purāṇa 24,000
13. Skanda Purāṇa 81,000
14. Vāmanav Purāṇa 10,000
15. Kurma Purāṇa 17,000
16. Matsya Purāṇa 14,000
17. Garuḍa Purāṇa 19,000
18. Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa 12,000

This above order and number of the verses, each Purāṇa contains are mentioned in the Bhāgawata Purāṇa. This order and no. of verses are found in many Purāṇas which enumerate the Purāṇas in a nutshell in the following couplet.

Madvyam bhadvayam caiva bratryam va caatsuṭhayam
nālimpāgnipūrṇā purāṇāni kū skam gāruḍameva ca

In the beginning of the new age, Lord immersed himself in the furious waters, at the time of dissolution of the Universe and explained them fully to Brahma, who in his turn, revealed them to the Devās and the Sages, after which they spread all over the world. Therefore, the Purāṇas became the source of all other Śāstras. Later on, seeing the neglect of the Purāṇa under the changed circumstances, he repromulgated them in every Yuga, through his partial incarnations of Vyāsa. In every Dwāpara Yuga, the Purāṇas were repromulgated to the extent of 4 lacs of Verses, and spread them in the World after dividing them into eighteen. Even now the bulk of the Purāṇa extends to a hundred crores verses in
the *Deva Loka*, on the universe, however, its bulk is abridged only to 4 lacs of verses, and is divided into eighteen *Purāṇas*.37

There is however no uniformity in the enumeration of the *Upapurāṇas* which are more sectarian in character, and of a composite nature. There historical value is very little, being composed much later from a collection of different lists, following appear to be the 18 *Upapurāṇas*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(1)</th>
<th>Sanatkumar</th>
<th>(11)</th>
<th>Varuṇa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>Narasimha</td>
<td>(12)</td>
<td>Kali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>Nandā</td>
<td>(13)</td>
<td>Maheśvara</td>
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<td>(4)</td>
<td>Shivadharma</td>
<td>(14)</td>
<td>Śāmba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5)</td>
<td>Durvās</td>
<td>(15)</td>
<td>Saura</td>
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<td>(6)</td>
<td>Nāradiya</td>
<td>(16)</td>
<td>Paraśara</td>
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<td>(7)</td>
<td>Kapila</td>
<td>(17)</td>
<td>Maricha</td>
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<tr>
<td>(8)</td>
<td>Vāmana</td>
<td>(18)</td>
<td>Bhārgava</td>
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<tr>
<td>(9)</td>
<td>Uśanas</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>(10)</td>
<td>Māṇava</td>
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</tbody>
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R.C. Hazra has collected the names of about a hundred *Upurāṇas*, of which hardly have appeared in print.

**Brief Introduction of Eighteen *Purāṇas*:**

1. **Brahma Purāṇa**: It contains 13,000 Verses. One who writes and gives it away in charity along with a cow and water in the month of *Vaiśākha*, on the full-moon day, passes his days in *Brahmaloka*, in happiness.

2. **Padma Purāṇa**: At the time when this Universe came out of the cosmic waters in the beginning of the lotus *Kalpa*, and in the form of a golden lotus, then the *Padma Purāṇa* was revealed, describing that creation, and it is called *Padma Purāṇa* by the wise.
(3) **Viṣṇu Purāṇa**: Similarly, the rules of virtue laid down by Parāśara, for the period when there was the Varāha incarnation of Viṣṇu, in the beginning of Varāha Kalpa, form the Viṣṇu Purāṇa.

(4) **Vāyu Purāṇa**: The rules of virtue laid down by Vāyu, along with the glory of Rudra in the Śveta-kalpa, is known as Vāyaviya Purāṇa.

(5) **Bhāgavata Purāṇa**: The Purāṇa which begins with the description of the sacred Gāyatrī warship, and goes on to mention various Dharmās and which contains a narratives of the destruction of the demon Vṛitraśura as well as an account of the famous men who flourished in the Sārasvata Kalpa, is known as Bhāgavata.

(6) **Nāradīya Purāṇa**: In which Nārada has described the Bṛihatakalpa and the Dharmās of the Bṛihatkalpa.

(7) **Mārkandeya Purāṇa**: The Purāṇa which begins with the story of the birds solving the difficulty of Dharma and Adharma and which the pious sages explain in an answer to the question of the sage (Jaimini), which has been described at great length by the sage Mārkandeya, at the request of the Riṣis, and which contains 9,000 couplets, is known as Mārkandeya Purāṇa.

(8) **Āgneya(Agni) Purāṇa**: The Purāṇa which commences with the description of the Iśāna Kalpa, and which was a path of virtue revealed to Agni by Vaśiṣṭha, is known as the Āgneya Purāṇa.

(9) **Bhavisya Purāṇa**: The Purāṇa in which Brahmā has described the history of Aghora Kalpa, the glory of the Sun, the existence of the Universe, the characteristics of the aggregate multitude to Manu, is known as the Bhavisya Purāṇa.

(10) **Brahmacharīvaivarta Purāṇa**: The Purāṇa which commences with the description of Rathāntara kalpa, and in which Śāvarṇi Manu has described to Nārada the glory of Kṛṣṇa and in which there is also a constant allusion to Brahma Vāraha, is known as Brahmacarīvaivarta Purāṇa.

(11) **Līṅga Purāṇa**: The Purāṇa in which Śiva explained the virtues of Agni and four Vargās, Viz, Dharma, Artha, Kāma and Mokṣa, by manifesting himself through the
pillar of fire, which commences with the description of Āgneyakalpa, and which was uttered by Brahmā himself, is known as Linga Purāṇa.

(12) Vārāha Purāṇa: The purāṇa in which Viṣṇu has described the glories of the great Boar to the goddess earth, and which was recited in connection with the Mānavakalpa, is known as the Vārāha Purāṇa.

(13) Skanda Purāṇa: The purāṇa in which the six-faced Kārtikeya has expressed the virtues of high-class men and also about the worship of Mahādeva, is known as Skanda Purāṇa. But day to day in there have many additions.

(14) Vāmana Purāṇa: The purāṇa in which the four faced Brahmā has related the glories of Trivikrama, and which describes the three vargās also to the Devās, after declaring the glory of Vāmana, is known as the Vāmana Purāṇa.

(15) Kūrma Purāṇa: The purāṇa in which Viṣṇu has dwelt on the glories of the four vargās (Dharma, Artha, Kāma and Mokṣa) in the form of a Kūrma, in the Rasātala regions before the sages, in connection with the story of Indradyumna, where Indra was also present, through his companion Idradyumna, is known as Kūrma Purāṇa.

(16) Matsya Purāṇa: The purāṇa in which the Lord has related the glory of Nārsimha to Vaivasvata Manu, at the beginning of the Kalpa, with a view to propagate the Śrutis, in the form of a fish, and in which the Lord has also described about the seven kalpās, is known, as Matsya Purāṇa.

(17) Garuda Purāṇa: The purāṇa in which Krṣṇa has described the birth of Garuḍa out of the cosmic egg, in the Garuḍa Kalpa, is known as Garuḍa Purāṇa.

(18) Brahmānda Purāṇa: The purāṇa commencing with the glory of the cosmic egg and in which Brahmā has described the future kalpās as well as the history of the universe to the Devās, is known as Brahmānda Purāṇa.

* Importance of Purāṇas

The importance of Purāṇas lie not only in 10 Lakṣaṇās but they are significant from several other points also. The Purāṇas have been a perennial source of themes and motifs for literary works, prose, poetical and dramatically. No less a poet Kālidāsa appears
to have been indebted to Purāṇās. His Raghūvamsam and Kumārasaṁbhava probably derive ideas from the Purāṇās. The Gita Govinda of Jaydeva (12th Cent), Ksemendra's (11th Cent), Daśavatāra, Śrikānta-carita are some of the outstanding examples of Purānic influence. The Duṣyanta - Śakuntalā legend of Kālidāsa's Abhinava- Sakuntalam has similarity with the same legend in the Savargakhand a of the Padmapurāṇa. Bhasā's Bāla-carita is based on a Purānic theme. Some of the Campukāvyās e.g. Niśitthacampu of Keśava, Nilakaṇṭha’s Nilakaṇṭha-Vijaya - Campu, have borrowed theme from the Purāṇās. Most of the Purāṇās admit Dharma, Artha, Kāma and Mokṣa as the four aims of life.

1. Dharma includes religious teachings, both Brahmānical and popular. Sin, punishment, penance and hell are described in some detail. A popular teaching consists of descriptions of Tīrthās (holy places) and of pilgrimages, as also of Vrata (religious observances) and Dāna (gifts), the chief feature of all these being that they were available to all, including women and Śudrās, to whom the the Vedās were denied.

2. Arthās or the acquisition of wealth or polity, is found in the Rājadharma section of many Purāṇās dealing with the duties of kings and methods of administration, conduct of war and peace, etc.

3. Karma includes marriage rules and duties of the wife and women, which are illustrated by stories such as those of Sītā and Sāvitri, who are cited as examples of perfect woman head.

4. Mokṣa, or final emancipation, is the aim placed before every human being. Transmigration is an article of faith, one can attain deliverance from the chain of successive rebirths by following the path of Yoga and Bhakti yoga includes Jñanayoga and Karmayoga, while Bhakti is generally associated with Viṣṇu and Krṣṇa.

In the religious and social history of India, historical data, the Purāṇās occupy an important position. Purāṇās contain considerable facts about the different sects and subsects, their origion and evolution. Even in old Smṛti (e.g. Yājnāvalkya I. 3), Purāṇa has
been regarded as one of the sources of Dharma. They have been devised a network of Vratas, Mahātmyam etc. The Purāṇas were important in that they were considered to be indispensable for the elucidation of the Vedas - Itihasa - Purāṇa.

The Skanda Purāṇa voices the importance of Purāṇas as Purāṇa is the soul of the Vedas. “O Brāhmaṇa, I consider the importance of Purāṇas to be as firmly fixed as the Veda”. All the Vedas are established in the purāṇa- there is no doubt about it. According to Nārādiya (I.9.100), the Purāṇas are the essence of all the Vedas. One may be conversant with all the Vedas with their accessories and Upaniṣads; but he cannot be wise unless he knows Purāṇa.

In fact Hindu culture and civilization were saved from total disintegration and devastation mainly due to the influence of the Purāṇas. The Purāṇas are of great value for the history and religion and are a variable store house of information for getting an insight into all aspects and phases of Hinduism. The Purāṇas embody the earliest traditional history and that much of their material is old and valuable.

**Date of Skanda Purāṇa:**

According to ancient works on Dharma Śāstra quote Skanda Purāṇa must be in existence for at least a century or two before its attaining the authoritative position of a Smṛti.

In fact no specific date can be assigned to the Skanda Purāṇa, but following points are noteworthy in this connection.

1) The Sk.P. has been quoted by Ballalasena (12th Cen.) in his Dānasāgar. So, we may conclude that by that time the Sk.P. must have gained the position of an authoritative source on religious matter.

2) The Sk.P. refers to Masyendranātha who is supposed to have lived in the latter half of the ninth century.

3) Alberuni (1030 A.D.) mentioned Sk.P. in his list of Purāṇas.

4) Bāna, the author of Harśacarita (7th Cent. A.D.) is also aware of the Sk.P.
5) The Purāṇa refers to the king Rajya Vardhana (7th Cent.) and the Smṛti Writer Harits (400-700 A. D.).

6) Independent proof of the existence of the Sk.P. in the 7th century is afforded by a Bengal Mss of that work written in Gupta style of hand-writing to which as early a date as the middle of the 7th century can be assigned.

7) A manuscript of Skanda Purāṇa written in the 7th century A. D. which is mentioned in the Nepal Durbar library (Haraprasāda shāstri catalogue of Nepal palm leaf Mss p. LII). But we are not in a position to trace it earlier. But we find Skanda Purāṇa quoting Bhāravi’s Kirātārjuniyam II.30. (Sahasā Vidadhita na kriyām) in I. II. 6.79 Kāśikhaṇḍa (i. 7. 4 - 5) mentions Nātya, Veda and Arthaśāstra, Dhanvantari and Caraka (ancient authorities on medicine) are mentioned in Kāśikhaṇḍa. I. 71. we can not locate the present text of Skanda Purāṇa earlier than 7th century A. D. and not later than 9th century A. D.⁴⁴.

**Skanda Purāṇa as a Mahāpurāṇa**

Skanda Purāṇa is the longest Mahāpurāṇa. It is supposed to the second work that Veda Vyāsa composed after the MB. It is perhaps because of this immediate succession to the MB. that the SK.P. overlaps with several stories in common scholars agree that the huge Skanda purāṇa is not really an unified work. In various parts of the country, there are various fragments that went by the name of Skanda Purāṇa.

The Skanda Purāṇa as Mahā Purāṇa is not disputed by any one. But the very nature of Sk.P. being a vast information book of kṣetra and other different Mahātmyās, is basically different from other seventeen Purāṇās. Skanda Purāṇa has the highest number of verses; i.e. 81,000, now-a-day different portions are also added.

**Skanda Purāṇa and its importance**

According to above information the number of Skanda Purāṇa is thirteen Sk.P. is the biggest of the Purāṇās and is also the most important for our purpose, being a Samhitā of Mahātmyās and Khaṇḍās, it gives us many new geographical names. In ancient India,
the recitation of the stories bearing on the geographical accounts was very popular. MB and Skanda Purāṇa maintain that tradition.

Skanda Purāṇa focuses light on society, religion, philosophy, mythology, education, iconography, geography, history and archeology, cartography and statecraft.

Each Khanda of Skanda Purāṇa stands as an independent book in itself. The encyclopedic nature of the Sk.P. makes it an indispensable guide for the students and scholars for the study of different factors of Indian culture.

Skanda Purāṇa is a valuable source of ancient Indian geography. Skanda Purāṇa, comprising innumerable Mahātmyās, is one of the most important and comprehensive work for the study of ancient Indian geography. Sk.P. however, contends for the unity of the Hindu society, based on Āṅgiki Śrīśti. It recognizes the organic character of the Hindu social organization, based on the birth of the Brāhmaṇas, Kṣatriyas, Vaiśyas and Śudrās from the different organs of the same body.

The name of the Skanda-Mahāpurāṇa is obviously derived from the story of Skanda, Son of Śiva, narrated in the text of the extent Purāṇa. Skanda along with his other names like Saunaka, Jayanta Subrahmanya and Mahāsana, is frequently referred to in the Sanskrit literature. These names suggest that he was closely related with Agni from the stories regarding the birth and exploits of Skanda, occurring in the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata, it seems that he was already accepted as the Son of Śiva. The Purāṇa had totally forgotten the relation that existed between Agni and Skanda.

The story of Skanda formed a part of a big story along with that of Daksayajña - Vidhvansha, Śiva, Pārvati Parīṇaya, and Madandahan. The various forms of the story of Skanda’s birth as found in the Purānic literature can be divided into two categories. The first belong to the stories describing his birth as an outcome of the search for a commander in chief for their army. In the second category fall the stories which described the fear of Gods on account of long love sports of Śiva and Pārvati. In which the six faced deity (Skanda) has related the events of the Tatpurṣa Kalpa.

The Skanda Purāṇa deals with the religious conditions prevailing in the sixth century and the succeeding centuries. The religion propagated here is Śaivism, though, worship
and devotion to other deities are also visible. Śiva is the Supreme deity, but the Purāṇa gives equal status for the trinity and one is enjoined to worship them with equal devotion.

The Skanda purāṇa is usually assigned the thirteenth place in the list of the eighteen Purāṇas. The Venkateshvara edition of the Skanda purāṇa comprises of seven Khaṇḍās (books) Mahēśvara, Vaiṣṇava, Brahmā, Kāśi, Avanti, Nāgara and Prabhāsa, Arunācala. The extent Skanda Purāṇa contains about 81,000 verses. The division of the work shows that the Purāṇa grew up into a huge bulk with the addition of parts which could never come from the same hand or belong to the same age that the Khaṇḍās which now constitute the printed Skanda Purāṇa.

**Skanda Purāṇa and its Saṁhitās:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Saṁhitā</th>
<th>No. of Slokās</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Sanatkumār saṁhitā</td>
<td>36,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Sūta saṁhitā</td>
<td>6,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Sanskara saṁhitā</td>
<td>30,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Vaiṣṇava saṁhitā</td>
<td>5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Brahmā saṁhitā</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) Saur saṁhitā</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>81,000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each Khaṇḍa is derived into sub sections which contain a number of chapters.

**The Seven Khaṇḍās are:**

1) **Mahēśvara Khaṇḍa:** Sub divided into Kedāra-khaṇḍa, Kumārikā khaṇḍa and Arunācala Mahātmyam, Purvārdha and Uttarārdha.

2) **Vaiṣṇava Khaṇḍa:** Sub divided into Venkatacalā Mahātmyam, Purusottamakṣetra Mahātmyam, Badarikāśrama Mahātmyam, Kārtikāmasa Mahātmyam, Mārgāśriṇā Mahātmyam, Bhāgavata Mahātmyam, Vaiśakhamāsa
Mahātmyam, Ayodhya Mahātmyam and Vāsudeva Mahātmyam. It contains tales related to Lord Viṣṇu's life and place, his virtues, & also description of holy places of pilgrimage, e.g. Puruṣottama tirtha etc., benefits of fasting, glorious effects of rituals bathing in Kārtika, Mārgāṣira and Vaiśāka months, description of subjects like knowledge, asceticism devotion Dharma, moral conduct, cleanliness Varṇāśrama Dharma, donation, expiation and faith etc. The remaining Khaṇḍas likewise deal with the glorious exploits of Lord Śiva, Viṣṇu and Brahmā.

3) **Brahā Khaṇḍa:** Setu khaṇḍa, Dharmāvanya Mahātmyam, Cāturmāsyā Mahātmyam and Brahīottara khaṇḍa.

4) **Kāsi Khaṇḍa:** It is divided into Purvārdha and Uttarārdha.

5) **Avanti Khaṇḍa:** is sub divided into Avanti khaṇḍa, Caturṣasitiśinga Mahātmyam and Revā Khaṇḍa.

6) **Nāgara Khaṇḍa:** It contain Hātākesvara kṣetra Mahātmyam and Cāturmāsyā Mahātmyam.

7) **Prabhāsa Khaṇḍa:** It is divided into Prabhāsa Khaṇḍa, Vastrāpathakṣetra Mahātmyam, Arbudācalā Mahātmyam and Dvārkā Mahātmyam.

**Vāsudeva Mahātmyam**

Vāsudeva Mahātmyam is not an independent work, but it forms integral part of the Skanda Purāṇa, which is having maximum numbers of stanzas. The Skanda Purāṇa is the biggest Purāṇa, out of the eighteen Purāṇas, according to the number of stanzas. The Vālkhiya, Brahottama, Kāshi, Revā, Kedār, Prabhāsa & Viṣṇu Khaṇḍa are seven Khaṇḍas of Sk.P. The Viṣṇu Khaṇḍa is divided into three parts, Karmakāṇḍa, Gyānkāṇḍa and Upāsanākāṇḍa. The group of 32 chapters containing 1415 stanzas of Upāsanā Kāṇḍa is known as Vāsudeva Mahātmyam; in which it described about glory of God Nārāyaṇa i.e. Vāsudeva. So it is called Vāsudeva Mahātmyam.

The religious teachers and the scholars of the theological India, divided eighteen Purāṇas in three parts wonderfully for readers and listeners based on the three qualities.

1) **Sātvika**
2) Rājasika

3) Tāmasika

It is seen that these types of the parts are made up on the basis of the description of the incarnation of the Lord. According to Rāmānuja, who was the preceptor of Vaiśṇava, believed that Skanda is the son of Śiva according to Itiḥāsa and Purāṇa. Viṣṇu is the God of Sāttvika virtue but Śiva is the God of Tāmas. For this reason, he might have this participation which is quite possible. The life-style of Brahmā, Viṣṇu & Śiva are given by the highest Puruṣottama Nārāyaṇa’s energy and direct inspirations. Śrimad Nimbārkāchārya and Śrimad Mādhavācārya are also Vaiśṇava but it is not found that they have considered the Skanda purāṇa as Tāmas purāṇa.

Viṣṇu occupies a position second only to Śiva. One whole Khanda i.e. Vaiśṇava is devoted to his worship, places sacred to him and the description of various Vaiśṇava Vratas. Importance of Vaiśnavi Vidyā is great. His various incarnations such as Vārāha, Kurma, Matsya have been referred to. Besides his popular forms such as Kṛṣṇa, Jagannātha and Satyanārāyana have also been eulogized. Though the Sk.P. is primarily a Śaivite one, yet it accords equal honour to Viṣṇu.

Unity of Viṣṇu and Śiva

Gauging the situation Śiva declared that all the other Gunās had in their religious worship made distinction between Śiva and Viṣṇu not knowing their true nature and thus their minds were clouded by ignorance. Śiva further declared the unity of his form with that of Viṣṇu in the following incisive words:

यतानात्ककचबधय चितन्वयं मम विद्रहम् ।
lathāpi vṛṣyathe vishṇum vede saratnān ॥ Vn. 67.37

"If you cut my body into two with an edge saw, even then you will find the eternal presence of Viṣṇu in my form". Sometimes Śiva is described as being edified in ten Purāṇas. Thus, to all appearances, the Purāṇa advocate devotion to a particular deity. But a critical examination of the purānic literature clearly shows how the same purāṇa advocates the
worship of more than one deity belonging to the same sect or deities of different Sects, among whom one is Supreme.49

According to classification of Purāṇas, the Matsya, Kūrma, Linga, Śiva, Skanda and Agni are Tāmas or Purāṇas of darkness from the prevalence of the quality of Tāmas, ignorance, ‘gloom’. But another remarks that those in which the Mahātmyās of Hari or Viṣṇu prevails are Sātvika or pure. Therefore, they are infact, Vaiṣṇava Purāṇas. if we study the Purāṇas critically, we shall find the contrary is the cause. One story alone should be enough to impress itself on the mind of even an ignorant man. There was a sage named Atri who had a wife by the name of Anasuyā. They had three sons Soma, Dattātreya and Durvāsā. A voice in the air is said to have exclaimed to the father thus: ‘Soma is the incarnation of Brahmā, Dattātreya of Viṣṇu and Durvāsā of Śiva. Why art thou called Atri which means not three separate because Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva are not three separate once but one in three’. Quotation from the Purāṇas may be adduced to show that the trinity is but three aspects of one Lord.51 Viṣṇu occupies a position second only to Śiva. Whole Viṣṇu Khanda is devoted to Lord Viṣṇu’s worship, places sacred to him and the description of various Vaiṣṇava vratas. Actually there is no difference between Śiva and Viṣṇu. Many of the epithets of Śiva are also to given Viṣṇu at many places. We find Śiva praising to Lord Viṣṇu and some other places Śiva and Viṣṇu regarded as equal.52.

Looking at the parts of Purāṇas developed by religious teachers and scholars, it is seen that for the reasons only they had interfered in the internal arrangement of Purāṇas. Due to this interference, the situation of Vāsudeva Mahātmyam in Skanda Purāṇa has been violated. In some part of India, it does not appear at all in the Skanda Purāṇa where as in some part of India, it has only 2 or 3 Chapters or more. There is no sign of Vāsudeva Mahātmyam in the Skanda Purāṇa deduced as Tāmaspurāṇa by Śri Rāmānujāchārya. As according to the details of Vāsudeva Mahātmyam, it has to accept by all including the religious teachers and scholars that it is a pure Sattvagauna Pradhān scripture according to its description of Lord Vāsudeva.

Before we start to think about the details and place of Vāsudeva Māhatmyam, it is useful to think about one basic question, Śri Rāmānujāchārya who is having a place in the
own regular succession of priest and who had refused to accept the scripture by nothing as \textit{Tāmas} and scripture which had been accepted as the beloved scripture by the devine being \textit{Śrī Swāminārāyaṇa} - Why?"

The devine being \textit{Śrī Swāminārāyaṇa} says,

"This is true that destruction is an action of \textit{Tāmas} type. But it is not proper to define the action of destruction by Lord Śiva in the universe of \textit{Tāmas} type. The action of the destruction being done by humankind in favour of some personal aim or with self interest or for the joy of their own is called \textit{Tāmas} and Terrible; but the action of destruction by the Lord Śiva is not of this type. In, massacring the universe, Lord Śiva does not have his own self interest or to obtain joy. It is clear on the basic of the name of Lord Śiva i.e. \textit{Śaṁkara} that the energy to massacring the Universe does not exist in Lord Śiva of his own accord or nature.

It is an energy stimulated by Lord Śrī Puruṣottam Nārāyaṇa (Viṣṇu). Lord Nārāyaṇa stimulated two types of energy in him for the sake of welfare of all living beings. Therefore Śiva means Śaṁkara uses that energy only to obtain delight of Lord Puruṣottam Nārāyaṇa, Due to it, this does not call as \textit{Tāmas} or terrible. Other reason an innermost, not a single chapter of 32 chapters or not a single stanza of 1415 stanta of Śrī Vāsudeva Mahātmīyam is not like so that the reader or the listener can inspire to believe that it is the \textit{Tāmas Purāṇa} or Volume. The courteous reader can understand the reality immediately from the essence of the details of subjects described in it. By that also it can say that it is not \textit{Tāmas} volume. The presentation of non-violence in it is of very excellent kind. It is described that the fight between the God means ‘Sat’ & demons means ‘Asat’ to obtain final welfare for nectar, unitedly, by abolishing their own existence, which tells that it is not a \textit{Tāmas} volume.

Due to mention of the \textit{Vāsudeva Mahātmīyam} of Ṣikṣāpatrī, where the name of the \textit{Purāṇa} was given after the name of son of Lord Śiva, is not \textit{Tāmas}. So the devine being Śrī Swāminārāyaṇa accepted the \textit{Vāsudeva Mahātmīyam} as the beloved scripture by keeping aside the belief of Rāmānujachārya with due respect.
As beloved scripture from the other scriptures of that time, the meaning of these scriptures were different, carried out by different translators and commentators. Sometimes it becomes difficult to understand that which meaning is correct and proper to comprehend. For the sake of the followers not to face any difficulty, the devine being Sri Swāminārāyaṇa had explained the reality of apparent words, in Śikṣāpatrī (Admonition bulletin) (Stanza 101-102) that

(1) Out of all those scriptures, the moral which is to be comprehended.

(2) The promises which are more proper to consider in the life.

(3) The significance of the scriptures.

Out of the accepted beloved scriptures in the admonition bulletin i.e. Śikṣāpatrī, the ‘Vāsudeva Mahātmyam’ is on the seventh rank. It is essential to know and to understand the details of the accepted beloved scriptures by his own accord by devine being Sri Swāminārāyaṇa, by the all followers.53

VM is the root couse of Swāminārāyaṇa Sect.54 The devine Sri Swāminārāyaṇa had accepted the VM not only as the beloved scripture but he had given the details about the part, the volume & the Purāṇa in which it is. Therefore the devotees have to read, learn & understand about the values of the VM. The capable commentator of admonition bulletin (Śikṣāpatrī) Śrī Shatānandamuni has discussed stanza 94 in the introduction of VM.55 The scripture namely VM is one and only one, unique scripture having 32 chapters which shows the majesty of fascinating appearance of Lord Sri Kṛṣṇa & is told by Sri Nar-Narāyāṇa himself.

Discoursing the stanza 94, Sukmuni also told that56 means in Śrī Vāsudeva Mahātmyam, the special description about referential, fascinating appearance of Lord Śrī Puruṣottama Narāyāṇa.

The Lord Śrī Swāmi Narāyāṇa told, after listeing VM again for about one month that “सर्ववाज्ञातस्मातस्येद्मूलमित्य वदीर्वज्” means the root of our realization knowledge is described in Śrī VM.57 It is described in the Vachanāmrut more than three times about the importance and usefulness of VM on the day of Falgun Sud Dwitiya in 1879, in the
conference of saints and devotees from all above the world in the royal court of Dādākhācharat Gadhadā, the divine being Śrī Śvāminārāyana told that Śrimad Bhāgawat is doubtlessly good but there is no other volume like the VM existing due to Skanda Purāṇa, because those who have reflected excessive about religion, knowledge, renunciation devotion and non violence due to that volume. The way the knowledge is to be gained from Vyāssutra and Gītā, the same way the knowledge is also gained from VM also. 58 'Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa told about the characteristics of Saints and religious practices of Varnāśrama in Śrī VM. 60

The discribed scriptures in the Śikṣapatri i. e. admonition bulletin for the dependents is developed in two parts.

(1) Obvious scriptions to learn & to teach
(2) Scriptures to observe in the life by deep understanding - scriptures of cult and other scriptures. 62 The scriptures of the cult means the proven scriptures of divine being Śrī Śvāminārāyana by himself.

Lord Śrī Śvāminārāyana is supreme Omniscient and competent, and the composition of the scriptures of the cult are at work & will be at work was known by only himself. Reality of the history is that he himself ordered to his own Saints to complete the composition to the scriptures of the cult quickly. Therefore, it is not possible that he gives the different order for the short time. He had given clear order in SP(203 stanza) to know about the principles of the cult and the traditions of religions practice in details from the scriptures of the cult. Therefore, it is ordered to learn, to teach and to perform religious discourse to attract other people who desire for salvation other than those followers of the cult. The meaning of this argument is that the supreme, omniscient and competent divine being Śrī Śvāminārāyana was so much incompetent that for the sake of attraction of other people, who desire for the salvation had to become dependent on other matters which are described useless now. Obviously the argument and the meaning comes out of it are false. The Lord Śrī Śvāminārāyana were supreme and competent and is too, therefore he gave the moral substance guidance to his followers by synthesising other scriptures by keeping his following feeling sights as "good is mine", by showing
unusual fearlessness; and explained them. Then after, he gave explanation for his talks and his methods, which scriptures are how much and more useful and important? especially VM.

So, it is important for the followers to know & to understand, what is written in the 'VM.

What Vāsudeva Mahātmyam is?

VM was spoken by the son Skanda of Lord Śiva, which is one of the basic scripture of the ‘Bhāgawata Dharmā’. Its conventional knowledge can be explained as below:

Lord Śvāminārāyaṇa means Bādarinārāyaṇa i.e. Śri Nārāyaṇa himself blessed and preached the knowledge of Bhāgawata Dharma to Nārada very first and therefore, he was called ‘Ādi Āchārya’. Then Nārada explained the significance of the knowledge to Vyāsa and to Śūkdevji by Vyāsji. Then Śūkdevji explained to sut purani & 88000 yogis. At last it was conveyed to Kārtikeya and he spread it all over the world namely ‘Śri Vāsudeva Mahātmyam’ Brahmānand Śvāmi explained & sang this conventional knowledge of ‘Bhāgawata Dharma’ in his Kirtan.

Commentary: ‘Vaiśṇava - Vallabhā’

On the day Margasirsh Sud 6 of 1886 i.e (Champa Śaṣṭhi), Śri Dinānāth Bhatt wrote commentary on Śri Vāsudeva Mahātmyam namely ‘Vaiśṇava - Vallabhā’ by the order of the divine being Śri Śvāminārāyaṇa even by staying at Gadhapur (Saurastra).

The other commentaries written on VM are

1) Śri Mādhavdasji the disciple of Śri Gapālanad Śvāmi wrote the ‘Vīdvyāvhyoga Tikā' known as ‘Swārth Prabodhī'.

2) Learned Saint Akhaṇḍ Chintāmaṇi wrote the

’Svānyāartha prakāṣikā’.

The Title Vaiśṇava Vallabhā
The title is self explanatory as the world "Vaisnava" means an ardent devotee of Lord Visnu (Vasudeva) and "Vallabha" i.e Lord Vasudeva is the most dearer to His Ekantika Vaisnava devotees. It means this commentary elaborated the principles of Vaisnavism and ritual. Which are most necessary for Ekantika Dharma. A devotee of Lord Vasudeva is supposed to follow all these rules. Since the V.V gives explanation of all those principles in detail and in a very simple manner. It is considered and accepted as most dear by all Vaisnavas. In Swaminarayana sect also it is considered very significant and authoritative work.

**Importance of 'Vaisnava - Vallabha'**

The details of 32 chapters of "Vaisnava - Vallabha" as follows.

The commentary "Vaisnava - Vallabha" begins with this verse,

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सकलेऽश्रवणसमपत्त उद्दाध्यापवर्तकः
श्रीसवामीसहजान्ते जयते कन्तलघामः
श्री वासुदेवमाहात्म्याखिलार्थ वैष्णवम् स सवयम्
यथा तत्प्रभुत्तमति व्याकूँ तत्तस्मातः
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and ends with this verse,

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तस्याज्ञ्येऽर्थिता यथा वैष्णववत्तमाः
श्री वासुदेवमाहात्म्यादि का तुष्यतुः तेन सः
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Here this commentary started with what are the means of getting highest desired fruit without obstacles and answered by this verse as

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अकामः सर्वकामो वा मोक्षकामः उदारधी
तीव्रेण पदस्योगेन यजेत पुरुष परमः
तस्मैव सर्वव्यत्वं पक्ष्यः कर्तव्यं मनुवैधुषः
निः श्रेयस्करं किचिद्वस्तोत्न्यवेति ह्यत्यातः
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(S. P. 113)
According to above stanzas of ch. 1 to 4 to worship the highest *Purusottam Kṛṣṇa* without desires or with desire\(^6\) means one should worship to the Lord *Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa* with total surrender and with his own dharma for the accomplishment of desire.

The very purpose of *V.M.* is to suggest the easiest path to know and to aquire the grace of Lord *Nārāyaṇa*. Hence it begins with the questions as to which is the way to recognise and gain the *Darśan* of Lord? because the way of penance is more difficult. And it is the most difficult is reading, understanding the meaning of the scriptures like *Veda* etc. To overcome this difficulties, the simplest path of devotion is described here which is otherwise called as *"Ekāntika Dharma."* Which most important part of this commentary *V.V.*

Chapters 5 to 9, relates to the nonviolent religion with example of king *Uparicara vasu*, the strict devotee of Lord *Viṣṇu*. Chapters 10 to 13 deals with the religious legend of *Samudra Manthan* (charming of ocean), the fight between Gods and demons to gain nector.

Chapters 14 to 15 is regarding the auspicious tales of appearance of *Laxmi* the goddess of wealth through charming of Ocean and her submission to Lord *Narāyana* (*Viṣṇu*). In Chapters 16 to 17, there is a description of Goddess *Saraswati* and her holy locations. In Chapter 18 is about the incarnation of Lord *Vāsudeva* and his incarnation in future living. Chapters 19\(^ th \) to 23\(^ rd \) are about the knowledge given by *Badarinārāyaṇa* to *Nārada* regarding living beings, about the celibate, about the householder in which it includes the rules to be followed by the householders, males and female and about the rules of ascetics.

Chapters 24\(^ th \) to 25\(^ th \) are About the appearance of knowledge & Asceticism.

Chapters 26\(^ th \) to 29\(^ th \) are about the *Karmayoga* means the worship of the God, its necessity and its usefulness to be performed by all humanbeings, with their manners. In the manners of worshipping God, the formation of tribatary assembly for worshipping God, *(Bhāgawadapūja Mandal)* to discribed in the sense of how, where, when and who can form it? The chapter 30, relates to the details of all eight parts of *अष्टाङ्गयोजन* 'The chapter-31 is about the Lord Śrī *Nārāyaṇa*’s praise i.e. the formula sacred to Śrī *Nārāyaṇa*.

29
Four chapters of this commentary mainly deals with own religion according to the
four parts of the life of the human beings which is for the sake of the people who desire for
the salvation and knowledge and observance in the life the truth of the appearance of the
own religion. After that, it is explained in next 2 chapters about the virtuous religion,
knowledge, ascetics devotion. Lord is always having two hands, devine, accessible clear.
The intention of explaining procedure of the worship of the God is to feel the values of the
doctrine in the life by attaining it in daily routine.

The devine, accessible, clear God having two hands is always surrender by his own
devotees and followers. To explain the truth of different incarnations in the scriptures are
all inseperable through the examples, it is explained the planning and formation of tributary
assembly for worshipping the God.

Lord Vāsudava is the only a lord of the universe who performs penance for the
welfare of the world in form of Śri Nārāyaṇa at Badarikāśram. He is the masters of yogā,
stābiliged in questionce. He is the great preceptor of parāṣhāsās. He is the all pervading
and the most prominent one among sages. He is the imperishable soul, the controller of
Jīvās and gods. He is the only witness of everything, the great person, the self dependent
one, not controlled by others. One can get permanent emancipation while worshipping
such god, Śri Vāsudeva with Ekāntika Dharma.

The commentary completely discribed the apeariance and nature of Paramātmā
Śri Vāsudeva who can be attained by Upāsanā and such attainable Upāsanā with all it
parts. So the Lord Śri Swāminārāyaṇa has himself accepted the supremacy of the scripture
VM and also VV Commentary of Śri Dinānāth Bhatt in his Sect with great respect.

Footnotes -

1. SK. P. Prabhāsā - 2.92, Kāsi, I. 2.96
2. History of Indian Literature : Winternitz - P. 529
4. Kautilya - Arthasāstra - I. 5 P. 10
5. SK. P. Kāsi, purva. 2. 100
6. A History of Indian Literature by Winernitz - v - 1 P. 518.
8. SK. P. Prabhāsa – 2.84
9. Analysis of the purāṇas by Prof. H. H. Wilson P. V
10. Amarkosa - 1. 6. 5
11. Presidential address, History. Section AIOC XVIII session P -61
13. Presidential address History section proceedings & Transactions of the AIOC XVIII session P. 61
14. Yasmat purā tanasya kalpasya purāṇāni Vidurbudhāh (Matsya 53-63
15. In Viṣṇu pu. Sridhara states swayam drśtaratha kanam prāhuh akhānakam budhah akhyānakam budhāh Halayudha kaśa (p-430) gives the following derivation of the term purāṇa: Puranah (Purvasminkālepūrā bhave iti. Purā nītate iti nītāṇatvaṅca.)
18. Chā UP. VII- 1.2
19. Amar - I 6.5
20. Viṣṇu III- 6.15
21. Studies in expics & Purāṇas, pusalkar A.D. XIV.
22. An introduction to Purāṇas, Raj kumar pruthi UBSPD- P.11
23. Amar - 1.6.5
25. Viṣṇu pu-1.2.25
26. Bhāpu- 12.7.27

31
27. Agnicipu- A study, S.D. Gyani P-9
28. Bhāpu. 2.10. 7-10.
29. Bhā pu-12.7.9
30. Studies of Upapurāṇās, S.D. Gyane P-2
31. Studies of Upapurāṇās S.D. Gyane P-3
34. Bhāpu-XII 7-10 X 7-22.
35. The Synthetic philosophy of the Bhā pu. by Rāmnārayaṇa Vyās, -P-5
36. Matsya Pu-P-250.
38. SK.P. Prabhāsa 2-90
40. Synthetic philosophy of the Bhā.pu. Ramnārayaṇa Vyās P. 10 -11
41. SKP. Nāgara Ch-263, H.C. Ray chaudhari JHQ -5, P. 130
42. J.R.A.S. E.H. I. Smith P. 23
43. SKP. with English translation G.P. Bhatt V. 49 part-1 P-IX
44. An Introduction to purāṇa, Rajkumar Pruthi P-56
45. SK. VI. 242 16
46. Vāmapi Pu 67,26-27-28-35
47. Agni Purāṇa A study, S. D. Gyani P-28
48. Analysis of the Purāṇāś, H.H. wilson preface XII.

52. *SKP.* A study Savitra Saxena.

53. *S.J.P.* -4, 45 Staza 7-8


55. वेदांत व्यासूदेश्यों श्रीमद्भागवतामिधम्
   पुराण भारते तु श्रीविष्णुनामसहस्रकरम्। ९३।।
   तथा श्रीभगवद्गीता नीतिश्च विदुरोदिता ।
   श्रीवासुदेवमहायः स्वान्तवैण्यविधा। ९४।।

56. परमवर्गमूत्तरकर्ता विशेषप्रतिपति श्रीवासुदेवमहाय: विशेषः।

57. *S.J. P.-4*, A 45 Stanza -8

58. *VGMP* -28

59. *VLS* -9

60. *V.V.P.* 18,

61. मिथ्यापावादः करिमंबिदपि स्वार्थस्य सिद्धः
   नारोपयो नापश्वदान्व मार्शीयः कविचन । २०।। S.P. Stanza 20

62. वेदांत व्यासूदेश्यों श्रीमद्भागवतामिधम्
   पुराण भारते तु श्रीविष्णुनामसहस्रकरम्। ९३।।
   तथा श्रीभगवद्गीता नीतिश्च विदुरोदिता ।
   श्रीवासुदेवमहायः स्वान्तवैण्यविधा। ९४।। S.P.

63. तम अमलरंगाते साधो
   पथम बीज बदरीपति बोधयं, नास्ते के उस्मांही
   नारद पास व्यासमुनि ले के, शुक जोगी कु पायो
   सो शुक ते ले सूत पुराणी, पीना खबर अध्यासी
   निशिनिः अही अमलके ढाके, घुमत सहस अलयासी।

64. सर्वकर्मणेन तमभवच्छ विधि विन्दृत मानवः।।
   धर्मेण सहिता कृषणमति: कार्यति ॥

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