

SYNOPSIS OF THE THESIS
 "CULTURAL HISTORY FROM THE MATSYA-PURĀNA"

STATEMENT No. 1

HOW THE PRESENT WORK TENDS TO THE
 GENERAL ADVANCEMENT OF KNOWLEDGE:

"The Purānas occupy a unique position in Indian literature both sacred and secular" especially as they are the literature of the masses and the Purānic studies are very fruitful for comparative studies in mythology, religion, philosophy and legendology, and over and above this, they are very important for the understanding and study of ancient Indian history and culture, for the Vedic interpretation and the linguistic history of Sanskrit.

The history of Sanskritic studies shows that the long-neglected Purānic studies were first brought to the notice of Indologists by Wilson and Pargiter. The importance of the Purānas as one of the fruitful sources of ancient Indian history and culture~~as~~ was

soon recognised, and the studies on political history by various writers appeared, but the cultural studies were neglected; however, the data on Hindu rites and customs enshrined in the Purānic literature have been studied by Dr. R.C. Hazra. But studies of individual Purānas from a cultural point of view are yet a long-felt desideratum, except a doctorate thesis of Dr. D.R. Patil, viz. Cultural History from the Vāyupurāna. It was the original plan of Dr. Patil to reconstruct the Kulturgeschichte from the Vāyupurāna, Viṣṇupurāna, Matsya-Purāna (MP) and Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna, but he had to abandon the long project on account of the exigencies of time and merely concentrate on the Vāyupurāna. Since then, there is yet no study of the MP from a cultural point of view. There are two monographs, viz. 1 - The Matsya-Purāna - A study by V.R.R. Dikshitar, and 2 - Die Indische Flutsage und das Matsya-Purāna by Hohenberger. Thus the selection of the MP for a study would appear to be justified not only because it is one of the "older works of the Purāna literature or at least one of those works which have preserved most of the ancient texts", but also of

its rich cultural data and linguistic peculiarities. And moreover, in view of the paucity of cultural studies of the Purāṇas, there seems to be a longfelt need for an intensive study of the MP from a cultural point of view, where the data on the various aspects of cultural history can be critically discussed at length.

I humbly try to present here my thesis entitled, "Cultural History from the Matsya-Purāṇa" which may remove this longfelt desideratum. A perusal of the synopsis submitted herewith will show the subject-matter of my thesis and the topics discussed therein.

In general the work presented here specially adds to the existent knowledge in the following important points-regarding India's past viz. (a) some aspects of promiscuity in ancient Indian society, (b) the mutual relations of Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism, (c) the history of Sāṅkhya and Yoga, (d) some philosophical terms, etc. Another important feature of this work is that the treatment and interpretation of the data are done especially from a 'sociological' point of view wherever possible.

It is in these among many other ways that this humble work contributes to the general advancement of knowledge.

STATEMENT No. 2

SOURCES, INDEBTEDNESS AND ORIGINALITY

In the preparation of the present work, I have fully drawn upon all the available literature in print in many languages. An acknowledgement has been fully made in proper places.

I studied the text and the relevant literature and tried to express my own views after a critical study.

S Y N O P S I S

CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION

After pointing out in brief the interrelation between society and culture, the importance of the purānas in the study of Indian history and culture, mythology etc. is pointed out along with the enumeration of the sources of Indian history and culture. Incidentally is also mentioned the need for the critical edition of the Purānas. Then is discussed the problem of the date and the home of the MP and this is followed by a discussion viz. how far the MP fulfills the classical pañcalaksana definition of a Purāna + and the classificatory nomenclature etc. Finally the influences of other literature on the MP is succinctly alluded to.

CHAPTER II - SOCIAL STRUCTURE

After a brief introductory note on the concept of social structure are discussed the concepts of Jāti and Varna which are very useful in the study of the caste-system. Then are taken up the problems

like the theory of the origin of the Varna-system according to the MP followed by a discussion on the rights, privileges and the status of the four social orders including the problem of the Ksatriyan Brahmins and the mixed castes. In order to complete the picture of the society, functions, duties etc. of the ascetics are also referred to. The phenomenon of the social mobility is also referred to. The Āśrama-organisation which is a kindred institution of the Varna-organisation is discussed by recording the views of the MP thereon as the former touches the man as an individual in contrast to the latter which touches the man in mass. This is followed by a treatment of the four human goals by MP. And this occasions the discussion of the doctrine of the triple 'debt'. Then is treated the system of education as reflected in the MP. This treatment of social structure is concluded by noting the views of the MP about the rights and status of slaves.

CHAPTER III - MARRIAGE, FAMILY AND THE POSITION OF WOMEN

The chapter is divided into four sections. The first section deals with the institution of marriage

by discussing the traces of promiscuity, propinquitous marriages, forms of marriages, 'intercaste' marriages, limitations of marriage, marriageable age, qualifications of the bride and the groom, marriage-procession etc., levirate-system and kinds of son.

The second section deals with the institutions of family and discusses the relations of the wife and husband, the father and son, the status and position of the father and son, the mores of relation of the daughter-in-law, parents-in-law and other relatives-in-law, relations of the daughter and parents and the interplay of relations amongst the other relatives.

The third section deals with the position of women and notes the sentiments at the birth of a daughter. This section also discusses the topics like the education of and yogic practices by women, bride's part in the choice of her mate, married life, women as mother, position of a widow, women and religion, seclusion of women, attitude towards and the treatment of the female captives, women as avadhyā and as objects of enjoyment. Moreover, the views of the MP about women's nature etc. and the power of a pativrata are noted.

The fourth section deals with the subject of prostitutes, residence and duties, status and position and general remarks about them.

CHAPTER IV - POLITICAL STRUCTURE

This chapter is divided into three sections.

The topics treated in section I - The King and the State - are : the origin and the nature of the state and the king, the theory of divinity of king, concept of the state, forms of government, nature of kingship, non-monarchical constitution, interstate relations, expedients and the Sādgunya theory.

The second section deals with the system of administration. Herein under the heading of monarchy are discussed the following topics:- qualities, qualifications and equipments of a king, his functions and duties, his place in the constitution.

Under the heading of ministers and other officers are discussed the following topics:- necessity of appointing ministers and other officers, their qualifications etc., consultation with ministers, list of functionaries, their qualities and qualifications, espionage and taxation.

Then follows the third section on 'War and Weapons' with a discussion on the following topics:- causes of war, ethics of war, types of war, composition of the army, banners, war and peace. And a list of weapons is appended at the end of the chapter.

CHAPTER V - RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY
(Religious Systems)

This chapter is divided into twelve sections. In the first section on Vaiṣṇavism, the following topics are dealt with:- etymology of the word Viṣṇu, a general description of the deity, particularly his epithets, weapons, emblems, functions etc., Viṣṇu and other gods, his consorts and abode, Viṣṇu as Vāsudeva-Nārāyaṇa and Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa, theory of incarnation, and different incarnations, the doctrine of Vyūha and the trinitarian concept.

Then follows the second section on 'Śaivism' with a discussion on the following topics:- a general description of the deity particularly his epithets, weapons, abode, etc., his eight forms and Yoga, Rudras, Gaṇas of Śiva, Śiva and Sūrya, Śiva and Viṣṇu, some Śiva-episodes, Rudra as Kāla, Śiva and his family, Skanda, Gaṇeśa, Bhairava form of Śiva, Ardhanārīśvara

form, Liṅga-worship and dominance of Śiva over other gods.

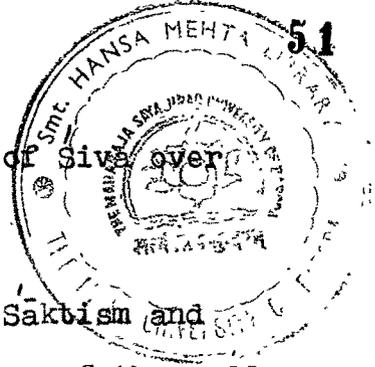
The third section deals with Śaktism and discusses following topics:- eulogy of the goddess-worship, functions of Pārvatī, origin of the Mātrkās, Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava mātrkās, etc.

The sections IV-XI deal with the following cults and sects:- Brahmā-cult, Lunar-cult, Liṅgāyā-tana Ārādhyas, Datta-cult, some minor sects, Jainism, Buddhism and heretical sects.

The section XII deals with the iconographical data pertaining to the various deities subsumed under the aforementioned religious systems.

CHAPTER VI - RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY (Philosophical Trends)

This chapter is divided into two sections: the first section deals with the schools of thought viz. the Sāṅkhya and the Yoga from their historical point of view, as well as the art and practice of Yoga. This is followed by a treatment of the philosophy of Fate.



The views of the MP regarding philosophical topics such as nature of God, the soul, the world, the means of emancipation, doctrine of transmigration, etc. are discussed in detail in section II.

CHAPTER VII - SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC LIFE

In this chapter the following topics are treated:-

Food and drink, dress and ornaments, customs and conventions, beliefs and superstitions, sports, pastimes and festivities, weights and measurements, numismatic data, occupations - agriculture and others.

- APPENDIX I : Brief Synopsis of the MP.
- APPENDIX II : Chronological Table of chapters of the MP according to Dr. R. C. Hazra.
- APPENDIX III : Geographical and Ethnic Data in the MP.
- APPENDIX IV : Flora and Fauna in the MP.
- APPENDIX V : Editions and Translations of the MP.