

## CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION  
=====Introductory :

Society is an organised set of individuals with a given way of life, as well as an aggregate of social relations and the aggregate of people and the relations between them, and then culture is the way of life or the content of the relations or the component of accumulated resources, material as well as non-material which people inherit, employ, transmute, add to and transmit; and thus society, culture and community involve one another.<sup>1</sup> Thus the study of society and culture is of absorbing interest to a student of social, cultural and

---

1. Firth Raymond, Elements of <sup>Social</sup> Organisation, pp. 27-28.

and religious history.

Sources of Indian History and Culture :

The student of ancient Indian history and culture has at his disposal the written and unwritten sources i.e. (1) literary sources, (2) archaeological finds - inscriptions, coins, monuments and (3) foreign accounts for the reconstruction of the history and culture of India's past.<sup>2</sup> The literary sources are e.g. the Vedas, the Epics, the Purāṇas, the Buddhist and Jain works etc.

Importance of Purāṇic Studies :

It was "at the starting of the India studies in the last decades of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries the purāṇas were regarded as of no historical value on account of the confused and conglomeration of legendary and historical events in the Purāṇas as also their peculiar ideas of "ages" and "cosmography".<sup>3</sup> But the help which

---

2. For details vide Majumdar R.C. & Pusalkar A.D. (Ed.), The Vedic Age, pp. 47 ff.

3. Pusalkar A.D., Presidential Address, History Section, Proceedings and Transactions of the AIOC XVIII Session, Annamalainagar, December, 1955, Pt. I, p. 61.

Col. Speke received from the Purāṇas in discovering<sup>4</sup> the course of the river Nile in Nubia (Kuśadvīpa) and the pioneer studies by Wilson and Pargiter drew the attention of scholars to this long neglected form of literature. This led to the orientation of the attitude towards the Purāṇas and their studies; and this augmented the study of political history enshrined in the Purāṇas.<sup>5</sup> "It is a good sign that the Purāṇas are now accepted as one of the important sources of Indian history"<sup>6</sup>, as it is needless to say that "they constitute an important source of the cultural history of India as they throw a

---

4. Pusalkar A.D., op.cit., p. 61.

5. For the account of the progress of Purāṇic studies, vide Pusalkar A.D., Studies in the Epics and Purāṇas, pp. 195 ff.

6. Pusalkar A.D., op.cit., p. 62.  
Dr. B. Subbarao makes an attempt to see how far our recent knowledge of Indian archaeology stands in relation to some hypotheses, after having summarized the merits and demerits of the best contributions so far to the study of our Tradition. For detail vide his "The Personality of India", Appendix I (Archaeology and Tradition), pp. 161 ff.

flood of light on the various aspects of the life and time. They occupy an intermediate position, broadly speaking between the Vedic age and the period of classical literature. They have been influencing the life of the people throughout the centuries and are valuable as supplying the materials for the study of such diverse subjects as religion and philosophy, folklore and ethnology, literature and sciences, history and geography, politics and sociology.<sup>7</sup> Over and above this they are important for the linguistic history of Sanskrit, Vedic interpretation and mythology. It is quite well known that the Śūdras and the weaker vessel were denied the benefits of enjoying the rich spiritual food enshrined in the Vedic literature as well as the use of the Vedic rites, mantras etc. This religious and spiritual disenfranchisement was compensated by supplying the Vedic material in a simple form which would be intelligible and inspiring to the Śūdras and others. This brings

---

7. Pusalkar A.D., op.cit., Introduction, p. xviii; for the historical value of the Purāṇas, vide *ibid*, pp. lxvi-lxviii; Dikshitar V.R.R., *PI*, 7, Vol. I, Introduction, pp. xxx ff.

out the multiple importance of the Purāṇas. It is a happy thing to note that the Sanskrit Commission recently appointed by the Government of India has also laid emphasis on the study of this branch of Sanskrit literature.

#### Need for Critical Editions :

In spite of the importance of the Purāṇic literature being acknowledged from various points of view "it is quite true that as yet we have no authoritative editions of the Purāṇas" remarked Professor R.D. Karmarkar.<sup>8</sup> It is now gratifying to learn that His Highness, the Maharaja of Banaras, has launched a scheme of bringing out critical editions of the Purāṇas - a project which would remove the long-felt desideratum. Incidentally it may be noted that Dr. John Brough examines the text - Critical Problem of the Pravara-Gotra - lists of the MP and remarks that "the early systematic position of the Matsya Purāṇa account

---

8. Karmarkar R.D., Presidential Address to the Classical Section, Proceedings and Transaction of the XVII AIOC, Ahmedabad, October-November, 1953, p. 87.

of the pravara-lists is beyond question..... the state of the Matsya text of the pravara lists is a notable revelation of the utter lack of the trustworthiness of the printed editions of the Purāṇa and even to judge by the variants noted by M<sub>2</sub> (i.e. ASS edition) of the Purāṇa manuscripts in general.<sup>9</sup> These remarks can be best judged in the light of the critical edition of the MP when it would be available.

#### H o m e :

Regarding the place of the composition of the MP there is no unanimity of opinion. South India, Nasik and the Narmadā Valley are claimed as the home of the MP by different scholars. The late Professor V.R.R. Dikshitar expressed the opinion that it "might have originated in South India",<sup>10</sup> on the assumption that the Matsya Purāṇa originally started with the Matsya tribe who were the habitants of the Matsya country. To this

---

9. Brough John, The Early Brahmanical System of the Gotra and Pravara, p. 48; for details vide *ibid*, pp.46-49.

10. Dikshitar V.R.R., The Matsya Purāṇa, A Study, p.24.

it is to be submitted with due deference to the late Professor's view that the MP sings nothing of the Matsya tribe. Moreover the Matsya country corresponds<sup>11</sup> to the modern territory of Jaipur."

"It included the whole of the present territory of Alwar with a portion of Bharatpur. The capital of the Matsya country was Virāṭanagaṇa (modern Bairat) named after its founder-king Virāṭa..... A branch of the Matsyas is similarly found in later days in the Vizagapatam region<sup>12</sup>. From this it is clear that in the subcontinent of India there were two territories - one in the north India and the second in the south India - which went by the name of the Matsya country. It is to be noted that the late Professor is aware of these two locations of this country<sup>13</sup>. In the face of the facts that the Matsya country claims two locations for its identifications it is of dubious value to give weightage to its identification in South India on such grounds that the Fish

---

11. Dikshitar V.R.R., op.cit., pp. 29 ff.

12. Majumdar R.C. and Pusalkar A.D.(Ed.),  
The Age of Imperial Unity, pp.11-12.

13. Dikshitar V.R.R., op.cit., pp.20-21.

appeared to Manu performing austerities on the Malaya hills (1.12) and the places like Rāmeśvara are mentioned in the MP. It is to be remembered that the places like Rāmeśvara are of pan-Indian fame and it is but natural that these places find a mention in the MP. According to the ŚB (1.8.1.5) and the Mbh (Cr.Ed. 3.185.44) the place of deluge is the Himalayas and the mention of the Malaya hills would at the most suggest that the attempt is made to shift the north Indian place of penance to south India, but even according to the MP 1.24 the place of scene shifts to the Ganges, a renowned river of north India. Thus the south India is not a convinc-<sup>14</sup>ing contender for the home of the MP.

The Andhra country appears to be suggested as the home of the MP by Pargiter when he writes (of course in a different context) that "there is an apparent indication that a compilation was begun in the latter part of the 2nd century in the Andhra

---

14. For the detailed arguments of Dikshitar V.R.R., vide *ibid*, pp. 19 ff. The detailed refutation of his arguments is not undertaken here as the view is unconvin<sup>ing</sup>g for obvious reasons.



King Vajñaśrī's reign, for 5 MSS of the Matsya (of which three appear to be independent, namely b, c and 1) speak of him as reigning in his ninth<sup>15</sup> or tenth year".

Dr. Haraprasad Shastri suggests that the place of composition of the MP was Nasik on the strength of the great prominence given to the region about the river Godāvarī in the MP 114.37-39,<sup>16</sup> but as pointed out by Dr. R.C. Hazra, "this suggestion seems to have a very weak basis, for these verses of the Matsya tally with Vā 45, 112-114, and it has been shown that the Matsya borrowed some chapters from the Vāyu. The close agreement of the majority of the geographical chapters in the two Purāṇas seems to confirm the indebtedness of the Matsya to the Vāyu."<sup>17</sup>

---

15. Pargiter F.E., Purāṇic Text of the Dynasties of the Kali Age, Introduction, p. xiii, fn.1.

16. Shastri Haraprasad, A Descriptive Catalogue of Sanskrit MSS in the collections of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Vol. V (Purāṇa MSS), Preface, p. cxc.

17. Hazra R.C., Studies in the Purāṇic Records on Hindu Rites and Customs, p. 52.

Dr. R.C. Hazra holds that the MP "was composed and circulated by Vaisṇavaite people living somewhere about the river Narmadā"<sup>18</sup> by arguing that when the indebtedness of the MP to the VP seems to be confirmed by the close agreement of the majority of the geographical chapters, one has "to look to those of its original chapters which have not been found borrowed from any other work. Such an one is Chap. 2. In it the river Narmadā, and not the famous Ganges, is said to remain even after the destruction of the world (cf. Mat.2,13-14). Elsewhere, in Chap. 15 (which most probably belongs to a little later date and which has a few verses in common with Vā 73), this river, "which flows through the Deccan" is called the 'mind-born daughter' of the Somapa Pitṛs living in the Mānasa-loka (cf.15, 25-28)".<sup>19</sup> Thus according to him these passages tend to suggest that the composition of the MP took place somewhere about the river Narmadā.

---

18. Hazra R.C., op.cit., p. 52.

19. Hazra R.C., op.cit., p. 52.

A.M.T. Jackson also opines that the MP may represent the original version of the work of the Brahmins on the Narmadā.<sup>20</sup> On the ground of the long list of place-names etc. on the Narmadā Rām Pratap Tripathi also opines that original bard-reciter had special connections with the Narmadā<sup>21</sup> Valley region.

Over and above the stray references eulogising the glory of the Narmadā there are nine chapters (Chs. 186-194) extolling the glory of the Narmadā. These chapters betray good acquaintance of the place-names, on the Narmadā Valley as well as that of the names of the distributaries and tributaries e.g. the confluence of a rivulet Kāverī with the Narmadā near Omkāresvara in the Madhya Pradesh is also mentioned in the MP (189.2 ff). This mention of their confluence is only possible if the compiler had good acquaintance of the Narmadā region; otherwise it would be silly on his part to speak of the

---

20. Jackson A.M.T., Epic and Purānic Notes, The Centenary Volume of the JBBRAS (1905), p.73.

21. R. Tri., Matsya<sup>Mahr</sup> Purāna (Hindi Translation), Introduction, p. 5.

confluence of the Kāverī of the South India with the Narmadā. Among the minor place-names mention may be made of Śuklatīrtha (192.3 ff), Koṭitīrtha (191.7 ff), Daśāśvamedha (193.21 ff) a sacred bathing place at Broach. All this tends to substantiate Dr. Hazra's view viz. the Narmadā-region as the home of the MP.

D a t e :

Amongst the eighteen Mahapurāṇas the MP is "one of the older works of the Purāṇa literature or at least one of those which have preserved the most ancient text and do fair justice to the definition of a "Purāṇa".<sup>22</sup> That the MP which has large later additions is one of the earliest and most authoritative Purāṇas - others being the BrP<sup>23</sup> and the VP-is also the view of Vincent Smith.<sup>23</sup> Incidentally it may be noted that according to

---

22. Winternitz M., History of Indian Literature, Vol. I, p. 575.

23. Smith Vincent A., The Early History of India, pp. 11-12.

Dr. R.G. Bhandarkar the VP is the oldest and the  
<sup>24</sup>  
 MP is next to it.

It is a matter of common knowledge that "all  
 dates given in Indian literary history are pins  
<sup>25</sup>  
 set up to be bowled down again" - and consequently  
 "there is not a single date in Sanskrit chronology  
<sup>26</sup>  
 which is not or has not been disputed". This  
 observation is much more true in the case of the  
 MP also, as "the determination of the date of the  
 composition of the Matsya Purāṇa, as we have it  
 now, is rather difficult. No one date is sufficient

- 
24. Bhandarkar R.G., Early History of the Dekkan,  
 p. 39. According to Dr. A.P. Karmarkar the MP  
 "happens to be the earliest of the Purāṇic texts.  
 Such supposition is absolutely in keeping with  
 the scope of the modern scholarship", The  
 Earliest Extant Purāṇa in Indian Literature,  
 Prin. Karmarkar Commemoration Volume, p. 81.

Pargiter holds that the Matsya version  
 of these dynasties of the Kali age is older  
 than those of the VP and BrP, op.cit.,  
 Introduction, p. xiv.

25. Whitney W.D., Sanskrit Grammar, Introduction,  
 p. xvii.
26. Growse F.S., Canda's Mention of Śrīharsa and  
 Kālidāsa, IA. Vol. II (1873), p. 306.

for it, because it has suffered through repeated<sup>27</sup> additions and losses", remarks Dr. R.C. Hazra.

A similar view is also expressed by MM Dr. P.V. Kane, when he writes, "the date of the Matsya Purāṇa is<sup>28</sup> far from being certain". However, Dr. R.C. Hazra remarks that "the date of the earlier form of the present Matsya seems to be the same as that of the Matsya's borrowing the chapters of the second group from the Vāyu i.e. about the last quarter of the<sup>29</sup> third or the first quarter of the fourth century A.D." According to MM Dr. P.V. Kane it "cannot be later<sup>30</sup> than the sixth century A.D." Elsewhere the same<sup>31</sup> scholar places it between 300 A.D. and 600 A.D. Professor V.R.R. Dikshitar spreads up the date of the MP "over a number of centuries commencing

---

27. Hazra R.C., op.cit., p. 26.

28. Kane P.V., The Kauṭilya and the Matsya Purāṇa, B.C. Law Volume, Part II, p. 15.

29. Hazra R.C., op.cit., p. 32.

30. Kane P.V., op.cit., p. 15.

31. Kane P.V., HDS, Vol. IV, Chronological Table, p. x.

probably with the third or fourth century B.C.  
 and ending with the third century A.D.<sup>32</sup> According  
 to Siriscandra Vidyarnava the MP "cannot be  
 postier to the year 225 A.D. if that date be taken  
 as the termination of the Andhra according to  
 Mr. V. Smith. It would be 432 A.D. according to  
 the Matsya Purāṇa."<sup>33</sup> According to Durgashankar  
 Shastri the material of the MP dealing with the  
 Purāṇic themes viz. Sarga, Pratisarga etc. is  
 as old as the third century A.D.,<sup>34</sup> whereas the  
 other material might have been inserted later on  
 and the whole Purāṇa might have been complete by  
 8th or 9th century but the portion mentioning the  
 name of Rādhā and Upapurāṇas might have been  
 inserted in the 10th or 11th century A. D.<sup>35</sup>

---

32. Dikshitar V.R.R., The Matsya Purāṇa, A Study,  
 pp. 71-72; for the details of his arguments,  
 vide ibid, pp. 35 ff and for a summary of his  
 arguments, vide PII, Introduction, pp.xxiii ff.

33. SBH Vol. XVII, Pt. I, Appendix X, p. cv.

34. Shastri Durgashankar K., Purāṇa-Vivecana,  
 p. 180.

35. Shastri Durgashankar K., op.cit., pp.183-184.

The MP account brings the historical narrative down to about the middle of the third century<sup>36</sup> and no further. From this survey it is clear that there is a diversity of opinion regarding the problem of the date of the MP. It may also be noted that the language of the MP shares similar linguistic aberrations with those of the Mbh and the Rām. from the phonological, morphological and syntactical points of view; and this linguistic aspect of the MP may also be a pointer in the fixation of the date of the MP. Recently it has been pointed out by Hans Hensgen that the composition of the younger sections of the cosmological tracts in the BrP, VP and MP are prior to Kālidāsa<sup>37</sup> (450 A.D.).

It may also be noted here that the famous story of Purūravas and Urvaśī is found in the MP

---

36. Pargiter F.E., op.cit., Introduction, p. xii.

37. Hensgen Hans, Bemerkungen zum kosmologischen Abschnitt des Brahmandā, Vāyu - und Matsya Purāṇa, ZDMG, Band 108, Heft. I, Neue Folge Band 33, (1958), p. 163.



(24.9 ff) and it tells the story more agreeably to the tenor of Kālidāsa's immortal play Vikramorvasīyam. Moreover the story of the Kumārasambhava is also told in the MP (Ch. 154 ff). Over and above this there are phraseological and ideological similarities between the MP and Kālidāsa; e.g. vande Pārvatī-Parameśvarau (64.11), cf. Vande Pārvatī-Parameśvarau (Raghuvamśa 1.1); rūpam saṁhara vai prabho (47.3,5), cf. krodham prabho saṁhara saṁharēti (Kumārasambhava 3.72); avagādhe hyubhayataḥ saṁdrat pūrvapaśāmatī (121.65), avagāhya hyubhayataḥ (113.11); cf. pūrvāparau toyanidhī vagāhya (Kumārasambhava 1.1) etc. From this it appears that Kālidāsa might, probably, have drawn inspiration from the MP or vice versa or from a common source and in the present state of our knowledge this point is left open for further future research.

Incidentally it may be noted that Dr. H.D. Sharma expressed the view that Kālidāsa was indebted to the PP for the plot of his Raghuvamśa and Sākuntala.<sup>38</sup> It is also interesting to note

---

38. Sharma H.D., Padmapurāṇa and Kālidāsa.

that Dr. Kirfel has drawn our attention to the agreement between the Bālakāṇḍa of the Rām. and the PP.<sup>39</sup> Recently in his edition of the Kumārasambhava Narayanrao Acharya has shown remarkable agreement between the Kumārasambhava and the Mahāsivapurāṇa<sup>40</sup> and has kept the point moot.

Moreover as remarked before the passages having linguistic affinities with those of the epics may be assigned to ~~circa~~ 200 A.D. The MP also alludes to the concept of Vyūha,<sup>41</sup> which is datable to the second century A.D. Further more the chronological analysis of the different chapters of the MP by Dr. R.C. Hazra shows that some of the chapters are datable to the last quarter of the third or the first quarter of the fourth century A.D., while some are datable to<sup>42</sup> 1250 A.D.

---

39. Kirfel W., Rāmāyana Bālakāṇḍa und Padma Purāṇa, Die Welt des Orients, 1947, pp. 113-128.

40. Kumārasambhava,<sup>Introduction</sup> pp. 1-34, 14th Edition, (NSP) 1955. The comparison of the passages shows how Kālidāsa dexterously changes the passages in Anuṣṭubh metre to suit in his Upajāti metre.

41. For details vide Chapter V.

42. Vide Appendix No. II.

From the above discussion it is clear that it is very difficult, as stated at the outset of this section, to assign a general date to the MP, because the chronological analysis of the MP shows that the different dates will have to be assigned to different chapters; and this means that the date of the MP will have to be spread over a very long period. Professor V.R.R. Dikshitar enunciates that "the composition of the Purāṇas is to be spread over a long<sup>time</sup> covering several centuries from the epoch of the Brāhmanas and the Upaniṣads to the age of the Guptas and after. The Purāṇas, then, constitute a work of various periods in succession. For example one and the same Purāṇa may have spread up over a long period of some centuries. The kernel of the Purāṇa may have been born in the earlier times, and its contents could be amplified in the course of the following centuries<sup>43</sup>". Thus in consonance with this principle of the spreading up the date, the date of the MP may tentatively be spread over from 4th Century B.C. to 1250 A.D.

---

43. Dikshitar V.R.R., PI, Vol. I, Introduction, pp. xvi-xvii.

The MP as a Purāṇa, its Place etc. :

The contents of the MP are given in Appendix I. Let us now see how far the definition of a Purāṇa is true in the case of the MP. The classical definition of the Purāṇa enumerates the following five characteristics (pañcalakṣaṇa) - viz. sarga (creation), pratisarga (dissolution and recreation), vaṃśa (divine genealogies), manvantara (ages of Manu) and vaṃśyānucarita (genealogies of kings)<sup>44</sup>. It is happy to note that the MP fulfils the pañcalakṣaṇas. For example the sarga is dealt with in Chs. 2-7; the pratisarga is dealt with in Chs. 164.4 ff; 165.20 ff; 166.1 ff; 167.1 ff; 169.1 ff; 171; the material regarding the vaṃśa is in Chs. 4.33-35; 6.1-47; 7.1-65; 8.1-12; 10.1-35 and 51 which deals with the Agnivamśa. The Chs. 9, 142, 144 and 145 deal with the manvantaras and the yugas. The vaṃśyānucarita is dealt with in e.g. Chs. 24, 44, 48, 49, 50, 271, 272, 273.

---

44. Cf. *sargas ca pratisargas ca vaṃśo manvantarāṇi ca/ vaṃśyānucaritaṃ caiva purāṇaṃ pañcalakṣaṇam //* MP 53.65. This definition is also found in other Purāṇas e.g. KP 1.1.12, BrP 1.1.37-38. Amarasimha (5th Century A.D.) says 'Purāṇaṃ pañcalakṣaṇam' Amarakośa, 1.6.6.

A variant reading has bhūmyādeḥ samsthāna<sup>45</sup>  
(world geography) in place of vaṁśyānucarita.

There are also chapters in the MP on the bhuvana-kośavarṇana (104-112; 113-123; 124-128; 180-194).

Pargiter considers the genealogical record in the MP in three parts: (i) account of the Aikṣvākus,  
<sup>the early Ailas down to Yayāti (iii)</sup>  
(ii) genealogies of five Aila races, Yādavas,

Pauravas etc. On the whole the MP-record is<sup>46</sup>  
valuable and in many points independent authority.

The MP is one of those Purāṇas - others being VP, BrP, ViP, BhP, GP and BvP - which contain accounts of the dynasties that reigned in India during the Kali age. The MP has borrowed the dynastic account of the Kali age from the Bhaviṣya probably during<sup>47</sup> the last quarter of the third century. The dynastic account - Pre-Mahābhāratan as well as post-Mahā-

---

45. Pusalkar A.D., Studies in the Epics and Purāṇas, Introduction, p. xlv.

46. Pargiter F.E., AIHT, p.79; for text-critical remarks on the three-fold classification of the account vide ibid, p. 79.

47. Pargiter F.E., Purāṇic Text of the Dynasties of Kali age, Introduction, p. xxvii; for details vide ibid, pp. v ff. Keith, however, traverses all Pargiter's theories and holds that the 'bhaviṣya' simply means "in the future". The Cambridge History of India Vol. I. (Ancient India, p. 299).

-bhāratan of the MP is given in Appendix VI<sup>48</sup> suffixed to the English translation of the MP.

To revert to the characteristics of a Purāṇa, the MP makes an advance over the classical definition of a Purāṇa when it says that the Purāṇas deal with the glorification of Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Sūrya and Rudra, as also with the dissolution and preservation of the world and with the dharma (righteous conduct), artha (economics and polity), kāma<sup>49</sup> (erotics). It will be seen from the following chapters of the thesis that these points enumerated in the above definition are either dealt with in detail or alluded to in the MP.

---

48. SBH, Vol. XVII, Pt. I, pp. liii<sup>4</sup>. Incidentally it may be noted that the dynastic list of the Andhra kings and the duration of the different reigns are substantially correct. (Smith Vincent A., ZDMG, 1902, pp. 654, 658 ff). G. Venket Rao also has successfully vindicated the MP list of the Andhra kings (PIHC, XIII, pp. 70-74)

49. Cf. brahmaviṣṇavarkarudrāṇām mähātmyam  
bhuvanasya ca /  
sasamhārapradānām ca purāṇe pañcavarṇake//  
dharmaś cārthaś ca kāmāś ca mokṣaś  
caivātra kīrtyate /  
sarveṣvapi purāṇesu tadviruddham ca  
yat phalam // MP 53. 66-67.

From the contents of the MP it would be clear that these are not the only topics that are dealt with in the MP. A brief index of the contents is given in the MP, according to which the topics dealt with are - utpatti, pralaya, vaṁśa, manvantara, vaṁśyānucarita, bhuvana-vistara, dāna-dharmavidhi, varṇāśramavibhāga, iṣṭāpūrta, devatā-pratiṣṭhā etc. (2.22-24).

It is to be observed that this is a faithful adumbration of the topics dealt with in the MP. The Chapter 291 is a detailed index of the contents of the MP.

Incidentally the classificatory nomenclature of the Purāṇas according to the preferential treatment of the deities may be briefly alluded to. They are classified into sāttvika, rājasa and tāmasa.

According to the MP 53.68-69, the Purāṇas glorifying Hari are regarded as sāttvika, those glorifying Brahmā as rājasa and those glorifying Agni and Śiva as tāmasa, whereas those glorifying Sarasvatī and manes as saṁkīrṇa.

According to the PP. distribution the MP is  
<sup>50</sup>  
 a tāmāsa Purāṇa. But the reading of the MP shows  
 that it does not exhibit a biased preferential  
 treatment either to Viṣṇu or Śiva and either one  
 of the two is declared to be higher than the other.  
 In short the MP exhibits a catholic spirit in this  
 matter. Dr. R.C. Hazra is of the opinion that the  
<sup>51</sup>  
 MP was originally a Vaiṣṇavite Purāṇa and hence  
 the ear-marking of the MP as a tāmāsa Purāṇa does  
 not appear to be strictly warranted by the evidence.

Dr. Haraprasad Shastri divides the Purāṇas  
 into six groups in accordance with the subject-  
 matter (1) encyclopaedia group, (2) dealing with

---

50. cf. मातृयं कौर्मं तथा स्त्रिंशैः शैवं स्कान्यं तथैव च ॥  
 आग्नेयं च वृतेतानि तामसानि निषेध मे ।  
 वैष्णवं नारदीयं च तथा भागवतं शुभम् ॥  
 गारुडं च तथा पाद्मं वाराहं शुभदर्शने ।  
 सत्त्विकानि पुराणानि विज्ञेयानि शुभानि वै ॥  
 ब्रह्माण्डं ब्रह्मवैवर्तं मार्कण्डेयं तथैव च ।  
 भविष्यं वामनं ब्राह्मं राजसानि निषेध मे ॥

PP, Uttarakhandā, 263.81-84.

51. Hazra R.C., op.cit., pp. 51-52.



tīrthas and vratas, (3) that underwent two general revisions. In these Purāṇas the original part is the kernel which has been added to twice - at both the ends on each occasion, (4) historical group, (5) sectarian works (6) Old Purāṇas revised out of existence.

One naturally expects these entire works to have been spoken by these various incarnations of Viṣṇu; but Matsya speaks only a third part of the MP<sup>52</sup> and this tends to explain the title of the present Purāṇa viz. the Matsya-Purāṇam; of course here the well-known dictum "prādhānyena vyapadesāḥ bhavanti" appears to be falsified.

From the brief synopsis of the MP<sup>53</sup> it is clear that many a diverse interesting problem is dealt with<sup>in the MP which opens with</sup> the much debated problem viz. the story of deluge. The story of deluge appears in the ancient literature of many countries. Much has been written

---

52. Shastri Harprasad, The Maha-Purāṇas, JBORS XIV, pp. 330-337.

53. Vide Appendix I.

on this vexed problem of the diluvial traditions by eminent scholars of the east and the west and for obvious reasons it would be wise not to give a bibliography on this problem.<sup>54</sup> There are various versions of the flood-legend in the Sanskrit literature and they are put together in translation by Dr. Suryakanta in his book "The Flood-Legends in Sanskrit Literature". Incidentally it may be mentioned that Dr. M. Winternitz has made a very interesting study of these different traditions.<sup>55</sup> of the flood.

Over and above the traditional topics of the Purāṇa the MP has chapters on śrāddha, various vratas, dānas, mahādānas, rājadharmā, vāstu, deva-pratimās, various stories and legends etc. It is needless to say that these topics are also dealt with in other Purāṇas also.<sup>56</sup>

---

54. Even Dr. Suryakanta in his book "The Flood-Legends in Sanskrit Literature" drops the bibliography on this problem. *Ibid*, Preface, p. 2.

55. Winternitz M., Die Flusagen des Alterthumas und der Naturvolker (pp.305-333) in Mittheilungen der Anthropologischen Gesellschaft in Wien XXXI Band, Wien, 1901.

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

It has been rightly observed by MM. Dr. P.V. Kane that the MP is "pre-eminently a work containing<sup>57</sup> Dharmaśāstra material." The perusal of the chapters on various rites and customs reveals that the Tantric influences have penetrated into the<sup>58</sup> realms of their ritual. Moreover this Dharmaśāstra material of the MP has been drawn upon by later Dharmaśāstra writers like Bhavadeva in his Prāyāścitta-prakaraṇa, Jīmūtavāhana in his Kāla-viveka, Aparārka in his commentary on the YS, Aniruddha Bhaṭṭa in his Hāratalā, Ballālasena in<sup>59</sup> his Adbhutasāgara, Lakṣmīdhara Bhaṭṭa in his Kṛtyakalpataru and others.

Like the Dharmaśāstra material the political material is also drawn upon by later writers on ancient Indian polity. The political views of the MP are in consonance with those of Kauṭilya and in some places we have the paraphrase of Kauṭilya's<sup>60</sup> words, and passages similar to those of the

---

57. Kane P.V., HDS, Vol. I, p. 161.

58. For details vide Hazra R.C., op.cit., pp. 260 ff.

59. For details vide Hazra R.C., ibid, pp. 279 ff.

60. For details vide Kane P.V., The Kauṭilya and the Matsya-Purāṇa, B.C. Law Volume, Pt. II, pp. 13 ff.

Kāmandakiya<sup>61</sup>śāstra and other works. Despite this it contributes to the advancement of political thought, and in this connection its mention of the seven expedients instead of the usual four may be noted. Moreover a study of the names of the magical and mythological weapons, incidentally, shows that generally wherever there is an adjectival name of a weapon, it is found that it multiplies after it being discharged.

It is also further to be observed that some of the verses of the MP regarding social, political, religious and philosophical data etc. are either identical ad verbatim or approximate to those of the Mbh, BG, MS, AP, Vid<sup>61</sup>, Harivaṃśa etc. It also appears that in certain places the views of the MP are similar to those of some Dharmasūtras or Smṛtis. This has been shown in the course of the present thesis at proper places.

It is true that the material of the Purāṇic character is also found in the Epics, but "our

---

61. A large number of chapters is found common to the Vid and the MP and the latter is the borrower. For details vide Hazra R.C., The Viṣṇu-dharmottara, an Encyclopaedic Work of the Gupta Period, Journal of the University of Gauhati, Vol. III (1952), pp. 48 ff.

recensions of the Purāṇas are admittedly of a very late date, and it is not to be expected that the Mahābhārata would have borrowed any of its material from our Purāṇas..... It must, however, be admitted that although in most cases the compilers of our Purāṇas appear to have drawn their material from the Mahābhārata, there may be - indeed there must be - a few cases in which both the Mahābhārata and the Purāṇas may have drawn independently upon a third common source. We can also say this with regard to episodes like the Sāvitrī episode which likewise occurs in the Matsya-Purāṇa, where it is narrated in a manner entirely different from that in the epic, and where all traces of mutual relationship are absent or obliterated, except for two or three common stanzas and stray pādas.<sup>62</sup> These remarks of Dr. Sukthankar succinctly bring out the general relation between the Epics and Purāṇas.

---

62. Sukthankar, Memorial Edition, Vol. I, pp. 155-156.

Finally it must also be mentioned that there are chapters on architecture and iconography and references to the Śikhara style of architecture,<sup>63</sup> and this is not unnatural as one of the civilizational activities, "much more connected with the daily needs of mankind is architecture which is described by H.W. Corbett 'as the art of so building so as to apply both beauty and utility' and<sup>64</sup> by W.R. Lethaby as the 'matrix of civilization,' "

From all this it would be clear that the MP occupies an important place in the Purāṇic Literature as well as it plays an important role in the study of ancient culture from several points of view.

---

63. Prof. V.R.R. Dikshitar has discussed the data on architecture and iconography in his book "The Matsya Purāṇa, A Study" (pp. 46 ff; 101 ff). The treatment of the fine arts such as architecture, painting, music etc. is comprehensive and systematic in the third khaṇḍa of the Viṣṇudharmottara which is recently edited by Dr. (Miss) Priyabala Shah in GOS (No. CXXX).

64. Ghurye G.S., Culture and Society, p. 12.