

SYNOPSIS
OF
THE THESIS
"DHARMĀRANYA PURĀNA : A CULTURAL STUDY"

STATEMENT NO. I

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

The value and importance of the Purāṇic records for the study of sociology, religion, mythology, philosophy politics etc. of ancient and medieval period of India have been widely felt and recognised by all Indologists. The Purāṇa - literature caters for the religious needs of the underprivileged who do not have access to the study of the Vedas. It was so important that it was styled the "fifth Veda". There are two classes of Purāṇas viz. Mahāpurāṇas and Upapurāṇas, each traditionally numbered eighteen. "The Upapurāṇas do not in general differ essentially from the Purāṇas except inasmuch as they are even more exclusively adopted to suit the purpose of local cult and the religious needs of separate sect."¹ Scholars have long neglected the importance of the Upapurāṇas, holding erroneous views that they are "later and inferior" works.² It is, however, a good sign towards their

¹•Winternitz M., A History of Indian Literature, p.579.

²•Hazre, R.C., Studies in the Upapurāṇas, Vol.I, Preface, p.III.

future study, that R.C. Hazra, after having expressed a deep disappointment at the unfair treatment, has asserted the importance of the Upapurāṇas as occupying the same position of the Mahāpurāṇas. He has pointed out "that the Upapurāṇas are rich as much in number as in content, that some of them are much earlier than many of the so called Mahāpurāṇas, and that, like the extant Mahāpurāṇas, they are of capital importance not only for the study of the social and religious institutions of the Hindus from the pre-Gupta period downward but also for varied information of literary, historical, geographical and cultural interest".³ With respect to the number of the Upapurāṇas, he asserts that they number more than a hundred.⁴ He has presented a study of many Upapurāṇas in his two-volume book. "Studies in the Upapurāṇas" but the Dharmāranya Purāṇas is not included therein. Moreover, there are not cultural studies of local caste Purāṇas except the unpublished thesis "CULTURAL AND CRITICAL STUDY OF ŚRĪMĀLĀ PURĀṆA by late Dr. Bhabhooti Mal Nawaji Parmar, submitted for the Ph.D. degree to the M.S. University of Baroda in 1969. It is,

³•Ibid., p.III.

⁴•Hazra, R.C., Introduction to Wilson's translation of the Viṣṇu Purāṇa, p.(a).

therefore, that the Dharmāranya Purāṇa, which can be placed under the category of the Upapurāṇas, as seemed to be suggested by B.J. Sandesara and R.N.Mehta,⁵ is taken up for a cultural study. This work has never been hitherto taken up for a critical study from the cultural point of view except for some stray references. The selection of the Dharmāranya Purāṇa for a critical study would appear to be justified also as it contains not only the valuable cultural data but also the history of Modha-Caste-Brahmins and Banias, to which belonged Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the freedom of India, and political history of Gujarat. Moreover, it contains philosophical, social and contemporary religious data etc.

I humbly try to present here my thesis entitled, "Dharmāranya Purāṇa: A Cultural Study", which sheds some further light on the cultural development of a particular period of Gujarat. 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, to mention a few : -

5. Sandesara, B.J., and Mehta, R.N., (eds.),
Mallapurāṇa, Gaekwad's Oriental Series No. 144.
Introduction, p.2.

1. Some aspects of the pilgrimage to the holy places.
2. Ancient geography of northern Gujarat and antiquities therein.
3. Spread of Jainism to Gujarat and its confrontation with the local Hinduism.
4. The origin and development of the Modha Caste.

The treatment and interpretation of the data are done from a "sociological" point of view as far as possible. Another important feature in this study is that the "field-study" of tīrthas was adopted. The method proves useful in determining the date of some Purāṇas and in tracing the geographical development of some region.⁶

It is in the way that this humble work contributes to the general advancement of knowledge

6. Vide, Mehta, R.N., "Kaumārikā - Khaṇḍa - A study", The Journal of the Maharaja Sayajirao of Baroda, Vol.XIV. No.1, April 1965, p.39.

STATEMENT NO. 2

SOURCES, INDEBTEDNESS AND ORIGINALITY

In the preparation of the present work, I have fully drawn upon all the available literature in many languages in print. An acknowledgement has been fully made in proper places. Moreover, some portions of this work were prepared from the results of the archaeological survey conducted by me in the area in Chanasma taluka and its surroundings, Mehsana District, North Gujarat.

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