

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

INTRODUCTORY.

"The Purāṇas occupy a unique position in Indian literature, both sacred and secular. After the Mahābhārata they have been the main sources of inspiration in the life of our people for over 1500 years."¹

The Purāṇas are of inestimable value for the history of society, philosophy and religion and are a veritable ~~and~~ store house for getting insight into all aspects and phases of Hinduism.²

Not a single Purāṇa can be found to contain all these particulars, however, "taken collectively they may be described as a popular encyclopaedia of ancient and medieval Hinduism, religious, philosophical, historical, personal, social and political."³

IMPORTANCE OF PURĀNIC STUDIES.

"At the starting of the Indic 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 conglomeration of legendary and historical events in the Purāṇas, as also their peculiar ideas of "ages" and "Cosmography".⁴ There may be some ^{exaggeration} in the descriptions of purāṇas⁵ though there are some important facts.⁶

But now the attitude is changed and they are accepted as one of the important sources of Indian history and culture, as they throw a flood of light on the various aspects of the life of the time.⁷

THE PROBLEM OF THE ORIGINAL BVP AND THE EXTANT BVP.

It was H.P. Sastri who started first the problem of the interrelationship of original BVP and the extant BVP. He remarks that "the Brahmaivaivartapurāṇa in the present shape can not be very old..... there seems to have existed a Brahmaivaivartapurāṇa very different from the one which we now possess."⁸

Dr. R.C. Hazra is also of opinion that certain genuine purāṇas were later on replaced by spurious works bearing the same title and one of such works, he mentions, is the BVP also.⁹

A number of Nibandha works e.g. Smṛticandrikā, Smṛtitattva and Ādurvarga-cintāmaṇi etc. have drawn upon a BVP. About 1500 lines of that BVP have been quoted in these works but only 30 of these lines are found in the extant BVP as pointed out by Dr. R.C. Hazra.¹⁰ These remarks of Dr. Hazra tend to suggest that the absence of the remaining lines in the present BVP shows that it was not the work from which those Nibandhakāras quoted in their works, so this BVP was not known even to the Nibandhakāras of the sixteenth century A.D.¹¹

The Asiatic Society of Bengal has two Devanāgarī manuscripts of the BVP: no.3820 and 3821, both of which

are fragmentary and incomplete. Some of their chapter-colophons show that both the manuscripts belong to a different BVP called 'Ādibrahmavaivartamahāpurāṇa' which is quite different from the extant BVP.¹²

Dr. H.P. Sastri, Dr. R.C. Hazra, J.C. Roy and A.S. Gupta hold that the extant BVP is not the original one but there was an original BVP before [^]ninth century A.D. which is now lost and about the tenth century A.D. it began to be changed by the interfering hands of the Bengali authors who recast it to its present form and contents in the sixteenth century A.D.¹³

The arguments for and against this problem are as follows :-

According to the MP (53.33-35) the original BVP was narrated by Sāvarṇi to Nārada and contained the mātmya or glorification of Kṛṣṇa and a repeated account of Brahmavarāha with a reference to the occurrence of the Rathantara Kalpa. Now it should be pointed out that the extant BVP is narrated by Nārāyaṇa to Nārada and has no reference to the Rathantara Kalpa. Further the MP (53.67-69) divides the purāṇas into four categories viz.

1. Sātvika which glorifies Hari
2. Rājasa which glorifies Brahmā
3. Tāmasa which glorifies Śiva
4. Saṁkīrṇa which glorifies sarasvatī and manes.

The PP (Uttarakhaṇḍa 264.84) states that the BVP is a rājasa purāṇa having Brahmā as its highest deity.

In the extant BVP Brahmā is shown as inferior to Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa who are said to be superior to one and all other gods (1.3.30, 1.2.20-27).

Thus the data in the extant BVP do not support the description of the BVP as given by the MP and PP.

According to the SKP, the sun is the highest deity of the BVP.¹⁴ but in the extant BVP, the sun is not the highest but Kṛṣṇa is the highest deity as noted above.

According to the MP (53.35), SP (9.27) and the SKP (7.1.2.53), a person who gives a copy of the BVP to a worthy Brahmin is said to attain the Brahmaloaka. But according to the extant BVP the Brahmaloaka is far interior to the Goloka, the abode of Kṛṣṇa and is never the goal of a devotee of Kṛṣṇa (1.12.33, 1.14.58).

It should be noted that the word Vaiṣṇava in the BVP (1.11.39, 4.1.65) is not a general term for a devotee of a god, for this purāṇa is very explicit in defining a 'Vaiṣṇava'. A 'Vaiṣṇava' is one who belongs to the Vaiṣṇava sect and who has been duly initiated by a preceptor into the vaiṣṇava fold by imparting to him the Vaiṣṇava Mantra. Such an initiated vaiṣṇava is extremely pure and jīvanmukta (1.11.41-42) and he certainly attains the Goloka (1.12.23). This position tends to suggest further that Brahmā is not the supreme deity in the extant BVP.

In almost all the purāṇas the list of the eighteen Mahāpurāṇas is given where the extent of the BVP is mentioned 18000 slokas.¹⁵ But the present available Ānandāśrama edition, yaṅgavāsī edition and the veṅkaṭeśvara edition of the BVP

contain nearly 22000, 22000 and 25000 verses respectively, so it follows that the extant BVP contains about 4000 or 7000 verses more as the case may be. These are later additions and hence its remaining portion is also a completely revised work.¹⁶

The NP (Pūrvakhaṇḍa 101) described the BVP containing four khaṇḍas i.e.

Brahma

Prakṛti

Ganeśa

Kṛṣṇa

and gives the description in brief of each khaṇḍa. The extant BVP contains four khaṇḍas as stated by the NP but it does not fulfil in detail complete description as given by the NP.

In the library of Oriental Institute Baroda, there are twelve manuscripts of the BVP and some of them are incomplete. The manuscript of the BVP, No.2544 is quite different from the extant BVP and it has three parts without any specific name or title. The total number of the chapters in the said manuscript is as follows :-

Part I	Ch. 28
II	117
III	26

	171

and generally each chapter - colophon reads 'Ādimahāpurāṇe-brahmavaivarte' and hence it follows that the extant BVP is different from this Ādibrahmavaivartapurāṇa. The several

māhātmyas which are noted under the authority of the BVP.¹⁷ are not found in the extant BVP.

From the above-mentioned arguments it follows that the extant BVP is a different or an enlarged one and not the same as described in various works, but A.S. Gupta further states that it is an apocryphal one¹⁸ but from the afore going facts it may be said that the extant BVP is not totally an apocryphal work but it might originally be a work of Brahmā-cult and containing 18000 verses before seventh or eighth century A.D. and after tenth century A.D. when Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā worship became popular, the original BVP underwent change, was enlarged and revised in the sixteenth century A.D. by the followers of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa sect in the eastern part of India, specially in Bengal where Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa worship was popular.¹⁹

DATE.

Various scholars have tried to handle the problem of the date of the BVP but they have not stated its precise date except a general remark that it is a late one hence an attempt is made to fix its precise date as far as possible.

Before going into the examination of the data for fixing the date of the BVP, the views of the different scholars on this problem may briefly be mentioned here below :-

- | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Roy J.C. ²⁰ | 16th Century A.D. |
| 2. Hazra R.C. ²¹ | 16th Century A.D. |
| 3. Wilson H.H. ²² | 16th Century A.D. |

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------|
| 4. Kane P.V. ²³ | 16th Century A.D. |
| 5. Dutta N.K. ²⁴ | 15th Century A.D. |
| 6. Maity P.K. ²⁵ | 15th Century A.D. |
| 7. Upadhyaya Baladeva ²⁶ | 15th Century A.D. |
| 8. Sen S.K. ²⁷ | 15th Century A.D. |
| 9. Shastri D.K. ²⁸ | 11th Century A.D. |
| 10. De S.K. ²⁹ | 10th Century A.D. |
| 11. Chatterjee B.C. ³⁰ | 10th Century A.D. |

From the above survey, it is clear that the scholars assign either 10th, 11th, 15th, or 16th century A.D.

Out of the above 11 scholars the following three scholars i.e.

Shastri D.K.

De. S.K.

Chatterjee B.C.

argue that the first verse of the *Gītagovinda* of Jayadeva (1162 A.D.)³¹ might be influenced by the verses of the BVP (4.15.4.ff) so the BVP is compiled before Jayadeva. But the learned scholars do not give any argument to prove their thesis. It is quite possible that the *purāṇa* and Jayadeva might have borrowed from a common source.

D.K. Shastri states that in the BVP there is a great influence of Rādhā and hence an unknown Nimbārkaite might have written the present BVP because Nimbārkaite worship Rādhā with Kṛṣṇa.³² To this observation of D.K. Shastri it should be pointed out that it is not in the Nimbārka sect but it is the Rādhāvallabha sect wherein Rādhā has a predominant position over Kṛṣṇa hence his argument does not

stand to reason. Hence D.K. Shastri's implication about the date i.e. 11th Century A.D. is unacceptable.

Now let us examine the date of the BVP on the basis of the inner intrinsic data of the BVP.

The BVP and the PP give the various names of Rādhā and Śālagrāma stone.³³ This enumeration in the BVP seems to follow that of the PP and Wilson remarks that "no portion of the PP is probably older than the twelfth century A.D. and the last parts may be as recent as the fifteenth or sixteenth"³⁴. Hence the BVP might have been compiled in c. fifteenth century A.D.

Dr.R.C. Hazra opines that the DbhP follows the BVP and states that almost all the chapters of DbhP IX have been taken from the BVP II and the Prakṛtikhaṇḍa i.e. BVP II in its present form can not be dated earlier than the tenth century A.D.³⁵

Now the BVP contains 67 chapters in its second part (i.e. Prakṛtikhaṇḍa which describes the caritras of various goddesses viz.

Sarasvatī

Vasudhā,

Gaṅgā,

Tulasī,

Sāvitṛī.

Lakṣmī

Svāhā

Svadhā,

Dakṣiṇā

Ṣaṣṭhī

Maṅgalacaṇḍī

Manasā

Surabhī

Rādhā

Durgā.

The DbhP IX. 1-50 are borrowed from the BVP II as stated by Dr. R.C. Hazra and the said portion of the DbhP describes caritras of

Sarasvatī

Vasudhā

Gāṅgā

Tulasī

Sāvitṛī

Lakṣmī

Svāhā

Svadhā

Dakṣiṇā

Ṣaṣṭhī

Maṅgalacaṇḍī


Manasā

Surabhī

Rādhā

Durgā

It should be noted that the DbhP IX 48 deals with Manasā in chapter one only while the BVP II 45,46 devotes two chapters to Manasā. The DbhP (IX.50-1-52) devotes only 52 verses to Rādhā with Durgā while the BVP devotes nine chapters to



Rādhā. This goes to prove that the BVP II i.e. Prakṛtikhaṇḍa is an elaboration of the DbhP IX and hence it follows that the BVP has based its chapters of Prakṛtikhaṇḍa on those of the DbhP IX.

It may also be noted that Dr. Kakati (B.) holds similar view³⁶. According to Dr. R.C. Hazra "it is highly probable that the DbhP was compiled in the eleventh or twelfth century A.D.³⁷ and hence it follows that the BVP might be compiled after the fourteenth century A.D. when the DbhP had become popular.

The BVP often mentions the worship of Ṣaḍāyatana which is definitely of later period than the worship of the Pañcāyatana³⁸. The DbhP (XI 17.35 ff) mentions the Pañcāyatanapūjā while the BVP refers to the Ṣaḍāyatanapūjā which is naturally of a subsequent period.

Aparārka (1200 A.D.), the commentator of YS, and Ballāṣeṇa (1155-1180 A.D.) give the quotations from the puranas but they do not refer to the BVP³⁹ this suggests that even upto the twelfth century A.D. the BVP was not known.

In the description of Kaliyuga in the BVP(2.7.25), the purāṇa states that the people would learn 'mlecchasastra' which suggests that the BVP might be referring here to some persian scriptures like Quaran etc. as Bengal came under Muslim rule from 1203 A.D.⁴⁰ From this reference it follows that the BVP is compiled after 1203 A.D.

Caṇḍidāsa (1385 A.D.) is said to be a founder of Parakīyā - Rādhā - Vāda.⁴¹ The BVP seems to Synthesis the theory of Parakīyā-Rādhā-Vāda and Svakīyā-Rādhā-Vāda⁴² and this synthesis - theory tends to suggest that the BVP would have been composed after Caṇḍidāsa, about, say, 100 years or so after, if due allowance is made for the popularity of the Parakīyā vāda and the consequent arising need for synthesis.

The BVP described some folk goddesses viz. Manasā, Maṅgalacaṇḍī and Śaṣṭhī. The folk songs regarding Manasā, Maṅgalacaṇḍī and Śaṣṭhī were written in the times of caṇḍidāsa (1385 A.D.) and Māṇika Dutta (1300 A.D.)⁴³. Hence it follows that the BVP is compiled after this date, as the folk songs preside their acceptance and inclusion in the official religious books like Purāṇas.

It is a current belief of Indians that on particular lunar days, particular dishes of food prove uncongenial to the human system.

Raghunandana Bhaṭṭācārya (1510-1565 A.D.) devotes an important chapter of his work Aṣṭāviṃsatitattva, to a consideration of this point, for instance one should not eat a pumppin or its gourd, on the second day of a Lunation. Brhatī on the third, Paṭola on the fourth, Radish on the fifth, Nimṣa on the sixth and so on.⁴⁴ The BVP also proscribes such things on particular days and it is probable that the BVP is indebted to the Aṣṭāviṃsatitattva of Raghunandana.

The philosophycal thought in the BVP reflects the influence of philosophy of Vallabhācārya (1479 A.D.)⁴⁵ and caitanya (1485 A.D.)⁴⁶ In the BVP the position of Rādhā is superior to Kṛṣṇa and this situation is found in the Rādhāvallabha saṁpradāya whose founder Hitaharivaṁśa florished in 1484 A.D.⁴⁷

While describing the residence of Rādhā, the BVP mentions that there were other 33 vanas in Vṛndāvana (4.28.165) which was situated in the residential area of Rādhā. Now the tradition runs that it was for the first time in 1535 A.D. Hitaharivaṁśa built the temple of Rādhā in Vṛnadāvana where he laid out the other vanas which still exist to day.⁴⁸

The BVP (4.73.79) mentions that amongst all the Purāṇas the BhP is the best which shows its influence and popularity. Now the BhP is assigned date ranging from 9th century A.D. to 12th Century A.D.⁴⁹ Even accepting the latest date of the BhP it is obvious that the BVP is later than the BhP, the influence and indebtedness of which is noticed in the enlargement of the topics handled by the BhP and also by its advancement over the BhP by introducing Rādhā who is missing in the BhP.

The BVP gives the description of the Goloka, Vṛndāvana, vaikunṭha, Kailāsa and the city of Śaṅkhacūḍa⁵⁰ in an artificial manner with architectural details which reflect the architectural school of Mughal period.⁵¹

The BVP categorically states that the moṁth of

Caitra is the last and Vaisākha is the initial of the year (4.96.60). It is only in the Bengali era that the year starts from the month of Vaisākha and this Bengali era is a revised form of the Fasali era which was started by Akabara.⁵²

None of the manuscripts of the BVP, recorded in the various Descriptive catalogues of Sanskrit manuscripts⁵³ is ~~per~~ prior to 1692 A.D. and hence the lower limit of the BVP is 1600 A.D. and from seeing the above points its upper limit can be put as 1400 A.D.

HOME.

Regarding the home of the BVP there is no controversy and scholars like Dr. R.C. Hazra⁵⁴, A.S. Gupta⁵⁵ Baladeva Upadhyaya⁵⁶ and D.K. Shastri⁵⁷ hold that Bengal is the home of the BVP. The following data which is available in the BVP also lead to the same conclusion.

The BVP describes various aspects of Kṛṣṇa's life and in this connection it mentions various geographical place-names ranging generally from Mathurā to some eastern parts of India. The geographical knowledge of north India is extremely poor in the case of the author of the BVP, whereas his good acquaintance with the geography of eastern India and this suggests that probably he might be a resident of any place ranging from Mathurā to the eastern parts of India, mostly of Bengal.

The BVP mentions two significant Ethnical names viz. Rāṣṭriya and Virendra (3.36.12) which are the Sanskritised forms of Rāḍhīya and Vārendra respectively which were the provinces of Bengal. This suggests that the author might be

aware of these provinces of Bengal as P.C. Sen remarks "towards the close of the premuhammadan period Rādhā and Vārendrī were well known divisions of Bengal."⁵⁸

The BVP uses the word Ballava (1.5.42, 2.49.42, 2.48.43,53) for the word Gopa. The caste Ballava is one of the subcaste of the caste Gopa by name and it is prevalent in Bengal even to day.⁵⁹

The BVP mentions the two, castes Jolā and Vaidya and traces their origin as follows :-

By the union of a Mleccha man a Kuvindaka woman, Jolā was born (1.10.121) and Vaidya was born by the union of Aśvinikumāra and a Brahmin woman (1.10.123). These two beliefs are still prevalent in Bengal.⁶⁰

Dr. Sukumar Sen holds⁶¹ that the vocable Jolā (BVP 1.10.121) is a Bengali word from Persian Jullāh, Julāh 'weaver'. Julāhā is the Hindi (Bhojapuri etc.) addeptation of Persian Jullāh, Julāh. Bengali drops the final 'h' so the original word Jullāh or Julāh is Sanskritised as Jolā.

The worship of folk goddess: Manasā, Ṣaṣṭhī and Maṅgalacaṇḍī is prevalent in Bengal only and the BVP (2.43-46) has described their stories at great length.

The BVP (4.3.23, 4.31.53, 3.34.38) uses some phrases which reflect the influence of persian which was spoken in Bengal then and Assamese.⁶² which prove that the author of the BVP might be aware of Persian and Assamese languages.

The BVP (2.27.79) states that one should perform Śivapūjā in the month of Māgha or caitra - a practice which

is prevalent in Bengal only.⁶³

As we have noted earlier, the BVP states that the month of caitra is the last and vaiśākha is the first month. Bengali era starts from Vaiśākha and this era is another form of Fasali era started by Akabara. This shows that the author of the BVP might be aware of the Fasali or Bengali era.

The BVP states that Sarasvatī, Gaṅgā, Tulasī and Lakṣmī are Nārāyaṇa's wife (2.12.1) and this belief is still prevalent in Bengal.⁶⁴

According to the direction of the BVP (2.27.87) one should perform Lakṣmīpūjā in the month of Bhādrapada which is still prevalent in Bengal.⁶⁵

According to the BVP (2.11.7) Gaṅgā was born from the fluid, at the result of Kṛṣṇa's and Rādhā's mutual merging as a consequential effect of music. This belief is popular in Bengal.⁶⁶

The BVP (2.30.162-163) states that one should perform five Parvans viz.

Janmāṣṭamī

Rāmanavamī

Śivarātri

Ekādaśī

Sunday

and it also states that one can take fish in one's meal except on these five Parvans. This belief is only prevalent in Bengal.⁶⁷

From the above mentioned data it may be concluded that the home of the BVP is Bengal.

THE TITLE OF THE BRAHMAVAIVARTAPURĀṆA.

As noted earlier there was another BVP named Ādibrahmavaivartapurāṇa. The extant Brahmavaivartapurāṇa is known simply as "Brahmavaivartamahāpurāṇa". The BVP itself gives its explanation as follows :- It has been called the BVP by the knowers of the past because it is in it that the modifications of Brahman brought about by Kṛṣṇa are described.⁶⁸

The BVP praises itself and states that amongst all the purāṇas, the BVP is fulfiller of all hopes and giver of wealth (1.1.59, 4.133.32). It further states that this Purāṇa was handed over first by Kṛṣṇa to Brahmā who gave it to Dharma who gave it to Nārāyaṇa who told it in turn to Nārada who inturn gave it to Vyāsa (1.1.62-64, 4.133.28-29).

There is also another title of the Brahmavaivartapurāṇa as Brahmakaivartapurāṇa which is prevalent in South India.⁶⁹ Nothing can be said regarding this title whether there might be a purāṇa different from the present BVP or the title is only different.⁷⁰

LAGHU BRAHMAVAIVARTAPURĀṆA.

Kamalākara Bhaṭṭa, in his Nirṇayasindhu, quotes two verses from the Laghubrahmavaivartapurāṇa with the remarks that "atra mulam cintayet". As these two verses, dealing with the praise of gifts made at Benaras during ~~X~~ eclipse etc. do not occur in the present BVP. Dr. R.C. Hazra remarks that "the Laghubrahmavaivartapurāṇa - if at all there was any work of this title - must have been a

separate work written before 1400 A.D. It should be also mentioned here that we do not know any second author who refers to or draws upon this work."⁷¹

THE BVP AND THE PURĀṆA PĀNCALAKṢANA.

The contents of the BVP are given in Appendix I. The classical definition of the Purāṇa enumerates the following five characteristics.⁷²

- | | | |
|------------------|---|--------------------------------|
| 1. Sarga | - | disolution creation |
| 2. Pratisarga | - | dissolution |
| 3. Vamśa | - | genealogies |
| 4. Manvantara | - | ages of Manus |
| 5. Vamśānucarita | - | genealogies of Kings. |

(4.133.6-7)

But according to the BVP, above mentioned five characteristics are of the Uppurāṇa and states that Mahāpurāṇa has ten characteristics as follows :-

- | | | |
|-------------------|---|---|
| 1. Sṛṣṭi | = | Primary Creation |
| 2. Visṛṣṭi | = | Secondary creation |
| 3. Sthiti | = | Stability of creation |
| 4. Pālana | = | Protection |
| 5. Karmavāsanā | = | Desire for work |
| 6. Manuvārtā | = | Information about the Manus. |
| 7. Pralayavarṇana | = | Description of the final
distruction |
| 8. Mokṣanirupaṇa | = | The way to release from rebirth |
| 9. Harikīrtana | = | Discourse on Hari |
| 10. Devakīrtana | = | Discourse on other gods. |

(4.133.8-10)

Generally the definition of Purāṇa Pañcalakṣaṇa is old and that of ten characteristics is of very late origin⁷³ because it is only stated in the BVP and in the BhP (2.10.1-7, 12.7.8-10).

The BVP (4.133.6-7) simply mentions the names of ten characteristics while the BhP (12.7.11-20) explains each and every one lakṣaṇa.

The names of ten characteristics given in the BVP and BhP are differed in some cases but they may correspond as follows:-⁷⁴

<u>BVP</u>	<u>BhP</u>
1. Sṛṣṭi	Sarga
2. Viśṛṣṭi	Visarga
3. Sthiti	Vṛtti or Sthāna
4. Pālana	Rakṣā or Poṣaṇa
5. Karmavāsanā	Hetu or Ūti
6. Manuvārtā	Antarāṇi or Manvantara
7. Pralayavarṇana	Samsthā or Nirodha
8. Mokṣanirupana	Apāy ¹ śraya or Mukti
9. Harikīrtana	Vamśa or Āśraya
10. Devakīrtana	Vamśā ¹ carita or Iśānuka thā

(12.7.9, 2.10.1)

It is significant to note that the BVP fulfils the above mentioned five and ten characteristics thus e.g.

Five characteristics :-

1. Sarga (1.6, 7, 8 etc.)
2. Pratisarga (1.5)

- | | |
|------------------|--------|
| 3. Vāṃsa | (1.22) |
| 4. Manvantara | (4.41) |
| 5. Vāṃsānucarita | (2.13) |

Ten characteristics :-

- | | |
|--------------------|----------------|
| 1. Sṛṣṭi | (1.6,7,8 etc.) |
| 2. Viśṛṣṭi | (1.5) |
| 3. Sthiti | (1.6) |
| 4. Pālana | (1.18) |
| 5. Karmavāsanā | (2.25,26) |
| 6. Manuvārtā | (4.41) |
| 7. Pralaya-varṇana | (1.5) |
| 8. Mokṣanirupana | (4.10,11 etc.) |
| 9. Harikīrtana | (2.34) |
| 10. Devakīrtana | (2.10,13). |

Over and above these, the BVP describes caste, Āyurveda, diseases, ācāra and āhnikā (1.10,1.16, 1.26).

It is strange to note that the BVP tries to fulfil itself according to five and ten characteristics of Purāṇa but even though MM. Dr. P.V. Kane⁷⁵ and H.H. Wilson⁷⁶ remark, without giving any argument that the Brahmavaivarta-purāṇa has not the slightest title to be regarded as a purāṇa.

THE POSITION OF THE BVP IN THE DIFFERENT CLASSIFICATION OF THE PURĀNAS.

The Purāṇas can be classified into ancient and later according as they conform or not strictly to the Pāñcalakṣaṇa definition.

Dr. A.D. Pusalker states that the Vāyu, Brahmāṇḍa,

Matsya and Viṣṇu are ancient Purāṇas.⁷⁷

The Mahāpurāṇas have been divided into Sāttvika, Rājasa and Tāmasa according to their preferential treatment of Viṣṇu, Śiva and other deities.

The PP (Uttara 263.81-84) classifies them in three categories as follows :-

1. Sāttvika - VP, NP, BhP, GP, PP, VPP.
2. Rājasa - BRP, BVP, MKP, BP, VMP, BSP
3. Tāmasa - MP, KP, LP, SP, AP, SKP.

The SKP enumerates ten purāṇas as describing the greatness of Śiva, four of Brahmā and two of Devī and Hari.⁷⁸ The MP (53.68-69) regards the Purāṇas glorifying Agni as rājasa and those that glorify Sarasvatī and Pitṛs as Saṁkīrṇa.

On the authority of the Tāmila works, V.R.R. Dikshitar⁷⁹ classifies the Purāṇas into five groups as follows :-

1. Brahmā - Brahma and Padma
2. Sūrya - Brahmavaivarta
3. Agni - Agni
4. Śiva - Śiva, Skanda, Liṅga, Kūrma, Vāmana, Varāha, Bhaviṣya, Matsya, Mārkaṇḍeya, Brahmāṇḍa,
5. Viṣṇu - Nārada, Bhāgavata, Garuḍa, Viṣṇu.

Hara Prasad Sastri⁸⁰ gives the following classification on a thorough and critical examination of the contents of the Purāṇas as follows :-

1. Purāṇas of encyclopaedic character = GP, AP, NP.

2. Purāṇas dealing with Holy places
and religious vows = PP, SKP, BSP.
3. Purāṇas which underwent
two general revisions = BP, BhP, BVP.
4. Purāṇas revised out of
existence = VRP, KP, MP.
5. Historical group = BRP, VVP
6. Sectarian works = LP, VMP, MKP.

Now according to the MP a Purāṇa which deals with Brahmā as its highest deity is a Rājasa Purāṇa and one which deals with Hari is a Sāttvika Purāṇa. According to PP the BVP is a rājasa Purāṇa but the extent BVP does not mention Brahmā as its highest deity but Brahmā is described inferior to Kṛṣṇa (Hari) who is mentioned as the Supreme deity in the BVP and hence the BVP is a Sāttvika Purāṇa not a Rājasa one.

According to V.R.R. Dikshitar, the BVP deals with Sūrya but this is far from the truth so far the extant BVP is concerned because Sūrya is shown inferior to Kṛṣṇa who is the major deity of description in the BVP.

INFLUENCE OF THE BVP ON OTHER WORKS.

It is known that the BhP has a great influence over Vaiṣṇavas of India. In this Purāṇa Kṛṣṇa's līlā or divine sports are described. Rādhā is connected with Kṛṣṇa but even then she is missing in the BhP. To fill up this desideratum, some vaiṣṇavas might have thought to compile the BVP. It can be said that Rādhā is the main character of this purāṇa and hence the BVP is the chief authority on the neo-school

of Vaiṣṇavism or the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa cult.⁸¹

The BVP has influenced later writers⁸² also e.g. Gaurikanta Dvija, an Assamese writer, wrote the drama "Vighneśa Janmodaya" containing three acts in Śaka year 1721 i.e. 1799 A.D. and this is inspired by the story of Gaṇeśa in the Gaṇeśakhaṇḍa of the BVP while another Assamese writer - Dina Dvija wrote the drama "Śaṁkha-cūḍa-vadha" containing three acts in Śaka year 1724 i.e. 1802 A.D. and this is based on the story of Śaṁkha-cūḍa of the Prakṛtikhaṇḍa of the BVP.

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Vide also Pusalker A.D. Studies in the Epics and Purāṇas P.22.
2. Ibid P.22.
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4. Pusalker A.D. Presidential Address, History section, proceedings and Transactions of the All India Oriental conference XVIII Session Annamalainagar December 1955 Part I P.61.
5. Upadhyaya Baladeva. Purāṇavimarsa P.22.
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- 8/ Vide also Dikshitar V.R.R. Purāṇa.
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11. Vide for the date of these Nibandha-works, Kane P.V. HDS Vol.I.


12. Vide A.S. Gupta's article "The Apocryphal character of the extant Brahmavaivarta purāṇa" Purāṇa Vol.III No.I January 1961 P.99.
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 Vide also "Some Minor Purāṇas" ABORI Poona XIX 1938 P.76.
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 Roy J.C. Bhāratvarṣa a Bengali journal. Bangabda Āśāḍha 1337 Quoted by Hazra R.C. in PRHRC P.166.
 Gupta A.S. Op.Cit.P.101.
14. Gupta A.S. Op.Cit.P.96.
15. MP 53.34
 BhP 12.13.6.
 BVP 4.133.16.
 NP Pūrvakhanda 101.
16. Sastri H.P. Op.Cit. P.335.
17. Hindīvisvakosa Part 7 P.237.
18. Gupta A.S. Op.Cit.P.101.
19. It may be noted that A.S. Gupta also express a similar opinion. Vide his above mentioned article.
20. Roy J.C. Bhāratavarṣa Āśāḍha Bangabda 1337 quoted by Hazra R.C. in PRHRC P.166.
21. Hazra R.C. 'Some Minor Purāṇas' ABORI Poona Vol.XIX 1938 P.76.
22. Wilson H.H. Eesays P.120.

23. Kane P.V. HDS Vol. V Part II P.895.
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25. Maity P.K. Historical study in the cult of the
goddess Manasā P.217.
26. Upadhyay Baladeva. Purānavimarsa P.556.
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34. Wilson H.H. Viṣṇupurāṇa English Translation preface
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66. Ibid. P.357.
67. Ibid. P.357.
68. Cf 1.1.61, 4.133.31.
69. Winternitz M. History of Indian Literature Vol.I 
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71. Hazra R.C. Studies in the Upapurāṇas Vol.II P.506.
72. Cf. BVP. 4.133.6
 MP 53.65.
 KP 1.1.12
 BP 1.37-38.
73. Hazra R.C. Op.Cit. Vol.I P.2.
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② On examining the mss. position, Dr. V. Raghavan finds that the name Brahmaparivarta is confined to South Indian mss. and Brahmaparivarta is uniformly found in all North Indian mss. Letter of Dr. V. Raghavan dt. 12.8.1970 to Dr. S. R. Kantawala. My grateful thanks are due to him for supplying this information.