

THE
VISHNU PURANA

TRANSLATED
FROM THE ORIGINAL SANSKRIT,
AND
ILLUSTRATED BY NOTES
DERIVED CHIEFLY FROM OTHER PURANAS,
BY

H. H. WILSON, M. A. F.R.S'.

MEMBER OF THE ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY, AND OF THE ASIATIC
SOCIETIES OF BENGAL AND PARIS; OF THE IMPERIAL SOCIETY OF
NATURALISTS, MOSCOW; OF THE ROYAL ACADEMIES OF BERLIN
AND MUNICH; PHIL. DR. IN THE UNIVERSITY OF BRESLAU AND BO-
DEN PROFESSOR OF SANSKRIT IN THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD;
LONDON,

PUBLISHED BY JOHN MURRAY,
ALBEMARLE STREET.

[1840]

Contents

| | |
|------------------------------------|----|
| PREFACE..... | 3 |
| Introduction..... | 3 |
| Date of the Puranas..... | 7 |
| Form of the Puranas..... | 8 |
| Classification of the Puranas..... | 8 |
| Synopsis of the Vishnu Purana..... | 30 |
| Date of the Vishnu Purana..... | 37 |
| Conclusion..... | 38 |
| CONTENTS..... | 39 |

TO
THE CHANCELLOR, MASTERS, AND SCHOLARS
OF
THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD,
THIS WORK
IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED BY
H. H. WILSON,
IN TESTIMONY OF HIS VENERATION FOR
THE UNIVERSITY,
AND IN GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE DISTINCTION
CONFERRED UPON HIM
BY HIS ADMISSION AS A MEMBER,
AND HIS ELECTION
TO THE
BODEN PROFESSORSHIP OF THE SANSKRIT LANGUAGE.
OXFORD,
Feb. 10, 1840.

PREFACE.

Introduction

THE literature of the Hindus has now been cultivated for many years with singular diligence, and in many of its branches with eminent success. There are some departments, however, which are yet but partially and imperfectly investigated; and we are far from being in possession of that knowledge which the authentic writings of the Hindus alone can give us of their religion, mythology, and historical traditions.

From the materials to which we have hitherto had access, it seems probable that there have been three principal forms in which the religion of the Hindus has existed, at as many different periods. The duration of those periods, the circumstances of their succession, and the precise state of the national faith at each season, it is not possible to trace with any approach to accuracy. The premises have been too imperfectly determined to authorize other than conclusions of a general and somewhat vague description, and those remain to be hereafter confirmed or corrected by more extensive and satisfactory research.

The earliest form under which the Hindu religion appears is that taught in the Vedas. The style of the language, and the purport of the composition of those works, as far as we are acquainted with them, indicate a date long anterior to that of any other class of Sanscrit writings. It is yet, however, scarcely safe to advance an opinion of the precise belief or philosophy which they inculcate. To enable us to judge of their tendency, we have only a general sketch of their arrangement and contents, with a few extracts, by Mr. Colebrooke, in the Asiatic Researches ; a few incidental observations by Mr. Ellis, in the same miscellany ; and a translation of the first book of the Sanhita, or collection of the prayers of the Rig-veda, by Dr. Rosen ; and some of the Upanishads, or speculative treatises, attached to, rather than part of, the Vedas, by Rammohun Roy . Of the religion taught in the Vedas,

Mr. Colebrooke's opinion will probably be received as that which is best entitled to deference, as certainly no Sanscrit scholar has been equally conversant with the original works. "The real doctrine of the Indian scripture is the unity of the Deity, in whom the universe is comprehended; and the seeming polytheism which it exhibits, offers the elements and the stars and planets as gods. The three principal manifestations of the divinity, with other personified attributes and energies, and most of the other gods of Hindu mythology, are indeed mentioned, or at least indicated, in the Veda. But the worship of deified heroes is no part of the system; nor are the incarnations of deities suggested in any portion of the text which I have yet seen, though such are sometimes hinted at by the commentators ." Some of these statements may perhaps require modification; for without a careful examination of all the prayers of the Vedas, it would be hazardous to assert that they contain no indication whatever of hero-worship; and certainly they do appear to allude occasionally to the Avatars, or incarnations, of Vishnu. Still, however, it is true that the prevailing character of the ritual of the Vedas is the worship of the personified elements; of Agni, or fire; Indra, the firmament; Vayu, the air; Varuna, the water; of Aditya, the sun; Soma, the moon; and other elementary and planetary personages. It is also true that the worship of the Vedas is for the most part domestic worship, consisting of prayers and oblations offered – in their own houses, not in temples – by individuals for individual good, and addressed to unreal presences, not to visible types. In a word, the religion of the Vedas was not idolatry.

It is not possible to conjecture when this more simple and primitive form of adoration was succeeded by the worship of images and types, representing Brahma, Vishnu, S'iva, and other imaginary beings, constituting a mythological pantheon of most ample extent; or when Rama and Krishna, who appear to have been originally real and historical characters, were elevated to the dignity of divinities. Image-worship is alluded to by Manu in several passages , but with an intimation that those Brahmans who subsist by ministering in temples are an inferior and degraded class. The story of the Ramayana and Mahabharata turns wholly upon the doctrine of incarnations, all the chief dramatis personae of the poems being impersonations of gods and demigods and celestial spirits. The ritual appears to be that of the Vedas, and it may be doubted if any allusion to image-worship occurs; but the doctrine of propitiation by penance and praise prevails throughout, and Vishnu and S'iva are the especial objects of panegyric and invocation. In these two works, then, we trace unequivocal indications of a departure from the elemental worship of the Vedas, and the origin or elaboration of legends, which form the great body of the mythological religion of the Hindus. How far they only improved upon the cosmogony and chronology of their predecessors, or in what degree the traditions of families and dynasties may originate with them, are questions that can only be determined when the Vedas and the two works in question shall have been more thoroughly examined.

The different works known by the name of Puranas are evidently derived from the same religious system as the Ramayana and Mahabharata, or from the mytho-heroic stage of Hindu belief. They present, however, peculiarities which designate their belonging to a later period, and to an important modification in the progress of opinion. They repeat the theoretical cosmogony of the two great poems; they expand and systematize the chronological computations; and they give a more definite and connected representation of the mythological fictions, and the historical traditions. But besides these and other particulars, which may be derivable from an old, if not from a primitive era, they offer characteristic peculiarities of a more modern description, in the paramount importance which they assign to individual divinities, in the variety and purport of the rites and observances addressed to them, and in the invention of new legends illustrative of the power and graciousness of those deities, and of the efficacy of implicit devotion to them. S'iva and Vishnu, under one or other form, are almost the sole objects that claim the homage of the Hindus in the Puranas; departing from the domestic and elemental ritual of the Vedas, and exhibiting a sectarial fervour and exclusiveness not traceable in the Ramayana, and only to a qualified extent in the Mahabharata. They are no longer authorities for Hindu belief as a whole: they are special guides for separate and sometimes conflict-

ing branches of it, compiled for the evident purpose of promoting the preferential, or in some cases the sole, worship of Vishnu or of S'iva .

That the Puranas always bore the character here given of them, may admit of reasonable doubt; that it correctly applies to them as they now are met with, the following pages will irrefragably substantiate. It is possible, however, that there may have been an earlier class of Puranas, of which those we now have are but the partial and adulterated representatives. The identity of the legends in many of them, and still more the identity of the words – for in several of them long passages are literally the same – is a sufficient proof that in all such cases they must be copied either from some other similar work, or from a common and prior original. It is not unusual also for a fact to be stated upon the authority of an 'old stanza,' which is cited accordingly; shewing the existence of an earlier source of information: and in very many instances legends are alluded to, not told; evincing acquaintance with their prior narration somewhere else. The name itself, Purana, which implies 'old,' indicates the object of the compilation to be the preservation of ancient traditions, a purpose in the present condition of the Puranas very imperfectly fulfilled. Whatever weight may be attached to these considerations, there is no disputing evidence to the like effect afforded by other and unquestionable authority. The description given by Mr. Colebrooke of the contents of a Purana is taken from Sanscrit writers. The Lexicon of Amara Sinha gives as a synonyme of Purana, Panchalakshanam, 'that which has five characteristic topics:' and there is no difference of opinion amongst the scholiasts as to what these are. They are, as Mr. Colebrooke mentions, 1. Primary creation, or cosmogony; 2. Secondary creation, or the destruction and renovation of worlds, including chronology; 3. Genealogy of gods and patriarchs; 4. Reigns of the Manus, or periods called Manwantaras; and 5. History, or such particulars as have been preserved of the princes of the solar and lunar races, and of their descendants to modern times . Such, at any rate, were the constituent and characteristic portions of a Purana in the days of Amara Sinha, fifty-six years before the Christian era; and if the Puranas had undergone no change since his time, such we should expect to find them still. Do they conform to this description? Not exactly in any one instance: to some of them it is utterly inapplicable; to others it only partially applies. There is not one to which it belongs so entirely as to the Vishnu Purana, and it is one of the circumstances which gives to this work a more authentic character than most of its fellows can pretend to. Yet even in this instance we have a book upon the institutes of society and obsequial rites interposed between the Manwantaras and the genealogies of princes, and a life of Krishna separating the latter from an account of the end of the world, besides the insertion of various legends of a manifestly popular and sectarial character. No doubt many of the Puranas, as they now are, correspond with the view which Col. Vans Kennedy takes of their purport. "I cannot discover in them," he remarks, "any other object than that of religious instruction." The description of the earth and of the planetary system, and the lists of royal races which occur in them, he asserts to be "evidently extraneous, and not essential circumstances, as they are entirely omitted in some Puranas, and very concisely illustrated in others; while, on the contrary, in all the Puranas some or other of the leading principles, rites, and observances of the Hindu religion are fully dwelt upon, and illustrated either by suitable legends or by prescribing the ceremonies to be practised, and the prayers and invocations to be employed, in the worship of different deities ." Now, however accurate this description may be of the Puranas as they are, it is clear that it does not apply to what they were when they were synonymously designated as Panchalakshanas, or 'treatises on five topics;' not one of which five is ever specified by text or comment to be "religious instruction." In the knowledge of Amara Sinha the lists of princes were not extraneous and unessential, and their being now so considered by a writer so well acquainted with the contents of the Puranas as Col. Vans Kennedy is a decisive proof that since the days of the lexicographer they have undergone some material alteration, and that we have not at present the same works in all respects that were current under the denomination of Puranas in the century prior to Christianity.

The inference deduced from the discrepancy between the actual form and the older definition of a Purana, unfavourable to the antiquity of the extant works generally, is converted into certainty when we come to examine them in detail; for although they have no dates attached to them, yet circum-

tances are sometimes mentioned or alluded to, or references to authorities are made, or legends are narrated, or places are particularized, of which the comparatively recent date is indisputable, and which enforce a corresponding reduction of the antiquity of the work in which they are discovered. At the same time they may be acquitted of subservience to any but sectarial imposture. They were pious frauds for temporary purposes: they never emanated from any impossible combination of the Brahmans to fabricate for the antiquity of the entire Hindu system any claims which it cannot fully support. A very great portion of the contents of many, some portion of the contents of all, is genuine and old. The sectarial interpolation or embellishment is always sufficiently palpable to be set aside, without injury to the more authentic and primitive material; and the Puranas, although they belong especially to that stage of the Hindu religion in which faith in some one divinity was the prevailing principle, are also a valuable record of the form of Hindu belief which came next in order to that of the Vedas; which grafted hero-worship upon the simpler ritual of the latter; and which had been adopted, and was extensively, perhaps universally established in India at the time of the Greek invasion. The Hercules of the Greek writers was indubitably the Balarama of the Hindus; and their notices of Mathura on the Jumna, and of the kingdom of the Suraseni and the Pandaeon country, evidence the prior currency of the traditions which constitute the argument of the Mahabharata, and which are constantly repeated in the Puranas, relating to the Pandava and Yadava races, to Krishna and his contemporary heroes, and to the dynasties of the solar and lunar kings.

The theogony and cosmogony of the Puranas may probably be traced to the Vedas. They are not, as far as is yet known, described in detail in those works, but they are frequently alluded to in a strain more or less mystical and obscure, which indicates acquaintance with their existence, and which seems to have supplied the Puranas with the groundwork of their systems. The scheme of primary or elementary creation they borrow from the Sankhya philosophy, which is probably one of the oldest forms of speculation on man and nature amongst the Hindus. Agreeably, however, to that part of the Pauranik character which there is reason to suspect of later origin, their inculcation of the worship of a favourite deity, they combine the interposition of a creator with the independent evolution of matter in a somewhat contradictory and unintelligible style. It is evident too that their accounts of secondary creation, or the developement of the existing forms of things, and the disposition of the universe, are derived from several and different sources; and it appears very likely that they are to be accused of some of the incongruities and absurdities by which the narrative is disfigured, in consequence of having attempted to assign reality and significancy to what was merely metaphor or mysticism. There is, however, amidst the unnecessary complexity of the description, a general agreement amongst them as to the origin of things, and their final distribution; and in many of the circumstances there is a striking concurrence with the ideas which seem to have pervaded the whole of the ancient world, and which we may therefore believe to be faithfully represented in the Puranas.

The Pantheism of the Puranas is one of their invariable characteristics, although the particular divinity, who is all things, from whom all things proceed, and to whom all things return, be diversified according to their individual sectarial bias. They seem to have derived the notion from the Vedas: but in them the one universal Being is of a higher order than a personification of attributes or elements, and, however imperfectly conceived, or unworthily described, is God. In the Puranas the one only Supreme Being is supposed to be manifest in the person of S'iva or Vishnu, either in the way of illusion or in sport; and one or other of these divinities is therefore also the cause of all that is, is himself all that exists. The identity of God and nature is not a new notion; it was very general in the speculations of antiquity, but it assumed a new vigour in the early ages of Christianity, and was carried to an equal pitch of extravagance by the Platonic Christians as by the S'aiva or Vaishnava Hindus. It seems not impossible that there was some communication between them. We know that there was an active communication between India and the Red sea in the early ages of the Christian era, and that doctrines, as well as articles of merchandise, were brought to Alexandria from the former. Epiphanius and Eusebius accuse Scythianus of having imported from India, in the second century, books on magic, and heretical notions leading to Manichaeism; and it was at the same period that

Ammonius instituted the sect of the new Platonists at Alexandria. The basis of his heresy was, that true philosophy derived its origin from the eastern nations: his doctrine of the identity of God and the universe is that of the Vedas and Puranas; and the practices he enjoined, as well as their object, were precisely those described in several of the Puranas under the name of Yoga. His disciples were taught "to extenuate by mortification and contemplation the bodily restraints upon the immortal spirit, so that in this life they might enjoy communion with the Supreme Being, and ascend after death to the universal Parent ." That these are Hindu tenets the following pages will testify; and by the admission of their Alexandrian teacher, they originated in India. The importation was perhaps not wholly unrequited; the loan may not have been left unpaid. It is not impossible that the Hindu doctrines received fresh animation from their adoption by the successors of Ammonius, and especially by the mystics, who may have prompted, as well as employed, the expressions of the Puranas. Anquetil du Perron has given , in the introduction to his translation of the 'Oupnekhat,' several hymns by Synesius, a bishop of the beginning of the fifth century, which may serve as parallels to many of the hymns and prayers addressed to Vishnu in the Vishnu Purana.

But the ascription to individual and personal deities of the attributes of the one universal and spiritual Supreme Being, is an indication of a later date than the Vedas certainly, and apparently also than the Ramayana, where Rama, although an incarnation of Vishnu, commonly appears in his human character alone. There is something of the kind in the Mahabharata in respect to Krishna, especially in the philosophical episode known as the Bhagavad Gita. In other places the divine nature of Krishna is less decidedly affirmed; in some it is disputed or denied; and in most of the situations in which he is exhibited in action, it is as a prince and warrior, not as a divinity. He exercises no superhuman faculties in the defence of himself or his friends, or in the defeat and destruction of his foes. The Mahabharata, however, is evidently a work of various periods, and requires to be read throughout carefully and critically before its weight as an authority can be accurately appreciated. As it is now in type – thanks to the public spirit of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, and their secretary Mr. J. Prinsep – it will not be long before the Sanscrit scholars of the continent will accurately appreciate its value.

Date of the Puranas

The Puranas are also works of evidently different ages, and have been compiled under different circumstances, the precise nature of which we can but imperfectly conjecture from internal evidence, and from what we know of the history of religious opinion in India. It is highly probable, that of the present popular forms of the Hindu religion, none assumed their actual state earlier than the time of S'ankara Acharya, the great S'aiva reformer, who flourished, in all likelihood, in the eighth or ninth century. Of the Vaishnava teachers, Ramanuja dates in the twelfth century, Madhwacharya in the thirteenth, and Vallabha in the sixteenth ; and the Puranas seem to have accompanied or followed their innovations, being obviously intended to advocate the doctrines they taught. This is to assign to some of them a very modern date, it is true; but I cannot think that a higher can with justice be ascribed to them. This, however, applies to some only out of the number, as I shall presently proceed to specify.

Another evidence of a comparatively modern date must be admitted in those chapters of the Puranas which, assuming a prophetic tone, foretell what dynasties of kings will reign in the Kali age. These chapters, it is true, are found but in four of the Puranas, but they are conclusive in bringing down the date of those four to a period considerably subsequent to Christianity. It is also to be remarked, that the Vayu, Vishnu, Bhagavata, and Matsya Puranas, in which these particulars are foretold, have in all other respects the character of as great antiquity as any works of their class .

Form of the Puranas

The invariable form of the Puranas is that of a dialogue, in which some person relates its contents in reply to the inquiries of another. This dialogue is interwoven with others, which are repeated as having been held on other occasions between different individuals, in consequence of similar questions having been asked. The immediate narrator is commonly, though not constantly, Lomaharshana or Romaharshana, the disciple of Vyasa, who is supposed to communicate what was imparted to him by his preceptor, as he had heard it from some other sage. Vyasa, as will be seen in the body of the work, is a generic title, meaning an 'arranger' or 'compiler.' It is in this age applied to Krishna Dwaipayana, the son of Paras'ara, who is said to have taught the Vedas and Puranas to various disciples, but who appears to have been the head of a college or school, under whom various learned men gave to the sacred literature of the Hindus the form in which it now presents itself. In this task the disciples, as they are termed, of Vyasa were rather his colleagues and coadjutors, for they were already conversant with what he is fabled to have taught them; and amongst them, Lomaharshana represents the class of persons who were especially charged with the record of political and temporal events. He is called Suta, as if it was a proper name; but it is more correctly a title; and Lomaharshana was 'a Suta,' that is, a bard or panegyrist, who was created, according to our text, to celebrate the exploits of princes; and who, according to the Vayu and Padma Puranas, has a right by birth and profession to narrate the Puranas, in preference even to the Brahmans. It is not unlikely therefore that we are to understand, by his being represented as the disciple of Vyasa, the institution of some attempt, made under the direction of the latter, to collect from the heralds and annalists of his day the scattered traditions which they had imperfectly preserved; and hence the consequent appropriation of the Puranas, in a great measure, to the genealogies of regal dynasties, and descriptions of the universe. However this may be, the machinery has been but loosely adhered to, and many of the Puranas, like the Vishnu, are referred to a different narrator.

An account is given in the following work of a series of Pauranic compilations, of which in their present form no vestige appears. Lomaharshana is said to have had six disciples, three of whom composed as many fundamental Sanhitas, whilst he himself compiled a fourth. By a Sanhita is generally understood a 'collection' or 'compilation.' The Sanhitas of the Vedas are collections of hymns and prayers belonging to them, arranged according to the judgment of some individual sage, who is therefore looked upon as the originator and teacher of each. The Sanhitas of the Puranas, then, should be analogous compilations, attributed respectively to Mitrayu, S'ans'apayana, Akritavrana, and Romaharshana: no such Pauranic Sanhitas are now known, The substance of the four is said to be collected in the Vishnu Purana, which is also, in another place, itself called a Sanhita: but such compilations have not, as far as inquiry has yet proceeded, been discovered. The specification may be accepted as an indication of the Puranas having existed in some other form, in which they are no longer met with; although it does not appear that the arrangement was incompatible with their existence as separate works, for the Vishnu Purana, which is our authority for the four Sanhitas, gives us also the usual enumeration of the several Puranas.

Classification of the Puranas

There is another classification of the Puranas alluded to in the Matsya Purana, and specified by the Padma Purana, but more fully. It is not undeserving of notice, as it expresses the opinion which native writers entertain of the scope of the Puranas, and of their recognising the subservience of these works to the dissemination of sectarian principles.. Thus it is said in the Uttara Khanda of the Padma, that the Puranas, as well as other works, are divided into three classes, according to the qualities which prevail in them. Thus the Vishnu, Naradiya, Bhagavata, Garuda, Padma, and Varaha Puranas, are Satwika, or pure, from the predominance in them of the Satwa quality, or that of goodness and purity. They are, in fact, Vaishnava Puranas. The Matsya, Kurma, Linga, S'iva, Skanda, and Agni Puranas, are Tamasa, or Puranas of darkness, from the prevalence of the quality of Tamas,

'ignorance,' 'gloom.' They are indisputably S'aiva Puranas. The third series, comprising the Brahma-vaivartta, Markandeya, Bhavishya, Vamana, and Brahma Puranas, are designated as Rajasa, 'passionate,' from Rajas, the property of passion, which they are supposed to represent.. The Matsya does not specify which are the Puranas that come under these designations, but remarks that those in which the Mahatmya of Hari or Vishnu prevails are Satwika; those in which the legends of Agni or S'iva predominate are Tamasa; and those which dwell most on the stories of Brahma are Rajasa. I have elsewhere stated, that I considered the Rajasa Puranas to lean to the Sakta division of the Hindus, the worshippers of S'akti, or the female principle; founding this opinion on the character of the legends which some of them contain, such as the Durga Mahatmya, or celebrated legend on which the worship of Durga or Kali is especially founded, which is a principal episode of the Markandeya. The Brahma-vaivartta also devotes the greatest portion of its chapters to the celebration of Radha, the mistress of Krishna, and other female divinities. Col. Vans Kennedy, however, objects to the application of the term Sakta to this last division of the Puranas, the worship of S'akti being the especial object of a different class of works, the Tantras, and no such form of worship being particularly inculcated in the Brahma Purana. This last argument is of weight in regard to the particular instance specified, and the designation of S'akti may not be correctly applicable to the whole class, although it is to some of the series; for there is no incompatibility in the advocacy of a Tantrika modification of the Hindu religion by any Purana, and it has unquestionably been practised in works known as Upa-puranas. The proper appropriation of the third class of the Puranas, according to the Padma Purana, appears to be to the worship of Krishna, not in the character in which he is represented in the Vishnu and Bhagavata Puranas, in which the incidents of his boyhood are only a portion of his biography, and in which the human character largely participates, at least in his riper years, but as the infant Krishna, Govinda, Bala Gopala, the sojourner in Vrindavan, the companion of the cowherds and milkmaids, the lover of Radha, or as the juvenile master of the universe, Jagannatha. The term Rajasa, implying the animation of passion, and enjoyment of sensual delights, is applicable, not only to the character of the youthful divinity, but to those with whom his adoration in these forms seems to have originated, the Gosains of Gokul and Bengal, the followers and descendants of Vallabha and Chaitanya, the priests and proprietors of Jagannath and S'rinath-dwar, who lead a life of affluence and indulgence, and vindicate, both by precept and practice, the reasonableness of the Rajasa property, and the congruity of temporal enjoyment with the duties of religion.

The Puranas are uniformly stated to be eighteen in number. It is said that there are also eighteen Upa-puranas, or minor Puranas; but the names of only a few of these are specified in the least exceptionable authorities, and the greater number of the works is not procurable. With regard to the eighteen Puranas, there is a peculiarity in their specification, which is proof of an interference with the integrity of the text, in some of them at least; for each of them specifies the names of the whole eighteen. Now the list could not have been complete whilst the work that gives it was unfinished, and in one only therefore, the last of the series, have we a right to look for it. As however there are more last words than one, it is evident that the names must have been inserted in all except one after the whole were completed: which of the eighteen is the exception, and truly the last, there is no clue to discover, and the specification is probably an interpolation in most, if not in all.

The names that are specified are commonly the same, and are as follows: 1. Brahma, 2. Padma, 3. Vaishnava, 4. S'aiva, 5. Bhagavata, 6. Narada, 7. Markanda, 8. Agneya, 9. Bhavishya, 10. Brahma-vaivartta, 11. Lainga, 12. Varaha, 13. Skanda, 14. Vamana, 15. Kaurma, 16. Matsya, 17. Garuda, 18. Brahmada . This is from the twelfth book of the Bhagavata, and is the same as occurs in the Vishnu. In other authorities there are a few variations. The list of the Kurma P. omits the Agni Purana, and substitutes the Vayu. The Agni leaves out the S'aiva, and inserts the Vayu. The Varaha omits the Garuda and Brahmada, and inserts the Vayu and Narasinha: in this last it is singular. The Markandeya agrees with the Vishnu and Bhagavata in omitting the Vayu. The Matsya, like the Agni, leaves out the S'aiva.

Some of the Puranas, as the Agni, Matsya, Bhagavata, and Padma, also particularize the number of stanzas which each of the eighteen contains. In one or two instances they disagree, but in general they concur. The aggregate is stated at 400,000 slokas, or 1,600,000 lines. These are fabled to be but an abridgment, the whole amount being a krore, or ten millions of stanzas, or even a thousand millions. If all the fragmentary portions claiming in various parts of India to belong to the Puranas were admitted, their extent would much exceed the lesser, though it would not reach the larger enumeration. The former is, however, as I have elsewhere stated, a quantity that an individual European scholar could scarcely expect to peruse with due care and attention, unless his whole time were devoted exclusively for many years to the task. Yet without some such labour being achieved, it was clear, from the crudity and inexactness of all that had been hitherto published on the subject, with one exception, that sound views on the subject of Hindu mythology and tradition were not to be expected. Circumstances, which I have already explained in the paper in the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society referred to above, enabled me to avail myself of competent assistance, by which I made a minute abstract of most of the Puranas. In course of time I hope to place a tolerably copious and connected analysis of the whole eighteen before Oriental scholars, and in the mean while offer a brief notice of their several contents.

In general the enumeration of the Puranas is a simple nomenclature, with the addition in some cases of the number of verses; but to these the Matsya Purana joins the mention of one or two circumstances peculiar to each, which, although scanty, are of value, as offering means of identifying the copies of the Puranas now found with those to which the Matsya refers, or of discovering a difference between the present and the past. I shall therefore prefix the passage descriptive of each Purana from the Matsya. It is necessary to remark, however, that in the comparison instituted between that description and the Purana as it exists, I necessarily refer to the copy or copies which I employed for the purpose of examination and analysis, and which were procured with some trouble and cost in Benares and Calcutta. In some instances my manuscripts have been collated with others from different parts of India, and the result has shewn, that, with regard at least to the Brahma, Vishnu, Vayu, Matsya, Padma, Bhagavata, and Kurma Puranas, the same works, in all essential respects, are generally current under the same appellations. Whether this is invariably the case may be doubted, and farther inquiry may possibly shew that I have been obliged to content myself with mutilated or unauthentic works. It is with this reservation, therefore, that I must be understood to speak of the concurrence or disagreement of any Purana with the notice of it which the Matsya P. has preserved.

1. The Brahma Purana

1. Brahma Purana. "That, the whole of which was formerly repeated by Brahma to Marichi, is called the Brahma Purana, and contains ten thousand stanzas ." In all the lists of the Puranas, the Brahma is placed at the head of the series, and is thence sometimes also entitled the Adi or 'first' Purana. It is also designated as the Saura, as it is in great part appropriated to the worship of Surya, 'the sun.' There are, however, works bearing these names which belong to the class of Upa-puranas, and which are not to be confounded with the Brahma. It is usually said, as above, to contain ten thousand slokas; but the number actually occurring is between seven and eight thousand. There is a supplementary or concluding section called the Brahmottara Purana, and which is different from a portion of the Skanda called the Brahmottara Khanda, which contains about three thousand stanzas more; but there is every reason to conclude that this is a distinct and unconnected work.

The immediate narrator of the Brahma Purana is Lomaharshana, who communicates it to the Rishis or sages assembled at Naimisharanya, as it was originally revealed by Brahma, not to Marichi, as the Matsya affirms, but to Daksha, another of the patriarchs: hence its denomination of the Brahma Purana. The early chapters of this work give a description of the creation, an account of the Manwantaras, and the history of the solar and lunar dynasties to the time of Krishna, in a summary manner, and in words which are common to it and several other Puranas: a brief description of the un-

iverse succeeds; and then come a number of chapters relating to the holiness of Orissa, with its temples and sacred groves dedicated to the sun, to S'iva, and Jagannath, the latter especially. These chapters are characteristic of this Purana, and shew its main object to be the promotion of the worship of Krishna as Jagannath . To these particulars succeeds a life of Krishna, which is word for word the same as that of the Vishnu Purana; and the compilation terminates with a particular detail of the mode in which Yoga, or contemplative devotion, the object of which is still Vishnu, is to be performed. There is little in this which corresponds with the definition of a Pancha-lakshana Purana; and the mention of the temples of Orissa, the date of the original construction of which is recorded , shews that it could not have been compiled earlier than the thirteenth or fourteenth century.

The Uttara Khanda of the Brahma P. bears still more entirely the character of a Mahatmya, or local legend, being intended to celebrate the sanctity of the Balaja river, conjectured to be the same as the Banas in Marwar. There is no clue to its date, but it is clearly modern, grafting personages and fictions of its own invention on a few hints from older authorities .

2. The Padma Purana

2. Padma Purana. "That which contains an account of the period when the world was a golden lotus (padma), and of all the occurrences of that time, is therefore called the Padma by the wise: it contains fifty-five thousand stanzas ." The second Purana in the usual lists is always the Padma, a very voluminous work, containing, according to its own statement, as well as that of other authorities, fifty-five thousand slokas; an amount not far from the truth. These are divided amongst five books, or Khandas; 1. the Srishti Khanda, or section on creation; 2. the Bhumi Khanda, description of the earth; 3. the Swarga Khanda, chapter on heaven; 4. Patala Khanda, chapter on the regions below the earth; and 5. the Uttara Khanda, last or supplementary chapter. There is also current a sixth division, the Kriya Yoga Sara, a treatise on the practice of devotion.

The denominations of these divisions of the Padma P. convey but an imperfect and partial notion of their contents. In the first, or section which treats of creation, the narrator is Ugras'ravas the Suta, the son of Lomaharshana, who is sent by his father to the Rishis at Naimisharanya to communicate to them the Purana, which, from its containing an account of the lotus (padma), in which Brahma appeared at creation, is termed the Padma or Padma Purana. The Suta repeats what was originally communicated by Brahma to Pulastya, and by him to Bhishma. The early chapters narrate the cosmogony, and the genealogy of the patriarchal families, much in the same style, and often in the same words, as the Vishnu; and short accounts of the Manwantaras and regal dynasties: but these, which are legitimate Pauranic matters, soon make way for new and unauthentic inventions, illustrative of the virtues of the lake of Pushkara, or Pokher in Ajmir, as a place of pilgrimage.

The Bhumi Khanda, or section of the earth, defers any description of the earth until near its close, filling up one hundred and twenty-seven chapters with legends of a very mixed description, some ancient and common to other Puranas, but the greater part peculiar to itself, illustrative of Tirthas either figuratively so termed – as a wife, a parent, or a Guru, considered as a sacred object – or places to which actual pilgrimage should be performed.

The Swarga Khanda describes in the first chapters the relative positions of the Lokas or spheres above the earth, placing above all Vaikuntha, the sphere of Vishnu; an addition which is not warranted by what appears to be the oldest cosmology . Miscellaneous notices of some of the most celebrated princes then succeed, conformably to the usual narratives; and these are followed by rules of conduct for the several castes, and at different stages of life. The rest of the book is occupied by legends of a diversified description, introduced without much method or contrivance; a few of which, as Daksha's sacrifice, are of ancient date, but of which the most are original and modern.

The Patala Khanda devotes a brief introduction to the description of Patala, the regions of the snake-gods; but the name of Rama having been mentioned, S'esha, who has succeeded Pulastya as spokesman, proceeds to narrate the history of Rama, his descent and his posterity; in which the

compiler seems to have taken the poem of Kalidas'a, the Raghu Vans'a, for his chief authority. An originality of addition may be suspected, however, in the adventures of the horse destined by Rama for an As'wamedha, which form the subject of a great many chapters. When about to be sacrificed, the horse turns out to be a Brahman, condemned by an imprecation of Durvasas, a sage, to assume the equine nature, and who, by having been sanctified by connexion with Rama, is released from his metamorphosis, and dispatched as a spirit of light to heaven. This piece of Vaishnava fiction is followed by praises of the S'ri Bhagavata, an account of Krishna's juvenilities, and the merits of worshipping Vishnu. These accounts are communicated through a machinery borrowed from the Tantras: they are told by Sadas'iva to Parvati, the ordinary interlocutors of Tantrika compositions.

The Uttara Khanda is a most voluminous aggregation of very heterogeneous matters, but it is consistent in adopting a decidedly Vaishnava tone, and admitting no compromise with any other form of faith. The chief subjects are first discussed in a dialogue between king Dilipa and the Muni Vas'ishtha; such as the merits of bathing in the month of Magha, and the potency of the Mantra or prayer addressed to Lakshmi Narayana. But the nature of Bhakti, faith in Vishnu – the use of Vaishnava marks on the body – the legends of Vishnu's Avataras, and especially of Rama – and the construction of images of Vishnu – are too important to be left to mortal discretion: they are explained by S'iva to Parvati, and wound up by the adoration of Vishnu by those divinities. The dialogue then reverts to the king and the sage; and the latter states why Vishnu is the only one of the triad entitled to respect; S'iva being licentious, Brahma arrogant, and Vishnu alone pure. Vas'ishtha then repeats, after S'iva, the Mahatmya of the Bhagavad Gita; the merit of each book of which is illustrated by legends of the good consequences to individuals from perusing or hearing it. Other Vaishnava Mahatmyas occupy considerable portions of this Khanda, especially the Kartika Mahatmya, or holiness of the month Kartika, illustrated as usual by stories, a few of which are of an early origin, but the greater part modern, and peculiar to this Purana .

The Kriya Yoga Sara is repeated by Suta to the Rishis, after Vyasa's communication of it to Jaimini, in answer to an inquiry how religious merit might be secured in the Kali age, in which men have become incapable of the penances and abstraction by which final liberation was formerly to be attained. The answer is, of course, that which is intimated in the last hook of the Vishnu Purana – personal devotion to Vishnu: thinking of him, repeating his names, wearing his marks, worshipping in his temples, are a full substitute for all other acts of moral or devotional or contemplative merit.

The different portions of the Padma Purana are in all probability as many different works, neither of which approaches to the original definition of a Purana. There may be some connexion between the three first portions, at least as to time; but there is no reason to consider them as of high antiquity. They specify the Jains both by name and practices.; they talk of Mlechchhas, 'barbarians,' flourishing in India; they commend the use of the frontal and other Vaishnava marks; and they notice other subjects which, like these, are of no remote origin. The Patala Khanda dwells copiously upon the Bhagavata, and is consequently posterior to it. The Uttara Khanda is intolerantly Vaishnava, and is therefore unquestionably modern. It enjoins the veneration of the Salagram stone and Tulasi plant, the use of the Tapta-mudra, or stamping with a hot iron the name of Vishnu on the skin, and a variety of practices and observances undoubtedly no part of the original system. It speaks of the shrines of S'ri-rangam and Venkatadri in the Dekhin, temples that have no pretension to remote antiquity; and it names Haripur on the Tungabhadra, which is in all likelihood the city of Vijayanagar, founded in the middle of the fourteenth century. The Kriya Yoga Sara is equally a modern, and apparently a Bengali composition. No portion of the Padma Purana is probably older than the twelfth century, and the last parts may be as recent as the fifteenth or sixteenth .

3. The Vishnu Purana

Vishnu Purana. "That in which Paras'ara, beginning with the events of the Varaha Kalpa, expounds all duties, is called the Vaishnava; and the learned know its extent to be twenty-three thousand stan-

zas ." The third Purana of the lists is that which has been selected for translation, the Vishnu. It is unnecessary therefore to offer any general summary of its contents, and it will be convenient to reserve any remarks upon its character and probable antiquity for a subsequent page. It may here be observed, however, that the actual number of verses contained in it falls far short of the enumeration of the Matsya, with which the Bhagavata concurs. Its actual contents are not seven thousand stanzas. All the copies, and in this instance they are not fewer than seven in number, procured both in the east and in the west of India, agree; and there is no appearance of any part being wanting. There is a beginning, a middle, and an end, in both text and comment; and the work as it stands is incontestably entire. How is the discrepancy to be explained?

4. The Vayaviya Purana

4. "The Purana in which Vayu has declared the laws of duty, in connexion with the Sweta Kalpa, and which comprises the Mahatmya of Rudra, is the Vayaviya Purana: it contains twenty-four thousand verses ." The S'iva or S'aiva Purana is, as above remarked, omitted in some of the lists; and in general, when that is the case, it is replaced by the Vayu or Vayaviya. When the S'iva is specified, as in the Bhagavata, then the Vayu is omitted; intimating the possible identity of these two works. This indeed is confirmed by the Matsya, which describes the Vayaviya Purana as characterised by its account of the greatness of Rudra or Siva ; and Balambhatta mentions that the Vayaviya is also called the S'aiva, though, according to some, the latter is the name of an Upa-purana. Col. Vans Kennedy observes, that in the west of India the S'aiva is commonly considered to be an Upa or 'minor' Purana .

Another proof that the same work is intended by the authorities here followed, the Bhagavata and Matsya, under different appellations, is their concurrence in the extent of the work, each specifying its verses to be twenty-four thousand. A copy of the S'iva Purana, of which an index and analysis have been prepared, does not contain more than about seven thousand: it cannot therefore be the S'iva Purana of the Bhagavata; and we may safely consider that to be the same as the Vayaviya of the Matsya .

The Vayu Purana is narrated by Suta to the Rishis at Naimisharanya, as it was formerly told at the same place to similar persons by Vayu; a repetition of circumstances not uncharacteristic of the in-artificial style of this Purana. It is divided into four Padas, termed severally Prakriya, Upodghata, Anushanga, and Upasanhara; a classification peculiar to this work. These are preceded by an index, or heads of chapters, in the manner of the Mahabharata and Ramayana; another peculiarity.

The Prakriya portion contains but a few chapters, and treats chiefly of elemental creation, and the first evolutions of beings, to the same purport as the Vishnu, but in a more obscure and unmethodical style. The Upodghata then continues the subject of creation, and describes the various Kalpas or periods during which the world has existed; a greater number of which is specified by the S'aiva than by the Vaishnava Puranas. Thirty-three are here described, the last of which is the Sweta or 'white' Kalpa, from S'iva's being born in it of a white complexion. The genealogies of the patriarchs, the description of the universe, and the incidents of the first six Manwantaras, are all treated of in this part of the work; but they are intermixed with legends and praises of S'iva, as the sacrifice of Daksha, the Mahes'wara Mahatmya, the Nilakantha Stotra, and others. The genealogies, although in the main the same as those in the Vaishnava Puranas, present some variations. A long account of the Pitris or progenitors is also peculiar to this Purana; as are stories of some of the most celebrated Rishis, who were engaged in the distribution of the Vedas.

The third division commences with an account of the seven Rishis and their descendants, and describes the origin of the different classes of creatures from the daughters of Daksha, with a profuse copiousness of nomenclature, not found in any other Purana. With exception of the greater minuteness of detail, the particulars agree with those of the Vishnu P. A chapter then occurs on the worship of the Pitris; another on Tirthas, or places sacred to them; and several on the performance of

Sraddhas, constituting the Sraddha Kalpa. After this, comes a full account of the solar and lunar dynasties, forming a parallel to that in the following pages, with this difference, that it is throughout in verse, whilst that of our text, as noticed in its place, is chiefly in prose. It is extended also by the insertion of detailed accounts of various incidents, briefly noticed in the Vishnu, though derived apparently from a common original. The section terminates with similar accounts of future kings, and the same chronological calculations, that are found in the Vishnu.

The last portion, the Upasanhara, describes briefly the future Manwantaras, the measures of space and time, the end of the world, the efficacy of Yoga, and the glories of S'iva-pura, or the dwelling of S'iva, with whom the Yogi is to be united. The manuscript concludes with a different history of the successive teachers of the Vayu Purana, tracing them from Brahma to Vayu, from Vayu to Vrihaspati, and from him, through various deities and sages, to Dwaipayana and S'uta.

The account given of this Purana in the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal was limited to something less than half the work, as I had not then been able to procure a larger portion. I have now a more complete one of my own, and there are several copies in the East India Company's library of the like extent. One, presented by His Highness the Guicowar, is dated Samvat 1540, or A. D. 1483, and is evidently as old as it professes to be. The examination I have made of the work confirms the view I formerly took of it; and from the internal evidence it affords, it may perhaps be regarded as one of the oldest and most authentic specimens extant of a primitive Purana.

It appears, however, that we have not yet a copy of the entire Vayu Purana. The extent of it, as mentioned above, should be twenty-four thousand verses. The Guicowar MS. has but twelve thousand, and is denominated the Purvarddha, or first portion. My copy is of the like extent. The index also spews that several subjects remain untold; as, subsequently to the description of the sphere of S'iva, and the periodical dissolution of the world, the work is said to contain an account of a succeeding creation, and of various events that occurred in it, as the birth of several celebrated Rishis, including that of Vyasa, and a description of his distribution of the Vedas; an account of the enmity between Vas'ishtha and Viswamitra; and a Naimisharanya Mahatmya. These topics are, however, of minor importance, and can scarcely carry the Purana to the whole extent of the verses which it is said to contain. If the number is accurate, the index must still omit a considerable portion of the subsequent contents.

5. The Bhagavata Purana

5. S'ri Bhagavata. "That in which ample details of duty are described, and which opens with (an extract from) the Gayatri; that in which the death of the Asura Vritra is told, and in which the mortals and immortals of the Saraswata Kalpa, with the events that then happened to them in the world, are related; that, is celebrated as the Bhagavata, and consists of eighteen thousand verses ." The Bhagavata is a work of great celebrity in India, and exercises a more direct and powerful influence upon the opinions and feelings of the people than perhaps any other of the Puranas. It is placed the fifth in all the lists; but the Padma Purana ranks it as the eighteenth, as the extracted substance of all the rest. According to the usual specification, it consists of eighteen thousand s'lokas, distributed amongst three hundred and thirty-two chapters, divided into twelve Skandhas or books. It is named Bhagavata from its being dedicated to the glorification of Bhagavat or Vishnu.

The Bhagavata is communicated to the Rishis at Naimisharanya by Suta, as usual; but he only repeats what was narrated by S'uka, the son of Vyasa, to Parikshit, the king of Hastinapura, the grandson of Arjuna. Having incurred the imprecation of a hermit, by which he was sentenced to die of the bite of a venomous snake, at the expiration of seven days; the king, in preparation for . this event, repairs to the banks of the Ganges; whither also come the gods and sages, to witness his death. Amongst the latter is S'uka; and it is in reply to Parikshit's question, what a man should do who is about to die, that he narrates the Bhagavata, as he had heard it from Vyasa; for nothing secures final happiness so certainly, as to die whilst the thoughts are wholly engrossed by Vishnu.

The course of the narration opens with a cosmogony, which, although in most respects similar to that of other Puranas, is more largely intermixed with allegory and mysticism, and derives its tone more from the Vedanta than the Sankhya philosophy. The doctrine of active creation by the Supreme, as one with Vasudeva, is more distinctly asserted, with a more decided enunciation of the effects being resolvable into Maya, or illusion. There are also doctrinal peculiarities, highly characteristic of this Purana; amongst which is the assertion that it was originally communicated by Brahma to Narada, that all men whatsoever, Hindus of every caste, and even Mlechchhas, outcastes or barbarians, might learn to have faith in Vasudeva.

In the third book the interlocutors are changed to Maitreya and Vidura; the former of whom is the disciple in the Vishnu Purana, the latter was the half-brother of the Kuru princes. Maitreya, again, gives an account of the Srishti-lila, or sport of creation, in a strain partly common to the Puranas, partly peculiar; although he declares he learned it from his teacher Paras'ara, at the desire of Pulas'tya ; referring thus to the fabulous origin of the Vishnu Purana, and furnishing evidence of its priority. Again, however, the authority is changed, and the narrative is said to have been that which was communicated by S'esha to the Nagas. The creation of Brahma is then described, and the divisions of time are explained. A very long and peculiar account is given of the Varaha incarnation of Vishnu, which is followed by the creation of the Prajapatis and Swayambhuva, whose daughter Devahuti is married to Karddama Rishi; an incident peculiar to this work, as is that which follows of the Avatara of Vishnu as Kapila the son of Karddama and Devahuti, the author of the Sankhya philosophy, which he expounds, after a Vaishnava fashion, to his mother, in the last nine chapters of this section.

The Manwantara of Swayambhuva, and the multiplication of the patriarchal families, are next described with some peculiarities of nomenclature, which are pointed out in the notes to the parallel passages of the Vishnu Purana. The traditions of Dhruva, Vena, Prithu, and other princes of this period, are the other subjects of the fourth Skandha, and are continued in the fifth to that of the Bharata who obtained emancipation. The details generally conform to those of the Vishnu Purana, and the same words are often employed, so that it would be difficult to determine which work had the best right to them, had not the Bhagavata itself indicated its obligations to the Vishnu. The remainder of the fifth book is occupied with the description of the universe, and the same conformity with the Vishnu continues.

This is only partially the case with the sixth book, which contains a variety of legends of a miscellaneous description, intended to illustrate the merit of worshipping Vishnu: some of them belong to the early stock, but some are apparently novel. The seventh book is mostly occupied with the legend of Prahlada. In the eighth we have an account of the remaining Manwantaras; in which, as happening in the course of them, a variety of ancient legends are repeated, as the battle between the king of the elephants and an alligator, the churning of the ocean, and the dwarf and fish Avatars. The ninth book narrates the dynasties of the Vaivaswata Manwantara, or the princes of the solar and lunar races to the time of Krishna . The particulars conform generally with those recorded in the Vishnu.

The tenth book is the characteristic part of this Purana, and the portion upon which its popularity is founded. It is appropriated entirely to the history of Krishna, which it narrates much in the same manner as the Vishnu, but in more detail; holding a middle place, however, between it and the extravagant prolixity with which the Hari Vans'a repeats the story. It is not necessary to particularize it farther. It has been translated into perhaps all the languages of India, and is a favourite work with all descriptions of people.

The eleventh book describes the destruction of the Yadavas, and death of Krishna. Previous to the latter event, Krishna instructs Uddhava in the performance of the Yoga; a subject consigned by the Vishnu to the concluding passages. The narrative is much the same, but something more summary than that of the Vishnu. The twelfth book continues the lines of the kings of the Kali age prophetically to a similar period as the Vishnu, and gives a like account of the deterioration of all things,

and their final dissolution. Consistently with the subject of the Purana, the serpent Takshaka bites Parikshit, and he expires, and the work should terminate; or the close might be extended to the subsequent sacrifice of Janamejaya for the destruction of the whole serpent race. There is a rather awkwardly introduced description, however, of the arrangement of the Vedas and Puranas by Vyasa, and the legend of Markandeya's interview with the infant Krishna, during a period of worldly dissolution. We then come to the end of the Bhagavata, in a series of encomiastic commendations of its own sanctity, and efficacy to salvation.

Mr. Colebrooke observes of the Bhagavata Purana, "I am inclined to adopt an opinion supported by many learned Hindus, who consider the celebrated S'ri Bhagavata as the work of a grammarian (Vopadeva), supposed to have lived six hundred years ago ." Col. Vans Kennedy considers this an incautious admission, because "it is unquestionable that the number of the Puranas has been always held to be eighteen; but in most of the Puranas the names of the eighteen are enumerated, amongst which the Bhagavata is invariably included; and consequently if it were composed only six hundred years ago, the others must be of an equally modern date ." Some of them are no doubt more recent; but, as already remarked, no weight can be attached to the specification of the eighteen names, for they are always complete; each Purana enumerates all. Which is the last? which had the opportunity of naming its seventeen predecessors, and adding itself? The argument proves too much. There can be little doubt that the list has been inserted upon the authority of tradition, either by some improving transcriber, or by the compiler of a work more recent than the eighteen genuine Puranas. The objection is also rebutted by the assertion, that there was another Purana to which the name applies, and which is still to be met with, the Devi Bhagavata.

For, the authenticity of the Bhagavata is one of the few questions affecting their sacred literature which Hindu writers have ventured to discuss. The occasion is furnished by the text itself. In the fourth chapter of the first book it is said that Vyasa arranged the Vedas, and divided them into four; and that he then compiled the Itihasa and Puranas, as a fifth Veda. The Vedas he gave to Paila and the rest; the Itihasa and Puranas to Lomaharshana, the father of Suta . Then reflecting that these works may not be accessible to women, S'udras, and mixed castes, he composed the Bharata, for the purpose of placing religious knowledge within their reach. Still he felt dissatisfied, and wandered in much perplexity along the banks of the Saraswati, where his hermitage was situated, when Narada paid him a visit. Having confided to him his secret and seemingly causeless dissatisfaction, Narada suggested that it arose from his not having sufficiently dwelt, in the works he had finished, upon the merit of worshipping Vasudeva. Vyasa at once admitted its truth, and found a remedy for his uneasiness in the composition of the Bhagavata, which he taught to S'uka his son . Here therefore is the most positive assertion that the Bhagavata was composed subsequently to the Puranas, and given to a different pupil, and was not therefore one of the eighteen of which Romaharshana the Seta was, according to all concurrent testimonies, the depositary. Still the Bhagavata is named amongst the eighteen Puranas by the inspired authorities; and how can these incongruities be reconciled?

The principal point in dispute seems to have been started by an expression of S'ridhara Swamin, a commentator on the Bhagavata, who somewhat incautiously made the remark that there was no reason to suspect that by the term Bhagavata any other work than the subject of his labours was intended. This was therefore an admission that some suspicions had been entertained of the correctness of the nomenclature, and that an opinion had been expressed that the term belonged, not to the S'ri Bhagavata, but to the Devi Bhagavata; to a S'aiva, not a Vaishnava, composition. With whom doubts prevailed prior to S'ridhara Swamin, or by whom they were urged, does not appear; for, as far as we are aware, no works, anterior to his date, in which they are advanced have been met with. Subsequently, various tracts have been written on the subject. There are three in the library of the East India Company; the Durjana Mukha Chapetika, 'A slap of the face for the vile,' by Ramas'rama; the Durjana Mukha Maha Chapetika, 'A great slap of the face for the wicked,' by Kas'inath Bhatta; and the Durjana Mukha Padma Paduka, 'A slipper' for the same part of the same persons, by a nameless disputant. The first maintains the authenticity of the Bhagavata; the second asserts that

the Devi Bhagavata is the genuine Purana; and the third replies to the arguments of the first. There is also a work by Purushottama, entitled 'Thirteen arguments for dispelling all doubts of the character of the Bhagavata' (Bhagavata swarupa vihsaya s'anka nirasa trayodasa); whilst Balambhatta, a commentator on the Mitakshara, indulging in a dissertation on the meaning of the word Purana, adduces reasons for questioning the inspired origin of this Purana.

The chief arguments in favour of the authenticity of this Purana are the absence of any reason why Vopadeva, to whom it is attributed, should not have put his own name to it; its being included in all lists of the Puranas, sometimes with circumstances that belong to no other Purana; and its being admitted to be a Purana, and cited as authority, or made the subject of comment, by writers of established reputation, of whom S'ankara Acharya is one, and he lived long before Vopadeva. The reply to the first argument is rather feeble, the controversialists being unwilling perhaps to admit the real object, the promotion of new doctrines. It is therefore said that Vyasa was an incarnation of Narayana, and the purpose was to propitiate his favour. The insertion of a Bhagavata amongst the eighteen Puranas is acknowledged; but this, it is said, can be the Devi Bhagavata alone, for the circumstances apply more correctly to it than to the Vaishnava Bhagavata. Thus a text is quoted by Kas'inath from a Purana – he does not state which – that says of the Bhagavata that it contains eighteen thousand verses, twelve books, and three hundred and thirty-two chapters. Kas'inath asserts that the chapters of the S'ri Bhagavata are three hundred and thirty-five, and that the numbers apply throughout only to the Devi Bhagavata. It is also said that the Bhagavata contains an account of the acquirement of holy knowledge by Hayagriva; the particulars of the Saraswata Kalpa; a dialogue between Ambarisha and S'uka; and that it commences with the Gayatri, or at least a citation of it. These all apply to the Devi Bhagavata alone, except the last; but it also is more true of the S'aiva than of the Vaishnava work, for the latter has only one word of the Gayatri, dhimahi, 'we meditate;' whilst the former to dhimahi adds, Ya nah prachodayat, 'who may enlighten us.' To the third argument it is in the first place objected, that the citation of the Bhagavata by modern writers is no test of its authenticity; and with regard to the more ancient commentary of S'ankara Acharya, it is asked, "Where is it?" Those who advocate the sanctity of the Bhagavata reply, "It was written in a difficult style, and became obsolete, and is lost." "A very unsatisfactory plea," retort their opponents, "for we still have the works of S'ankara, several of which are quite as difficult as any in the Sanscrit language." The existence of this comment, too, rests upon the authority of Madhwa or Madhava, who in a commentary of his own asserts that he has consulted eight others. Now amongst these is one by the monkey Hanuman; and although a Hindu disputant may believe in the reality of such a composition, yet we may receive its citation as a proof that Madhwa was not very scrupulous in the verification of his authorities.

There are other topics urged in this controversy on both sides, some of which are simple enough, some are ingenious: but the statement of the text is of itself sufficient to shew that according to the received opinion of all the authorities of the priority of the eighteen Puranas to the Bharata, it is impossible that the S'ri Bhagavata, which is subsequent to the Bharata, should be of the number; and the evidence of style, the superiority of which to that of the Puranas in general is admitted by the disputants, is also proof that it is the work of a different hand. Whether the Devi Bhagavata have a better title to be considered as an original composition of Vyasa, is equally questionable; but it cannot be doubted that the S'ri Bhagavata is the product of uninspired erudition. There does not seem to be any other ground than tradition for ascribing it to Vopadeva the grammarian; but there is no reason to call the tradition in question. Vopadeva flourished at the court of Hemadri, Raja of Devagiri, Deogur or Dowlutabad, and must consequently have lived prior to the conquest of that principality by the Mohammedans in the fourteenth century. The date of the twelfth century, commonly assigned to him, is probably correct, and is that of the Bhagavata Purana.

6. The Naradiya Purana

6. Narada or Naradiya Purana. "Where Narada has described the duties which were observed in the Vrihat Kalpa, that, is called the Naradiya, having twenty-five thousand stanzas ." If the number of verses be here correctly stated, the Purana has not fallen into my hands. The copy I have analysed contains not many more than three thousand s'lokas. There is another work, which might be expected to be of greater extent, the Vrihat Naradiya, or great Narada Purana; but this, according to the concurrence of three copies in my possession, and of five others in the Company's library, contains but about three thousand five hundred verses. It may be doubted, therefore, if the Narada Purana of the Matsya exists .

According to the Matsya, the Narada Purana is related by Narada, and gives an account of the Vrihat Kalpa. The Naradiya Purana is communicated by Narada to the Rishis at Naimisharanya, on the Gomati river. The Vrihannaradiya is related to the same persons, at the same place, by Suta, as it was told by Narada to Sanatkumara. Possibly the term Vrihat may have been suggested by the specification which is given in the Matsya; but there is no description in it of any particular Kalpa, or day of Brahma.

From a cursory examination of these Puranas, it is very evident that they have no conformity to the definition of a Purana, and that both are sectarial and modern compilations, intended to support the doctrine of Bhakti, or faith in Vishnu. With this view they have collected a variety of prayers addressed to one or other form of that divinity; a number of observances and holidays connected with his adoration; and different legends, some perhaps of an early, others of a more recent date, illustrative of the efficacy of devotion to Hari. Thus in the Narada we have the stories of Dhruva and Prahlada; the latter told in the words of the Vishnu: whilst the second portion of it is occupied with a legend of Mohini, the will-born daughter of a king called Rukmangada: beguiled by whom, the king offers to perform for her whatever she may desire. She calls upon him either to violate the rule of fasting on the eleventh day of the fortnight, a day sacred to Vishnu, or to put his son to death; and he kills his son, as the lesser sin of the two. This shews the spirit of the work. Its date may also be inferred from its tenor, as such monstrous extravagancies in praise of Bhakti are certainly of modern origin. One limit it furnishes itself, for it refers to S'uka and Parikshit, the interlocutors of the Bhagavata, and it is consequently subsequent to the date of that Purana: it is probably considerably later, for it affords evidence that it was written after India was in the hands of the Mohammedans. In the concluding passage it is said, "Let not this Purana be repeated in the presence of the 'killers of cows' and contemners of the gods." It is possibly a compilation of the sixteenth or seventeenth century.

The Vrihannaradiya is a work of the same tenor and time. It contains little else than panegyric prayers addressed to Vishnu, and injunctions to observe various rites, and keep holy certain seasons, in honour of him. The earlier legends introduced are the birth of Markandeya, the destruction of Sagar's sons, and the dwarf Avatara; but they are subservient to the design of the whole, and are rendered occasions for praising Narayana: others, illustrating the efficacy of certain Vaishnava observances, are puerile inventions, wholly foreign to the more ancient system of Pauranic fiction. There is no attempt at cosmogony, or patriarchal or regal genealogy. It is possible that these topics may be treated of in the missing stanzas; but it seems more likely that the Narada Purana of the lists has little in common with the works to which its name is applied in Bengal and Hindustan.

7. The Markandeya Purana

7. Markanda or Markandeya Purana. "That Purana in which, commencing with the story of the birds that were acquainted with right and wrong, every thing is narrated fully by Markandeya, as it was explained by holy sages in reply to the question of the Muni, is called the Markandeya, containing nine thousand verses ." This is so called from its being in the first instance narrated by Markandeya Muni, and in the second place by certain fabulous birds; thus far agreeing with the account given of

it in the Matsya. That, as well as other authorities, specify its containing nine thousand stanzas; but my copy closes with a verse affirming that the number of verses recited by the Muni was six thousand nine hundred; and a copy in the East India Company's library has a similar specification. The termination is, however, somewhat abrupt, and there is no reason why the subject with which it ends should not have been carried on farther. One copy in the Company's library, indeed, belonging to the Guicowar's collection, states at the close that it is the end of the first Khanda, or section. If the Purana was ever completed, the remaining portion of it appears to be lost.

Jaimini, the pupil of Vyasa, applies to Markandeya to be made acquainted with the nature of Vasudeva, and for an explanation of some of the incidents described in the Mahabharata; with the ambrosia of which divine poem, Vyasa he declares has watered the whole world: a reference which establishes the priority of the Bharata to the Markandeya Purana, however incompatible this may be with the tradition, that having finished the Puranas, Vyasa wrote the poem.

Markandeya excuses himself, saying he has a religious rite to perform; and he refers Jaimini to some very sapient birds, who reside in the Vindhya mountains; birds of a celestial origin, found, when just born, by the Muni S'amika, on the field of Kurukshetra, and brought up by him along with his scholars: in consequence of which, and by virtue of their heavenly descent, they became profoundly versed in the Vedas, and a knowledge of spiritual truth. This machinery is borrowed from the Mahabharata, with some embellishment. Jaimini accordingly has recourse to the birds, Pingaksha and his brethren, and puts to them the questions he had asked of the Muni. "Why was Vasudeva born as a mortal? How was it that Draupadi was the wife of the five Pandus? Why did Baladeva do penance for Brahmanicide? and why were the children of Draupadi destroyed, when they had Krishna and Arjuna to defend them?" The answers to these inquiries occupy a number of chapters, and form a sort of supplement to the Mahabharata; supplying, partly by invention, perhaps, and partly by reference to equally ancient authorities, the blanks left in some of its narrations.

Legends of Vritrasura's death, Baladeva's penance, Haris'chandra's elevation to heaven, and the quarrel between Vas'ishtha and Viswamitra, are followed by a discussion respecting birth, death, and sin; which leads to a more extended description of the different hells than is found in other Puranas. The account of creation which is contained in this work is repeated by the birds after Markandeya's account of it to Kroshtuki, and is confined to the origin of the Vedas and patriarchal families, amongst whom are new characters, as Duhsaha and his wife Marshti, and their descendants; allegorical personages, representing intolerable iniquity and its consequences. There is then a description of the world, with, as usual to this Purana, several singularities, some of which are noticed in the following pages. This being the state of the world in the Swayambhuva Manwantara, an account of the other Manwantaras succeeds, in which the births of the Manus, and a number of other particulars, are peculiar to this work. The present or Vaivaswata Manwantara is very briefly passed over; but the next, the first of the future Manwantaras, contains the long episodical narrative of the actions of the goddess Durga, which is the especial boast of this Purana, and is the text-book of the worshippers of Kali, Chandi, or Durga, in Bengal. It is the Chandi Patha, or Durga Mahatmya, in which the victories of the goddess over different evil beings, or Asuras, are detailed with considerable power and spirit. It is read daily in the temples of Durga, and furnishes the pomp and circumstance of the great festival of Bengal, the Durga puja, or public worship of that goddess .

After the account of the Manwantaras is completed, there follows a series of legends, some new, some old, relating to the sun and his posterity; continued to Vaivaswata Manu and his sons, and their immediate descendants; terminating with Dama, the son of Narishyanta . Of most of the persons noticed, the work narrates particulars not found elsewhere.

This Purana has a character different from that of all the others. It has nothing of a sectarial spirit, little of a religious tone, rarely inserting prayers and invocations to any deity, and such as are inserted are brief and moderate. It deals little in precepts, ceremonial or moral. Its leading feature is narrative, and it presents an uninterrupted succession of legends, most of which, when ancient, are

embellished with new circumstances; and when new, partake so far of the spirit of the old, that they are disinterested creations of the imagination, having no particular motive; being designed to recommend no special doctrine or observance. Whether they are derived from any other source, or whether they are original inventions, it is not possible to ascertain. They are most probably, for the greater part at least, original; and the whole has been narrated in the compiler's own manner, a manner superior to that of the Puranas in general, with exception of the Bhagavata.

It is not easy to conjecture a date for this Purana: it is subsequent to the Mahabharata, but how long subsequent is doubtful. It is unquestionably more ancient than such works as the Brahma, Padma, and Naradiya Puranas; and its freedom from sectarial bias is a reason for supposing it anterior to the Bhagavata. At the same time, its partial conformity to the definition of a Purana, and the tenor of the additions which it has made to received legends and traditions, indicate a not very remote age; and, in the absence of any guide to a more positive conclusion, it may conjecturally be placed in the ninth or tenth century.

8. The Agni Purana

8. Agni Purana. "That Purana which describes the occurrences of the Is'ana Kalpa, and was related by Agni to Vas'ishtha, is called the Agneya: it consists of sixteen thousand stanzas ." The Agni or Agneya Purana derives its name from its having being communicated originally by Agni, the deity of fire, to the Muni Vas'ishtha, for the purpose of instructing him in the twofold knowledge of Brahma . By him it was taught to Vyasa, who imparted it to Suta; and the latter is represented as repeating it to the Rising at Naimisharanya. Its contents are variously specified as sixteen thousand, fifteen thousand, or fourteen thousand stanzas. The two copies which were employed by me contain about fifteen thousand s'lokas. There are two in the Company's library, which do not extend beyond twelve thousand verses; but they are in many other respects different from mine: one of them was written at Agra, in the reign of Akbar, in A. D. 1589.

The Agni Purana, in the form in which it has been obtained in Bengal and at Benares, presents a striking contrast to the Markandeya. It may be doubted if a single line of it is original. A very great proportion of it may be traced to other sources; and a more careful collation – if the task was worth the time it would require – would probably discover the remainder.

The early chapters of this Purana describe the Avataras; and in those of Rama and Krishna avowedly follow the Ramayana and Mahabharata. A considerable portion is then appropriated to instructions for the performance of religious ceremonies; many of which belong to the Tantrika ritual, and are apparently transcribed from the principal authorities of that system. Some belong to mystical forms of S'aiva worship, little known in Hindustan, though perhaps still practised in the south. One of these is the Diksha, or initiation of a novice; by which, with numerous ceremonies and invocations, in which the mysterious monosyllables of the Tantras are constantly repeated, the disciple is transformed into a living personation of S'iva, and receives in that capacity the homage of his Guru. Interspersed with these, are chapters descriptive of the earth and of the universe, which are the same as those of the Vishnu Purana; and Mahatmyas or legends of holy places, particularly of Gaya. Chapters on the duties of kings, and on the art of war, then occur, which have the appearance of being extracted from some older work, as is undoubtedly the chapter on judicature, which follows them, and which is the same as the text of the Mitakshara. Subsequent to these, we have an account of the distribution and arrangement of the Vedas and Puranas, which is little else than an abridgment of the Vishnu: and in a chapter on gifts we have a description of the Puranas, which is precisely the same, and in the same situation, as the similar subject in the Matsya Purana. The genealogical chapters are meagre lists, differing in a few respects from those commonly received, as hereafter noticed, but unaccompanied by any particulars, such as those recorded or invented in the Markandeya. The next subject is medicine, compiled avowedly, but injudiciously, from the Saus'ruta. A series of chapters on the mystic worship of S'iva and Devi follows; and the work winds up with treatises on rhetoric, prosody, and grammar, according to the Sutras of Pingala and Panini.

The cyclopaedical character of the Agni Purana, as it is now described, excludes it from any legitimate claims to be regarded as a Purana, and proves that its origin cannot be very remote. It is subsequent to the Itihasas; to the chief works on grammar, rhetoric, and medicine; and to the introduction of the Tantrika worship of Devi. When this latter took place is yet far from determined, but there is every probability that it dates long after the beginning of our era. The materials of the Agni Purana are, however, no doubt of some antiquity. The medicine of Sus'ruta is considerably older than the ninth century; and the grammar of Panini probably precedes Christianity. The chapters on archery and arms, and on regal administration, are also distinguished by an entirely Hindu character, and must have been written long anterior to the Mohammedan invasion. So far the Agni Purana is valuable, as embodying and preserving relics of antiquity, although compiled at a more recent date.

Col. Wilford has made great use of a list of kings derived from an appendix to the Agni Purana, which professes to be the sixty-third or last section. As he observes, it is seldom found annexed to the Purana. I have never met with it, and doubt its ever having formed any part of the original compilation. It would appear from Col. Wilford's remarks, that this list notices Mohammed as the institutor of an era; but his account of this is not very distinct. He mentions explicitly, however, that the list speaks of Salivahana and Vikramaditya; and this is quite sufficient to establish its character. The compilers of the Puranas were not such bunglers as to bring within their chronology so well known a personage as Vikramaditya. There are in all parts of India various compilations ascribed to the Puranas, which never formed any portion of their contents, and which, although offering sometimes useful local information, and valuable as preserving popular traditions, are not in justice to be confounded with the Puranas, so as to cause them to be charged with even more serious errors and anachronisms than those of which they are guilty.

The two copies of this work in the library of the East India Company appropriate the first half to a description of the ordinary and occasional observances of the Hindus, interspersed with a few legends: the latter half treats exclusively of the history of Mina.

9. The Bhavishya Purana

9. Bhavishya Purana. "The Purana in which Brahma, having described the greatness of the sun, explained to Manu the existence of the world, and the characters of all created things, in the course of the Aghora Kalpa; that, is called the Bhavishya, the stories being for the most part the events of a future period. It contains fourteen thousand five hundred stanzas ." This Purana, as the name implies, should be a book of prophecies, foretelling what will be (bhavishyati), as the Matsya Purana intimates. Whether such a work exists is doubtful. The copies, which appear to be entire, and of which there are three in the library of the East India Company, agreeing in their contents with two in my possession, contain about seven thousand stanzas. There is another work, entitled the Bhavishyottara, as if it was a continuation or supplement of the former, containing also about seven thousand verses; but the subjects of both these works are but to a very imperfect degree analogous to those to which the Matsya alludes .

The Bhavishya Purana, as I have it, is a work in a hundred and twenty-six short chapters, repeated by Sumantu to S'atanika, a king of the Pandu family. He notices, however, its having originated with Swayambhu or Brahma; and describes it as consisting of five parts; four dedicated, it should seem, to as many deities, as they are termed, Brahma, Vaishnava, S'aiva, and Twashtra; whilst the fifth is the Pratisarga, or repeated creation. Possibly the first part only may have come into my hands, although it does not so appear by the manuscript.

Whatever it may be, the work in question is not a Purana. The first portion, indeed, treats of creation; but it is little else than a transcript of the words of the first chapter of Manu. The rest is entirely a manual of religious rites and ceremonies. It explains the ten Sanskaras, or initiatory rites; the performance of the Sandhya; the reverence to be shewn to a Guru; the duties of the different Asramas

and castes; and enjoins a number of Vratas, or observances of fasting and the like, appropriate to different lunar days. A few legends enliven the series of precepts. That of the sage Chyavana is told at considerable length, taken chiefly from the Mahabharata. The Naga Panchami, or fifth lulation, sacred to the serpent-gods, gives rise to a description of different sorts of snakes. After these, which occupy about one-third of the chapters, the remainder of them conform in subject to one of the topics referred to by the Matsya. They chiefly represent conversations between Krishna, his son S'amba, who had become a leper by the curse of Durvasas, Vas'ishtha, Narada, and Vyasa, upon the power and glory of the sun, and the manner in which he is to be worshipped. There is some curious matter in the last chapters, relating to the Magas, silent worshippers of the sun, from Sakadwipa, as if the compiler had adopted the Persian term Magh, and connected the fire-worshippers of Iran with those of India. This is a subject, however, that requires farther investigation.

The Bhavishyottara is, equally with the preceding, a sort of manual of religious offices, the greater portion being appropriated to Vratas, and the remainder to the forms and circumstances with which gifts are to be presented. Many of the ceremonies are obsolete, or are observed in a different manner, as the Rath-yatra, or car festival; and the Madanotsava, or festival of spring. The descriptions of these throw some light upon the public condition of the Hindu religion at a period probably prior to the Mohammedan conquest. The different ceremonies are illustrated by legends, which are sometimes ancient, as, for instance, the destruction of the god of love by S'iva, and his thence becoming Ananga, the disembodied lord of hearts. The work is supposed to be communicated by Krishna to Yudhishtira, at a great assemblage of holy persons at the coronation of the latter, after the conclusion of the great war.

10. The Brahma-vaivartta Purana

10. Brahma-vaivartta Purana. "That Purana which is related by Savarni to Narada, and contains the account of the greatness of Krishna, with the occurrences of the Rathantara Kalpa, where also the story of Brahma-varaha is repeatedly told, is called the Brahma-vaivartta, and contains eighteen thousand stanzas ." The account here given of the Brahma-vaivartta Purana agrees with its present state as to its extent. The copies rather exceed than fall short of eighteen thousand stanzas. It also correctly represents its comprising a Mahatmya or legend of Krishna; but it is very doubtful, nevertheless, if the same work is intended.

The Brahma-vaivartta, as it now exists, is narrated, not by Savarni, but the Rishi Narayana to Narada, by whom it is communicated to Vyasa: he teaches it to Suta, and the latter repeats it to the Rishis at Naimisharanya. It is divided into four Khandas, or books; the Brahma, Prakriti, Ganes'a, and Krishna Janma Khandas; dedicated severally to describe the acts of Brahma, Devi, Ganes'a, and Krishna; the latter, however, throughout absorbing the interest and importance of the work. In none of these is there any account of the Varaha Avatara of Vishnu, which seems to be intended by the Matsya; nor any reference to a Rathantara Kalpa. It may also be observed, that, in describing the merit of presenting a copy of this Purana, the Matsya adds, "Whoever makes such gift, is honoured in the Brahma-loka;" a sphere which is of very inferior dignity to that to which a worshipper of Krishna is taught to aspire by this Purana. The character of the work is in truth so decidedly sectarian, and the sect to which it belongs so distinctly marked, that of the worshippers of the juvenile Krishna and Radha, a form of belief of known modern origin, that it can scarcely have found a notice in a work to which, like the Matsya, a much more remote date seems to belong. Although therefore the Matsya may be received in proof of there having been a Brahma-vaivartta Purana at the date of its compilation, dedicated especially to the honour of Krishna, yet we cannot credit the possibility of its being the same we now possess.

Although some of the legends believed to be ancient are scattered through the different portions of this Purana, yet the great mass of it is taken up with tiresome descriptions of Vrindavan and Goloka, the dwellings of Krishna on earth and in heaven; with endless repetitions of prayers and invocations

addressed to him; and with insipid descriptions of his person and sports, and the love of the Gopis and of Radha towards him. There are some particulars of the origin of the artificer castes, which is of value because it is cited as authority in matters affecting them, contained in the Brahma Khanda; and in the Prakrita and Ganes'a Khandas are legends of those divinities, not wholly, perhaps, modern inventions, but of which the source has not been traced. In the life of Krishna the incidents recorded are the same as those narrated in the Vishnu and the Bhagavata; but the stories, absurd as they are, are much compressed to make room for original matter, still more puerile and tiresome. The Brahma-vaivartta has not the slightest title to be regarded as a Purana .

11. The Linga Purana

11. Linga Purana. "Where Mahes'wara, present in the Agni Linga, explained (the objects of life) virtue, wealth, pleasure, and final liberation at the end of the Agni Kalpa, that Purana, consisting of eleven thousand stanzas, was called the Lainga by Brahma himself ."

The Linga Purana conforms accurately enough to this description. The Kalpa is said to be the Is'ana, but this is the only difference. It consists of eleven thousand stanzas. It is said to have been originally composed by Brahma; and the primitive Linga is a pillar of radiance, in which Mahes'wara is present. The work is therefore the same as that referred to by the Matsya.

A short account is given, in the beginning, of elemental and secondary creation, and of the patriarchal families; in which, however, S'iva takes the place of Vishnu, as the indescribable cause of all things. Brief accounts of S'iva's incarnations and proceedings in different Kalpas next occur, offering no interest except as characteristic of sectarial notions. The appearance of the great fiery Linga takes place, in the interval of a creation, to separate Vishnu and Brahma, who not only dispute the palm of supremacy, but fight for it; when the Linga suddenly springs up, and puts them both to shame; as, after travelling upwards and downwards for a thousand years in each direction, neither can approach to its termination. Upon the Linga the sacred monosyllable Om is visible, and the Vedas proceed from it, by which Brahms and Vishnu become enlightened, and acknowledge and eulogize the superior might and glory of S'iva.

A notice of the creation in the Padma Kalpa then follows, and this leads to praises of S'iva by Vishnu and Brahma. S'iva repeats the story of his incarnations, twenty-eight in number; intended as a counterpart, no doubt, to the twenty-four Avatars of Vishnu, as described in the Bhagavata; and both being amplifications of the original ten Avatars, and of much less merit as fictions. Another instance of rivalry occurs in the legend of Dadhichi, a Muni and worshipper of S'iva. In the Bhagavata there is a story of Ambarisha being defended against Durvasas by the discus of Vishnu, against which that S'aiva sage is helpless: here Vishnu hurls his discus at Dadhichi, but it falls blunted to the ground, and a conflict ensues, in which Vishnu and his partisans are all overthrown by the Muni.

A description of the universe, and of the regal dynasties of the Vaivaswata Manwantara to the time of Krishna, runs through a number of chapters, in substance, and very commonly in words, the same as in other Puranas. After which, the work resumes its proper character, narrating legends, and enjoining rites, and reciting prayers, intending to do honour to S'iva under various forms. Although, however, the Linga holds a prominent place amongst them, the spirit of the worship is as little influenced by the character of the type as can well be imagined. There is nothing like the phallic orgies of antiquity: it is all mystical and spiritual. The Linga is twofold, external and internal. The ignorant, who need a visible sign, worship S'iva through a 'mark' or 'type' – which is the proper meaning of the word 'Linga' – of wood or stone; but the wise look upon this outward emblem as nothing, and contemplate in their minds the invisible, inscrutable type, which is S'iva himself. Whatever may have been the origin of this form of worship in India, the notions upon which it was founded, according to the impure fancies of European writers, are not to be traced in even the S'aiva Puranas.

Data for conjecturing the era of this work are defective, but it is more of a ritual than a Purana, and the Pauranik chapters which it has inserted, in order to keep up something of its character, have

been evidently borrowed for the purpose. The incarnations of S'iva, and their 'pupils,' as specified in one place, and the importance attached to the practice of the Yoga, render it possible that under the former are intended those teachers of the S'aiva religion who belong to the Yoga school, which seems to have flourished about the eighth or ninth centuries. It is not likely that the work is earlier, it may be considerably later. It has preserved apparently some S'aiva legends of an early date, but the greater part is ritual and mysticism of comparatively recent introduction.

12. The Varaha Purana

12. Varaha Purana. "That in which the glory of the great Varaha is predominant, as it was revealed to Earth by Vishnu, in connexion, wise Munis, with the Manava Kalpa, and which contains twenty-four thousand verses, is called the Varaha Purana."

It may be doubted if the Varaha Purana of the present day is here intended. It is narrated by Vishnu as Varaha, or in the boar incarnation, to the personified Earth. Its extent, however, is not half that specified, little exceeding ten thousand stanzas. It furnishes also itself evidence of the prior currency of some other work, similarly denominated; as, in the description of Mathura contained in it, Sumantu, a Muni, is made to observe, "The divine Varaha in former times expounded a Purana, for the purpose of solving the perplexity of Earth."

Nor can the Varaha Purana be regarded as a Purana agreeably to the common definition, as it contains but a few scattered and brief allusions to the creation of the world, and the reign of kings: it has no detailed genealogies either of the patriarchal or regal families, and no account of the reigns of the Manus. Like the Linga Purana, it is a religious manual, almost wholly occupied with forms of prayer, and rules for devotional observances, addressed to Vishnu; interspersed with legendary illustrations, most of which are peculiar to itself, though some are taken from the common and ancient stock: many of them, rather incompatibly with the general scope of the compilation, relate to the history of S'iva and Durga. A considerable portion of the work is devoted to descriptions of various Tirthas, places of Vaishnava pilgrimage; and one of Mathura enters into a variety of particulars relating to the shrines of that city, constituting the Mathura Mahatmyam.

In the sectarianism of the Varaha Purana there is no leaning to the particular adoration of Krishna, nor are the Rath-yatra and Janmashtami included amongst the observances enjoined. There are other indications of its belonging to an earlier stage of Vaishnava worship, and it may perhaps be referred to the age of Ramanuja, the early part of the twelfth century.

13. The Skanda Purana

13. Skanda Purana. "The Skanda Purana is that in which the six-faced deity (Skanda) has related the events of the Tatpurusha Kalpa, enlarged with many tales, and subservient to the duties taught by Mahes'wara. It is said to contain eighty-one thousand one hundred stanzas: so it is asserted amongst mankind."

It is uniformly agreed that the Skanda Purana in a collective form has no existence; and the fragments in the shape of Sanhitas, Khandas, and Mahatmyas, which are affirmed in various parts of India to be portions of the Purana, present a much more formidable mass of stanzas than even the immense number of which it is said to consist. The most celebrated of these portions in Hindustan is the Kas'i Khanda, a very minute description of the temples of S'iva in or adjacent to Benares, mixed with directions for worshipping Mahes'wara, and a great variety of legends explanatory of its merits, and of the holiness of Kas'i: many of them are puerile and uninteresting, but some are of a higher character. The story of Agastya records probably, in a legendary style, the propagation of Hinduism in the south of India: and in the history of Divodasa, king of Kas'i, we have an embellished tradition of the temporary depression of the worship of S'iva, even in its metropolis, before the ascendancy of the followers of Buddha, There is every reason to believe the greater part of the

contents of the Kas'i Khanda anterior to the first attack upon Benares by Mahmud of Ghizni. The Kas'i Khanda alone contains fifteen thousand stanzas.

Another considerable work ascribed in upper India to the Skanda Purana is the Utkala Khanda, giving an account of the holiness of Urissa, and the Kshetra of Purushottama or Jagannatha. The same vicinage is the site of temples, once of great magnificence and extent, dedicated to S'iva, as Bhuvanesh'wara, which forms an excuse for attaching an account of a Vaishnava Tirtha to an eminently S'aiva Purana. There can be little doubt, however, that the Utkala Khanda is unwarrantably included amongst the progeny of the parent work. Besides these, there is a Brahmottara Khanda, a Reva Khanda, a S'iva Rahasya Khanda, a Himavat Khanda, and others. Of the Sanhitas, the chief are the Suta Sanhita, Sanatkumara Sanhita, Saura Sanhita, and Kapila Sanhita: there are several other works denominated Sanhitas. The Mahatmyas are more numerous still. According to the Suta Sanhita, as quoted by Col. Vans Kennedy, the Skanda Purana contains six Sanhitas, five hundred Khandas, and five hundred thousand stanzas; more than is even attributed to all the Puranas. He thinks, judging from internal evidence, that all the Khandas and Sanhitas may be admitted to be genuine, though the Mahatmyas have rather a questionable appearance. Now one kind of internal evidence is the quantity; and as no more than eighty-one thousand one hundred stanzas have ever been claimed for it, all in excess above that amount must be questionable. But many of the Khandas, the Kas'i Khanda for instance, are quite as local as the Mahatmyas, being legendary stories relating to the erection and sanctity of certain temples or groups of temples, and to certain Lingas; the interested origin of which renders them very reasonable objects of suspicion. In the present state of our acquaintance with the reputed portions of the Skanda Purana, my own views of their authenticity are so opposed to those entertained by Col. Vans Kennedy, that instead of admitting all the Sanhitas and Khandas to be genuine, I doubt if any one of them was ever a part of the Skanda Purana.

14. The Vamana Purana

14. Vamana Purana. "That in which the four-faced Brahma taught the three objects of existence, as subservient to the account of the greatness of Trivikrama, which treats also of the S'iva Kalpa, and which consists of ten thousand stanzas, is called the Vamana Purana."

The Vamana Purana contains an account of the dwarf incarnation of Vishnu; but it is related by Pulastya to Narada, and extends to but about seven thousand stanzas. Its contents can scarcely establish its claim to the character of a Purana.

There is little or no order in the subjects which this work recapitulates, and which arise out of replies made by Pulastya to questions put abruptly and unconnectedly by Narada. The greater part of them relate to the worship of the Linga; a rather strange topic for a Vaishnava Purana, but engrossing the principal part of the compilation. They are however subservient to the object of illustrating the sanctity of certain holy places; so that the Vamana Purana is little else than a succession of Mahatmyas. Thus in the opening almost of the work occurs the story of Daksha's sacrifice, the object of which is to send S'iva to Papamochana tirtha at Benares, where he is released from the sin of Brahmanicide. Next comes the story of the burning of Kamadeva, for the purpose of illustrating the holiness of a S'iva-linga at Kedares'wara in the Himalaya, and of Badarikas'rama. The larger part of the work consists of the Saro-mahatmya, or legendary exemplifications of the holiness of Sthanu tirtha; that is, of the sanctity of various Lingas and certain pools at Thanesar and Kurukhet, the country north-west from Delhi. There are some stories also relating to the holiness of the Godavari river; but the general site of the legends is in Hindustan. In the course of these accounts we have a long narrative of the marriage of S'iva with Uma, and the birth of Kartikeya. There are a few brief allusions to creation and the Manwantaras, but they are merely incidental; and all the five characteristics of a Purana are deficient. In noticing the Swarochisha Manwantara, towards the end of the book, the elevation of Bali as monarch of the Daityas, and his subjugation of the universe, the gods included, are described; and this leads to the narration that gives its title to the Purana, the birth of

Krishna as a dwarf, for the purpose of humiliating Bali by fraud, as he was invincible by force. The story is told as usual, but the scene is laid at Kurukshetra.

A more minute examination of this work than that which has been given to it might perhaps discover some hint from which to conjecture its date. It is of a more tolerant character than the Puranas, and divides its homage between S'iva and Vishnu with tolerable impartiality. It is not connected, therefore, with any sectarian principles, and may have preceded their introduction. It has not, however, the air of any antiquity, and its compilation may have amused the leisure of some Brahman of Benares three or four centuries ago.

15. The Kurma Purana

15. Kurma Purana. "That in which Janarddana, in the form of a tortoise, in the regions under the earth, explained the objects of life – duty, wealth, pleasure, and liberation – in communication with Indradyumna and the Rishis in the proximity of S'akra, which refers to the Lakshmi Kalpa, and contains seventeen thousand stanzas, is the Kurma Purana ."

In the first chapter of the Kurma Purana it gives an account of itself, which does not exactly agree with this description. Suta, who is repeating the narration, is made to say to the Rishis, "This most excellent Kaurma Purana is the fifteenth. Sanhitas are fourfold, from the variety of the collections. The Brahmi, Bhagavati, Sauri, and Vaishnavi, are well known as the four Sanhitas which confer virtue, wealth, pleasure, and liberation. This is the Brahmi Sanhita, conformable to the four Vedas; in which there are six thousand s'lokas, and by it the importance of the four objects of life, O great sages, holy knowledge and Parames'wara is known." There is an irreconcilable difference in this specification of the number of stanzas and that given above. It is not very clear what is meant by a Sanhita as here used. A Sanhita, as observed above (p. xi), is something different from a Purana. It may be an assemblage of prayers and legends, extracted professedly from a Purana, but is not usually applicable to the original. The four Sanhitas here specified refer rather to their religious character than to their connexion with any specific work, and in fact the same terms are applied to what are called Sanhitas of the Skanda. In this sense a Purana might be also a Sanhita; that is, it might be an assemblage of formulae and legends belonging to a division of the Hindu system; and the work in question, like the Vishnu Purana, does adopt both titles. It says, "This is the excellent Kaurma Purana, the fifteenth (of the series):" and again, "This is the Brahmi Sanhita." At any rate, no other work has been met with pretending to be the Kurma Purana.

With regard to the other particulars specified by the Matsya, traces of them are to be found. Although in two accounts of the traditional communication of the Purana no mention is made of Vishnu as one of the teachers, yet Suta repeats at the outset a dialogue between Vishnu, as the Kurma, and Indradyumna, at the time of the churning of the ocean; and much of the subsequent narrative is put into the mouth of the former.

The name, being that of an Avatara of Vishnu, might lead us to expect a Vaishnava work; but it is always and correctly classed with the S'aiva. Puranas, the greater portion of it inculcating the worship of S'iva and Durga. It is divided into two parts, of nearly equal length. In the first part, accounts of the creation, of the Avataras of Vishnu, of the solar and lunar dynasties of the kings to the time of Krishna, of the universe, and of the Manwantaras, are given, in general in a summary manner, but not unfrequently in the words employed in the Vishnu Purana. With these are blended hymns addressed to Mahes'wara by Brahma and others; the defeat of Andhakasura by Bhairava; the origin of four S'aktis, Mahes'wari, S'iva, S'ati, and Haimavati, from S'iva; and other S'aiva legends. One chapter gives a more distinct and connected account of the incarnations of S'iva in the present age than the Linga; and it wears still more the appearance of an attempt to identify the teachers of the Yoga school with personations of their preferential deity. Several chapters form a Kas'i Mahatmya, a legend of Benares. In the second part there are no legends. It is divided into two parts, the Is'wara Gita and Vyasa Gita. In the former the knowledge of god, that is, of S'iva, through contemplative

devotion, is taught. In the latter the same object is enjoined through works, or observance of the ceremonies and precepts of the Vedas.

The date of the Kurma Purana cannot be very remote, for it is avowedly posterior to the establishment of the Tantrika, the Sakta, and the Jain sects. In the twelfth chapter it is said, "The Bhairava, Vama, Arhata, and Yamala S'astras are intended for delusion." There is no reason to believe that the Bhairava and Yamala Tantras are very ancient works, or that the practices of the left-hand S'aktas, or the doctrines of Arhat or Jina were known in the early centuries of our era.

16. The Matsya Purana

16. Matsya Purana. "That in which, for the sake of promulgating the Vedas, Vishnu, in the beginning of a Kalpa, related to Manu the story of Narasinha and the events of seven Kalpas, that, O sages, know to be the Matsya Purana, containing twenty thousand stanzas ."

We might, it is to be supposed, admit the description which the Matsya gives of itself to be correct, and yet as regards the number of verses there seems to be a misstatement. Three very good copies, one in my possession, one in the Company's library, and one in the Radcliffe library, concur in all respects, and in containing no more than between fourteen and fifteen thousand stanzas: in this case the Bhagavata is nearer the truth, when it assigns to it fourteen thousand. We may conclude, therefore, that the reading of the passage is in this respect erroneous. It is correctly said that the subjects of the Purana were communicated by Vishnu, in the form of a fish, to Manu.

The Purana, after the usual prologue of Suta and the Rishis, opens with the account of the Matsya or 'fish' Avatara of Vishnu, in which he preserves a king named Manu, with the seeds of all things, in an ark, from the waters of that inundation which in the season of a Pralaya overspreads the world. This story is told in the Mahabharata, with reference to the Matsya as its authority; from which it might be inferred that the Purana was prior to the poem. This of course is consistent with the tradition that the Puranas were first composed by Vyasa; but there can be no doubt that the greater part of the Mahabharata is much older than any extant Purana. The present instance is itself a proof; for the primitive simplicity with which the story of the fish Avatara is told in the Mahabharata is of a much more antique complexion than the mysticism and extravagance of the actual Matsya Purana. In the former, Manu collects the seeds of existing things in the ark, it is not said how: in the latter, he brings them all together by the power of Yoga. In the latter, the great serpents come to the king, to serve as cords wherewith to fasten the ark to the horn of the fish: in the former, a cable made of ropes is more intelligibly employed for the purpose.

Whilst the ark floats, fastened to the fish, Manu enters into conversation with him; and his questions, and the replies of Vishnu, form the main substance of the compilation. The first subject is the creation, which is that of Brahma and the patriarchs. Some of the details are the usual ones; others are peculiar, especially those relating to the Pitris, or progenitors. The regal dynasties are next described; and then follow chapters on the duties of the different orders. It is in relating those of the householder, in which the duty of making gifts to Brahmans is comprehended, that we have the specification of the extent and subjects of the Puranas. It is meritorious to have copies made of them, and to give these away on particular occasions. Thus it is said of the Matsya; "Whoever gives it away at either equinox, along with a golden fish and a milch cow, gives away the whole earth;" that is, he reaps a like reward in his next migration. Special duties of the householder – Vratas, or occasional acts of piety – are then described at considerable length, with legendary illustrations. The account of the universe is given in the usual strain. S'aiva legends ensue; as, the destruction of Tripurasura; the war of the gods with Taraka and the Daityas, and the consequent birth of Kartikeya, with the various circumstances of Uma's birth and marriage, the burning of Kamadeva, and other events involved in that narrative; the destruction of the Asuras Maya and Andhaka; the origin of the Matris, and the like; interspersed with the Vaishnava legends of the Avataras. Some Mahatmyas are also introduced; one of which, the Narmada Mahatmya, contains some interesting particulars. There

are various chapters on law and morals; and one which furnishes directions for building houses, and making images. We then have an account of the kings of future periods; and the Purana concludes with a chapter on gifts.

The Matsya Purana, it will be seen even from this brief sketch of its contents, is a miscellaneous compilation, but including in its contents the elements of a genuine Purana. At the same time it is of too mixed a character to be considered as a genuine work of the Pauranik class; and upon examining it carefully, it may be suspected that it is indebted to various works, not only for its matter, but for its words. The genealogical and historical chapters are much the same as those of the Vishnu; and many chapters, as those on the Pitris and Sraddhas, are precisely the same as those of the Srishti Khanda of the Padma Purana. It has drawn largely also from the Mahabharata: amongst other instances, it is sufficient to quote the story of Savitri, the devoted wife of Satyavat, which is given in the Matsya in the same manner, but considerably abridged.

Although a S'iva work, it is not exclusively so, and it has no such sectarial absurdities as the Kurma and Linga. It is a composition of considerable interest; but if it has extracted its materials from the Padma, which it also quotes on one occasion, the specification of the Upa-puranas, it is subsequent to that work, and therefore not very ancient.

17. The Garuda Purana

17. Garuda Purana. "That which Vishnu recited in the Garuda Kalpa, relating chiefly to the birth of Garuda from Vinata, is here called the Garuda Purana; and in it there are read nineteen thousand verses ."

The Garuda Purana which has been the subject of my examination corresponds in no respect with this description, and is probably a different work, though entitled the Garuda Purana. It is identical, however, with two copies in the Company's library. It consists of no more than about seven thousand stanzas; it is repeated by Brahma to Indra; and it contains no account of the birth of Garuda. There is a brief notice of the creation; but the greater part is occupied with the description of Vratas, or religious observances, of holidays, of sacred places dedicated to the sun, and with prayers from the Tantrika ritual, addressed to the sun, to S'iva, and to Vishnu. It contains also treatises on astrology, palmistry, and precious stones; and one, still more extensive, on medicine. The latter portion, called the Preta Kalpa, is taken up with directions for the performance of obsequial rites. There is nothing in all this to justify the application of the name. Whether a genuine Garuda Purana exists is doubtful. The description given in the Matsya is less particular than even the brief notices of the other Puranas, and might have easily been written without any knowledge of the book itself, being, with exception of the number of stanzas, confined to circumstances that the title alone indicates.

18. The Brahmanda Purana

18. Brahmanda Purana. "That which has declared, in twelve thousand two hundred verses, the magnificence of the egg of Brahma, and in which an account of the future Kalpas is contained, is called the Brahmanda Purana, and was revealed by Brahma ."

The Brahmanda Purana is usually considered to be in much the same predicament as the Skanda, no longer procurable in a collective body, but represented by a variety of Khandas and Mahatmyas, professing to be derived from it. The facility with which any tract may be thus attached to the non-existent original, and the advantage that has been taken of its absence to compile a variety of unauthentic fragments, have given to the Brahmanda, Skanda, and Padma, according to Col. Wilford, the character of being the Puranas of thieves or impostors . This is not applicable to the Padma, which, as above shewn, occurs entire and the same in various parts of India. The imposition of which the other two are made the vehicles can deceive no one, as the purpose of the particular legend is always too obvious to leave any doubt of its origin.

Copies of what profess to be the entire Brahmanda Purana are sometimes, though rarely, procurable. I met with one in two portions, the former containing, one hundred and twenty-four chapters, the latter seventy-eight; and the whole containing about the number of stanzas assigned to the Purana. The first and largest portion, however, proved to be the same as the Vayu Purana, with a passage occasionally slightly varied, and at the end of each chapter the common phrase 'Iti Brahmanda Purane' substituted for 'Iti Vayu Purane.' I do not think there was any intended fraud in the substitution. The last section of the first part of the Vayu Purana is termed the Brahmanda section, giving an account of the dissolution of the universe; and a careless or ignorant transcriber might have taken this for the title of the whole. The checks to the identity of the work have been honestly preserved, both in the index and the frequent specification of Vayu as the teacher or narrator of it.

The second portion of this Brahmanda is not any part of the Vayu; it is probably current in the Dakshin as a Sanhita or Khanda. Agastya is represented as going to the city Kanchi (Conjeveram), where Vishnu, as Hayagriva, appears to him, and, in answer to his inquiries, imparts to him the means of salvation, the worship of Paras'akti. In illustration of the efficacy of this form of adoration, the main subject of the work is an account of the exploits of Lalita Devi, a form of Durga, and her destruction of the demon Bhandasura. Rules for her worship are also given, which are decidedly of a S'akta or Tantrika description; and this work cannot be admitted, therefore, to be part of a genuine Purana.

The Upa-puranas

The Upa-puranas, in the few instances which are known, differ little in extent or subject from some of those to which the title of Purana is ascribed. The Matsya enumerates but four; but the Devi Bhagavata has a more complete list, and specifies eighteen. They are, 1. The Sanatkumara, 2. Narasinha, 3. Naradiya, 4. S'iva, 5. Durvasasa, 6. Kapila, 7. Manava, 8. Aus'anas'a, 9. Varuna, 10. Kalika, 11. S'amba, 12. Nandi, 13. Saura, 14. Paras'ara, 15. Aditya, 16. Mahes'wara, 17. Bhagavata, 18. Vas'ishtha. The Matsya observes of the second, that it is named in the Padma Purana, and contains eighteen thousand verses. The Nandi it calls Nanda, and says that Kartikeya tells in it the story of Nanda. A rather different list is given in the Reva Khanda; or, 1. Sanatkumara, 2. Narasinha, 3. Nanda, 4. S'ivadharmas, 5. Durvasasa, 6. Bhavishya, related by Narada or Naradiya, 7. Kapila, 8. Manava, 9. Aus'anas'a, 10. Brahmanda, 11. Varuna, 12. Kalika, 13. Mahes'wara, 14. S'amba, 15. Saura, 16. Paras'ara, 17. Bhagavata, 18. Kaurma. These authorities, however, are of questionable weight, having in view, no doubt, the pretensions of the Devi Bhagavata to be considered as the authentic Bhagavata.

Of these Upa-puranas few are to be procured. Those in my possession are the S'iva, considered as distinct from the Vayu; the Kalika, and perhaps one of the Naradiyas, as noticed above. I have also three of the Skandhas of the Devi Bhagavata, which most undoubtedly is not the real Bhagavata, supposing that any Purana so named preceded the work of Vopadeva. There can be no doubt that in any authentic list the name of Bhagavata does not occur amongst the Upa-puranas: it has been put there to prove that there are two works so entitled, of which the Purana is the Devi Bhagavata, the Upa-purana the S'ri Bhagavata. The true reading should be Bhargava, the Purana of Bhrgu; and the Devi Bhagavata is not even an Upa-purana. It is very questionable if the entire work, which as far as it extends is eminently a Sakta composition, ever had existence.

The S'iva Upa-purana contains about six thousand stanzas, distributed into two parts. It is related by Sanatkumara to Vyasa and the Rishis at Naimisharanya, and its character may be judged of from the questions to which it is a reply. "Teach us," said the Rishis, "the rules of worshipping the Linga, and of the god of gods adored under that type; describe to us his various forms, the places sanctified by him, and the prayers with which he is to be addressed." In answer, Sanatkumara repeats the S'iva Purana, containing the birth of Vishnu and Brahma; the creation and divisions of the universe; the origin of all things from the Linga; the rules of worshipping it and S'iva; the sanctity of times, places, and things, dedicated to him; the delusion of Brahma and Vishnu by the Linga; the rewards of offering flowers and the like to a Linga; rules for various observances in honour of Mahadeva; the

mode of practising the Yoga; the glory of Benares and other S'aiva Tirthas; and the perfection of the objects of life by union with Mahes'wara. These subjects are illustrated in the first part with very few legends; but the second is made up almost wholly of S'aiva stories, as the defeat of Tripurasura; the sacrifice of Daksha; the births of Kartikeya and Ganes'a the sons of S'iva, and Nandi and Bhringariti his attendants and others; together with descriptions of Benares and other places of pilgrimage, and rules for observing such festivals as the S'ivaratri. This work is a S'aiva manual, not a Purana.

The Kalika Purana contains about nine thousand stanzas in ninety-eight chapters, and is the only work of the series dedicated to recommend the worship of the bride of S'iva, in one or other of her manifold forms, as Girija, Devi, Bhadrakali, Kali, Mahamaya. It belongs therefore to the Sakta modification of Hindu belief, or the worship of the female powers of the deities. The influence of this worship spews itself in the very first pages of the work, which relate the incestuous passion of Brahma for his daughter Sandhya, in a strain that has nothing analogous to it in the Vayu, Linga, or S'iva Puranas.

The marriage of S'iva and Parvati is a subject early described, with the sacrifice of Daksha, and the death of Sati: and this work is authority for S'iva's carrying the dead body about the world, and the origin of the Pithasthanas, or places where the different members of it were scattered, and where Lingas were consequently erected. A legend follows of the births of Bhairava and Vetala, whose devotion to different forms of Devi furnishes occasion to describe in great detail the rites and formulae of which her worship consists, including the chapters on sanguinary sacrifices, translated in the Asiatic Researches. Another peculiarity in this work is afforded by very prolix descriptions of a number of rivers and mountains at Kamarupa-tirtha in Asam, and rendered holy ground by the celebrated temple of Durga in that country, as Kamaks'hi or Kamakhya. It is a singular, and yet uninvestigated circumstance, that Asam, or at least the north-east of Bengal, seems to have been in a great degree the source from which the Tantrika and S'akta corruptions of the religion of the Vedas and Puranas proceeded.

The specification of the Upa-puranas, whilst it names several of which the existence is problematical, omits other works, bearing the same designation, which are sometimes met with. Thus in the collection of Col. Mackenzie we have a portion of the Bhargava, and a Mudgala Purana, which is probably the same with the Ganes'a Upa-purana, cited by Col. Vans Kennedy. I have also a copy of the Ganes'a Purana, which seems to agree with that of which he speaks; the second portion being entitled the Krida Khanda, in which the pastimes of Ganes'a, including a variety of legendary matters, are described. The main subject of the work is the greatness of Ganes'a, and prayers and formulae appropriate to him are abundantly detailed. It appears to be a work originating with the Ganapatya sect, or worshippers of Ganes'a. There is also a minor Purana called Adi, or 'first,' not included in the list. This is a work, however, of no great extent or importance, and is confined to a detail of the sports of the juvenile Krishna.

Synopsis of the Vishnu Purana

From the sketch thus offered of the subjects of the Puranas, and which, although admitting of correction, is believed to be in the main a candid and accurate summary, it will be evident that in their present condition they must be received with caution as authorities for the mythological religion of the Hindus at any remote period. They preserve, no doubt, many ancient notions and traditions; but these have been so much mixed up with foreign matter, intended to favour the popularity of particular forms of worship or articles of faith, that they cannot be unreservedly recognised as genuine representations of what we have reason to believe the Puranas originally were.

The safest sources for the ancient legends of the Hindus, after the Vedas, are no doubt the two great poems, the Ramayana and Mahabharata. The first offers only a few, but they are of a primitive character. The Mahabharata is more fertile in fiction, but it is more miscellaneous, and much that it

contains is of equivocal authenticity, and uncertain date. Still it affords many materials that are genuine, and it is evidently the great fountain from which most, if not all, of the Puranas have drawn; as it intimates itself, when it declares that there is no legend current in the world which has not its origin in the Mahabharata .

A work of some extent professing to be part of the Mahabharata may more accurately be ranked with the Pauranik compilations of least authenticity, and latest origin. The Hari Vans'a is chiefly occupied with the adventures of Krishna, but, as introductory to his era, it records particulars of the creation of the world, and of the patriarchal and regal dynasties. This is done with much carelessness and inaccuracy of compilation, as I have had occasion frequently to notice in the following pages. The work has been very industriously translated by M. Langlois.

A comparison of the subjects of the following pages with those of the other Puranas will sufficiently shew that of the whole series the Vishnu most closely conforms to the definition of a Panchalakshana Purana, or one which treats of five specified topics. It comprehends them all; and although it has infused a portion of extraneous and sectarial matter, it has done so with sobriety and with judgment, and has not suffered the fervour of its religious zeal to transport it into very wide deviations from the prescribed path. The legendary tales which it has inserted are few, and are conveniently arranged, so that they do not distract the attention of the compiler from objects of more permanent interest and importance.

Book One

The first book of the six, into which the work is divided, is occupied chiefly with the details of creation, primary (Sarga) and secondary (Pratisarga); the first explaining how the universe proceeds from Prakriti, or eternal crude matter; the second, in what manner the forms of things are developed from the elementary substances previously evolved, or how they reappear after their temporary destruction. Both these creations are periodical, but the termination of the first occurs only at the end of the life of Brahma, when not only all the gods and all other forms are annihilated, but the elements are again merged into primary substance, besides which one only spiritual being exists: the latter takes place at the end of every Kalpa, or day of Brahma, and affects only the forms of inferior creatures, and lower worlds, leaving the substance of the universe entire, and sages and gods unharmed. The explanation of these events involves a description of the periods of time upon which they depend. and which are accordingly detailed. Their character has been a source of very unnecessary perplexity to European writers, as they belong to a scheme of chronology wholly mythological, having no reference to any real or supposed history of the Hindus, but applicable, according to their system, to the infinite and eternal revolutions of the universe. In these notions, and in that of the coeternity of spirit and matter, the theogony and cosmogony of the Puranas, as they appear in the Vishnu Purana, belong to and illustrate systems of high antiquity, of which we have only fragmentary traces in the records of other nations.

The course of the elemental creation is in the Vishnu, as in other Puranas, taken from the Sankhya philosophy; but the agency that operates upon passive matter is confusedly exhibited, in consequence of a partial adoption of the illusory theory of the Vedanta philosophy, and the prevalence of the Pauranik doctrine of Pantheism. However incompatible with the independent existence of Pradhana or crude matter, and however incongruous with the separate condition of pure spirit or Purusha, it is declared repeatedly that Vishnu, as one with the supreme being, is not only spirit, but crude matter; and not only the latter, but all visible substance, and Time. He is Purusha, 'spirit;' Pradhana, crude matter; 'Vyakta, 'visible form;' and Kula, 'time.' This cannot but be regarded as a departure from the primitive dogmas of the Hindus, in which the distinctness of the Deity and his works was enunciated; in which upon his willing the world to be, it was; and in which his interposition in creation, held to be inconsistent with the quiescence of perfection, was explained away by the personification of attributes in action, which afterwards came to be considered as real divinities, Brahma, Vishnu, and S'iva, charged severally for a given season with the creation, preservation, and tempo-

rary annihilation of material forms. These divinities are in the following pages, consistently with the tendency of a Vaishnava work, declared to be no other than Vishnu. In S'iva Puranas they are in like manner identified with S'iva. The Puranas thus displaying and explaining the seeming incompatibility, of which there are traces in other ancient mythologies, between three distinct hypostases of one superior deity, and the identification of one or other of those hypostases with their common and separate original.

After the world has been fitted for the reception of living creatures, it is peopled by the will-engendered sons of Brahma, the Prajapatis or patriarchs, and their posterity. It would seem as if a primitive tradition of the descent of mankind from seven holy personages had at first prevailed, but that in the course of time it had been expanded into complicated, and not always consistent, amplification. How could these Rishis or patriarchs have posterity? it was necessary to provide them with wives. In order to account for their existence, the Manu Swayambhuva and his wife Satarupa were added to the scheme, or Brahma becomes twofold, male and female, and daughters are then begotten, who are married to the Prajapatis. Upon this basis various legends of Brahma's double nature, some no doubt as old as the Vedas, have been constructed: but although they may have been derived in some degree from the authentic tradition of the origin of mankind from a single pair, yet the circumstances intended to give more interest and precision to the story are evidently of an allegorical or mystical description, and conduced, in apparently later times, to a coarseness of realization which was neither the letter nor spirit of the original legend. Swayambhuva, the son of the self-born or untreated, and his wife Satarupa, the hundred-formed or multiform, are themselves allegories; and their female descendants, who become the wives of the Rishis, are Faith, Devotion, Content, Intelligence, Tradition, and the like; whilst amongst their posterity we have the different phases of the moon, and the sacrificial fires. In another creation the chief source of creatures is the patriarch Daksha (ability), whose daughters, Virtues or Passions or Astronomical Phenomena, are the mothers of all existing things. These legends, perplexed as they appear to be, seem to admit of allowable solution, in the conjecture that the Prajapatis and Rishis were real personages, the authors of the Hindu system of social, moral, and religious obligations, and the first observers of the heavens, and teachers of astronomical science.

The regal personages of the Swayambhuva Manwantara are but few, but they are described in the outset as governing the earth in the dawn of society, and as introducing agriculture and civilisation. How much of their story rests upon a traditional remembrance of their actions, it would be useless to conjecture, although there is no extravagance in supposing that the legends relate to a period prior to the full establishment in India of the Brahmanical institutions. The legends of Dhruva and Prahlada, which are intermingled with these particulars, are in all probability ancient, but they are amplified, in a strain conformable to the Vaishnava purport of this Purana, by doctrines and prayers asserting the identity of Vishnu with the supreme. It is clear that the stories do not originate with this Purana. In that of Prahlada particularly, as hereafter pointed out, circumstances essential to the completeness of the story are only alluded to, not recounted; shewing indisputably the writer's having availed himself of some prior authority for his narration.

Book Two

The second book opens with a continuation of the kings of the first Manwantara; amongst whom, Bharata is said to have given a name to India, called after him Bharata-varsha. This leads to a detail of the geographical system of the Puranas, with mount Meru, the seven circular continents, and their surrounding oceans, to the limits of the world; all of which are mythological fictions, in which there is little reason to imagine that any topographical truths are concealed. With regard to Bharata, or India, the case is different: the mountains and rivers which are named are readily verifiable, and the cities and nations that are particularized may also in many instances be proved to have had a real existence. The list is not a very long one in the Vishnu Purana, and is probably abridged from some more ample detail like that which the Mahabharata affords, and which, in the hope of supplying in-

formation' with respect to a subject yet imperfectly investigated, the ancient political condition of India, I have inserted and elucidated.

The description which this book also contains of the planetary and other spheres is equally mythological, although occasionally presenting practical details and notions in which there is an approach to accuracy. The concluding legend of Bharata – in his former life the king so named, but now a Brahman, who acquires true wisdom, and thereby attains liberation – is palpably an invention of the compiler, and is peculiar to this Purana.

The Third Book

The arrangement of the Vedas and other writings considered sacred by the Hindus, being in fact the authorities of their religious rites and belief, which is described in the beginning of the third book, is of much importance to the history of Hindu literature, and of the Hindu religion. The sage Vyasa is here represented, not as the author, but the arranger or compiler of the Vedas, the Itihasas, and Puranas. His name denotes his character, meaning the 'arranger' or 'distributor;' and the recurrence of many Vyasas, many individuals who new modelled the Hindu scriptures, has nothing in it that is improbable, except the fabulous intervals by which their labours are separated. The rearranging, the refashioning, of old materials, is nothing more than the progress of time would be likely to render necessary. The last recognised compilation is that of Krishna Dwaipayana, assisted by Brahmans, who were already conversant with the subjects respectively assigned to them. They were the members of a college or school, supposed by the Hindus to have flourished in a period more remote, no doubt, than the truth, but not at all unlikely to have been instituted at some time prior to the accounts of India which we owe to Greek writers, and in which we see enough of the system to justify our inferring that it was then entire. That there have been other Vyasas and other schools since that date, that Brahmans unknown to fame have remodelled some of the Hindu scriptures, and especially the Puranas, cannot reasonably be contested, after dispassionately weighing the strong internal evidence which all of them afford of the intermixture of unauthorized and comparatively modern ingredients. But the same internal testimony furnishes proof equally decisive of the anterior existence of ancient materials; and it is therefore as idle as it is irrational to dispute the antiquity or authenticity of the greater portion of the contents of the Puranas, in the face of abundant positive and circumstantial evidence of the prevalence of the doctrines which they teach, the currency of the legends which they narrate, and the integrity of the institutions which they describe, at least three centuries before the Christian era. But the origin and development of their doctrines, traditions, and institutions, were not the work of a day; and the testimony that establishes their existence three centuries before Christianity, carries it back to a much more remote antiquity, to an antiquity that is probably not surpassed by any of the prevailing fictions, institutions, or belief, of the ancient world.

The remainder of the third book describes the leading institutions of the Hindus, the duties of castes, the obligations of different stages of life, and the celebration of obsequial rites, in a short but primitive strain, and in harmony with the laws of Manu. It is a distinguishing feature of the Vishnu Purana, and it is characteristic of its being the work of an earlier period than most of the Puranas, that it enjoins no sectarial or other acts of supererogation; no Vratas, occasional self-imposed observances; no holidays, no birthdays of Krishna, no nights dedicated to Lakshmi; no sacrifices nor modes of worship other than those conformable to the ritual of the Vedas. It contains no Mahatmyas, or golden legends, even of the temples in which Vishnu is adored.

The Fourth Book

The fourth book contains all that the Hindus have of their ancient history. It is a tolerably comprehensive list of dynasties and individuals; it is a barren record of events. It can scarcely be doubted, however, that much of it is a genuine chronicle of persons, if not of occurrences. That it is discredited by palpable absurdities in regard to the longevity of the princes of the earlier dynasties must be granted, and the particulars preserved of some of them are trivial and fabulous: still there is an

inartificial simplicity and consistency in the succession of persons, and a possibility and probability in some of the transactions which give to these traditions the semblance of authenticity, and render it likely that they are not altogether without foundation. At any rate, in the absence of all other sources of information, the record, such as it is, deserves not to be altogether set aside. It is not essential to its credibility or its usefulness that any exact chronological adjustment of the different reigns should be attempted. Their distribution amongst the several Yugas, undertaken by Sir Wm. Jones or his Pandits, finds no countenance from the original texts, farther than an incidental notice of the age in which a particular monarch ruled, or the general fact that the dynasties prior to Krishna precede the time of the great war, and the beginning of the Kali age; both which events we are not obliged, with the Hindus, to place five thousand years ago. To that age the solar dynasty of princes offers ninety-three descents, the lunar but forty-five, though they both commence at the same time. Some names may have been added to the former list, some omitted in the latter; and it seems most likely, that, notwithstanding their synchronous beginning, the princes of the lunar race were subsequent to those of the solar dynasty. They avowedly branched off from the solar line; and the legend of Sudyumna, that explains the connexion, has every appearance of having been contrived for the purpose of referring it to a period more remote than the truth. Deducting however from the larger number of princes a considerable proportion, there is nothing to shock probability in supposing that the Hindu dynasties and their ramifications were spread through an interval of about twelve centuries anterior to the war of the Mahabharata, and, conjecturing that event to have happened about fourteen centuries before Christianity, thus carrying the commencement of the regal dynasties of India to about two thousand six hundred years before that date. This may or may not be too remote; but it is sufficient, in a subject where precision is impossible, to be satisfied with the general impression, that in the dynasties of kings detailed in the Puranas we have a record which, although it cannot fail to have suffered detriment from age, and may have been injured by careless or injudicious compilation, preserves an account, not wholly undeserving of confidence, of the establishment and succession of regular monarchies amongst the Hindus, from as early an era, and for as continuous a duration, as any in the credible annals of mankind.

The circumstances that are told of the first princes have evident relation to the colonization of India, and the gradual extension of the authority of new races over an uninhabited or uncivilized region. It is commonly admitted that the Brahmanical religion and civilization were brought into India from without. Certainly, there are tribes on the borders, and in the heart of the country, who are still not Hindus; and passages in the Ramayana and Mahabharata and Manu, and the uniform traditions of the people themselves, point to a period when Bengal, Orissa, and the whole of the Dekhin, were inhabited by degraded or outcaste, that is, by barbarous, tribes. The traditions of the Puranas confirm these views, but they lend no assistance to the determination of the question whence the Hindus came; whether from a central Asiatic nation, as Sir Wm. Jones supposed, or from the Caucasian mountains, the plains of Babylonia, or the borders of the Caspian, as conjectured by Klaproth, Vans Kennedy, and Schlegel. The affinities of the Sanscrit language prove a common origin of the now widely scattered nations amongst whose dialects they are traceable, and render it unquestionable that they must all have spread abroad from some central spot in that part of the globe first inhabited by mankind, according to the inspired record. Whether any indication of such an event be discoverable in the Vedas, remains to be determined; but it would have been obviously incompatible with the Pauranik system to have referred the origin of Indian princes and principalities to other than native sources. We need not therefore expect from them any information as to the foreign derivation of the Hindus.

We have, then, wholly insufficient means for arriving at any information concerning the ante-Indian period of Hindu history, beyond the general conclusion derivable from the actual presence of barbarous and apparently aboriginal tribes – from the admitted progressive extension of Hinduism into parts of India where it did not prevail when the code of Manu was compiled – from the general use of dialects in India, more or less copious, which are different from Sanscrit – and from the affinities of that language with forms of speech current in the western world – that a people who spoke San-

scrit, and followed the religion of the Vedas, came into India, in some very distant age, from lands west of the Indus. Whether the date and circumstances of their immigration will ever be ascertained is extremely doubtful, but it is not difficult to form a plausible outline of their early site and progressive colonization.

The earliest seat of the Hindus within the confines of Hindusthan was undoubtedly the eastern confines of the Panjab. The holy land of Manu and the Puranas lies between the Drishadwati and Saraswati rivers, the Caggar and Sursooty of our barbarous maps. Various adventures of the first princes and most famous sages occur in this vicinity; and the Asramas, or religious domiciles, of several of the latter are placed on the banks of the Saraswati. According to some authorities, it was the abode of Vyasa, the compiler of the Vedas and Puranas; and agreeably to another, when on one occasion the Vedas had fallen into disuse, and been forgotten, the Brahmans were again instructed in them by Saraswata, the son of Saraswati. One of the most distinguished of the tribes of the Brahmans is known as the Saraswata; and the same word is employed by Mr. Colebrooke to denote that modification of Sanscrit which is termed generally Prakrit, and which in this case he supposes to have been the language of "the Saraswata nation, which occupied the banks of the river Saraswati." The river itself receives its appellation from Saraswati, the goddess of learning, under whose auspices the sacred literature of the Hindus assumed shape and authority. These indications render it certain, that whatever seeds were imported from without, it was in the country adjacent to the Saraswati river that they were first planted, and cultivated and reared in Hindusthan.

The tract of land thus assigned for the first establishment of Hinduism in India is of very circumscribed extent, and could not have been the site of any numerous tribe or nation. The traditions that evidence the early settlement of the Hindus in this quarter, ascribe to the settlers more of a philosophical and religious, than of a secular character, and combine with the very narrow bounds of the holy land to render it possible that the earliest emigrants were the members, not of a political, so much as of a religious community; that they were a colony of priests, not in the restricted sense in which we use the term, but in that in which it still applies in India, to an Agrahara, a village or hamlet of Brahmans, who, although married, and having families, and engaging in tillage, in domestic duties, and in the conduct of secular interests affecting the community, are still supposed to devote their principal attention to sacred study and religious offices. A society of this description, with its artificers and servants, and perhaps with a body of martial followers, might have found a home in the Brahma-vartha of Manu, the land which thence was entitled 'the holy,' or more literally 'the Brahman, region;' and may have communicated to the rude, uncivilized, unlettered aborigines the rudiments of social organization, literature, and religion; partly, in all probability, brought along with them, and partly devised and fashioned by degrees for the growing necessities of new conditions of society. Those with whom this civilization commenced would have had ample inducements to prosecute their successful work, and in the course of time the improvement which germinated on the banks of the Saraswati was extended beyond the borders of the Jumna and the Ganges.

We have no satisfactory intimation of the stages by which the political organization of the people of Upper India traversed the space between the Saraswati and the more easterly region, where it seems to have taken a concentrated form, and whence it diverged in various directions, throughout Hindustan. The Manu of the present period, Vaivaswata, the son of the sun, is regarded as the founder of Ayodhya; and that city continued to be the capital of the most celebrated branch of his descendants, the posterity of Ikshwaku. The Vishnu Purana evidently intends to describe the radiation of conquest or colonization from this spot, in the accounts it gives of the dispersion of Vaivaswata's posterity: and although it is difficult to understand what could have led early settlers in India to such a site, it is not inconveniently situated as a commanding position, whence emigrations might proceed to the east, the west, and the south. This seems to have happened: a branch from the house of Ikshwaku spread into Tirhut, constituting the Maithila kings; and the posterity of another of Vaivaswata's sons reigned at Vaisali in southern Tirhut or Saran.

The most adventurous emigrations, however, took place through the lunar dynasty, which, as observed above, originates from the solar, making in fact but one race and source for the whole. Leaving out of consideration the legend of Sudyumna's double transformation, the first prince of Pratihthana, a city south from Ayodhya, was one of Vaivaswata's children, equally with Ikshvaku. The sons of Pururavas, the second of this branch, extended, by themselves or their posterity, in every direction: to the east to Kas'i, Magadha, Benares, and Behar; southwards to the Vindhya hills, and across them to Vidarbha or Berar; westwards along the Narmada to Kus'asthali or Dwaraka in Guzerat; and in a north-westerly direction to Mathura and Hastinapura. These movements are very distinctly discoverable amidst the circumstances narrated in the fourth book of the Vishnu Purana, and are precisely such as might be expected from a radiation of colonies from Ayodhya. Intimations also occur of settlements in Banga, Kalinga, and the Dakhin; but they are brief and indistinct, and have the appearance of additions subsequent to the comprehension of those countries within the pale of Hinduism.

Besides these traces of migration and settlement, several curious circumstances, not likely to be unauthorized inventions, are hinted in these historical traditions. The distinction of castes was not fully developed prior to the colonization. Of the sons of Vaivaswata, some, as kings, were Kshatriyas; but one, founded a tribe of Brahmans, another became a Vais'ya, and a fourth a S'udra. It is also said of other princes, that they established the four castes amongst their subjects. There are also various notices of Brahmanical Gotras, or families, proceeding from Kshatriya races: and there are several indications of severe struggles between the two ruling castes, not for temporal, but for spiritual dominion, the right to teach the Vedas. This seems to be the especial purport of the inveterate hostility that prevailed between the Brahman Vas'ishtha and the Kshatriya Viswamitra, who, as the Ramayana relates, compelled the gods to make him a Brahman also, and whose posterity became very celebrated as the Kaus'ika Brahmans. Other legends, again, such as Daksha's sacrifice, denote sectarial strife; and the legend of Paras'urama reveals a conflict even for temporal authority between the two ruling castes. More or less weight will be attached to these conjectures, according to the temperament of different inquirers; but, even whilst fully aware of the facility with which plausible deductions may cheat the fancy, and little disposed to relax all curb upon the imagination, I find it difficult to regard these legends as wholly unsubstantial fictions, or devoid of all resemblance to the realities of the past.

After the date of the great war, the Vishnu Purana, in common with those Puranas which contain similar lists, specifies kings and dynasties with greater precision, and offers political and chronological particulars, to which on the score of probability there is nothing to object. In truth their general accuracy has been incontrovertibly established. Inscriptions on columns of stone, on rocks, on coins, decyphered only of late years, through the extraordinary ingenuity and perseverance of Mr. James Prinsep, have verified the names of races, and titles of princes – the Gupta and Andhra Rajas, mentioned in the Puranas – and have placed beyond dispute the identity of Chandragupta and Sandrocoptus: thus giving us a fixed point from which to compute the date of other persons and events. Thus the Vishnu Purana specifies the interval between Chandragupta and the great war to be eleven hundred years; and the occurrence of the latter little more than fourteen centuries B. C., as shewn in my observations on the passage, remarkably concurs with inferences of the like date from different premises. The historical notices that then follow are considerably confused, but they probably afford an accurate picture of the political distractions of India at the time when they were written; and much of the perplexity arises from the corrupt state of the manuscripts, the obscure brevity of the record, and our total want of the means of collateral illustration.

The Fifth Book

The fifth book of the Vishnu Purana is exclusively occupied with the life of Krishna. This is one of the distinguishing characteristics of the Purana, and is one argument against its antiquity. It is possible, though not yet proved, that Krishna as an Avatara of Vishnu, is mentioned in an indisputably

genuine text of the Vedas. He is conspicuously prominent in the Mahabharata, but very contradictorily described there. The part that he usually performs is that of a mere mortal, although the passages are numerous that attach divinity to his person. There are, however, no descriptions in the Mahabharata of his juvenile frolics, of his sports in Vrindavan, his pastimes with the cow-boys, or even his destruction of the Asuras sent to kill him. These stories have all a modern complexion: they do not harmonize with the tone of the ancient legends, which is generally grave, and sometimes majestic: they are the creations of a puerile taste, and grovelling imagination. These Chapters of the Vishnu Purana offer some difficulties as to their originality: they are the same as those on the same subject in the Brahma Purana: they are not very dissimilar to those of the Bhagavata. The latter has some incidents which the Vishnu has not, and may therefore be thought to have improved upon the prior narrative of the latter. On the other hand, abridgment is equally a proof of posteriority as amplification. The simpler style of the Vishnu Purana is however in favour of its priority; and the miscellaneous composition of the Brahma Purana renders it likely to have borrowed these chapters from the Vishnu. The life of Krishna in the Hari-vans'a and the Brahma-vaivartta are indisputably of later date.

The Sixth Book

The last book contains an account of the dissolution of the world, in both its major and minor cataclysms; and in the particulars of the end of all things by fire and water, as well as in the principle of their perpetual renovation, presents a faithful exhibition of opinions that were general in the ancient world. The metaphysical annihilation of the universe, by the release of the spirit from bodily existence, offers, as already remarked, other analogies to doctrines and practices taught by Pythagoras and Plato, and by the Platonic Christians of later days.

Date of the Vishnu Purana

The Vishnu Purana has kept very clear of particulars from which an approximation to its date may be conjectured. No place is described of which the sacredness has any known limit, nor any work cited of probable recent composition. The Vedas, the Puranas, other works forming the body of Sanscrit literature, are named; and so is the Mahabharata, to which therefore it is subsequent. Both Bauddhas and Jains are adverted to. It was therefore written before the former had disappeared; but they existed in some parts of India as late as the twelfth century at least; and it is probable that the Purana was compiled before that period. The Gupta kings reigned in the seventh century; the historical record of the Purana which mentions them was therefore later: and there seems little doubt that the same alludes to the first incursions of the Mohammedans, which took place in the eighth century; which brings it still lower. In describing the latter dynasties, some, if not all, of which were no doubt contemporary, they are described as reigning altogether one thousand seven hundred and ninety-six years. Why this duration should have been chosen does not appear, unless, in conjunction with the number of years which are said to have elapsed between the great war and the last of the Andhra dynasty, which preceded these different races, and which amounted to two thousand three hundred and fifty, the compiler was influenced by the actual date at which he wrote. The aggregate of the two periods would be the Kali year 4146, equivalent to A. D. 1045. There are some variety and indistinctness in the enumeration of the periods which compose this total, but the date which results from it is not unlikely to be an approximation to that of the Vishnu Purana.

It is the boast of inductive philosophy, that it draws its conclusions from the careful observation and accumulation of facts; and it is equally the business of all philosophical research to determine its facts before it ventures upon speculation. This procedure has not been observed in the investigation of the mythology and traditions of the Hindus. Impatience to generalize has availed itself greedily of whatever promised to afford materials for generalization; and the most erroneous views have been confidently advocated, because the guides to which their authors trusted were ignorant or insufficient. The information gleaned by Sir Wm. Jones was gathered in an early season of Sanscrit

study, before the field was cultivated. The same may be said of the writings of Paulinus a St. Barolomaeo, with the further disadvantage of his having been imperfectly acquainted with the Sanscrit language and literature, and his veiling his deficiencies under loftiness of pretension and a prodigal display of misapplied erudition. The documents to which Wilford trusted proved to be in great part fabrications, and where genuine, were mixed up with so much loose and unauthenticated matter, and so overwhelmed with extravagance of speculation, that his citations need to be carefully and skilfully sifted, before they can be serviceably employed. The descriptions of Ward are too deeply tinctured by his prejudices to be implicitly confided in; and they are also derived in a great measure from the oral or written communications of Bengali pandits, who are not in general very deeply read in the authorities of their mythology. The accounts of Polier were in like manner collected from questionable sources, and his *Mythologie des Hindous* presents a heterogeneous mixture of popular and Pauranic tales, of ancient traditions, and legends apparently invented for the occasion, which renders the publication worse than useless, except in the hands of those who can distinguish the pure metal from the alloy. Such are the authorities to which Maurice, Faber, and Creuzer have exclusively trusted in their description of the Hindu mythology, and it is no marvel that there should have been an utter confounding of good and bad in their selection of materials, and an inextricable mixture of truth and error in their conclusions. Their labours accordingly are far from entitled to that confidence which their learning and industry would else have secured; and a sound and comprehensive survey of the Hindu system is still wanting to the comparative analysis of the religious opinions of the ancient world, and to a satisfactory elucidation of an important chapter in the history of the human race. It is with the hope of supplying some of the necessary means for the accomplishment of these objects, that the following pages have been translated.

Conclusion

The translation of the Vishnu Purana has been made from a collation of various manuscripts in my possession. I had three when I commenced the work, two in the Devanagari, and one in the Bengali character: a fourth, from the west of India, was given to me by Major Jervis, when some progress had been made: and in conducting the latter half of the translation through the press, I have compared it with three other copies in the library of the East India Company. All these copies closely agree; presenting no other differences than occasional varieties of reading, owing chiefly to the inattention or inaccuracy of the transcriber. Four of the copies were accompanied by a commentary, essentially the sane, although occasionally varying; and ascribed, in part at least, to two different scholiasts. The annotations on the first two books and the fifth are in two MSS. said to be the work of S'ridhara Yati, the disciple of Parananda, and who is therefore the same as S'ridhara Swami, the commentator on the Bhagavata. In the other three books these two MSS. concur with other two in naming the commentator Ratnagarbha Bhatta, who in those two is the author of the notes on the entire work. The introductory verses of his comment specify him to be the disciple of Vidya-vachaspati, the son of Hiranyagarbha, and grandson of Madhava, who composed his commentary by desire of Suryakara, son of Ratinath, Mis'ra, son of Chandrakara, hereditary ministers of some sovereign who is not particularized. In the illustrations which are attributed to these different writers there is so much conformity, that one or other is largely indebted to his predecessor. They both refer to earlier commentaries. S'ridhara cites the works of Chit-sukha-yoni and others, both more extensive and more concise; between which, his own, which he terms Atma- or Swa-prakasa, 'self-illuminator,' holds an intermediate character. Ratnagarbha entitles his, *Vaishnavakuta chandrika*, 'the moonlight of devotion to Vishnu.' The dates of these commentators are not ascertainable, as far as I am aware, from any of the particulars which they have specified.

In the notes which I have added to the translation, I have been desirous chiefly of comparing the statements of the text with those of other Puranas, and pointing out the circumstances in which they differ or agree; so as to render the present publication a sort of concordance to the whole, as it is not very probable that many of them will be published or translated. The Index that follows has been

made sufficiently copious to answer the purposes of a mythological and historical dictionary, as far as the Puranas, or the greater number of them, furnish, materials.

In rendering the text into English, I have adhered to it as literally as was compatible with some regard to the usages of English composition. In general the original presents few difficulties. The style of the Puranas is very commonly humble and easy, and the narrative is plainly and unpretendingly told. In the addresses to the deities, in the expatiations upon the divine nature, in the descriptions of the universe, and in argumentative and metaphysical discussion, there occur passages in which the difficulty arising from the subject itself is enhanced by the brief and obscure manner in which it is treated. On such occasions I derived much aid from the commentary, but it is possible that I may have sometimes misapprehended and misrepresented the original; and it is also possible that I may have sometimes failed to express its purport with sufficient precision to have made it intelligible. I trust, however, that this will not often be the case, and that the translation of the Vishnu Purana will be of service and of interest to the few, who in these times of utilitarian selfishness, conflicting opinion, party virulence, and political agitation, can find a restingplace for their thoughts in the tranquil contemplation of those yet living pictures of the ancient world which are exhibited by the literature and mythology of the Hindus.

CONTENTS.

BOOK I.

CHAP. I. – Invocation. Maitreya inquires of his teacher, Paras'ara, the origin and nature of the universe. Paras'ara performs a rite to destroy the demons: reproved by Vas'ishtha, he desists: Pulastya appears, and bestows upon him divine knowledge: he repeats the Vishnu Purana. Vishnu the origin, existence, and end of all things.

CHAP. II. – Prayer of Paras'ara to Vishnu. Successive narration of the Vishnu Purana. Explanation of Vasudeva: his existence before creation: his first manifestations. Description of Pradhana, or the chief principle of things. Cosmogony. Of Prakrita, or material creation; of time; of the active cause. Development of effects; Mahat; Ahankara; Tanmatras; elements; objects of sense; senses; of the mundane egg. Vishnu the same as Brahma the creator; Vishnu the preserver; Rudra the destroyer.

CHAP. III. – Measure of time. Moments or Kashthas, &c.; day and night, fortnight, month, year, divine year: Yugas, or ages: Mahayuga, or great age: day of Brahma: periods of the Manus: a Manwantara: night of Brahma, and destruction of the world: a year of Brahma: his life: a Kalpa: a Pararddha: the past, or Padma Kalpa: the present, or Varaha.

CHAP. IV. – Narayana's appearance, in the beginning of the Kalpa, as the Varaha or boar: Prithivi (Earth) addresses him: he raises the world from beneath the waters: hymned by Sanandana and the Yogis. The earth floats on the ocean: divided into seven zones. The lower spheres of the universe restored. Creation renewed.

CHAP. V. – Vishnu as Brahma creates the world. General characteristics of creation. Brahma meditates, and gives origin to immovable things, animals, gods, men. Specific creation of nine kinds; Mahat, Tanmatra, Aindriya, inanimate objects, animals, gods, men, Anugraha, and Kaumara. More particular account of creation. Origin of different orders of beings from Brahma's body under different conditions; and of the Vedas from his mouths. All things created again as they existed in a former Kalpa.

CHAP. VI. – Origin of the four castes: their primitive state. Progress of society. Different kinds of grain. Efficacy of sacrifice. Duties of men: regions. assigned them after death.

CHAP. VII. – Creation continued. Production of the mind-born sons of Brahma; of the Prajapatis; of Sanandana and others; of Rudra and the eleven Rudras; of the Manu Swayambhuva, and his wife S'atarupa; of their children, The daughters of Daksha, and their marriage to Dharma and others. The

progeny of Dharma and Adharma. The perpetual succession of worlds, and different modes of mundane dissolution.

CHAP. VIII. – Origin of Rudra: his becoming eight Rudras: their wives and children. The posterity of Bhṛigu. Account of S'ri in conjunction with Vishnu. (Sacrifice of Daksha.)

CHAP. IX. – Legend of Lakshmi. Durvasas gives a garland to Indra: he treats it disrespectfully, and is cursed by the Muni. The power of the gods impaired: they are oppressed by the Danavas, and have recourse to Vishnu. The churning of the ocean. Praises of S'ri.

CHAP. X. – The descendants of the daughters of Daksha married to the Rishis.

CHAP. XI. – Legend of Dhruva, the son of Uttanapada: he is unkindly treated by his father's second wife: applies to his mother: her advice: he resolves to engage in religious exercises: sees the seven Rishis, who recommend him to propitiate Vishnu.

CHAP. XII. – Dhruva commences a course of religious austerities. Unsuccessful attempts of Indra and his ministers to distract Dhruva's attention: they appeal to Vishnu, who allays their fears, and appears to Dhruva. Dhruva praises Vishnu, and is raised to the skies as the pole-star.

CHAP. XIII. – Posterity of Dhruva. Legend of Vena: his impiety: he is put to death by the Rishis. Anarchy ensues. The production of Nishada and Prithu: the latter the first king. The origin of Suta and Magadha: they enumerate the duties of kings. Prithu compels Earth to acknowledge his authority: he levels it: introduces cultivation: erects cities. Earth called after him Prithivi: typified as a cow.

CHAP. XIV. – Descendants of Prithu. Legend of the Prachetasas: they are desired by their father to multiply mankind, by worshipping Vishnu: they plunge into the sea, and meditate on and praise him: he appears, and grants their wishes.

CHAP. XV. – The world overrun with trees: they are destroyed by the Prachetasas. Soma pacifies them, and gives them Marisha to wife: her story: the daughter of the nymph Pramlocha. Legend of Kandū. Marisha's former history. Daksha the son of the Prachetasas: his different characters: his sons: his daughters: their marriages and progeny: allusion to Prahlada, his descendant.

CHAP. XVI. – Inquiries of Maitreya respecting the history of Prahlada.

CHAP. XVII. – Legend of Prahlada. Hiranyakas'ipu the sovereign of the universe: the gods dispersed, or in servitude to him: Prahlada, his son, remains devoted to Vishnu: questioned by his father, he praises Vishnu: Hiranyakas'ipu orders him to be put to death, but in vain: his repeated deliverance: he teaches his companions to adore Vishnu.

CHAP. XVIII. – Hiranyakas'ipu's reiterated attempts to destroy his son: their being always frustrated.

CHAP. XIX. – Dialogue between Prahlada and his father: he is cast from the top of the palace unhurt: baffles the incantations of Samvara: he is thrown fettered into the sea: he praises Vishnu.

CHAP. XX. – Vishnu appears to Prahlada. Hiranyakas'ipu relents, and is reconciled to his son: he is put to death by Vishnu as the Nrisinha. Prahlada becomes king of the Daityas: his posterity: fruit of hearing his story.

CHAP. XXI. – Families of the Daityas. Descendants of Kas'yapa by Danu. Children of Kas'yapa by his other wives. Birth of the Marutas, the sons of Diti.

CHAP. XXII. – Dominion over different provinces of creation assigned to different beings. Universality of Vishnu. Four varieties of spiritual contemplation. Two conditions of spirit. The perceptible attributes of Vishnu types of his imperceptible properties. Vishnu every thing. Merit of hearing the first book of the Vishnu Purana.

BOOK II.

CHAP. I. – Descendants of Priyavrata, the eldest son of Swayambhuva Manu: his ten sons: three adopt a religious life; the others become kings of the seven Dwipas, or isles, of the earth. Agnidhra, king of Jambu-dwipa, divides it into nine portions, which he distributes amongst his sons. Nabhi, king of the south, succeeded by Rishabha; and he by Bharata: India named after him Bharata: his descendants reign during the Swayambhuva Manwantara.

CHAP. II. – Description of the earth. The seven Dwipas and seven seas. Jambu-dwipa. Mount Meru: its extent and boundaries. Extent of Ilavrita. Groves, lakes, and branches of Meru. Cities of the gods. Rivers. The forms of Vishnu worshipped in different Varshas.

CHAP. III. – Description of Bharata-varsha: extent: chief mountains: nine divisions: principal rivers and mountains of Bharata proper: principal nations: superiority over other Varshas, especially as the seat of religious acts. (Topographical lists).

CHAP. IV. – Account of kings, divisions, mountains, rivers, and inhabitants of the other Dwipas, viz. Plaksha, S'almala, Kus'a, Krauncha, S'aka, and Pushkara: of the oceans separating them: of the tides: of the confines of the earth: the Lokaloka mountain. Extent of the whole.

CHAP. V. – Of the seven regions of Patala, below the earth. Narada's praises of Patala. Account of the serpent S'esha. First teacher of astronomy and astrology.

CHAP. VI. – Of the different hells, or divisions of Naraka, below Patala: the crimes punished in them respectively: efficacy of expiation: meditation on Vishnu the most effective expiation.

CHAP. VII. – Extent and situation of the seven spheres, viz. earth, sky, planets, Mahar-loka, Jana-loka, Tapo-loka, and Satya-loka. Of the egg of Brahma, and its elementary envelopes. Of the influence of the energy of Vishnu.

CHAP. VIII. – Description of the sun: his chariot; its two axles: his horses. The cities of the regents of the cardinal points. The sun's course: nature of his rays: his path along the ecliptic. Length of day and night. Divisions of time: equinoxes and solstices, months, years, the cyclical Yuga, or age of five years. Northern and southern declinations. Saints on the Lokaloka mountain. Celestial paths of the Pitris, gods, Vishnu. Origin of Ganga, and separation, on the top of Meru, into four great rivers.

CHAP. IX. – Planetary system, under the type of a S'is'umara, or porpoise. The earth nourished by the sun. Of rain whilst the sun shines. Of rain from clouds. Rain the support of vegetation, and thence of animal life. Narayana the support of all beings.

CHAP. X. – Names of the twelve Adityas. Names of the Rishis, Gandharbas, Apsarasas, Yakshas, Uragas, and Rakshasas, who attend the chariot of the sun in each month of the year. Their respective functions.

CHAP. XI. – The sun distinct from, and supreme over, the attendants on his car: identical with the three Vedas and with Vishnu: his functions.

CHAP. XII. – Description of the moon: his chariot, horses, and course: fed by the sun: drained periodically of ambrosia by the progenitors and gods. The chariots and horses of the planets: kept in their orbits by aerial chains attached to Dhruva. Typical members of the planetary porpoise. Vasudeva alone real.

CHAP. XIII. – Legend of Bharata. Bharata abdicates his throne, and becomes an ascetic: cherishes a fawn, and becomes so much attached to it as to neglect his devotions: he dies: his successive births: works in the fields, and is pressed as a palankin-bearer for the Raja of Sauvira: rebuked for his awkwardness: his reply: dialogue between him and the king.

CHAP. XIV. – Dialogue continued. Bharata expounds the nature of existence, the end of life, and the identification of individual with universal spirit.

CHAP. XV. – Bharata relates the story of Ribhu and Nidagha. The latter, the pupil of the former, becomes a prince, and is visited by his preceptor, who explains to him the principles of unity, and departs.

CHAP. XVI. – Ribhu returns to his disciple, and perfects him in divine knowledge. The same recommended to the Raja by Bharata, who thereupon obtains final liberation. Consequences of hearing this legend.

BOOK III.

CHAP. I. – Account of the several Manus and Manwantaras. Swarochisha the second Manu: the divinities, the Indra, the seven Rishis of his period, and his sons. Similar details of Auttami, Tamasa, Raivata, Chakshusha, and Vaivaswata. The forms of Vishnu, as the preserver, in each Manwantara. The meaning of Vishnu.

CHAP. II. – Of the seven future Manus and Manwantaras. Story of Sanjna and Chhaya, wives of the sun. Savarni, son of Chhaya, the eighth Manu. His successors, with the divinities, &c. of their respective periods. Appearance of Vishnu in each of the four Yugas.

CHAP. III. – Division of the Veda into four portions, by a Vyasa, in every Dwapara age. List of the twenty-eight Vyasas of the present Manwantara. Meaning of the word Brahma.

CHAP. IV. – Division of the Veda, in the last Dwapara age, by the Vyasa Krishna Dwaipayana. Paila made reader of the Rich; Vais'ampayana of the Yajush; Jaimini of the Saman; and Sumantu of the Atharvan. Suta appointed to teach the historical poems. Origin of the four parts of the Veda. Sanhitas of the Rig-veda.

CHAP. V. – Divisions of the Yajur-veda. Story of Yajnowalkya: forced to give up what he has learned: picked up by others, forming the Taittiriya-yajush. Yajnowalkya worships the sun, who communicates to him the Vajasaneyi-yajush.

CHAP. VI. – Divisions of the Sama-veda: of the Atharva-veda. Four Pauranik Sanhitas. Names of the eighteen Puranas. Branches of knowledge. Classes of Rishis.

CHAP. VII. – By what means men are exempted from the authority of Yama, as narrated by Bhishma to Nakula. Dialogue between Yama and one of his attendants. Worshippers of Vishnu not subject to Yama. How they are to be known.

CHAP. VIII. – How Vishnu is to be worshipped, as related by Aurva to Sagara. Duties of the four castes, severally and in common: also in time of distress.

CHAP. IX. – Duties of the religious student, householder, hermit, and mendicant.

CHAP. X. – Ceremonies to be observed at the birth and naming of a child. Of marrying, or leading a religious life. Choice of a wife. Different modes of marrying.

CHAP. XI. – Of the Sadacharas, or perpetual obligations of a householder. Daily purifications, ablations, libations, and oblations: hospitality: obsequial rites: ceremonies to be observed at meals, at morning and evening worship, and on going to rest.

CHAP. XII. – Miscellaneous obligations – purificatory, ceremonial, and moral.

CHAP. XIII. – Of S'raddhas, or rites in honour of ancestors, to be performed on occasions of rejoicing. Obsequial ceremonies. Of the Ekoddishtha or monthly S'raddha, and the Sapindana or annual one. By whom to be performed.

CHAP. XIV. – Of occasional S'raddhas, or obsequial ceremonies: when most efficacious, and at what places.

CHAP. XV. – What Brahmans are to be entertained at S'raddhas. Different prayers to be recited. Offerings of food to be presented to deceased ancestors.

CHAP. XVI. – Things proper to be offered as food to deceased ancestors: prohibited things. Circumstances vitiating a S'raddha: how to be avoided. Song of the Pitris, or progenitors, heard by Ikshwaku.

CHAP. XVII. – Of heretics, or those who reject the authority of the Vedas: their origin, as described by Vas'ishtha to Bhishma: the gods, defeated by the Daityas, praise Vishnu: an illusory being, or Buddha, produced from his body.

CHAP. XVIII. – Buddha goes to the earth, and teaches the Daityas to contemn the Vedas: his sceptical doctrines: his prohibition of animal sacrifices. Meaning of the term Bauddha. Jainas and Bauddhas; their tenets. The Daityas lose their power, and are overcome by the gods. Meaning of the term Nagna. Consequences of neglect of duty. Story of S'atadhanu and his wife S'aivya. Communion with heretics to be shunned.

BOOK IV.

CHAP. I. – Dynasties of kings. Origin of the solar dynasty from Brahma. Sons of the Manu Vaivaswata. Transformations of Ila or Sudyumna. Descendants of the sons of Vaivaswat: those of Nedishta. Greatness of Marutta. Kings of Vais'ali. Descendants of S'aryati. Legend of Raivata: iris daughter Revati married to Balarama.

CHAP. II. – Dispersion of Revata's descendants: those of Dhrishta: those of Nabhaga. Birth of Ikshwaku, the son of Vaivaswata: his sons. Line of Vikukshi. Legend of Kakutstha; of Dhundhumara; of Yuvanas'wa; of Mandhatri: his daughters married to Saubhari.

CHAP. III. – Saubhari and his wives adopt an ascetic life. Descendants of Mandhatri. Legend of Narmada and Purukutsa. Legend of Tris'anuku. Bahu driven from his kingdom by the Haihayas and Talajanghas. Birth of Sagara: he conquers the barbarians, imposes upon them distinguishing usages, and excludes them from offerings to fire, and the study of the Vedas.

CHAP. IV. – The progeny of Sagara: their wickedness: he performs an As'wamedha: the horse stolen by Kapila: found by Sagara's sons, who are all destroyed by the sage: the horse recovered by Ans'umat: his descendants. Legend of Mitrasaha or Kalmashapada, the son of Sudasa. Legend of Khatwanga. Birth of Rama and the other sons of Das'aratha. Epitome of the history of Rama: his descendants, and those of his brothers. Line of Kus'a. Vrihadbala, the last, killed in the great war.

CHAP. V. – Kings of Mithila. Legend of Nimi, the son of Ikshwaku. Birth of Janaka. Sacrifice of Siradhwaja. Origin of Sita. Descendants of Kus'adhwaja. Krita the last of the Maithila princes.

CHAP. VI. – Kings of the lunar dynasty. Origin of Soma or the moon: he carries off Tara, the wife of Vrihaspati: war between the gods and Asuras in consequence: appeased by Brahma. Birth of Budha: married to Ila, daughter of Vaivaswata. Legend of his son Pururavas, and the nymph Urvas'i: the former institutes offerings with fire: ascends to the sphere of the Gandharbas,

CHAP. VII. – Sons of Pururavas. Descendants of Amavasu. Indra born as Gadhi. Legend of Richika and Satyavati. Birth of Jamadagni and Vis'wamitra. Paras'urama the son of the former. (Legend of Paras'urama.) Sunahs'ephas and others the sons of Vis'wamitra, forming the Kaus'ika race.

CHAP. VIII. – Sons of Ayus. Line of Kshatravridha, or kings of Kas'i. Former birth of Dhanwantari. Various names of Pratardana. Greatness of Alarka.

CHAP. IX. – Descendants of Raji, son of Ayus: Indra resigns his throne to him: claimed after his death by his sons, who apostatize from the religion of the Vedas, and are destroyed by Indra. Descendants of Pratikshatra, son of Kshatravridha.

CHAP. X. – The sons of Nahusha. The sons of Yayati: he is cursed by S'ukra: wishes his sons to exchange their vigour for his infirmities. Puru alone consents. Yayati restores him his youth: divides the earth amongst his sons, under the supremacy of Puru.

CHAP. XI. – The Yadava race, or descendants of Yadu. Karttavirya obtains a boon from Dattatreya: takes Ravana prisoner: is killed by Paras'urama: his descendants.

CHAP. XIII. – Descendants of Kroshtri. Jyamagha's connubial affection for his wife S'aivya: their descendants kings of Vidarbha and Chedi.

CHAP. XIII. – Sons of Satwata. Bhoja princes of Mrittikavati. Surya the friend of Satrajit: appears to him in a bodily form: gives him the Syamantaka gem: its brilliance and marvellous properties. Satrajit gives it to Prasena, who is killed by a lion: the lion killed by the bear Jambavat. Krishna suspected of killing Prasena, goes to look for him in the forests: traces the bear to his cave: fights with him for the jewel: the contest prolonged: supposed by his companions to be slain: he overthrows Jambavat, and marries his daughter Jambavati: returns with her and the jewel to Dwaraka: restores the jewel to Satrajit, and marries his daughter Satyabhama. Satrajit murdered by S'atadhanwan: avenged by Krishna. Quarrel between Krishna and Balarama. Akrura possessed of the jewel: leaves Dwaraka. Public calamities. Meeting of the Yadavas. Story of Akrura's birth: he is invited to return: accused by Krishna of having the Syamantaka jewel: produces it in full assembly: it remains in his charge: Krishna acquitted of having purloined it.

CHAP. XIV. – Descendants of S'ini, of Anamitra, of S'waphalka and Chitraka, of Andhaka. The children of Devaka and Ugrasena. The descendants of Bhajamana. Children of S'ura: his son Vasudeva: his daughter Pritha married to Pandu: her children, Yudhishtira and his brothers; also Karna by Aditya. The sons of Pandu by Madri. Husbands and children of S'ura's other daughters. Previous births of S'is'upala.

CHAP. XV. – Explanation of the reason why S'is'upala in his previous births as Hiranyakas'ipu and Ravana was not identified with Vishnu on being slain by him, and was so identified when killed as S'is'upala. The wives of Vasudeva: his children: Balarama and Krishna his sons by Devaki: born apparently of Rohini and Yasoda. The wives and children of Krishna. Multitude of the descendants of Yadu.

CHAP. XVI. – Descendants of Turvasu.

CHAP. XVII. – Descendants of Druhyu.

CHAP. XVIII. – Descendants of Anu. Countries and towns named after some of them, as Anga, Banga, and others.

CHAP. XIX. – Descendants of Puru. Birth of Bharata, the son of Dushyanta: his sons killed: adopts Bharadwaja or Vitatha. Hastin, founder of Hastinapur. Sons of Ajamidha, and the races derived from them, as Panchalas, &c. Kripa and Kripa found by S'antanu. Descendants of Riksha, the son of Ajamidha. Kurukshetra named from Kuru. Jarasandha and others, kings of Magadha.

CHAP. XX. – Descendants of Kuru. Devapi abdicates the throne: assumed by Santanu: he is confirmed by the Brahmans: Bhishma his son by Ganga: his other sons. Birth of Dhritarashtra, Pandu, and Vidura. The hundred sons of Dhritarashtra. The five sons of Pandu: married to Draupadi: their posterity. Parikshit, the grandson of Arjuna, the reigning king.

CHAP. XXI. – Future kings. Descendants of Parikshit, ending with Kshemaka.

CHAP. XXII. – Future kings of the family of Ikshwaku, ending with Sumitra.

CHAP. XXIII. – Future kings of Magadha, descendants of Vrihadratha.

CHAP. XXIV. – Future kings of Magadha. Five princes of the line of Pradyota. Ten S'ais'unagas. Nine Nandas. Ten Mauryas. Ten S'ungas. Four Kanwas. Thirty Andhrabhrityas. Kings of various tribes and castes, and periods of their rule. Ascendancy of barbarians. Different races in different regions. Period of universal iniquity and decay. Coming of Vishnu as Kalki. Destruction of the wicked, and restoration of the practices of the Vedas. End of the Kali, and return of the Krita, age.

Duration of the Kali. Verses chanted by Earth, and communicated by Asita to Jamaka. End of the fourth book.

BOOK V.

CHAP. I. – The death of Kansa announced. Earth, oppressed by the Daityas, applies to the gods. They accompany her to Vishnu, who promises to give her relief. Kansa imprisons Vasudeva and Devaki. Vishnu's instructions to Yoganidra.

CHAP. II. – The conception of Devaki: her appearance: she is praised by the gods.

CHAP. III. – Birth of Krishna: conveyed by Vasudeva to Mathura, and exchanged with the newborn daughter of Yas'oda. Kansa attempts to destroy the latter, who becomes Yoganidra..

CHAP. IV. – Kansa addresses his friends, announces their danger, and orders male children to be put to death.

CHAP. V. – Nanda returns with the infants Krishna and Balarama to Gokula. Putana killed by the former. Prayers of Nanda and Yas'oda.

CHAP. VI. – Krishna overturns a waggon: casts down two trees. The Gopas depart to Vrindavana. Sports of the boys. Description of the season of the rains.

CHAP. VII. Krishna combats the serpent Kaliya: alarm of his parents and companions: he overcomes the serpent, and is propitiated by him: commands him to depart from the Yamuna river to the ocean.

CHAP. VIII. – The demon Dhenuka destroyed by Rama.

CHAP. IX. – Sports of the boys in the forest. Pralamba the Asura comes amongst them: is destroyed by Rama, at the command of Krishna.

CHAP. X. – Description of autumn. Krishna dissuades Nanda from worshipping Indra: recommends him and the Gopas to worship cattle and the mountains.

CHAP. XI. – Indra, offended by the loss of his offerings, causes heavy rains to deluge Gokula. Krishna holds up the mountain Govardhana to shelter the cowherds and their cattle.

CHAP. XII. – Indra comes to Gokula: praises Krishna, and makes him prince over the cattle. Krishna promises to befriend Arjuna.

CHAP. XIII. – Krishna praised by the cowherds: his sports with the Gopis: their imitation and love of him. The Rasa dance.

CHAP. XIV, – Krishna kills the demon Arishta, in the form of a bull.

CHAP. XV. – Kansa informed by Narada of the existence of Krishna and Balarama: he sends Kes'in to destroy them, and Akura to bring them to Mathura.

CHAP. XVI. – Kes'in, in the form of a horse, slain by Krishna: he is praised by Narada.

CHAP. XVII. – Akrura's meditation on Krishna: his arrival at Gokula: his delight at seeing Krishna and his brother.

CHAP. XVIII. – Grief of the Gopis on the departure of Krishna and Balarama with Akrura: their leaving Gokula. Akrura bathes in the Yamuna; beholds the divine forms of the two youths, and praises Vishnu.

CHAP. XIX. – Akrura conveys Krishna and Rama near to Mathura, and leaves them: they enter the town. Insolence of Kansa's washerman: Krishna kills him. Civility of a flower-seller: Krishna gives him his benediction.

CHAP. XX. – Krishna and Balarama meet Kubja; she is made straight by the former: they proceed to the palace. Krishna breaks a bow intended for a trial of arms. Kansa's orders to his servants. Public games. Krishna and his brother enter the arena: the former wrestles with Chanura, the latter with Mushtika, the king's wrestlers; who are both killed. Krishna attacks and slays Kansa: he and Balarama do homage to Vasudeva and Devaki: the former praises Krishna.

CHAP. XXI. – Krishna encourages his parents; places Ugrasena on the throne; becomes the pupil of Sandipani, whose son he recovers from the sea: he kills the marine demon Panchajana, and makes a horn of his shell.

CHAP. XXII. – Jarasandha besieges Mathura; is defeated, but repeatedly renews the attack.

CHAP. XXIII. – Birth of Kalayavana: he advances against Mathura. Krishna builds Dwaraka, and sends thither the Yadava tribe: he leads Kalayavana into the cave of Muchukunda: the latter awakes, consumes the Yavana king, and praises Krishna.

CHAP. XXIV. – Muchukunda goes to perform penance. Krishna takes the army and treasures of Kalayavana, and repairs with them to Dwaraka. Balarama visits Vraja: inquiries of its inhabitants after Krishna.

CHAP. XXV. – Balarama finds wine in the hollow of a tree; becomes inebriated; commands the Yamuna to come to him, and on her refusal drags her out of her course: Lakshmi gives him ornaments and a dress: he returns to Dwaraka, and marries Revati.

CHAP. XXVI. – Krishna carries off Rukmini: the princes who come to rescue her repulsed by Balarama. Rukmin overthrown, but spared by Krishna, founds Bhojakata. Pradyumna born of Rukmini.

CHAP. XXVII. – Pradyumna stolen by Sambara; thrown into the sea, and swallowed by a fish; found by Mayadevi: he kills Sambara, marries Mayadevi, and returns with her to Dwaraka. Joy of Rukmini and Krishna.

CHAP. XXVIII. – Wives of Krishna. Pradyumna has Aniruddha: nuptials of the latter. Balarama beat at dice, becomes incensed, and slays Rukmin and others.

CHAP. XXIX. – Indra comes to Dwaraka, and reports to Krishna the tyranny of Naraka. Krishna goes to his city, and puts him to death. Earth gives the earrings of Aditi to Krishna, and praises him. He liberates the princesses made captive by Naraka, sends them to Dwaraka, and goes to Swarga with Satyabhama.

CHAP. XXXI. – Krishna restores her earrings to Aditi, and is praised by her: he visits the gardens of Indra, and at the desire of Satyabhama carries off the Parijata tree. S'achi excites Indra to its rescue. Conflict between the gods and Krishna, who defeats them. Satyabhama derides them. They praise Krishna.

CHAP. XXXI. – Krishna, with Indra's consent, takes the Parijata tree to Dwaraka; marries the princesses rescued from Naraka.

CHAP. XXXII. – Children of Krishna. Usha, the daughter of Bana, sees Aniruddha in a dream, and becomes enamoured of him.

CHAP. XXXIII. – Bana solicits S'iva for war: finds Aniruddha in the palace, and makes him prisoner. Krishna, Balarama, and Pradyumna come to his rescue. S'iva and Skanda aid Bana: the former is disabled; the latter put to flight. Bana encounters Krishna, who cuts off all his arms, and is about to put him to death. S'iva intercedes, and Krishna spares his life. Vishnu and S'iva are the same.

CHAP. XXXIV. – Paundraka, a Vasudeva, assumes the insignia and style of Krishna, supported by the king of Kai. Krishna marches against, and destroys them. The son of the king sends a magical being against Krishna: destroyed by his discus, which also sets Benares on fire, and consumes it and its inhabitants.

CHAP. XXXV. – S'amba carries off the daughter of Duryodhana, but is taken prisoner. Balarama comes to Hastinapur, and demands his liberation: it is refused: in his wrath he drags the city towards him, to throw it into the river. The Kuru chiefs give up S'amba and his wife.

CHAP. XXXVI. – The Asura Dwivida, in the form of an ape, destroyed by Balarama.

CHAP. XXXVII. – Destruction of the Yadavas. S'amba and others deceive and ridicule the Rishis. The former bears an iron pestle: it is broken, and thrown into the sea. The Yadavas go to Prabhasa by desire of Krishna: they quarrel and fight, and all perish. The great serpent S'esha issues from the mouth of Rama. Krishna is shot by a hunter, and again becomes one with universal spirit.

CHAP. XXXVIII. – Arjuna comes to Dwaraka, and burns the dead, and takes away the surviving inhabitants. Commencement of the Kali age. Shepherds and thieves attack Arjuna, and carry off the women and wealth. Arjuna regrets the loss of his prowess to Vyasa; who consoles him, and tells him the story of Ashtavakra's cursing the Apsarasas. Arjuna and his brothers place Parikshit on the throne, and go to the forests. End of the fifth book.

BOOK VI.

CHAP. I. – Of the dissolution of the world: the four ages: the decline of all things, and deterioration of mankind, in the Kali age.

CHAP. II. – Redeeming properties of the Kali age. Devotion to Vishnu sufficient to salvation in that age for all castes and persons.

CHAP. III. – Three different kinds of dissolution. Duration of a Pararddha. The Clepsydra, or vessel for measuring time. The dissolution that occurs at the end of a day of Brahma.

CHAP. IV. – Continuation of the account of the first kind of dissolution. Of the second kind, or elemental dissolution; of all being resolved into primary spirit.

CHAP. V. – The third kind of dissolution, or final liberation from existence. Evils of worldly life. Sufferings in infancy, manhood, old age. Pains of hell. Imperfect felicity of heaven. Exemption from birth desirable by the wise. The nature of spirit or god. Meaning of the terms Bhagavat and Vasudeva.

CHAP. VI. – Means of attaining liberation. Anecdotes of Khandikya and Kes'idhwaja. The former instructs the latter how to atone for permitting the death of a cow. Kes'idhwaja offers him a requital, and he desires to be instructed in spiritual knowledge.

CHAP. VII. – Kes'idhwaja describes the nature of ignorance, and the benefits of the Yoga, or contemplative devotion. Of the novice and the adept in the performance of the Yoga. How it is performed. The first stage, proficiency in acts of restraint and moral duty: the second, particular mode of sitting: the third, Pranayama, modes of breathing: the fourth, Pratyahara, restraint of thought: the fifth, apprehension of spirit: the sixth, retention of the idea. Meditation on the individual and universal forms of Vishnu. Acquirement of knowledge. Final liberation.

CHAP. VIII. – Conclusion of the dialogue between Paras'ara and Maitreya. Recapitulation of the contents of the Vishnu Purana: merit of hearing it: how handed down. Praises of Vishnu. Concluding prayer.