

address is concerned with is that they rescued the Purāṇas from the disrepute in which they were placed and heightened the respect for them.

As a consequence, the study of the Purāṇas has commenced in Europe, and the idea of editing passages on particular subjects has taken root. In 1927, Willibald Kirfel has come out with a stout volume, "Das Purāṇa Pañcalakṣaṇa." He has collected together from various Purāṇas all the passages on the five characteristics of the Purāṇa, viz., creation, details of creation, ages of Manu, dynasties, and biographies of kings. This is a great service, for in it we can at a glance see what the original idea of creation, et cetera, were and how they developed in different ages. It has also served another great purpose. People were all along under the impression that the Purāṇas were concerned with these five subjects with others intruding upon and interpolated into these five subjects. Kirfel shows what an insignificant part these five play in the Purāṇas. They form about 10,000 verses, out of total of 400,000, thus being the one-fortieth part of it. So there are other characteristics of the Purāṇas, which form the bulk of them.

It would be a serious omission, in this connexion, not to mention the name of Rai Sahib Nagen-  
**Rai Sahib Nagen-**dra-nātha Vasu who has taken great  
**dranath Vasu.** interest in the Purāṇas. His article on the Purāṇa in his well-known Bengali Encyclopedia Viśva-koṣa occupies pages 526-719 in vol. XI. He has treated of each Purāṇa, each Upa-purāṇa and each other Purāṇa as far as was possible for him 30 years ago. The contents of each Purāṇa have been noted and he has some remarks to make for each of them. On page 560, he has given the names of 18 Mahā-Purāṇas in a tabular form, the order in which these names have been mentioned in each of the Purāṇas, and their extent in ślokas, wherever found. This tabular statement could be useful to anyone studying the Purāṇas. The description of individual

Purāṇas is preceded by a dissertation on Purāṇa literature in general. The Rai Sahib thinks that the principal Purāṇas were compiled a short time after the Vedic age; but the literature continued to grow up to a very late time. The Purāṇas have undergone various changes in the hands of various sects. The Rai Sahib has included an examination of the Jaina Purāṇas which are only imitations of the Hindu Purāṇas. Some of the Jaina imitations are dated, from which he has attempted to prove the antiquity of the Hindu originals.

Up to very recent times, the Purāṇa scholars had to contend with one great difficulty. They had to study their subjects mostly through manuscripts; and manuscripts are difficult to procure even for collation. But the way shown by the Rev. K. M. Banerjea and by the piety of the Hindu public who used to print the Purāṇas and distribute them to pious Brahmins, led to excellent results. Mandalik from Bombay published the Padma-purāṇa in four volumes. The Ānandāśrama published the Matsya, Brahma and other Purāṇas. The popularity of these works led the Venkateśwar Press, Bombay and the Vaṅgavāsī Press, Calcutta, to publish the entire bulk of the 18 Mahā-purāṇas. People often complain that these editions are worthless. They are more full of errors than even the worst manuscripts. But I think they are useful. In the eighties of the last century, my late lamented friend Dr. Hoernle used to say of these editions that they serve a good purpose by multiplying bad manuscripts. The very multiplication is useful. One can with a few rupees procure any Puranic work and work upon it, instead of waiting till a manuscript is searched for and procured, say, in the course of a year or two. The public, indeed, should be thankful to these two printers for circulating printed editions of all the Purāṇas, the Vaṅgavāsī for Rs. 67 and the Venkateśwar for Rs. 200 only. They serve another purpose. They represent the different provincial recensions and that means collations of different classes of manuscripts. They have made researches