

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

on the Purānas practicable. By a cursory view of the two sets, one can at once come to know that the Mubammadan custom offering "Sirpi" to Satyapīr adopted by the Hindur of Bengal as the worship of Satya-Nārāyaṇa, is to be found in the Revā-khaṇḍa of the Vaṅgavāsī edition, but not in the Venkateśwar edition, that some khaṇḍas of the Purānas are popular in one province and unknown in another and so forth.

With these preliminaries, I now enter into the proper subject
The 18 Maha- of my address. The late lamented
puranas. Mr. Jackson, I.C.S., Bombay, used to say that the Purānas were originally one. His arguments were that the word Purāna is used in singular in some of the Kalpa-sūtras, that the dynastic lists in the Purānas are couched in the same language in every one of them (that shows that they were taken from the same source), that like the Saxon chronicles which changed its character in different monasteries, the Purāna changed its character in different places, different families and in the midst of different sects of different religions. Many of the Purānas also declare that "Purānam ekam eva āsit." The Viṣṇu-purāna says that the Purāna was one. It was taught by Vyāsa to Loma-harṣaṇa who imparted it to six of his students, three of whom wrote three Saṃhitās. So here we get an account of four Purānas. The Vāyu-purāna is lost to all intents and purposes. But the first portion of the second Khaṇḍa of the genuine Vāyu is to be found in the library of the Asiatic Society, Bengal. From that it is apparent that the Purānas at one time were ten, but at the time of writing that book it had grown to 18. In the Garuḍa-purāna we hear that Garuḍa obtained a boon that he should be known as a "Purāna-saṃhitā-kartā," and so the Garuḍa-purāna is independent of other Purānas. Vaśiṣṭha's grandson Parāśara obtained a boon from Pulastya,—the progenitor of the Rākṣasas whom Parāśara determined to extirpate but subsequently desisted owing to Pulastya's intercession,—that he should be celebrated as a "Purāna-saṃhitā-kartā." These show the futility of the theory that all the 18 Purānas proceeded from Vyāsa who, after