

Mahāpurāṇas are classified into different categories—Vaiṣṇava, Brāhma, Śaiva etc. in proportion as they accord preferential treatment to Viṣṇu, Brahmā, Śiva and others⁷. Śivapurāṇa, as its title signifies is a Śaiva Purāṇa. It derives its designation from the fact that it eulogises the glory and greatness of Śiva, describes the ritual and philosophical principles of Śiva cult, embodies descriptions, sermons and dissertations on the greatness of his divinity, recounts his emblems, attributes, exploits and incarnations, narrates legends on the origin and importance of his phallic image and dwells upon the merit of installing and consecrating that image. In brief, Śivapurāṇa is a sacred treatise of Śiva's legends and ritual.

The extant text of Śivapurāṇa is arranged into seven⁸ Saṁhitās designated as Vidyēśvara, Rudra, Śatarudra, Koṭi-rudra, Umā, Kailāsa and Vāyaviya. The second of these, Rudrasaṁhitā, is divided into five sections, viz. Creation, the narrative of Satī, the biography of Pārvatī, the birth and adventures of Kumāra and Śiva's battles. The seventh Saṁhitā—Vāyaviya—has two parts (Pūrvabhāga and Uttarabhāga)⁹. It is called Vāyaviya, for though it was recited by the Sūta at the Naimiṣa forest, it was originally proclaimed by Vāyu at the advent of Śvetakalpa.¹⁰

According to the records of the Vāyaviya, the original Śivapurāṇa consisted of twelve¹¹ Saṁhitās. That is to say, in addition to the extant seven there were five more Saṁhitās viz. Vaināyaka, Mātr, Rudraikādaśa, Sahasrakoṭi and Dharma. The complete group of twelve Saṁhitās comprised one hundred thousand Ślokas.¹² But five of the group were dropped in the course of reconstruction and abridgement of the purāṇas. The extant Śivapurāṇa is an abridged edition and comprises twentyfour thousand Ślokas.¹³ The redaction was made by the sage Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vyāsa¹⁴ himself.¹⁵

7. Skanda, Kedāra 1.

8. Vāyaviya I. 1. 59-60.

9. Ibid. I. 1. 65.

10. Ibid. I. 1. 23.

11. Ibid. I, 1. 50-52.

12. Ibid. I. 1. 57.

13. Ibid. I. 1. 58.

14. Ibid I. 1. 58; yuddha 16. 15.

15. The above records of the Vāyaviya Saṁhitā are found in the