

As previously stated, the Mahāpurāṇas are eighteen¹⁶ in number. The Puranic scholars are agreed upon the authenticity of the seventeen Mahāpurāṇas but in regard to the eighteenth there is a difference of opinion. Most of the Purāṇas¹⁷ include Śivapurāṇa in the list while a few others¹³ substitute Vāyu for Śiva. The substitution of either was inevitable, for the traditional number had to be maintained. Therefore some voted in favour of Śiva, some in favour of Vāyu. Neither of the parties could agree which of the two was actually a Mahāpurāṇa.

Now let us examine if any solution could at all be possible. We know that Śivapurāṇa is divided into seven Saṁhitās, one of which is the Vāyaviya. We have the testimony of Śivapurāṇa itself that the original Śivapurāṇa consisting of one hundred thousand ślokas was abridged into twentyfour thousand ślokas. On the strength of this evidence it cannot be unreasonable to suppose that there was a proto-Śivapurāṇa and a proto-Vāyaviya. It is not unlikely that there was a close affinity between the extant Vāyupurāṇa and the proto-Vāyaviya or that the extant Vāyupurāṇa is a recension of the proto-Vāyaviya and thus a part of Śivapurāṇa itself. Solution lies in assuming identity of the two on the basis of this suggestion, not in accepting the one and rejecting the other.

Śivapurāṇa has all the characteristics of a Mahāpurāṇa. According to the ancients, a Mahāpurāṇa contained five main characteristics¹⁹ that concerned either early religion or traditional history. Of these the origin of the universe (Sarga) is an important feature of every religion. As a Mahāpurāṇa and a sacred work of Śiva cult, Śivapurāṇa possesses this important trait. It discusses the origin of the universe which it traces to Śiva, the eternal god who though devoid of attributes has still an inherent Energy which manifests

Vidyēśvara Saṁhitā also. (VS 2. 49-63). The two accounts are similar and confirm each other.

16. Umā 44-199.

17. Bhāgavata xii. 7. 23 ff; Brahmaparvata III. 133 14 ff; Kūrma I. 1. 13 ff; Liṅga I. 36. 61 ff. Mārkaṇḍeya 137. 18 ff; Padma, I. 62. 2ff. iv. iii. 50 ff; Varāha 112 74 ff; Viṣṇu III. 6. 21 ff.

18. Agni 272. 4ff. Matsya 53. 18; Nārada I. 95.

19. These are Sarga, Pratisarga, Vamśa, Manvantara, and Vamśānu-carita.