

mekhalai. For a Purāṇa to be popularised and expounded, and that too in the Tamil land, it must have taken a considerable time after its composition was made. Therefore, this evidence of Tamil literature may possibly point to a much higher antiquity than the second century A.D. And we are inclined to put it down to a date much earlier than the fourth century B.C. which has been even suggested to some Purāṇas by the late scholar V. A. Smith. (V. A. Smith: *Early History of India*, 4th Edn. pp. 22-24 ; V. R. R. Dikshitar, IHQ, 1931, the *Age of the Vishṇu Purāṇa* ; V. R. R. Dikshitar, the *Age of the Vishṇu Purāṇa* being a paper read at the Indian History Congress, Cuttack, 1949). There are at least four or five Purāṇas which existed some centuries before the Christian era and we have no doubt that one such Purāṇa is the Vishṇu Purāṇa.

THE BHAGAVATA PURANA

Scholars, European and Indian, have now come to believe that the *Muktāphala* was after all a work much dependant upon the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, and in his *Harilila*, Bopadeva has simply indexed the Bhāgavata Purāṇa. It has been admirably pointed by Prof. Winternitz that the Bopadeva theory cannot stand critical examination (*History of Indian Literature*, Vol. I, p. 556). The Śrīmad Bhāgavatam which is undoubtedly a Mahāpurāṇa is commonly regarded as Vaishṇava Purāṇa. No doubt it deals with the *avatārs* of Vishṇu, particularly with the *avatār* of Krishṇa. Be it noted that Krishṇa is a common god even to-day much worshipped by the people. The Śrīmad Bhāgavatam conceives Krishṇa as a Vedic god, and in the Bhāgavata there is also the glorification of Śiva and there is no sectarian animosity towards Śaiva worship.

Most vital to our point is the cult of Sankarshana-Vāsudeva which prevailed from the 6th century B.C. to about the 3rd century A.D. In the religious system of India, Pāṇini and Patañjali referred to Vāsudeva as a divine being glorified by the Sātvatas, one of the Yādava tribes when Śrī