

Though we have been dealing with the Vedic origin of the Purāṇa there are informing stanzas in the Viṣṇu Purāṇa which deal with their origin and evolution. According to this testimony, Vyāsa, the sage, originally compiled what is known as the Purāṇa Samhitā and taught it to his disciple Lomaharshaṇa. He was the Sūta or the professional chronicler. Because he was a Sūta we must not misunderstand that he held an inferior position. Lomaharshaṇa was, on the other hand, a great sage. He had under him six disciples. These were Agnivarcha, Maitreya, Sāmsapāyana, Kāśyapa and Sāvarni. To them he imparted the Purāṇa Samhitā as he heard it from his guru Vyāsa. He and his disciples were then the famous chroniclers of ancient India and their versions were respectfully heard in different learned assemblies, specially called for on the occasion of the performance of great *yajñas* by the reigning monarch of the realm.

In the Agni Purāṇa (Ch. II, 70, vv. 10-13) the same version is told but with a slight variation. This Purāṇa makes Vyāsa imparting the Purāṇa Samhitā to his own six disciples. If we compare the names given here with the names mentioned in the Viṣṇu Purāṇa (Bk. III, ch. 6, vv. 17-19) four names are common. The names given in the Brahmāṇḍa and Vāyu Purāṇas as the disciples of Lomaharshaṇa, also spelt Romaharshaṇa, though slightly different, are common. Among these sages the names of Kāśyapa, Sāvarni and Sāmsapāyana are mentioned as the authors of an independent Purāṇa Samhitā and these three together with Romaharshaṇa composed what is known as the Mūla Samhitā (sometimes Pūrva Samhitā) of the Purāṇa literature. This would demonstrate that this was the first Samhitā or the original Samhitā from which the later Purāṇas developed, adding more information to what already existed. Among these again priority is given to Lomaharshaṇa Samhitā; then came Kāśyapa's, then Sāvarni's and lastly, Sāmsapāyana's. Unfortunately these Purāṇas have been lost to us; but it is said that they con-