

Mauryas. It is familiar with the twin epics the Mahābhārata and Rāmāyaṇa. In some places it seems to refer to the sections in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa. Perhaps the Bhāgavata Purāṇa supplemented what was actually wanting in that Purāṇa.

There is also an interesting reference to Vaikhānasa. It presupposes an elaborate form of image worship and furnishes details as to the architecture of the temples. The Vaikhānasa sūtra is referred to by the Baudhāyana Dharma Śāstra. In the epoch of the Matsya Purāṇa and very much earlier, the Vaikhānasa school had come to stay and the Pāñcharātra was yet a thing of the future. Further the Purāṇa mentions the worship of the moon as an independent deity. It is only from the days of Varāhamihira that the worship of the moon came to be merged as it were in that of the sun. Though we have no temples extant solely dedicated to the moon, traces of ancient modes of worship of that deity still linger in the Tamil land, for instance, the *Piraitoludal* or seeing the moon on the third day after the New Moon. There is also an interesting reference to the use of betel leaves. We need not go into other references but we may safely say that the date of the Matsya Purāṇa is probably to be spread over a number of centuries commencing with the 4th century B.C. and ending with the 3rd century A.D.

Though there are certain data which may bespeak of a higher antiquity, still the language and style of the Purāṇa preclude us from being guided by mere references, some of which might have been accidental. There are no archaic expressions and the Purāṇa indicates that it is far ahead of the Sūtra form of style employed by the authors of the Arthaśāstra and Kāmasūtras. The stanzas are couched in elegant literary style in conformity to the Pāṇinian standard. Though we cannot definitely fix a period for the upper limit of the age of this Purāṇa, still we would not be far wrong if we fix it at the 3rd century B.C. It is quite plausible that