

the six attributes connoted by the term *Bhaga*. In these circumstances we are obliged to think that the imperial Guptas, Smārtas as they were, held as sacred the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam as its tenets appealed to them most. We conclude therefore with Sir Charles Eliot that the Śrīmad Bhāgavata could not belong to the latest class of Purāṇas, for "it seems to contemplate the performance of Smārta rights, not temple ceremonial". (For details, see my article in the Journal of the Madras University, January and July 1949, pp. 87 to 95 on the *Date of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa*.)

#### THEIR HISTORICAL VALUE

To the historian of ancient India, the Purāṇas are an unfailing source of information. They help us to reconstruct the history of Indian culture and civilization. By culture and civilization we mean the history of Indian polity, of Indian society, the history of religion and philosophy, legal history, the history of arts and crafts, architecture and iconography besides royal dynasties and the period of their rule. With regard to the Indian political institutions in the past, there are some valuable chapters in several Purāṇas and particularly in the Matsya Purāṇa. The elective and hereditary character of monarchy, the king's rights and duties, the qualifications of councillors and ministers, systems of taxation, and administration of justice are all found described with a wealth of detail. Some Purāṇas like the Agni Purāṇa furnish material for the construction of fortifications, rules of warfare methods and weapons of war, diplomacy, etc. (See also V. R. R. Dikshitar, on the *Polity of the Purāṇas* in the "Indian Review", 1935, No. 6, Madras).

In the same way a student of sociology will meet with details with regard to movements of people, their manners and customs, and in short their culture. There are materials about the castes and tribes of ancient India, both indigenous and foreign. For example, the Vishṇu Purāṇa speaks of the Kirātas on the eastern boundary of Jambū-