

and greatness are celebrated in the extant work entitled the *Lalitā Sahasranāmam* but this seems to be a composition later than the celebrated Śankara, who is commonly placed in the early years of the eighth century.

There is a well-known tradition that the great Śankarāchārya wrote a commentary on the *Lalitā-Triśatī*. He thus attached a special significance to the worship of *Lalitā* by addressing her with three hundred names of the *Triśatī*. It has since then become a recognised mode of worship of the *Devī* by the orthodox Hindus for the advancement of their moral and material welfare. It would thus seem that the *Lalitā* cult was popular in the days of Śankarāchārya himself. Even *Kālidāsa* who perhaps lived in the 1st century B.C. refers to the worship of *Devī* and though he mentions her by the name *Caṇḍikā*, still he lays emphasis upon the *saumya* form of *Devī* worship. This is perhaps due to the *Lalitā Upākhyānam* of the *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa*. So we have to conclude that whatever be the purpose of the manifestation of *Lalitā*, the *Devī* worship or worship of the world mother (*Jagatām Mātā*) was prevalent from Vedic times, and the *Purāṇa* compiler was particularly interested in narrating the story of *Lalitā* and thus laid stress upon its importance.

According to the *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* the *Lalitā* cult was the most efficacious. The principal centres of *Śakti* worship as referred to in this *Purāṇa* are *Śrinagar*, perhaps in the present *Kashmir* and *Kāncī* in South India. From the foregoing study the conclusion is inevitable that the *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* can come under the category of some of the oldest *Purāṇas*. As the major portions of the *Purāṇa* are indebted to the *Vāyu Purāṇa*, we may safely venture the guess that the *Brahmāṇḍa* may be the immediate successor to the *Vāyu Purāṇa*, and the date for the *Brahmāṇḍa* would almost be the same as that for *Vāyu*. In other words, the composition of this *Purāṇa* may be roughly assigned to about the 4th century B.C. though we cannot be positive