

these so-called heretical sects which was in the Magadha kingdom. In propounding a theory we must take into account the circumstances in which an incident took place and also the place of its occurrence.

The Purāṇas then constitute a work of various periods in succession. For example, one and the same Purāṇa may have spread over a long period of some centuries. The kernel of the Purāṇa may have been born in the earlier times, and its contents could be amplified in the course of the following centuries. Thus we have the Purāṇas belonging to the epoch of the Upanishads, to the Sūtra treatises, to the epics, and to the post-epic periods. Therefore every Purāṇa must be judged by its contents, by its external and internal evidence, and its chronology fixed accordingly. We shall not attempt here at an examination of the date of all the Mahāpurāṇas but we shall confine ourselves to the five Purāṇas indexed in these volumes.

THE VĀYU PURĀNA

We know it as a matter of fact that every Purāṇa furnishes us with a list of the eighteen Mahāpurāṇas. But all such lists are not identical ; they vary slightly from one another. The Vāyu Purāṇa, for example, is omitted in the lists of the Padma Purāṇa, the Viṣṇu Purāṇa, the Bhāgavata Purāṇa and Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa. The lists in the other Purāṇas do not fail to include the Vāyu Purāṇa as a Mahāpurāṇa. Sometimes the Vāyu Purāṇa is identified with Śiva Purāṇa and sometimes with Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa. As many as six Purāṇas have the name of Śivapurāṇa in their lists. But a close examination of the contents of these two Purāṇas shows that Vāyu and Śiva are not identical.

The apparent confusion may be due to the Vāyaviya Samhitā tacked on to the end of the extant Śivapurāṇa. But again there is no similarity between the Vāyaviya Samhitā and the Vāyu Purāṇa. It is reasonable to assume therefore that the Vāyu Purāṇa is an independent Purāṇa and has nothing common whatsoever with the Śiva Purāṇa or its section.