

some of the Purāṇa texts are older ; but we are actually concerned with the probable period during which the Matsya Purāṇa as we know to-day, took its shape.

According to Pargiter "there is an apparent indication that a compilation was begun in the later part of the second century in the Āndhra king, Yajñaśrī's reign, for, five manuscripts of the Matsya Purāṇa speak of him as reigning in his ninth or tenth year". As against this theory two objections can be raised. One is that the reading in one manuscript militates against another. Even granting for the sake of argument, the reading is correct, what answer have we to give for the continuance of the list to the very end of the Āndhra dynasty ? If we have to take as Pargiter would have it, the Purāṇic list must come to an end with Yajñaśrī ; but it is not so. The kings who succeeded Yajñaśrī are correctly and precisely mentioned. It appears more logical and more reasonable that in that century the dynastic portion was brought up-to-date, for, other portions of the Purāṇa bear an air of antiquity about them. On this account we can very well assign to this Purāṇa a place among the oldest of the Purāṇas. If by the term 'oldest' is meant only second century A.D., we are not only prepared to grant it but also to go further back by three or four centuries (See, for details, the *Matsya Purāṇa, a study*, published by the University of Madras, 1935).

THE VISHNU PURANA

This Purāṇa has been credited with a certain amount of antiquity, as being the best conserved of all. According to tradition, it is narrated by sage Parāśara in the reign of Parikshit, king of the Kurus. From Parikshit to Adhisīma-Krishṇa, there may be an intervening period of four generations. If tradition can be believed then we have to take it that the Vishṇu Purāṇa was composed four or five generations before the other Purāṇas came into existence. Pargiter would assign to this Purāṇa a period not earlier than the 5th century A.D. The version in this Purāṇa and the Hari-