

The Composition and Chronicle of the Agni Purāṇa: A Brief Study

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Abstract: *The Purāṇas have obtained an incomparable status in Indian religious literature. As a category of religious literature, the Purāṇas are concerned with the Indian ancient philosophy, sociology, history, politics, religion, and geography. Besides, the Purāṇas have delivered valuable materials for the study of miscellaneous knowledge and ancient wisdom. The Purāṇas are considered to be the post-Vedic literature. Among that Purāṇas the Agni Purāṇa is a vital purāṇa. The Purāṇa has included an eighth place in the list of the Mahāpurāṇa. The Purāṇa is called Tāmasika Purāṇa. The narrator of this Purāṇa is Agni or the fire god himself. Kṛṣṇadvaipāyana Vedavyāsa wrote this Purāṇa. The god Agni delivered the summary of the Purāṇa to the sage Vasistha, who passed on the knowledge to Vedavyāsa. Śuta, the disciple of Vedavyāsa learnt about this Purāṇa from his teacher. There are 383 chapters and about fifteen and half thousand verses in the Agni Purāṇa. In this article, I have discussed briefly about the composition and chronicle of the Agni Purāṇa.*

Keywords: Composition, chronicle, Purāṇa and Agni Purāṇa etc

I. INTRODUCTION

The Purāṇas have obtained an incomparable status in Indian religious literature. As a category of religious literature, the Purāṇas are concerned with the Indian ancient philosophy, sociology, history, politics, religion, and geography. Besides, the Purāṇas have delivered valuable materials for the study of miscellaneous knowledge and ancient wisdom. The Purāṇas are considered to be the post-Vedic literature. These are directly connected with the Vedas and their authority. As a literature of post – Vedic period, the Purāṇas are deeply related to the story of Gods, demi-Gods, Asuras, seers and the kings of the ancient periods. Besides this, it connected with the topics of astrology, medicine, Arts, science, grammar, astronomy, dramaturgy and domicile. As a class of religious literature, the Purāṇas are mainly concerned with the different phases and appearance of Hindu culture and customs like its mythology, sacrifices, theology and pantheology and belief in spiritual energy (God). In short, it can say that the Purāṇas are the storehouse of all events of ancient and medieval Hindu culture and customs, from which Hinduism expanded. The knowledge of ‘Vedārtha’ is found in the Purāṇas. The Purāṇas are vast in size and consist of four lakhs of verses glorifying the Vedic supremacy to establish the perfection of ancient Indian culture and customs.¹

A brief description of Agni Purana:

The Agni Purāṇa is a Mahāpurāṇa. The Purāṇa has included an eighth place in the list of the Mahāpurāṇa. The Purāṇa is called Tāmasika Purāṇa. The narrator of this Purāṇa is Agni or the fire god himself. Kṛṣṇadvaipāyana Vedavyāsa wrote this Purāṇa. The god Agni delivered the summary of the Purāṇa to the sage Vasistha, who passed on the knowledge to Vedavyāsa. Śuta, the disciple of Vedavyāsa learnt about this Purāṇa from his teacher. There are 383 chapters and about fifteen and half thousand verses in the Agni Purāṇa. But the Matsya and the Bhāgavad Purāṇa have uttered that in the Agni Purāṇa there are about fifteen thousand and sixteen thousand verses respectively. The Agni Purāṇa is dealing with a variety of subjects. In early chapters, the description of incarnations has found. While some chapters are concerned with the narration of God Rāma Kṛṣṇa, it follows the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata. Some chapters describe the universe, creation, destruction are the same as in the Viṣṇu Purāṇa. The mahātmyas or the legends of sacred places especially of Bodhgayā are attached to them. Some chapters deal with mysticism, medicine, rhetoric, prosody, grammar and so on. Besides, the geographical records are the same as quoted in the Viṣṇu Purāṇa.²

The composition and chronicle of Agni Purāṇa:

There are no separate sections in the Agni Purāṇa. Three hundred eighty-three Chapters [Adhyāyas] are all that distinct it. Chapter 380, which is one of these chapters, is particularly stimulating. It explains the core of Advaita Brahma gyāna in explanation form. The term "Brahman" refers to the divine spirit, and the term "Brahmagyāna" denotes knowledge of the highest. As we all know, advaita means "non-dual" or "one." AdvaitaBrahmagyāna teachers so teach on the union of the unique human soul with the highest being.

The Agni Purāṇa's portions are little more than a précis of the Vedic and Upaniṣadic teachings. There were boundaries on who could read these sacred scriptures and how difficult they were to comprehend. The Purāṇas, on the other hand, were made simple enough for a commoner to understand. They were available for reading or listening by anyone. So, through this Purāṇa, this ultimate knowledge of "Brahma gyāna" was abridged for the entire public.

In actuality, this Purāṇaincorporates all aspects of life, not just accounts. In this Purāṇa, all of Vishnu's manifestations are pronounced. In addition, there are directions on how to construct palaces and idols, knowledge of astrology and economics, a variety of rites, and in-depth knowledge of medical and veterinary sciences, among other things. Thus, chapters on astrology, architecture, botany, literature, acting, dancing, language, and a condensed version of the Gitā lessons, the Veda, and the Upaniṣads are encompassed.

Most experts agree that this Purāṇa was written between 400 and 1000 AD. However, these Mahāpurāṇas were not written in the same style as modern novels. The Vedas and other sacred texts' explanations, which were written, edited, and organized by a team of scholars led by Vedavyāsa, included their core teachings. As far as we know, the title Vedavyāsa was given to the most eminent scholar of the time. The name Vedavyāsa, which literally translates to "someone who is very well versed with the knowledge of Veda and other scriptures," was given to Krishna Dvaipāyana, an illegitimate son of the sage Parāser andSatyavati, during the Age of Dvāpara.Nevertheless, it is evident that numerous persons contributed to the creation of the Purāṇas over a long period of time, contrary to the widespread notion that Vedavyāsa wrote all of the Mahāpurāṇas. The Purāṇas grew as a result of the stories and other material that each author supplied. It seems reasonable to conclude that the text's later parts may have been added to it recently, perhaps just half a millennium ago, based on the style of the language and narration.

Moreover, the Agni Purāṇahas a comfortable part on Sanskrit literature. In the seventh century, a writer by the name of Daṇḍicreatedworks in Sanskrit. These sections on Sanskrit literature in the Purāṇadetermine knowledge of Daṇḍi's work. In the eleventh century, he lived. No knowledge of the writings of king Bhoja is apparent in the Sanskrit literature. The Agni Purāṇa must have been written somewhere in the ninth century in its final form, though some of its earlier sections may have been written earlier.

A 'Mahāpurāṇa' is necessary to possess five diverse qualities in order to meet the standards established by early Sanskrit scholars. The original foundation of the universe, the cyclic process of creation and destruction, the genealogy, the numerous evas, and the dynastics should all be enclosed. This gives the impression that the Mahāpurāṇa is full with interesting and diverse stories and narratives. The Agni Purāṇa is anconcession to the rule that most of the Purāṇas follow.

In reality, there are very few stories in it, and it is full with ceremonials. Moreover, its chapters are shorter than those in other Purāṇas. Even when the stories are told, they are heavily summarized. Actually, several Purāṇas have their extended forms. For instance, Rama's Incarnation has been extensively studied. But perhaps this is the case because we are well familiar with this manifestation's specifics. This demonstrates that it was a Mahāpurāṇathat was written after other Purāṇas. The same defence is valid when we discover how much has been overlooked regarding the Kauravas and the Pāṇdavvas.

It shows that this Purāṇa was meant to be read in addition to the other, older Purāṇas. The other Purāṇas already enclosed the story, but the ceremonial particulars were absent. Once more, this creates the sense that the rites were given a lot of importance when this Purāṇa was written. The Agni Purāṇaseems to have been written at a time when Sanātan Dharma had evolved into a highly ritualistic system. As a caste, the "Brāhmaṇa" dominates in the Agni Purāṇa considerably more so than in the Purāṇas of later attribution.

The Purāṇas, according to our ancient tradition, must have differentdispositions because they were written during several Kalpas (cycles of time) to meet the demands of the moment. The Agni Purāṇadeliversthe dates of its writings; IshānKalpa, according to legend, is where it is thought to have been composed.

As was already renowned, this Purāṇahighlights ceremonies. This is the best source for you if you're interested in learning about the Hindu Psyche that recognized these practices. Read it in the original to understand everything there is to know about worship performs throughout time, pilgrimage sites, funeral rituals, penance, remedies, omen incarnations, and even grammar rules. The Gāyatri Mantra, which is the most valued mantra for Hindus, is explained upon in greater detail in this Purāṇa than in other Purāṇas.

II. CONCLUSION

From the above discussion we may say that the Agni Purāṇa has played in vital role in Indian history and culture. The Purāṇa describes the various aspects of human learning. Although the Purāṇa is quite small in size, but it has delivered the various information in various field. The knowledge of the Agni Purāṇa is more valuable in present time

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