

verses. The six Khaṇḍas are Sṛṣṭikhāṇḍa, Bhūmikhaṇḍa, Svargakhaṇḍa, Pātālakhaṇḍa, Uttarakhaṇḍa and Kriyāyogasāra. The Uttarakhaṇḍa describes the importance of all months and also the lotus, the seat of Brahmā. This contains the stories of Śakuntalā and Śrī Rāma as described by Kālidāsa in his works Śakuntala and Raghuvamśa which has made some believe that this Purāṇa was written after Kālidāsa. If this Purāṇa is given as gift with a cow in the month of Jyēṣṭha (June) it brings prosperity.

(vi) *Varāha Purāṇa*. The mode of narration is in the form of narrating the story by Varāha, the third incarnation of Viṣṇu. The theme is about holy places and mantras. It states that the goddess of earth prayed to Mahāviṣṇu and that prayer took the form of a goddess. This book contains fourteen thousand verses. If one copies down this Purāṇa and gives it as gift along with a golden image of Garuḍa on the full-moon day in the month of Caitra (April) one will attain Viṣṇuloka.

*B. Purāṇas relating to Brahmā.*

(i) *Brahma Purāṇa*. This is in the form of teachings by Brahmā to Dakṣa. This contains twentyfive thousand verses. This is called Ādi Purāṇa also. There is a special treatise in this book on Orissa, an ancient holy region of Bhārata. There is in this a special annexure explaining the intimacy between Śiva and Sūrya which is a deviation from other Purāṇas. Brahma Purāṇa states about a sūryaksetra (sun-temple) situated at a place called Koṅārka near the holy place of Purī, installed there in the year 1241 A.D. If this Purāṇa along with Jaladhenu is given as a gift on the full-moon day in the month of Vaiśākha (May) the donor will attain heaven.

(ii) *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa*. This deals with the origin of the universe as told by Brahmā. In the beginning there was a golden egg and the prapañca (universe with its activities) was formed out of it. Portions of Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa, references to Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa and the incarnation of Paraśurāma are included in this. This book contains twelve thousand verses and it is believed to be uttama (best) to give this book as a gift to a brahmin.

(iii) *Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa*. This was instructed to Sāvarnika by Nārada. The theme is the story of Rathantara. There are four khaṇḍas in this Purāṇa called Brahmakāṇḍa, Prakṛtikāṇḍa, Gaṇeśakāṇḍa and Kṛṣṇajanmakāṇḍa. This deals with Prapañcasṛṣṭi (creation of the universe). It says that Prapañca is nothing but the Vaivartta (transformation) of Brahman. It is considered to be holy to give this book containing eighteen thousand verses as a gift on the full-moon day in the month of Māgha (February).

(iv) *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*. This is one of the ancient Purāṇas. There are many stories regarding Indra, Sūrya and Agni in this. This includes a division called Devīmāhātmya containing praises about the goddess Durgā. This contains nine thousand verses and it is considered as uttama (best) to give this book as a gift to a brahmin on a full-moon day in the month of Kārttika (November).

(v) *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa*. This is what is told to Manu by Sūrya (Sun). This contains statements about future events. The book praises the worship of Sūrya (Sun), Agni (fire) and Nāga (serpent). There is an annexure dealing with the several holy places of Bhārata and the

rights of pilgrims. The book contains fourteen thousand verses and it is considered to be uttama (best) to give this book along with treacle as a gift to a brahmin on the full-moon day in the month of Pauṣa (January).

(vi) *Vāmana Purāṇa*. There is a great similarity between the contents of this Purāṇa and that of Varāha Purāṇa. All the incarnations of Viṣṇu from Vāmana downwards are described in this Purāṇa. The scene of Śiva marrying Pārvatī is vividly described in this book. This Purāṇa contains ten thousand verses and it is considered to be uttama (best) to give this book as a gift in the autumn season or at the time of Viṣuva to a brahmin.

*C. Purāṇas relating to Śiva.*

(i) *Vāyu Purāṇa*. This Purāṇa is told by Vāyu. Bāṇabhaṭṭa who lived in the seventh century A.D. makes references to this Purāṇa in his works. There are many references in this Purāṇa about the Gupta Kings who ruled Bhārata in the 4th century A.D. So it is believed that this Purāṇa must have been written in the fifth or sixth century A.D. The book contains plenty of verses in praise of Śiva. There are fourteen thousand verses in the Vāyu Purāṇa and it is considered to be best to give this book as a gift to a brahmin on the full-moon day in the month of Śrāvāṇa (August).

(ii) *Līṅga Purāṇa*. This contains instructions of Śiva on Dharma sitting in the form of līṅga (Phallus). The twentyeight different forms of Śiva are described in this. This contains twelve thousand verses and if this book is given as a gift to a brahmin with tiladhenu on the full-moon day in the month of Phālguna (March) the donor will attain Śivasāyujya.

(iii) *Skānda Purāṇa*. This Purāṇa is narrated by Skanda. The theme is the slaughter of the demon Tārakāsura by Skanda (Subrahmaṇya). There is a great similarity between this Purāṇa and the Kumārasambhava of Kālidāsa. There are eightyfour thousand verses in this Purāṇa and giving this book as a gift is thought to be good.

(iv) *Agni Purāṇa*. This Purāṇa was instructed to the sage Vasīṣṭha by Agnideva. There are several references in this to Sivalīṅga and Durgādevī. The incarnations of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa are also dealt with in this. Distinct from other Purāṇas this book deals with arts and science like Kavyālaṅkāranāṭakas (Poems, dramas, figures of speech), Jyotiśśāstra (Astronomy) and Śilpakaḷā (architecture). This Purāṇa contains twelve thousand verses and is capable of imparting knowledge on all arts and sciences.

(v) *Matsya Purāṇa*. This Purāṇa was taught to Manu by Matsya, the incarnation of Viṣṇu. The incarnation of Matsya is dealt in this. Several subjects like Jainamata (religion of Jainism), Buddhamata (Buddhism), Nāṭyaśāstra (histrionics) and Āndhrarājavamśa (kingdom and Kings of Āndhra) are discussed in this book. The book contains thirteen thousand verses and this is to be given as gift along with a golden image of a fish at the time of Viṣuva.

(vi) *Kūrma Purāṇa*. This Purāṇa is taught by Kūrmamūrti (incarnation of Viṣṇu as Kūrma (tortoise) while narrating the story of Indradyumna at Pātāla. All the seven islands and seven oceans are described in this book. Bhārata is situated in the centre of all these and is called Jambūdvīpa. Though it is believed that there were four saṁhitās for this, only the Brāhmasaṁhitā is available now. It includes Ivaragītā and Vyāsagītā.