

pendent form and their compositions were generally familiar with the literary people of the land, though not with the masses. It took some more time before they were familiarised among the masses, and the latter took any interest in them. A reference in the Atharvaveda Samhitā from the verse addressed to the sage Nārada is evidently taken from some Purāṇa. But we cannot determine the name of the Purāṇa which was given to Nārada. But we can confidently assert that some Purāṇas were in existence.

The same inference can be drawn from the use of the term in the Upanishads. That a definite work is meant is seen from the seventh book of the Chāndogya Upanishad where Nārada explicitly says that he had mastered the Itihāsa and Purāṇa (VII.1.2 and 4). When we come to the epoch of Sūtra literature we find reference to the contents of the Purāṇas profusely quoted. The Āpastamba Dharma Sūtra for example, definitely mentions that the quotation was taken from the Bhavishyat Purāṇa. The Purāṇas are again mentioned by name in the Mahābhārata (I.5.55 ff.) both in their special and general sense. In a later book of the epic (Bk. XVIII) there is a definite mention of the Purāṇic literature as a class, and the names of eighteen Purāṇas as handed down by tradition.

Further among the particular class of literature prescribed for a prince as an important branch of study, Kauṭalya, who belongs to the fourth century B.C., mentions the Purāṇa in his epoch-making book, the Arthaśāstra. If we go further and examine literature by Amarasimha, one of the ancient lexicographers, he mentions Purāṇas and gives pañchalakṣhaṇa as the attributes to a Purāṇa treatise. Thus it is evident that the Purāṇas have become popular even in times before Amarasimha. It was honestly felt that it will take more than a life time to study the Vedic literature and as a result this Vedic literature was the monopoly of the few. But the masses hankered after some religious literature which would give them the old legends and tales and