

speaks of almost of all deities. For example, in the so-called Śaiva Purāṇa, we come across legends of Viṣṇu, Brahmā and other gods together with their heroic exploits. This can be seen from the Vāyu Purāṇa itself. In the same way, in the so-called Vaishṇava Purāṇa, the legends of Śiva and other deities largely figure. Some Purāṇas extol the legendary exploits of a particular deity, and thus seem to inculcate preferential worship to that deity. From this we cannot rush to the conclusion that that Purāṇa is exclusively Śaiva or Vaishṇava. Though a particular deity is extolled, it cannot be said that the other deities were ignored or condemned. One interesting point about these Purāṇas is that every Purāṇa specifies the number eighteen together with their names. If it is really sectarian, it will not make mention of other sectarian Purāṇas.

It is difficult to ascertain the time and the occasion when these eighteen Purāṇas were moulded into their present shape. It does not stand to reason that all the Purāṇas were composed at one and same time and afforded the occasion to the compiler of each Purāṇa to mention the names of the eighteen. The eighteen versions seem to have been the result of their version in different parts of the land. We would be lacking in historical sense, if we say, that all these Purāṇas were confined to a certain locality like the Naimiśhāraṇya. At the most the then busy centres of religious activity were perhaps the locale of the Purāṇa compilations. The chief places of pilgrimage were often thronged by a large number of people from all parts of India, and were the best venue for the propagation of this literature. From the detailed glorification of certain places, we may venture to conjecture that the particular version of the Purāṇa sprang up in that centre. A Purāṇa that deals with the Gayā mähātmya in extenso may be reasonably taken to have been compiled in the city of Gayā or its environs. In that way we must look for the compilation of this or that version of a particular Purāṇa in one locality or other.