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# CLASSICAL DICTIONARY

OF

## HINDU MYTHOLOGY AND RELIGION, GEOGRAPHY, HISTORY, AND LITERATURE.

*Purana* \* *Kurman Pose*  
*Vedalar alindig*  
*gere Puramalar da*  
BY *almman geyelur*

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PURĀNA.

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PURĀNA. 'Old,' hence an ancient legend or tale of olden times. The Purānas succeed the Itihāsas or epic poems, but at a considerable distance of time, and must be distinguished from them. The epics treat of the legendary actions of heroes as mortal men, the Purānas celebrate the powers and works of positive gods, and represent a later and more extravagant development of Hinduism, of which they are in fact the Scriptures. The definition of a Purāna by Amara Sinha, an ancient Sanskrit lexicographer, is a work "which has five distinguishing topics:— (1.) The creation of the universe; (2.) Its destruction and renovation; (3.) The genealogy of gods and patriarchs; (4.) The reigns of the Manus, forming the periods called Manwantaras. (5.) The history of the Solar and Lunar races of kings." These are the Pancha-lakshanas or distinguishing marks, but no one of the Purānas answers exactly to the description; some show a partial conformity with it, others depart from it very widely. The Vishnu Purāna is the one which best accords with the title. Wilson says, "A very great portion of the contents of many is genuine and old. The sectarian interpolation or embellishment is always sufficiently palpable to be set aside without injury to the more authentic and primitive material; and the Purānas, although they belong especially to that stage of the Hindu religion in which faith in some one divinity was the prevailing principle, are also a valuable record of the form of Hindu belief which came next in order to that of the Vedas, which grafted hero-worship upon the simpler ritual of the latter, and which had been adopted, and was extensively, perhaps universally, established in India at the time of the Greek invasion." According to the same authority, Pantheism "is one of their invariable characteristics," and underlies their whole teaching, "although the particular divinity who is all things, from whom all things proceed, and to whom all things return, is diversified according to their individual sectarian bias." The Purānas are all written in verse, and their invariable form is that of a dialogue between an exponent and an inquirer, interspersed with the dialogues and observations of other individuals. Thus Pulaṣṭya received the Vishnu Purāna from Brahmā; he made it known to Parāśara, and Parāśara narrated it to his disciple Maitreya. The Purānas are eighteen in number, and in addition to these there are eighteen Upa Purānas or subordinate works. The Purānas are