

# PURANAS

## What is Puranas & How Many Puranas are There?

Puranas (Sanskrit: पुराण Purāṇa, "of ancient times") is a Sanskrit word. It means "ancient" or "old." Puranas are considered one of the most ancient Indian literature about Hinduism. In fact, the Puranas are post-Vedic Texts and are regarded as the fifth Veda.

The Puranas contain a vivid description of the history of the Universe from creation to destruction. It describes Hindu cosmology and geography. It contains narratives of heroes and demigods and even the genealogies of the kings. In fact, the first Purana was compiled between the 3rd and 10th centuries C.E.

By far the most famous Purana stands to be the *Bhagavata Purana* which narrates the childhood and early life of Lord Krishna, the eighth incarnation of Hindu God, [Lord Vishnu](#). The Bhagavata Purana preaches the practice of Bhakti Yoga. In fact, the Puranas contain a wealth of information on yogic practices as well as different branches of spiritual practice. There are as many as 18 main Puranas and 18 minor Puranas (known as Upa puranas). Together they contain over 400,000 verses (slokas).

## Are Vedas Authentic Scripts of Sanatana Dharma, and Ithihas-Puranas not?

There are **four** types of **Vedas** – Rigveda, Samaveda, Yajurveda, and Atharvaveda. One of the best sources of Ancient Indian History is **Vedic** literature.

## Is Puranas part of Vedas?

The Puranas are regarded as post-Vedic texts. They were composed much later than the Vedas which are believed to have been composed about 1500 BC.

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**Yajurveda:** It is also called the book of prayers

**Rig Veda:** It is the earliest form of Veda

**Samaveda:** The earliest reference for singing

**Atharvaveda:** The book of magic and charms

Each of them are broken into 4 parts

**Samhita:** The Mantra text of each veda called samhita.

**Brahmanas:** They are the prose texts that explain the hymns in the Vedas and are also the classification of Sanskrit texts that are embedded within each Veda, incorporating myths and legends to explain and instruct Brahmins on the performance of Vedic rituals.

### Aranyaka's:

- These are called Forest Books
- Sacrificial rituals are interpreted by Aranyakas in a symbolic and philosophical way.

### Upanishads:

- There are 108 Upanishads
- Out of 108 Upanishads, 13 are considered the major ones.

- The concepts of 'Atman' and 'Brahman' are majorly explained by Upanishads
- **Shruti Literature** – The word 'Shruti' from the term 'Shruti Literature' means 'to hear' and describes the sacred texts which comprise of Vedas, Brahmanas, Aranyakas, & Upanishads. Shruti Literature is canonical, consisting of revelation and unquestionable truth, and is considered eternal.
- **Smriti Literature** – Whereas, the word 'Smriti' literally means to be remembered and which is supplementary and may change over time. Smriti Literature is the entire body of the post-Vedic Classical Sanskrit literature and consists of Vedanga, Shad darsana, Puranas, Itihasa, Upveda, Tantras, Agamas, Upangas.
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### **The Division of Puranas**

The 18 main Puranas have been divided into three categories and have been named after the Deity: Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva.

सात्त्विकेषु पुराणेषु माहात्म्यमधिकं हरेः  
राजसेषु च माहात्म्यमधिकं ब्रह्मणो विदुः ६८

तद्वदग्रेश्च माहात्म्यं तामसेषु शिवस्य च संकीर्णेषु  
सरस्वत्याः पितृणां च निगद्यते ६९ (Mats. Pura. 53.68-69)<sup>[2]</sup>

### **Out of the 18 main Puranas:**

- Six are Sattvic or Vaishnava Puranas which glorify Lord Vishnu
- Six are Rajasic or Brahma Puranas which glorify Lord Brahma
- The remaining (Six) are Tamasic or Shiva Puranas and glorify Lord Shiva.

### **The Vaishnava Puranas include:**

- Vishnu Purana
- Narada Purana
- Vamana Purana
- Mathsyas Purana
- Garuda Purana
- Srimad Bhagavata Purana

### **The Brahma Puranas include:**

- Brahma Purana
- Bhavishya Purana
- Agni Purana
- Brahmavaivarta Purana
- Brahmanda Purana
- Padma Purana

### **The Shiva Puranas include:**

- Shiva Purana
- Linga Purana
- Kurma Purana
- Markandeya Purana
- Skanda Purana
- Varaha Purana

### **In fact, it is believed that there were approximately 64 Puranas:**

- 18 Maha Purana
- 18 Primary Upa Puranas
- And the rest secondary Upa Puranas.

The *Upapuranas* are eighteen in number, with disagreement as to which canonical titles belong in that list of eighteen.

They include among –

1. Sanat-kumara
2. [Narasimha](#)
3. Brihan-naradiya
4. Siva-rahasya
5. Durvasa
6. [Kapila](#)
7. Vamana
8. Bhargava
9. Varuna
10. [Kalika](#)
11. [Samba](#)
12. Nandi
13. Surya
14. Parasara
15. Vasishtha
16. [Ganesha](#)
17. [Mudgala](#)
18. Hamsa.

## **What Does Puranas Contain?**

Typically, Puranas cover five major topics.

These are:

- Cosmogony
- Cosmology
- Cosmic cycles

- Genealogy of the Gods, Sages, and Kings
- Legends during the time of various Kings

However, some other Puranas (such as the Bhagavata Purana) contain five more characteristics thereby making a list of 10.

These include:

- Tales about Gods - Ishanukatha
- Karmic links that exist between the Deities, Sages, Kings and living beings - Utaya
- Spiritual Liberation or Moksha - Mukti:
- Finale or cessation - Nirodha
- Refuge - Ashraya

Several Puranas, such as the Matsya Purana, Devi Bhagavata Purana list "five characteristics" or "five signs" of a Purana. These are called the *Pancha Lakshana* (*pañcalakṣaṇa*), and are topics covered by a Purana:

These are:

- **Sarga** – It describes the creation of the Universe
- **Pratisarga** – the cyclical process where destruction and creation occur repeatedly
- **Manvantara** – It describes the various eras, cosmic cycles, history of the world during the time of one patriarch
- **Vamsa** – It gives the histories of dynasties such as the solar and lunar

- **Vamsanucharita** – the royal lineage, including the Suryavamshi and Chandravamshi kings.

## The Purpose of Puranas

In their perpetual struggle of existence, human beings have forgotten their relationship with God and are overly attached to material sense gratification from time immemorial.

Religious literature such as Vedas and Puranas attempt to bring human beings closer to God and re-establish their forgotten relation with God.

Puranas offer shelter to people who seek to conquer the darkest region of material existence. It is said that one who has experienced the nectar of its "Rasa" never desires anything else.

Shrimad Bhagavata Purana teaches nine primary forms of bhakti:

- Śravaṇa (It refers to the "listening" of the scriptural stories of Krishna and his companions)
- Kirtana (praising the Lord, usually refers to ecstatic group singing)
- Smarana (remembering Lord Vishnu)
- Pāda-sevana (rendering service)
- Archana (worshipping an image of Lord Vishnu)
- Vandana (paying homage)
- Dāsya (servitude)
- Sākhyā (friendship)
- Atma-nivedana (complete surrender of the self)

So, the Bhagavatam contains the essence of all Vedanta philosophy as it is related to the Absolute Truth.

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## Interesting Facts About Puranas

All the Puranas are related to the class of Suhrit-Sammitas or the Friendly Treatises. The Puranas belong to the class of Itihasas (the Ramayana and the Mahabharata).

The Puranas endeavor to bring people closer to the Gods.

It should be appreciated that the Puranas tell the Supreme Truth to one and all in a very simple manner.

All the Puranas are dedicated to certain deities.

In the *Linga Purana*, you get a description of Yama (disciplines), Niyama (virtues), and Pranayama (breathing techniques).



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## **Is Mahabharata a Purana?**

Mahabharata can rightly be considered a bridge between Vedic and Puranic cultures. However, scholars attribute that Mahabharata is still more Puranic.

Most importantly, Mahabharata is a history-based mythological, religious scripture. In Vedas, you don't find any history. It's all about philosophy. So, Mahabharata is not related to Vedas at all.

Mahabharata is closer to Puranas. It has Puranic Myths, and so it falls in the Puranic category.

## **How many Upanishads are there in total?**

There are in all 251 Upanishads whose text has been found.

However, in print, there are 108 of them. The concept of Brahman and Atman are the central ideas in all of the Upanishads.

Here, we have shown a list of some of the most popular Upanishads:

- Isha Upanishad
- Kena Upanishad
- Katha Upanishad

- Prashna Upanishad
- Mundaka Upanishad
- Mandukya Upanishad
- Taittiriya Upanishad
- Aitareya Upanishad
- Chandogya Upanishad
- Brihadaranyaka Upanishad

**Puranas are surely a treasure and valuable source of information in the Hindu religion. They are easy to follow and very interesting indeed.**

**We hope that you would like to begin your religious journey with one of the Puranas.**

**स्वस्ति प्रजाभ्यः परिपालयन्तां न्यायेन मार्गेण महीं  
महीशाः। गोब्राह्मणेभ्यः शुभमस्तु नित्यं लोकाः समस्ताः सुखिनो  
भवन्तु।**

