

Puranic Search: An Instant Search System for Puranas

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Abstract

Purana is a huge genre of Indian literature about a wide range of topics, particularly myths, legends and other traditional wisdom. It is also source of the science and technology of ancient India. *Puranas* are primarily written in Sanskrit language. The *Puranas* genre of literature is found in both Hinduism and Jainism. *Puranas* includes diverse topics such as cosmogony, cosmology, genealogies of gods, goddesses, kings, heroes, sages, and demigods, folk tales, pilgrimages, temples, medicine, astronomy, grammar, mineralogy, humor, love stories, as well as theology and philosophy. This paper describe a web based information extraction tools from the Puranic texts. Data of the 18 *Puranas* has been collected and digitalized in Devanagari script. Major goal of the paper is to introduce a search engine called *Pauraic Search*.

Keywords: Information Retrieval, Sanskrit Search, Purana, Online Indexing

1. Introduction

The word *Puranas* literally means ancient or old (Webster, 1955 and Oliver, 2006). *Puranas* like Vedic *Samhitas* and Epics form the compendium of fourfold vision of human existence. It was primarily composed in Sanskrit and later translated in various regional languages (Doniger, 1993). *Purana* is define as '*Puranam Pancalakshanam*' it is the correct pre-requisite superimpose on them (Sharma, 2003).

सर्गश्च प्रतिसर्गश्च वंशो मन्वंतराणि च ।

वंशानुचरितं चैव पुराणं पंचलक्षणम् ॥

Every *Purana* fundamentally deals with topics normally coming within the fold of these five *lakshanas*, viz. creation, dissolution and re-creation, genealogy of gods, sages etc., periods called *Manvantaras* and description of Royal dynasties. But this treatment is quite

unique in unraveling the social, political, historical, ethical, linguistic, etymological and allied subjects. This fundamentally forms the basis of Ancient Indian legendary lore and chronicles though anachronism and affords opportunity to make a probe by a comparative study to expose the factual happenings (Webster, 1955, Doniger, 1993 and Oliver, 2006).

S.No.	Purana name	Verses number
1	Agni	15,400 verses
2	Bhagavata	18,000 verses
3	Brahma	10,000 verses
4	Brahmanda	12,000 verses
5	Brahmavaivarta	17,000 verses
6	Garuda	19,000 verses
7	Kurma	17,000 verses
8	Linga	11,000 verses
9	Markandeya	9,000 verses
10	Matsya	14,000 verses
11	Narada	25,000 verses
12	Padma	55,000 verses
13	Shiva	24,000 verses
14	Skanda	81,100 verses
15	Vamana	10,000 verses
16	Varaha	24,000 verses
17	Vayu	24,000 verses
18	Vishnu	23,000 verses

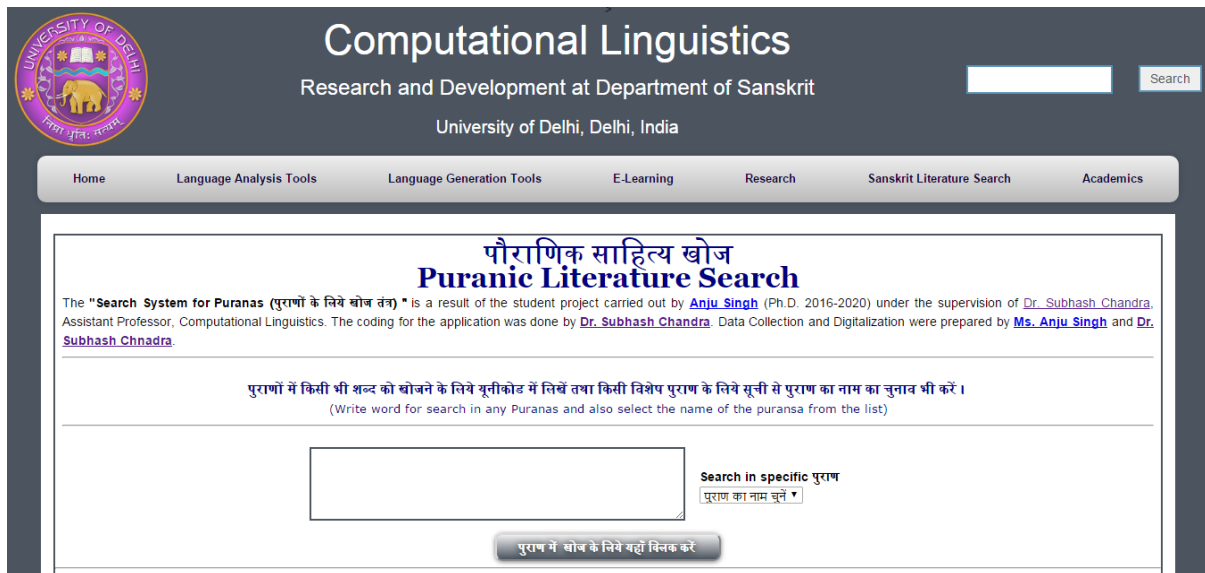
Table 1: Puranas Verses Data

Indeed, the *Purana* is a distinct branch of learning. It is treated as one of the *Vidyas* like the Samkhya and the Vedanta, it has its distinct theory of cosmology. Moreover and besides the Five times (*Sarga-Pratisarga* etc.) mythology is also the special feature of *Puranas*. Cosmology and Mythology are the two main subjects of *Purana-vidya*. Just as the Puranic cosmology can be best understood in the light of the knowledge of cosmology of

various philosophical systems of India, in the same way that Puranic mythology can best be understood in the light of the knowledge of the comparative mythology.

2. Importance of Puranas

Puranas have contributed significantly in the all-round development of human life. They are the symbols of national, social and cultural awareness. They are true inspirational force behind human spirit. They are equally beneficial for both our life in this world and the other worlds (after the death), like *Vedas*, *shrutis*, *Smrtis*, the importance of Puranas has been maintained till date. Since Puranas are shadow of Vedas, the deep knowledge of Vedas is very simply and smartly illustrated in the Puranas. The conclusion is that without the study of Puranas, knowledge of ancient Indian wisdom is incomplete.



The screenshot displays the user interface of the 'Puranic Literature Search' application. At the top, there is a header for the 'University of Delhi, Delhi, India' with the title 'Computational Linguistics' and 'Research and Development at Department of Sanskrit'. Below this is a navigation bar with links: Home, Language Analysis Tools, Language Generation Tools, E-Learning, Research, Sanskrit Literature Search, and Academics. The main content area features the title 'पौराणिक साहित्य खोज' (Puranic Literature Search) in Hindi and English. A paragraph in Hindi describes the project as a student project supervised by Dr. Subhash Chandra. Below this is a search instruction in Hindi: 'पुराणों में किसी भी शब्द को खोजने के लिये सूचीकोड में लिखें तथा किसी विशेष पुराण के लिये सूची से पुराण का नाम का चुनाव भी करें।' (Write word for search in any Puranas and also select the name of the purana from the list). There is a large text input field for the search term and a dropdown menu labeled 'Search in specific पुराण' (Search in specific Purana) with a list of Puranas. A button at the bottom says 'पुराण में खोज के लिये यहाँ क्लिक करें' (Click here to search in Purana).

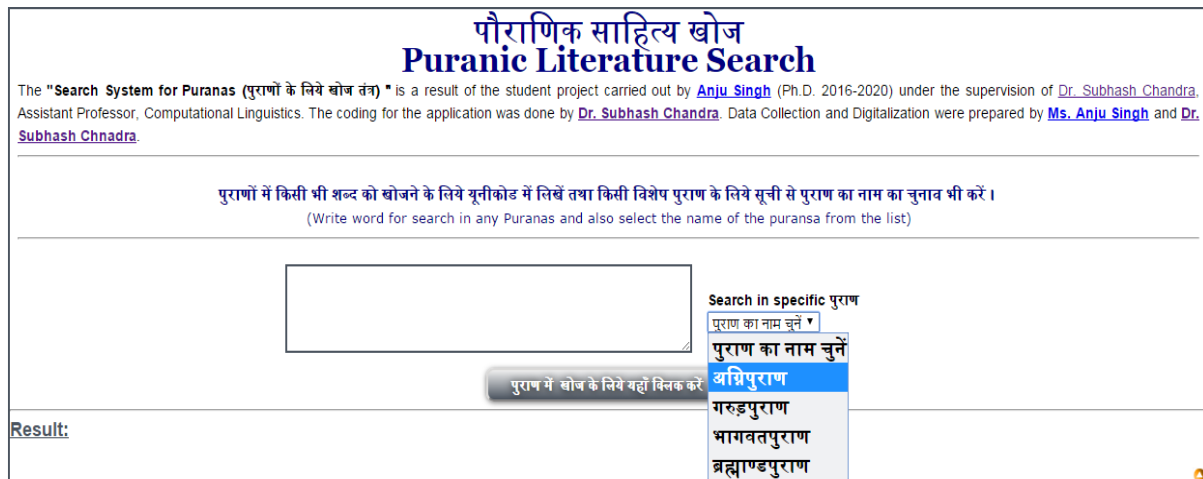
Figure 1: User Interface

There are 18 Mahapuranas (Great Puranas) and 18 Upapuranas (Minor Puranas) (Dimmitt, 2012 and Hazra, 1958), with over 400,000 verses (Leaman, 2006). The first versions of the various Puranas were likely composed between the 3rd and 10th century (Collins, 1988).

The most important Mahapuranas or the major Puranas are said to be eighteen in number, divided into three groups of six, though they are not always counted in the same way (Mani, 1975 Ali, 1966 and Parmeshwaranand, 2001).

3. Features of Puranic Search System

Puranic Literature Search is an online search system for Puranas is developed by the Computational linguistics, department of Sanskrit University of Delhi. User can search any word available in any *Puranas* and get complete reference of that word. Data of the Puranas are stored in a database with complete detail in UTF-8 format in Devanagari script.



पौराणिक साहित्य खोज
Puranic Literature Search

The "Search System for Puranas (पुराणों के लिये खोज तंत्र)" is a result of the student project carried out by [Anju Singh](#) (Ph.D. 2016-2020) under the supervision of [Dr. Subhash Chandra](#), Assistant Professor, Computational Linguistics. The coding for the application was done by [Dr. Subhash Chandra](#). Data Collection and Digitalization were prepared by [Ms. Anju Singh](#) and [Dr. Subhash Chandra](#).

पुराणों में किसी भी शब्द को खोजने के लिये यहाँ क्लिक करें तथा किसी विशेष पुराण के लिये सूची से पुराण का नाम चुनाव भी करें।
(Write word for search in any Puranas and also select the name of the purana from the list)

Search in specific पुराण
पुराण का नाम चुनें
पुराण का नाम चुनें
अग्निपुराण
गरुडपुराण
भागवतपुराण
ब्रह्माण्डपुराण

पुराण में खोज के लिये यहाँ क्लिक करें

Result:

Figure 2: Drop Down List

3.1 Components of the Pauranic Search and their Role in Searching

Pauranic Search system takes help of few components. The components are User Interface, Preprocessor, Purana Indexer and Output Generator. User shown in figure 1 gives input through User Interface and then interface send input to Preprocessor module for validation of the string after validation input goes to the Purana Indexer for searching in the Purana database. This component searches input word in the Purana database one by one. If user doesn't select any specific Purana name from the list shown on the User Interface as shown in figure 2 then input searches in all Puranas otherwise searches in only specific Purana. After searching complete information related to the input word goes to the Output Generator and output generator format the result and display the result on the User Interface page.

3.2 Searching Methodology

Currently system accepts input through text area in UTF-8 format in Devanagari script. User can type searching string/word in the text area then click on the button below.

After clicking on the button system send the request to the search engine for searching in the Purana database. Searching methods can be understood through Figure 3:

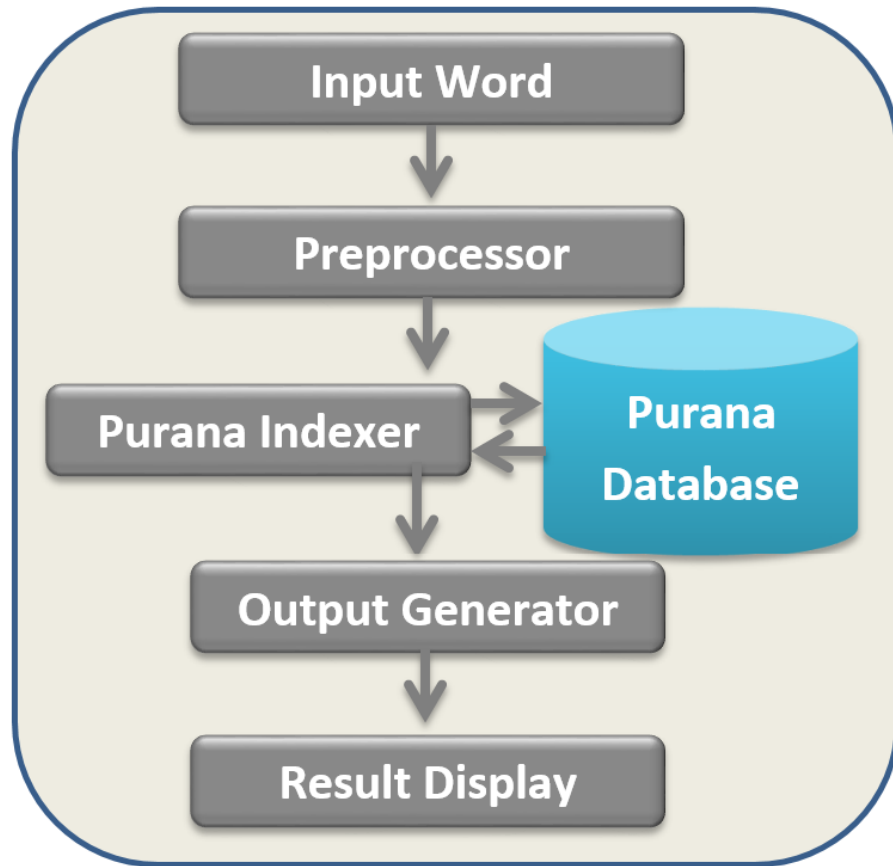


Figure 3: Flow Chart of the System

4. Conclusion and Future Direction

Puranic search system is very useful system for researcher for immediate reference search. Currently this system is under development and contains only Agni, Garuna (Bhattacharya, 1964), Bhagavat Purana. The data is stored in UTF-8 Devanagari format. In future, it is planned to digitalize all 18 Puranas. The input input/output methods of system will be made multilingual (Punjabi, Sanskrit, English, Bangla, Telugu, Tamil etc.) in near future because Sanskrit teach in various language medium in India.

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