CHAPTER 53

Descriptions of Purāṇas and merit of making the gift of a Purāṇa

The Rṣis said—O Sūta! Be pleased to describe to us the number of the Purāṇas in due order and in detail and also about the giving of gifts and charity (Dāna Dharma).

Sūta said—I shall tell you exactly what the Universal Soul, the ancient Male Lord, said to the King Vaivasvata Manu.

Lord said to Manu! Brahmā remembered in the beginning first the Purāṇas among all the Śāstras. So Purāṇas are the first among the Śāstras. Afterwards, Brahmā uttered out the four Vedas from His four mouths.

There was only one Purāṇa in the beginning of the Kalpa. It was alone the means of the accomplishment of the three ends of man (Dharma, Artha and Kāma). And it was the only holy book consisting of thousand millions of stanzas.

When all the regions perished by fire at the Great Dissolution, then I recited the four Vedas, with their six Āṅgas as well as the Purāṇas, the manifold Nyāyas, the Mīmāṃsā and the Dharmasastra. In the beginning of the new age, I immersed myself in the furious waters, at the time of dissolution of the universe and explained them fully to Brahmā, Who in His turn revealed them to the Devas and the sages, after which they spread all over the world. Therefore, the Purāṇas became the source of all other Śāstras. Later on, seeing the neglect of the Purāṇa under the changed circumstances, I repromulgated them in every yuga, through my partial incarnation of Vyāsa. In every Dwāpara yuga, I compiled the Purāṇas to the extent of four lacs of ślokas, and spread them in the world after dividing them into eighteen. Even now the bulk of the Purāṇa extends to a hundred crore verses in the Deva loka. On the universe, however, its bulk is abridged only to 4 lakhs of ślokas, and is divided into eighteen Purāṇas.

नामस्तन्त्रां कष्ट्यां शृणुण्यं मुनिसंगमः।
ब्रह्मणं भधिं पूर्वं यात्रां श्रवणीयं।२१।
Sūta said—Hear, O Rṣis! The names of the different eighteen Purāṇas. I shall enumerate them to you, as they were described to Marici by Brahmā.

The Brahma Purāṇa. Brahma Purāṇa contains 13,000 ślokas. One who writes and gives it away in charity, along with a cow and water, in the month of Vaisākha on the full-moon day, passes his days in Brahmaloka, in happiness.

The Padma Purāṇa. At the time when this universe came out of the cosmic waters, in the beginning of the Lotus Kalpa, and in the form of a golden lotus, then the Padma Purāṇa was revealed, describing that creation, and it is called Padma Purāṇa by the wise. And it consists of 55,000 ślokas.

One who gives away Padma Purāṇa in charity, along with a golden lotus and sesameum, in the month of Jyeṣṭha, gets the benefit of performing an aśvamedha sacrifice.

The Viṣṇu Purāṇa. Similarly, the rules of virtue laid down by Parāśara, for the period when there was the Varāha incarnation of Viṣṇu, in the beginning of Varāha Kalpa, form the Viṣṇu Purāṇa.

The Vāyu Purāṇa. The rules of virtue laid down by Vāyu, along with the glory of Rudra, in the Śveta-kalpa, is known as Vāyavīya Purāṇa. It contains 24,000 ślokas.

One who gives it away in charity, along with a cow, jaggery and an ox, to a Brahmāna, whose family is large, on the 15th day of light half of the month of Śrāvaṇa, attains the region of Śiva and resides there for a Kalpa.

The Bhāgavata Purāṇa. The Purāṇa which begins with the description of the sacred Gāyatrī worship, and goes on to mention various Dharmas and which contains a narration of the destruction of the demon Vṛtrasura as well as an account of the famous men who flourished in the Sārasvata Kalpa, is known as Bhāgavata. One who writes Bhāgavata and gives it away in charity, along with a golden lion, on the full-moon day, in the month of
Bhādrapada, attains final emancipation. It contains 18,000 ṣlokas.

चतुर्दश नारदे वर्षोबारसस्मानितयम च।
पञ्चायक्तसहस्राणि नारदीयं तदुच्छः॥२३॥
आशिने पञ्चदश्यं तु दशादेशुसम्मितम्।
परम निदिष्टाचेनु पुरानांविनिर्लुभः॥२४॥

The Nāradya Purāṇa. The Nāradya Purāṇa, containing 25,000 ṣlokas is that in which Nārada has described the Br̄hatakalpa and the Dharmas of the Br̄hatkalpa. One who gives away this Purāṇa in charity, on the full-moon day of Āsvin, along with a cow, attains bliss, and is liberated from the cycles of birth.

यज्ञाधिकृता शाकुनीयमानोपालितयाः।
व्यायामः वै वृद्धिमयो वृद्धिर्मयार्थविविधाः।॥२५॥
मार्कौंडेनेन कवितं पत्त्वम् विस्तरोवः।
पुराणं नवसाहसं मार्कौंडेयमहिमोच्छः॥२६॥

The Mārkandeya Purāṇa. The Purāṇa which begins with the story of the birds solving the difficulty of Dharma and Adharma and which the pious sages explain in answer to the question of the sage (Jaimini), which has been described at great length by the sage Mārkandeya, at the request of the Rṣis, and which contains 9,000 couplets, is known as Mārkandeya Purāṇa.

प्रतिनिधषं च यो दशात्वैर्गर्भोपायसिकसंबतः।
कावित्यां पुंडरिकस्य चतुर्मय विलपाभवेत॥२७॥

One who writes this Purāṇa and gives it away in charity, along with a golden elephant, on the full-moon day, in the month of Kārttika, attains the benefit of performing Puṇḍarīka sacrifice.

बच्चीशाशसं कल्यं वृत्तात्मधिकृत्य च।
वस्मितायामन्न्वः प्रोक्तमामेणं तत्संक्षैल॥२८॥

The Agni Purāṇa. The Purāṇa, which commences with the description of the Īśāna Kalpa, and which was a path of virtue revealed to Agni by Vasiṣṭha, is known as the Āgneya Purāṇa, and contains 16,000 ṣlokas.

लिखितव तत्त् यो दशात्वैर्गर्भोपायसिकसंबतः।
मार्कौंडेनानि तिलकेऽपरमिता।॥२९॥

One who writes this Purāṇa and gives it away in charity, along with a golden lotus, a cow and sesamum, on the full-moon day, in Mārgaśīrṣa, attains the benefit of performing 16,000 sacrifices.

तत्त् यो दशात्वैर्गर्भोपायसिकसंबतः।
वः प्रदीर्घः सोंसं यस्मातो महीयते॥३०॥
यज्ञाधिकृता महात्मयमार्गितवाच्यै चतुर्मयः।
अधोरक्षात्ति वातावात्स्रवस्य जातास्तिनितम्।॥३१॥
चतुर्मयः सहस्राणि तया पद्म महात्मिन च।
भविष्यचतुत्राणि भविष्यं दिनित्याति॥३२॥

The Bhaviṣya Purāṇa. The Purāṇa in which Brahmā has described the history of Aghorakalpa, the glory of the Sun, the existence of the Universe, the characteristics of the aggregate multitude to Manu, is known as the Bhaviṣya Purāṇa, and contains 14,500 ṣlokas.

तयोऽभिसं यो दशात्वैर्गर्भोपायसिकसंबतः।
गुडकुम्भसमानतिनिदोऽत्मित्वेत्॥३३॥

One who gives away this Purāṇa in charity, free from the feeling of jealousy, on the full-moon day of Pauṣa, along with a pitcher of raw sugar, attains the benefit of performing the Agniṣṭoma sacrifice.

ख्यातस्य कल्यं वृत्तात्मधिकृत्य च।
सारवार्णो नारायणः क्रस्तात्मधिकृत्यैः॥३४॥
यत्र ब्रह्मवाहस्य चोदनं चं चित्तं मुदः।
तदस्यान्तरसाहसं ब्रह्मवैवर्तचुतः॥३५॥

The Brahmaivaivarta Purāṇa. The Purāṇa which commences with the description of Rathantara Kalpa, and in which Sāvarṇi Manu has described to Nārada the glory of Kṛṣṇa and the history of the Rathantara Kalpa, and in which there is also a constant allusion to
Brahmavarāha, is known as Brahmvaaivarta Purāṇa and contains 18,000 ślokas.

पुराणं भ्रामवैरत्नं यो दक्षार्णाञ्चारसि च।
पौराणिकं शुष्कं श्रवणरक्तं महाशयं।| 13.61

One who gives away this Brahmvaaivarta Purāṇa in charity to a Brāhmaṇa, on an auspicious day, in the month of Māgha, on the full-moon day, goes and enjoys in the region of Brahmā.

येन्नमित्वमययः प्रह देवो महेष्वरः।
वर्त्तमानान्यसंकल्पमानान्यसंकल्पम्।| 13.77

The Liṅga Purāṇa. The Purāṇa in which Śiva explained the virtues of Agni and the four Vargas, viz., Dharma, Artha, Kāma and Mokṣa, by manifesting Himself through the pillar of fire, which commences with the description of Āgneya Kalpa, and which was uttered by Brahmā Himself, is styled Liṅga Purāṇa and it contains 11,000 ślokas. One who gives away this Purāṇa, along with sesamum and cow in charity, on the full-moon day, in the month of Phālguna, attains the form of and similarity with Śiva.

कल्पानं तेऽप्रतिष्ठितमपन्नं पुराणं भ्रामणं स्वयम्।
तददयोऽविकारं फलाधम्य यः प्रभच्छितः।| 13.88

The Varāha Purāṇa. The Purāṇa in which Viṣṇu has described the glories of the Great Boar to the goddess Earth, and which was recited in connection with the Mānava Kalpa, is known as the Varāha Purāṇa, and contains 24,000 stanzas.

महावराणं प्रसिद्धं कल्पस्य मुनिस्तोतः।
चतुष्क्रियाशस्वित्तत्त्वपुराणायहमहोरतः।| 14.01

One who gives away this Purāṇa in charity, along with a golden eagle (Garuḍa), cow and sesamum, on the full-moon day, in the month of Caitra, to a Brāhmaṇa with a large family, reaches the region of Viṣṇu by the favour of Varāha.

कालं गर्भं कृतं तिलभेतोर्मचितम।
पौराणमाक्षिपन् दक्षार्णाञ्चारसि च।| 14.11

The Skanda Purāṇa. The Purāṇa in which the six-faced Kārtika has expressed the virtues of high-class men and also about the worship of Mahādeva, is known as Skanda Purāṇa. It commences with the description of the Māheṣvara Dharmas, as found in the Satpuruṣa Kalpa, and contains 81,100 ślokas in this mortal region.

परिलिख्य चो दक्षार्णाञ्चारसिः सम्प्रमुखितम।
शैवं पदार्थाय गीतं मोरे चोकाराते रक्षोः।| 14.41

One who gives away this Purāṇa, along with a golden trident, after writing it out at the time of the Sun being in the 12th sign of the Zodiac (Pisces), goes to the region of Śiva.

तिल्लिमस्य महावराणं विकारं च।
तिल्लिमयायात्तच्य वायुपरिकर्तितम।| 14.51

The Vāmana Purāṇa. The Purāṇa in which the four-faced Brahmā has related the glories of Trivikrama and which describes the three Vargas also to the Devas, after declaring the glory of Vāmana, is known as the Vāmana Purāṇa, and contains 10,000 ślokas. It describes the Kalpa, and is auspicious. Following Kūrma Kalpa, one who gives it away in charity, after writing it out neatly in the autumnal equinox, goes to the region of Viṣṇu.

वामाणं दक्षार्णाञ्च विवर्णकल्पानुभायं रक्षात्।
श्रीकृष्णवं दक्षार्णाञ्च विवर्णकल्पानुभायं।| 14.61
giving in gift the entire earth.

The Kûrma Purân. The Purâna in which Viśnu has dwelt on the glories of the four Vargas (Dharma, Artha, Kâma and Mokṣa) in the form of a Kûrma, in the Rasâtala regions, before the sages, in connection with the story of Indrayumna, where Indra was also present, through his companion Indrayumna, is known as Kûrma Purâna, and is related to Lakshmi Kalpa. It contains 18,000 slokas.

The Garuda Purâna. The Purâna in which Kṛṣṇa has described the birth of Garuda out of the cosmic egg, in the Garuda Kalpa, is known as Garuda Purâna, and contains 18,000 slokas. One who gives away this Purâna in charity, along with a golden flamingo, attains a place in the region of Śiva, endowed with highest perfection.

The Brahmana Purâna. The Purâna commencing with the glory of the cosmic egg, and in which Brahmâ has described the future Kalpas as well as the history of the Universe to the Devas, is known as the Brahmana Purâna, and contains 12,200 slokas.

One who gives this Purâna away in charity, along with a golden fish and a cow, at the time of the summer solstice,\(^1\) acquires the benefit of

\(^1\) The first point of Aries or Libra into which the sun enters at the vernal or autumnal equinox, the equinoctial point. विनुभाय - the shadow of the sun at noon. विनुभाय - the day of the equinox.

\(^1\) विनुभाय - the equinoctial line विनुभाय - the sun's equinoctial passage, V.S. Apte, pp. 524-525, MW p. 998.