

THE VIṢṆU-PURĀṆAM

BOOK I

प्रथमांशः

CHAPTER 1

॥ प्रथमोऽध्यायः ॥

(मङ्गलाचरणम्, पराशरं प्रति मैत्रेयस्य प्रश्नः,
पराशरस्योत्तरदानञ्च)

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय।

जितं ते पुण्डरीकाक्ष नमस्ते विश्वभावन।

नमस्तेऽस्तु हृषीकेश महापुरुष पूर्वज॥ १॥

OM ! glory to Vāsudeva¹— Victory be to you, Puṇḍarikākṣa, adoration be to you, Viśvabhāvana; glory be to you, Hṛṣīkeśa, Mahāpuruṣa, and Pūrvaja².

सदक्षरं ब्रह्म य ईश्वरः पुमान्

गुणोर्मिसृष्टि-स्थिति-काल-संलयः।

प्रधान-बुद्ध्यादि-जगत्-प्रपञ्च सूः

स नोऽस्तु विष्णुर्मति-भूति-मुक्तिदः॥ २॥

May that Viṣṇu, who is the existent, imperishable, Brahmā, who is Íśvara,³ who is spirit;⁴ who with the three qualities⁵ is the cause of creation, preservation, and destruction; who is the parent of nature, intellect, and the other ingredients of the universe⁶; be to us the bestrew of understanding, wealth and final emancipation.

प्रणम्य विष्णुं विश्वेशं ब्रह्मादीन् प्रणिपत्य च।

गुरुं प्रणम्य वक्ष्यामि पुराणं वेदसम्मितम्॥ ३॥

इतिहासपुराणज्ञं वेदवेदाङ्गपारगम्।

धर्मशास्त्रादितत्त्वज्ञं वसिष्ठतनयात्मजम्॥ ४॥

पराशरं मुनिवरं कृतपूर्वाह्निकक्रियम्।

मैत्रेयः परिप्रच्छ प्रणिपत्याभिवाद्य च॥ ५॥

Having adored Viṣṇu⁷, the lord of all, and paid reverence to Brahmā and the rest⁸; having also saluted the spiritual preceptor, I will narrate a Purāṇa equal in sanctity to the Vedas, Maitreya,¹⁰ having saluted him reverentially,

thus addressed Parāśara, the excellent sage, the grandson of Vasiṣṭha, who was versed in traditional history and the Purāṇas; who was acquainted with the Vedas and the branches of science dependent upon them; and skilled in law and philosophy; and who had performed the morning rites of devotion.

मैत्रेय उवाच

त्वत्तो हि वेदाध्ययनमधीतमखिलं गुरो।

धर्मशास्त्राणि सर्वाणि वेदाङ्गानि यथाक्रमम्॥ ६॥

त्वत्प्रसादान्मुनिश्रेष्ठ मामन्ये नाकृतश्रमम्।

वक्ष्यन्ते सर्वशास्त्रेषु प्रायशो येऽपि विद्विषः॥ ७॥

सोऽहमिच्छामि धर्मज्ञः श्रोतुं त्वत्तो यथा जगत्।

बभूव भूयश्च यथा महाभाग भविष्यति॥ ८॥

यन्मयञ्च जगद् ब्रह्मन् यतश्चैतद्यराचरम्।

लीनमासीद् यथा यत्र लयमेष्यति यत्र च॥ ९॥

यत्प्रमाणानि भूतानि देवादीनाञ्च सम्भवम्।

समुद्र-पर्वतानां च संस्थानञ्च तथा भुवः॥ १०॥

सूर्यादीनाञ्च संस्थानं प्रमाणं मुनिसत्तम।

Maitreya said— Master! I have been instructed by you in the whole of the Vedas, and in the institutes of law and of sacred science; through your favour, other men, even though they be my foes, cannot accuse me of having been remiss in the acquirement of knowledge. I am now desirous, oh you who are profound in piety! to hear from you, how this world was, and how in future it will be? What is its substance, oh Brahman, and whence proceeded animate and inanimate things? Into what has it been resolved, and into what will its dissolution again occur? How were the elements manifested? Whence proceeded the gods and other beings? What are the situation and extent of the oceans and the mountains, the earth, the sun, and the planets?

देवादीनां तथा वंशान् मनून् मन्वन्तराणि च॥ ११॥
 कल्पान् कल्पविकल्पांश्च चतुर्युगविकल्पितान्।
 कल्पान्तस्य स्वरूपञ्च युगधर्माश्च कृत्स्नशः॥ १२॥
 देवर्षिपार्थिवानाञ्च चरितं यन्महामुने।
 वेदशाखाप्रणयनं यथावद् व्यासकर्तृकम्॥ १३॥
 धर्माश्च ब्राह्मणादीनां तथा चाश्रमवासिनाम्।
 श्रोतुमिच्छाम्यहं सर्वं त्वत्तो वाशिष्ठनन्दन॥ १४॥
 ब्रह्मन् प्रसादप्रवणं कुरुव मयि मानसम्।
 येनाहमेतज्जानीयां त्वत्प्रसादान्महामुने॥ १५॥

What are the families of the gods and others, the Manus, the period, called Manvantaras, those termed Kalpas, and their sub-divisions, and the four ages: the events that happen at the close of a Kalpa, and the terminations of the several ages¹¹: the histories, oh great Muni of the gods, the sages, and kings; and how the Vedas were divided into branches (or schools), after they had been arranged by Vyāsa; the duties of the Brāhmaṇas, and the other tribes, as well as of those who pass through the different orders of life ? All these things I wish to hear from you, grandson of Vasiṣṭha. Incline your thoughts benevolently towards me, that I may, through your favour, be informed of all I desire to know.

पराशर उवाच

साधु मैत्रेय धर्मज्ञ स्मारितोऽस्मि पुरातनम्।
 पितुः पिता मे भगवान् वसिष्ठो यदुवाच ह॥ १६॥
 विश्वामित्रप्रयुक्तेन रक्षता भक्षितो मया।
 श्रुतस्तातस्ततः क्रोधो मैत्रेयासीन्मातुलः॥ १७॥
 ततोऽहं रक्षसां सत्रं विनाशाय समारभम्।
 भस्मीकृताश्च शतशस्तस्मिन् सत्रे निशाचराः॥ १८॥
 ततः संक्षीयमाणेषु तेषु रक्षः स्वशेषतः।
 मामुवाच महाभागो वसिष्ठो मत्पितामहः॥ १९॥
 अलमत्यन्तकोपेन तात मन्युमिमं जहि।
 राक्षसा नापराध्यन्ते पितुस्ते विहितं तथा॥ २०॥
 मूढानामेष भवति क्रोधो ज्ञानवतां कुतः।
 हन्यते तात कः केन यतः स्वकृतभुक् पुमान्॥ २१॥

संचितस्यापि महतो वत्स क्लेशेन मानवैः।
 यशसस्तपसश्चैव क्रोधो नाशकरः परः॥ २२॥
 स्वर्गापवर्गव्यासेधकारणं परमर्षयः।
 वर्जयन्ति सदा क्रोधं तात मा तद्वशो भव॥ २३॥
 अलं निशाचरैर्दग्धैर्दैनैरनपकारिभिः।
 सत्रं ते विरमत्वेतत् क्षमासारा हि साधवः॥ २४॥

Parāśara replied— Well inquired, pious Maitreya, You recall to my recollection that which was of old narrated by my father's father, Vasiṣṭha, I had heard that my father had been devoured by a Rākṣasa employed by Viśvāmitra: violent anger seized me, and I commenced a sacrifice for the destruction of the Rākṣasas: hundreds of them were reduced to ashes by the rite, when, as they- were about to be entirely extirpated, my grandfather Vasiṣṭha thus spoke to me: Enough, my child; let your wrath be appeased : the Rākṣasas are not culpable: your father's death was the work of destiny. Anger is the passion of fools; it becomes not a wise man. By whom. It may be asked, is any one killed? Every man reaps the consequences of his own acts. Anger, my son, is the destruction of all that man obtains by arduous exertions, of fame, and of devout austerities; and prevents the attainment of heaven or of emancipation. The chief sages always shun wrath: be not you, my child, subject to its influence. Let no more of these unoffending spirits of darkness be consumed. Mercy is the might of the righteous¹²

एवं तातेन तेनाहमनुनीतो महात्मना।
 उपसंहृतवान् सत्रं सद्यस्तद्वाक्यगौरवात्॥ २५॥
 ततः प्रीतः स भगवान् वसिष्ठो मुनिसत्तमः।
 सम्प्राप्तश्च तदा पुत्र पुलस्त्यो ब्रह्मणः सुतः॥ २६॥
 पितामहेन दत्तार्घ्यः कृतासनपरिग्रहः।
 मामुवाच महाभागो मैत्रेय पुलहाग्रजः॥ २७॥
 वीरे महति यद्वाक्याद् गुरोरस्याश्रिता क्षमा।
 त्वया तस्मात्समस्तानि भवान् शास्त्राणि वेत्स्यति॥ २८॥
 सन्ततेर्न ममोच्छेदः क्रुद्धेनापि यतः कृतः।
 त्वया तस्मान्महाभाग ददाम्यन्यं महावरम्॥ २९॥

पुराणसंहिताकर्ता भवान् वत्स भविष्यति।
 देवतापारमार्थञ्च यथावद् वेत्स्यते भवान्॥३०॥
 प्रवृत्ते च निवृत्ते च कर्मण्यस्तमला मतिः।
 मत्प्रसादादसन्दिग्धा तव वत्स भविष्यति॥३१॥
 ततश्च भगवान् प्राह वसिष्ठो मत्पितामहः।
 पुलस्त्येन यदुक्तं ते सर्वमेतद् भविष्यति॥३२॥

Being thus admonished by my venerable grandsire, I immediately desisted from the rite, in obedience to his injunctions, and Vasiṣṭha, the most excellent of sages, was connect with me. Then arrived Pulastya, the son of Brahmā,¹³ who was received by my grandfather with the customary marks of respect. The illustrious brother of Pulaha said to me: Since, in the violence of animosity, you have listened to the words of your progenitor, and have exercised clemency, therefore you shall become learned in every science: since you have forborne, even though incensed, to destroy my posterity, I will bestow upon you another boon, and you shall become the author of a summary of the Purāṇas;¹⁴ you shall know the true nature of the deities, as it really is; and, whether engaged in religious rites, or abstaining from their performance,¹⁵ your understanding, through my favour, shall be perfect, and exempt from doubts. Then my grandsire Vasiṣṭha added: Whatever has been said to you by Pulastya, shall assuredly come to pass.

इति पूर्वं वसिष्ठेन पुलस्त्येन च धीमता।
 यदुक्तं तत् स्मृतिं यातं त्वत्तत्प्रश्नाखिलं मम॥३३॥
 सोऽहं वदाम्यशेषं ते मैत्रेय परिपृच्छते।
 पुराणसंहितां सम्यक् तां निबोध यथायथम्॥३४॥
 विष्णोः सकाशात् सम्भूतं जगत् तत्रैव संस्थितम्।
 स्थिति-संयमकर्त्ताऽसौ जगतोऽस्य जगद्य सः॥३५॥
 इति श्रीविष्णुपुराणे प्रथमांशे प्रथमोऽध्यायः॥१॥

Now truly all that was told me formerly by Vasiṣṭha, and by the wise Pulastya, has been brought to my recollection by your questions, and I will relate to you the whole, even all you have asked. Listen to the complete

compendium of the Purāṇas, according to its tenor. The world was produced from Viṣṇu : it exists in him: he is the cause of its continuance and cessation: he is the world.¹⁶

NOTES

1. ओम् नमो वासुदेवाय An address of this kind, to one or other Hindu divinity, usually introduces Sanskrit compositions, especially those considered sacred. The first term of this mantra or brief prayer. Om or Ōmkāra, is well known as a combination of letters invested by Hindu mysticism with peculiar sanctity. In the Vedas it is said to comprehend all the gods; and in the Purāṇas it is directed to be prefixed to all such formulae as that of the text. Thus in the Uttara Khaṇḍa of the Padma Purāṇa: 'The syllable Om, the mysterious name, or Brahmā, is the leader of all prayers: let it therefore, O lovely-faced, (Śiva addresses Durgā.) be employed in the beginning of all prayers:' ओङ्कारः प्रणवो ब्रह्म सर्वमन्त्रेषु नायकः। आदौ सर्वत्र युञ्जीत मन्त्राणां च शुभानने॥ According to the same authority, one of the mystical imports of the term is the collective enunciation of Viṣṇu expressed by A, of Śrī his bride intimated by u, and of their joint worshipper designated by M. A whole chapter of the Vāyu Purāṇa is devoted to this term. A text of the Vedas is there cited: ओमित्येकाक्षरं ब्रह्म। 'Om. the monosyllable Brahmā;' the latter meaning either the Supreme Being or the Vedas collectively, of which this monosyllable is the type. It is also said to typify the three spheres of the world, the three holy fires, the three steps of Viṣṇu etc. ओमित्येव त्रयो वेदास्त्रयो लोकास्त्रयोऽग्नयः। विष्णुक्रमास्त्वेते॥ Frequent meditation upon it, and repetition of it, ensure release from worldly existence, इत्येतदक्षरं ब्रह्म परमोकारसंहितम्। यस्तु वेदयते सम्यक् तथाध्यायति वा पुनः॥ संसारचक्रमुत्सृज्य मुक्तवचनबन्धनः। अचलं निर्गुणं स्थानं शिवं प्राप्नोत्यसंशयः॥ See also Manu, II. 76. Vāsudeva, a name of Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa, is according to its grammatical etymology, a patronymic derivative implying son of Vāsudeva. The Vaiṣṇava Purāṇas, however, devise other explanations: see the next chapter, and again, b. VI. c. 5.

2. In this stanza occurs a series of the appellations of Viṣṇu: I. Puṇḍarikākṣa, having eyes like a lotus, or heart-pervading; or Pundarika is explained supreme glory, and Akṣa imperishable:

the first is the most usual etymon, 2. Viśvabhāvana, the creator of the universe, or the cause of the existence of all things. 3. Hṛshikeśa, lord of the senses. 4. Māhapuruṣa, great or supreme spirit; puruṣa meaning that which abides or is quiescent in body (puri sete). 5. Purvaja, produced or appearing before creation; the Orphic 'πρωτοῦ σπινος'. In the fifth book, c. 18, Viṣṇu is described by five appellations, which are considered analogous to these; or, 1. Bhūtātmā, one with created things, or Puṇḍarikākṣa; 2. Pradhānātmā, one with crude nature, or Viśvabhāvana : 3. Indriyātmā, one with the senses, or Hṛshikeśa : 4. Paramātmā, supreme spirit, or Māhapuruṣa : and Ātmā, soul; living soul, animating nature and existing before it, or Pūrvaja.

3. Brahmā, in the neuter form, is abstract supreme spirit: and Íśvara is the Deity in his active nature, he who is able to do or leave undone, or to do any thing in any other manner than that in which it is done: कर्तुमकर्तुमन्यथा कर्तुं समर्थः।

4. Pumān which is the same with Puruṣa, incorporated spirit. By this and the two preceding terms also the commentator understands the text to signify that Viṣṇu is any form of spiritual being that is acknowledged by different philosophical systems, or that he is the Brahmā of the Vedānta, the Íśvara of the Pātañjala, and the Puruṣa of the Sāṃkhya school.

5. The three qualities, to which we shall have further occasion to advert, are Satya (सत्यं), goodness or purity, knowledge, quiescence; Rajas, foulness, passion, activity; and Tamas, darkness, ignorance, inertia.

6. Pradhanabuddhyādisūh. This predicate of the Deity distinguishes most of the Purāṇas from several of the philosophical systems, which maintain, as did the earliest Grecian systems of cosmogony, the eternal and independent existence of the first principle of things, as nature, matter, or chaos. Accordingly, the commentator notices the objection. Pradhāna being without beginning, it is said how can Viṣṇu be its parent? To which he replies, that this is not so, for in a period of worldly destruction (Pralaya), when the Creator desists from creating, nothing is generated by virtue of any other energy or parent. Or, if this be not satisfactory, then the text may be understood to imply that intellect (Buddhi) etc, are formed

through the materiality of crude nature, or Pradhāna.

7. Viṣṇu is commonly derived in the Purāṇas from the root Vis, to enter, entering into, or pervading the universe, agreeably to the text of the Vedas, तत्सृष्ट्वा तदेवानुप्रविशति। "Having created that (world), he then afterwards enters into it; being, as our comment observes, undistinguished by place, time, or property; देशकालस्वरूपतो व्यवच्छेदाभावात्। According to the Matsya Purāṇa the name alludes to his entering into the mundane egg: according to the Pādma Purāṇa, to his entering into or combining with Prakṛti, as Puruṣa or spirit: स एव भगवान् विष्णु प्रकृत्यामविशे ह। In the Mokṣa Dharma of the Mahābhārata, s. 165, the word is derived from the root vi. signifying motion, pervasion, production, radiance; or, irregularly, from krama, to go with the particle vi, implying, variously, prefixed.

8. Brahmā and the rest is said to apply to the series of teachers through whom this Purāṇa was transmitted from its first reputed author Brāhmā, to its actual narrator, the sage Parāśara. See also b, VI. c. 8.

9. The Guru, or spiritual preceptor, is said to be Kapila or Sārasvata: the latter is included in the series of teachers of the Purāṇa, Parāśara must be considered also as a disciple of Kapila, as a teacher of the Sāṃkhya philosophy.

10. Maitreya is the disciple of Parāśara, who relates the Viṣṇu Purāṇa to him; he is also one of the chief interlocutors in the Bhagavata, and is introduced in the Mahābhārata (Vana Parva, s. 10.) as a great Rṣi, or sage, who denounces Duryodhana's death. In the Bhāgavata he is also termed Kaushāravi, or the son of Kusharava.

11. One copy reads Yuga dharma, the duties peculiar to the four 14 ages, or their characteristic properties, instead of Yugānta.

12. Sacrifice of Parāśara. The story of Parāśara's birth is narrated in detail in the Mahābhārata (Adi Parva, s. 176). King Kalmāṣapāda meeting with Śakti, the son of Vasiṣṭha, in a narrow path in a thicket, desired him to stand out of his way. The sage refused : on which the Raja beat him with his whip, and Śakti cursed him to become a Rākṣasa, a man-devouring spirit. The Raja in this transformation killed and ate its author, or Śakti, together with all the other sons of Vasiṣṭha, Śakti

left his wife Adrisyanti pregnant, and she gave birth to Parāśara, who was brought up by his grandfather. When he grew up, and was informed of his father's death, he instituted a sacrifice for the destruction of all the Rākṣasas, but was dissuaded from its completion by Vasiṣṭha and other sages or Atri, Pulastya, Pulaha, and Kratu. The Mahābhārata adds, that; when he desisted from the rite, he scattered the remaining sacrificial fire upon the northern face of the Himalaya mountain, where it still blazes forth at the phases of the moon, consuming Rākṣasas, forests, and mountains. The legend alludes possibly to some trans-Himalayan volcano. The transformation of Kalmaṣapāda is ascribed in other places to a different cause; but he is every where regarded as the devourer of Śakti or Saktri, as the name also occurs. The story is told in the Liṅga Purāṇa (Purvārdha, s. 64) in the same manner, with the addition, conformably to the Śaiva tendency of that work, that Parāśara begins his sacrifice by propitiating Mahādeva Vasiṣṭha's dissuasion, and Pulastya's appearance, are given in the very words of our text; and the story concludes, 'thus through the favour of Pulastya and of the wise Vasiṣṭha, Parāśara composed the Vaiṣṇava (Viṣṇu) Purāṇa, containing ten thousand stanzas, and being the third of the Purāṇa compilations (Purāṇasamhitā). The Bhāgavata (b. III. s. 8) also alludes, though obscurely, to this legend. In recapitulating the succession of the narrators of part of the Bhāgavata, Maitreya states that this first Purāṇa was communicated to him by his Guru Purasara, as he had been desired by Pulastya: प्रोवाच मह्यं स दयालुरुक्तो मुनिः पराशरः) पुलस्त्येन पुराणमाद्यम्। i.e. according to the commentator, agreeably to the boon given by Pulastya to Parāśara, saying, 'You shall be a narrator of Purāṇas; पुराणवक्ता भविष्यसि) The Mahābhārata makes no mention of the communication of this faculty to Parāśara by Pulastya; and as the Bhāgavata could not derive this particular from that source, it here most probably refers unavowedly, as the Liṅga does avowedly, to the Viṣṇu Purāṇa.

13. Pulastya, as will be presently seen, is one of the Ṛsis. who were the mind-born sons of Brahmā. Pulaha, who is here also named, is another. Pulastya is considered as the ancestor of the Rākṣasas, as he is the father of Visravas, the father of

Rāvana and his brethren, Uttara Rāmāyaṇa, Mahābhārata, Vana Parva. s. 272. Pādma Purāṇa Liṅga Purāṇa s. 63.

14. Purāṇa samhitā karttā bhavān bhaviṣyati. You shall be a maker of the Samhitā or compendium of the Purāṇas or of the Viṣṇu Purāṇa, considered as a summary or compendium of Pauranic traditions, in either sense it is incompatible with the general attribution of all the Purāṇas to Vyāsa.

15. Whether performing the usual ceremonies of the Brāhmaṇas. or leading a life of devotion and penance. which supersedes the necessity of rites and sacrifices.

16. These are, in fact. the brief replies to Maitreya's six questions (p. 3). or. How was the world created? By Viṣṇu how will it be? At the periods of dissolution it will be in Viṣṇu. Whence proceeded animate and inanimate things? From Viṣṇu. Of what is the substance of the world? Viṣṇu. Into what has it been. and will it agnir be. resolved? Viṣṇu. He is therefore both the instrumental and material cause of the universe. 'The answer to the "whence" replies to the query as to the instrumental cause: "He is the world" replies to the inquiry as to the material cause: 'अनेन यतश्चैतदस्य निमित्तप्रश्नस्योत्तरं जगच्च स इत्युपादानप्रश्नस्योत्तरं। 'And by this explanation of the agency of the materiality, etc. of Viṣṇu. as regards the universe, (it follows that) all will be produced from, and all will repose in him: अनेनैव विष्णोः सर्वजगदुपादान-रूपकर्तृत्वादिकथनेन विष्णोरेवोद्भवविष्यति तत्रैव स्थास्यतीति। We have here precisely the TO nav of the Orphic doctrines, and we might fancy that Brucker was translating a passage from a Purāṇa when he describes them in these words: "Continuisse Jovem (lege Viṣṇum) sive summum deum in se omnia. omnibus ortum ex se dedisse, omnia ex se genuisse. et ex sua produxisse essentia. Spiritum esse universi qui omnia regit vivificat estque; ex quibus necessario sequitur omnia in eum reditura." Hist. Philos. I. 388. Jamblichus and Proclus also testify that the Pythagorean doctrines of the origin of the material world from the Deity, and its identity with him, were much the same.—Cudworth. 1. c. p. 348.