

CHAPTER 3

तृतीयोऽध्यायः

(निमेषादिकालमानस्य नैमित्तिकप्रलयस्य च वर्णनम्)

पराशर उवाच

सर्वेषामेव भूतानां त्रिविधः प्रतिसञ्चरः।

नैमित्तिकः प्राकृतिकस्तथैवात्यन्तिको मतः॥ १॥

ब्राह्मो नैमित्तिकस्तेषां कल्पान्ते प्रतिसञ्चरः।

आत्यन्तिकश्च मोक्षाख्यः प्राकृतो द्विपरार्द्धिकः॥ २॥

The dissolution of existing beings is of three kinds, incidental, elemental and absolute¹. The incidental is that which relates to Brahmā, and occurs at the end of a Kalpa: the elemental is that which takes place after two Parārdhas: the absolute is final liberation from existence.

मैत्रेय उवाच

परार्द्धसंख्यां भगवन्! ममाचक्ष्व यया तु सः।

द्विगुणीकृतया ज्ञेयः प्राकृतः प्रतिसञ्चरः॥ ३॥

Maitreya said— Tell me, excellent master, what is the enumeration of a Parārdha, the expiration of two of which is the period of elemental dissolution².

पराशर उवाच

स्थानात् स्थानं दशगुणमेकस्माद् गण्यते द्विज।

ततोऽष्टादशमे स्थाने परार्द्धमभिधीयते॥ ४॥

परार्द्धद्विगुणं यत्तु प्राकृतः प्रलयो द्विज!

तदाव्यक्तेऽखिलं व्यक्तं स्वहेतौ लयमेति वै॥ ५॥

निमेषो मानुषो योऽयं मात्रामात्रप्रमाणतः।

तैः पञ्चदशभिः काष्ठा त्रिंशत् काष्ठास्तथा कलाः॥ ६॥

नाडिका तु प्रमाणेन कला दश च पञ्च च।

उन्मानेनाम्भसः सा तु पलान्यर्द्धत्रयोदश॥ ७॥

हेममाषैः कृतच्छिद्रश्चतुर्भिश्चतुरङ्गलैः।

मागधेन प्रमाणेन जलप्रस्थस्तु स स्मृतः॥ ८॥

नाडिकाभ्यामथ द्वाभ्यां मुहूर्तो द्विजसत्तमा

अहोरात्रं मुहूर्तास्तु त्रिंशन्मासो दिनैस्तथा॥ ९॥

मासैर्द्वादशभिर्वर्षमहोरात्रन्तु तद्विवि।

त्रिभिर्वर्षशतैर्वर्ष षष्ट्या चैवासुरद्विषाम्॥ १०॥

तैस्तु द्वादशसाहस्रं चतुर्युगमुदाहृतम्।

चतुर्युगसहस्रन्तु कथ्यते ब्रह्मणो दिनम्॥ ११॥

स कल्पोऽप्यत्र मनवश्चतुर्दश महामुने।

तदन्ते चैव मैत्रेय! ब्राह्मो नैमित्तिको लयः॥ १२॥

तस्य स्वरूपमत्युग्रं मैत्रेय गदतो मम।

शृणुष्व प्राकृतं भूयस्तव वक्ष्याम्यहं लयम्॥ १३॥

Parāśara continued— A Parārdha, Maitreya, is that number which occurs in the eighteenth place of figures, enumerated according to the rule of decimal notation³. At the end of twice that period elemental dissolution occurs, when all the discrete products of nature are withdrawn into their indiscrete source. The shortest period of time is a Mātrā, which is equal to the twinkling of the human eye. Fifteen Mātrās make a Kāṣṭhā; thirty Kāṣṭhās, one Kalā; fifteen Kalās, one Nāḍikā. A Nāḍikā is ascertained by a measure of water, with a vessel made of twelve Palas and a half of copper, in the bottom of which there is to be a hole made with a tube of gold, of the weight of four Māṣas, and four inches long⁴. According to the Māgadha measure, the vessel should hold a Prastha (or sixteen Palas) of water. Two of these Nāḍis make one Muhūrta; thirty of which are one day and night. Thirty such periods form a month; twelve months make a year, or a day and night of the gods; and three hundred and sixty such days constitute a year of the celestials. An aggregate of four ages contains twelve thousand divine years; and a thousand periods of four ages complete a day of Brahmā. That period is also termed a Kalpa, during which fourteen Manus preside; and at the end of it occurs the incidental or Brahmā dissolution.

The nature of this dissolution is very fearful: hear me describe it, as well as that which takes place at the elemental dissolution, which I will also relate to you.

चतुर्थ्युगसहस्रान्ते क्षीणप्राये महीतले।
 अनावृष्टिरतीवोग्रा जायते शतवार्षिकी॥ १४॥
 ततो यान्यल्पसाराणि तानि सत्त्वान्यशेषतः।
 क्षयं यान्ति मुनिश्रेष्ठ! पार्थिवान्यत्र पीडनात्॥ १५॥
 ततः स भगवान् विष्णु रुद्ररूपधरोऽव्ययः।
 क्षयाय यतते कर्तुमात्मस्थाः सकलाः प्रजाः॥ १६॥
 ततः स भगवान् विष्णुर्भानोः सप्तसु रश्मिषु।
 स्थितः पिबत्यशेषाणि जलानि मुनिसत्तम॥ १७॥
 पीत्वाम्भांसि समस्तानि प्राणिभूमिगतानि वै।
 शोषं नयति मैत्रेय! समस्तं पृथिवीतलम्॥ १८॥
 सरित्-समुद्र-शैलेषु शैल प्रस्रवणेषु च।
 पातालेषु च यतोयं तत् सर्वं नयति क्षयम्॥ १९॥
 ततस्तस्यानुभावेन तोयाहारोपबृंहिताः।
 त एव रश्मयः सप्त जायन्ते सप्त भास्कराः॥ २०॥
 अधश्चोर्ध्वञ्च ते दीप्तास्ततः सप्त दिवाकराः।
 दहन्यशेषं त्रैलोक्यं सपातालतलं द्विज॥ २१॥
 दह्यमानन्तु तैदीप्तैस्त्रैलोक्यं द्विज! भास्करीः।
 साद्रिनद्वर्णवाभोगं निःस्त्रेहमति जायते॥ २२॥
 ततो निर्दग्धवृक्षाम्बु त्रैलोक्यमखिलं द्विज।
 भवत्येका च वसुधा कूर्मपृष्ठोपमाकृतिः॥ २३॥

At the end of a thousand periods of four ages the earth is for the most part exhausted. A total dearth then ensues, which lasts a hundred years; and, in consequence of the failure of food, all beings become languid and exanimate, and at last entirely perish. The eternal Viṣṇu then assumes the character of Rudra, the destroyer, and descends to reunite all his creatures with himself. He enters into the seven rays of the sun,⁵ drinks up all the waters of the globe, and causes all moisture whatever, in living bodies or in the soil, to evaporate; thus drying up the whole earth. The seas, the rivers, the mountain torrents, and springs, are all exhaled; and so are all the waters of Pātāla, the regions below the earth.

Thus fed, through his intervention, with abundant moisture, the seven solar rays dilate to seven suns⁶, whose radiance glows above, below and on every side, and sets the three worlds and Pātāla on fire. The three worlds, consumed by these suns, become rugged and deformed throughout the whole extent of their mountains, rivers, and seas; and the earth, bare of verdure, and destitute of moisture, alone remains, resembling in appearance the bank of a tortoise.

ततः कालाग्निरुद्रोऽसौ भूत्वा सर्वहरो हरिः।
 शेषनिःश्वाससम्भूतः पातालानि बभस्वधः॥ २४॥
 पातालानि समस्तानि स दग्धा ज्वलनो महान्।
 भूमिमध्येत्य सकलं बभस्ति वसुधातलम्॥ २५॥
 भुवर्लोकं तत सर्वं स्वर्लोकञ्च सुदारुणः।
 ज्वालापालामहावर्त्तस्तत्रैव परिवर्त्तते॥ २६॥
 अम्बरीषमिवाभाति त्रैलोक्यमखिलं तदा।
 ज्वालावर्त्तपरीवारमुपक्षीणचराचरम्॥ २७॥
 ततस्तापपरीतास्तु लोकद्वयनिवासिनः।
 कृताधिकारा गच्छन्ति महर्लोकं महामुने॥ २८॥
 तस्मादपि महातापतप्ता लोकास्ततः परम्।
 गच्छन्ति जनलोकं ते दशावृत्या परैषिणः॥ २९॥

The destroyer of all things, Hari, in the form of Rudra, who is the flame of time, becomes the scorching breath of the serpent Śeṣa, and thereby reduces Pātāla to ashes. The great fire, when it has burnt all the divisions of Pātāla, proceeds to the earth, and consumes it also. A vast whirlpool of eddying flame then spreads to the region of the atmosphere, and the sphere of the gods, and wraps them in ruin. The three spheres show like a frying-pan amidst the surrounding flames, that prey upon all moveable or stationary things. The inhabitants of the two upper spheres, having discharged their functions, and being annoyed by the heat, remove to the sphere above, or Maharloka. When that becomes heated, its tenants, who after the full period of their stay are desirous of ascending to higher regions, depart for the Janaloka⁷.

ततो दग्ध्वा जगत् सर्वरुद्ररूपी जनार्दनः।
 मुखनिःश्वासजान् मेघान् करोति मुनिसत्तम॥ ३०॥
 ततो गजकुलप्रख्यास्तडित्वन्तो निनादिनः।
 उत्तिष्ठन्ति तदा व्योम्नि घोराः संवर्त्तका घनाः॥ ३१॥
 केचिन्नीलोत्पलश्यामाः केचित् कुमुदसन्निभाः।
 धूमवर्णा घनाः केचित् किञ्चित् पीताः पयोधराः॥ ३२॥
 केचिद्रासभवर्णाभा लाक्षारसनिभास्तथा।
 केचिद्द्वैतूर्यसङ्काशा इन्द्रनीलनिभाः परे॥ ३३॥
 शङ्खकुन्दनिभाश्चान्ये जात्यञ्जननिभास्तथा।
 इन्द्रगोपनिभाः केचिन्मनःशिलनिभास्तथा॥ ३४॥

Janārdana, in the person of Rudra, having consumed the whole world, breathes forth heavy clouds; and those called Samvartta, resembling vast elephants in bulk, overspread the sky, roaring, and darting lightnings. Some are as black as the blue lotus; some are white as the water-lily; some are dusky, like smoke; and some are yellow; some are of a dun colour, like that of an ass; some like ashes sprinkled on the forehead; some are deep blue, as the lapis lazuli; some azure, like the sapphire; some are white, as the conch or the jasmine; and some are black, as collyrium; some are of bright red, like the lady-bird; some are of the fierceness of red arsenic; and some are like the wing of the painted jay.

चाषपत्रनिभाः केचिदुत्तिष्ठन्ति घना घनाः।
 केचित् पुरवराकाराः केचित् पर्वतसन्निभाः॥ ३५॥
 कूटागारनिभाश्चान्ये केचित् स्थूलनिभा घनाः।
 महारावा महाकायाः पूरयन्ति नभस्तलम्॥ ३६॥
 वर्षन्तस्ते महासारैस्तमग्निमतिभैरवम्।
 शमयन्त्यखिलं विप्र! त्रैलोक्यान्तरविस्तृतम्॥ ३७॥
 नष्टे चान्नौ शतं तेऽपि वर्षाणामनिवारिताः।
 प्लावयन्तो जगत् सर्वं वर्षन्ति मुनिसत्तम॥ ३८॥
 धाराभिरक्षमात्राभिः प्लावयित्वाखिलं भुवम्।
 भुवर्लोकं तथैवोर्ध्वं प्लावयन्ति दिवं द्विज॥ ३९॥
 अन्धकारीकृते लोके नष्टे स्थावरजङ्गमे।
 वर्षन्ति ते मेघा वर्षाणामधिकं शतम्॥ ४०॥
 इति श्रीविष्णु पुराणे षष्ठांशे तृतीयः अध्यायः।

Such are these massy clouds in hue: in form some resemble towns, some mountains, some are like houses and hovels, and some are like columns. Mighty in size, and loud in thunder, they fill all space. Showering down torrents of water, these clouds quench the dreadful fires which involve the three worlds, and then they rain uninterruptedly for a hundred years, and deluge the whole world. Pouring down in drops as large as dice, these rains overspread the earth, and fill the middle region, and inundate heaven. The world is now enveloped in darkness, and all things, animate or inanimate, having perished, the clouds continue to pour down their waters for more than a hundred years.

NOTES

1. The first is called Naimittaka, 'occasional' or 'incidental' or Brāhmya, as occasioned by the intervals of Brahmā's days; the destruction of creatures, though not of the substance of the world, occurring during his night. The general resolution of the elements into their primitive source, or Prakṛti, is the Prākṛtika destruction, and occurs at the end of Brahmā's life. The third, the absolute or final. Ātyantika, is individual annihilation; Mokṣa, exemption for ever from future existence. The Bhāgavata here notices the fourth kind, of which mention occurred in a preceding passage (Bk. I. Ch. III). Nitya or constant dissolution; explaining it to be the imperceptible change that all things suffer in the various stages of growth and decay, life and death. The various conditions of beings subject to change are occasioned by that constant dissolution of life which is rapidly produced by the resistless stream of time, taking every thing perpetually aways: कालस्रोतसोजवेनाशु ह्रियमाणस्य नित्यदा परिणामिनामवस्थास्ताः जन्मप्रलयहेतवः। The Vāyu describes but three kinds of Pralaya, omitting the Nitya.

2. Maitreya has a rather indifferent memory (see Bk. I. Ch. III); but the periods specified in the two places do not agree. In the first book two Parārdhas, as equal to one hundred years of Brahmā, are 311,040, 000,000,000 years of mortals.

3. Counting according to this mode of enumeration, a Parārdha is represented by 100,000,000,000,000,000. The Vāyu Purāṇa has a term for each of these decimal values. Daśa (दश), 10; Śatam (शतं), 100; Sahasram (सहस्रं), 1000; Ayutam (अयुतं), 10,000; Niyutam (नियुतं), 100,000; Prayutam (प्रयुतं), 1,000,000; Arvudam (अर्वुदं), 10,000,000; Nyurvudam (न्युर्वुदं), 100,000,000; Vrindam (वृन्दं), 1,000,000,000; Param (परं), 10,000,000,000; Kharvam (खर्वं), 100,000,000,000; Nikharvam (निखर्वं), 1,000,000,000,000; Śankham (शंखं), 10,000,000,000,000; Padmam (पद्मं), 100,000,000,000,000; Samudram (समुद्रं), 1,000,000,000,000,000; Madhyamam (मध्यमं), 10,000,000,000,000,000; Parārdham (पराद्धं), 100,000,000,000,000,000. In the first book the Parārdham, as the half of Brahmā's life, it but 155,520,000,000,000 fifteen instead of eighteen places of figures.

4. The description of the Clepsydra is very brief, and wanting in precision. One of the commentaries is more explicit: 'A vessel made of twelve Palas and half of copper, and holding a Prastha, Māgadha measure, of water, broad at top, and having at bottom a tube of gold of four Māshas weight, four fingers long, is placed in water, and the time in which the vessel is filled by the whole in the bottom is called a Nāḍika.' सार्द्धद्वादशपलताम्रमयं मागधप्रस्थसम्मितं ऊर्द्धयितं पात्रं चतुर्माषचतुरङ्गुलहेम शलाकया कृताश्छिद्रं जलेस्थापितं तेनच्छिद्रेण यावता कालेन युर्यते तावत्कालो नाडिकेति। The term Śālākā generally means a needle or stake, but it must here denote a pipe. The common measure of the Nāḍi is a thin shallow brass cup, with a small hole in the bottom. It is placed on the surface of water, in a large vessel, where nothing can disturb it, and where the water gradually fills the cup, and sinks it. *As. Res.* vol. V. p. 87.

5. See Bk. II. Ch. XI. n. 3.

6. These also have their several appellations: the commentator quotes the Vedas as the authority; Ārāga, Bhrāja, Paṭala, Pataṅga, Svamābhāk, Jyotiṣ mat, and Savibhāsa.

7. The passage may also be understood. 'Those go to Janaloka who are desirous of obtaining Brahma, or final liberation, through the ten stages of perfection— devotion, penance, truth, etc.' In the

Vāyu Purāṇa more details are specified. Those sainted mortals who have diligently worshipped Viṣṇu, and are distinguished for piety, abide, at the time of dissolution, in Maharloka, with the Pitṛs, the Manus, the seven Ṛṣis, the various orders of celestial spirits, and the gods. These, when the heat of the flames that destroy the worlds reaches to Maharloka, repair to Janaloka in their subtle forms, destined to become re-embodied, in similar capacities as their former, when the world is renewed, at the beginning of the succeeding Kalpa. This continues throughout the life of Brahmā; at the expiration of his life all are destroyed: but those who have then attained a residence in the Brahmaloaka, by having identified themselves in spirit with the supreme, are finally resolved into the sole-existing Brahma.
