

honoured; and that anyone may offer a Piṇḍa to anybody by uttering his name and gotra and can offer a piṇḍa to oneself*.

Gayā is thus the most sacred centre to pay the debt of our ancestors and to redeem them from their plights and secure for them the highest abode.

VĀYU PURĀṆA

PART I

SECTION I : PRAKRIYĀ PĀDA

CHAPTER ONE

(Summary of Contents)

Obeisance to Śrī Gaṇeśa

One should read or recite any *Purāṇa* or *Itihāsa* text¹ after having paid obeisance to Nārāyaṇa² and Nara,³ the most excellent of men, as well as to goddess Sarasvatī.

1. This verse, originally used at the beginning of the Mbh. is adopted by Purāṇa-writers as well, for example, Bh. P. I. 2. 4; and the word '*Jaya*' therein is interpreted by the commentators Vira Rāghava and Śukadeva as another name of the Bh. P. Thus the word '*Jaya*' became a generic term used both for Itihāsa (Mbh.) and Purāṇa texts (Bh. P., Va. P.). Hence '*Jaya*' is interpreted as 'any Purāṇa or Itihāsa' here. Bhaviṣya Purāṇa states :

Tathaiiva viṣṇudharmāśca śivadharmāśca śāśvatāḥ|
Jayeti nāma teṣāṃ ca pravādanti manīṣiṇaḥ||

Compare KP I. 53. 33; II. 46.

2. *Nārāyaṇa* : The god who lay on cosmic waters of the deluge before creation. This aspect of this deity is recorded in the etymology of his name in Manu 1. 10, Mbh. Śānti 328. 25 :

Āpo nārā itī proktā, āpo vai naraśūnavaḥ|
Tā yadasyāyananī pūrvān tena nārāyaṇa smṛtaḥ||

In early Viṣṇuism, Viṣṇu and Nārāyaṇa were not identical; the amalgamation of Viṣṇu of Vedic Brāhmaṇism and Nārāyaṇa of the Pañcarātras was a later development (vide J. Gonda, *Aspects of Early Viṣṇuism*; also G. V. Tagare, *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (AITM), Part I, Introduction, pp. xlii-xlv).

3. *Nara* : An incarnation of Viṣṇu : born of Dharmā and Mūrti, daughter of Dakṣa; a constant associate of Nārāyaṇa while performing penance at Badarikāśrama. The Mahābhārata heroes Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna are regarded as incarnations of Nārāyaṇa and Nara.

*For details see Va. P. II. Chs. 45-50. There are of course a few divergences in other Purāṇas about the details of the Yātrā but TSS follows Vā. P.

Victory to Vyāsa,¹ the son of Parāśara and the gladdener of the heart of Satyavatī—Vyāsa from whose lotus-like mouth flowed forth the nectar of words, which the whole universe imbibes.

1. I seek refuge in Lord Īśāna (Śiva), the eternal, steady, immutable, great god of noble soul, the lord of the entire universe.

2-6. Desirous of knowing (more about) *Purāṇas*, legends, (etc.) I seek refuge in Lord Brahmā, the creator of the worlds, (who is) omniscient, unvanquished, the noble lord of (everything) past, present and future; God Brahmā, the lord of the universe in whom are inherent the four divine excellences, viz. unparalleled knowledge, detachment, supremacy and virtue (*dharma*); (Lord Brahmā) who for ever visualizes all beings (irrespective of their being) manifest or unmanifest, which re-enter the Lord (Brahmā) for cessation of activities (at the time of the dissolution of the universe); (God Brahmā) the creator of the world, the knower of the reality of the world, the knower of the principles, who, resorting to Yoga, created all living beings mobile and immobile; the unborn lord, the creator of everything, the lord in the form of consciousness and the cosmic witness of the world.

7-9. After bowing with devoted and pious mind to Brahmā, Vāyu and Indra, to the noble-souled Vasiṣṭha, the most excellent of the sages, and to his (Vasiṣṭha's) great-grandson, Vyāsa, Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana, who had attained pre-eminent fame as a sage of great purity, and to sage Jātukarṇa,² I shall

1. *Vyāsa* : Vyāsa means "an arranger". In every Dvāpara Yuga, the work of arranging the floating Vedic Mantras into *Samhitās*—compilation—is done by a person. And he is called Vyāsa. The compilation of the Mbh. and eighteen Purāṇas is assigned to him. The present Vyāsa is the son of Satyavatī, the incarnation of Vāsavi, the daughter of Piṭṛs. His father was sage Parāśara, the grandson of sage Vasiṣṭha. He was dark in complexion and was concealed in an islet in a river by Satyavatī (Mbh. Ādi. 63. 68). Hence he came to be known as 'Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana'.

2. *Jātukarṇa*; (also Jātukarṇya) : A sage noted for self-control; a member of Yudhiṣṭhira's court (Mbh. Sabhā. 4.14). One wonders why Parāśara did not teach the Purāṇas (for example this and Bd. P.) directly to his son Vyāsa but did so through Jātukarṇa.

(now) narrate this *Purāṇa* related by Brahmā, which is on a par with the Vedas and which is embellished by sacred treatises consisting of sections on *Dharma* (virtue), *Artha* (wealth) and *Nyāya* (justice or right conduct).

10-12. While Asimākṛṣṇa,¹ the valiant king of unequalled splendour and the most excellent among sovereigns was ruling over the Earth righteously, the sages of well-disciplined souls performed a sacrifice of long duration in the holy land of Kurukṣetra² on the sacred bank of the river Dṛṣadvatī.³ The sages were devoted to truth and holy rites. They were straightforward. Their sins had been quelled. They were quiescent, had full mental control and had conquered the sense-organs. They were within the precincts of the Naimiṣa⁴ forest and had been initiated in accordance with the sacred scriptures.

1. *Asimākṛṣṇa* : or *Adhisimākṛṣṇa* :

The great-grandson of Janamejaya III who was the great-grandson of the Mahābhārata hero Arjuna. He was a contemporary of Divākara, king of Ayodhyā and king Senajit of Magadha. All these kings belonged to the 6th or 7th generation of their forebears who participated in the Bhārata war. It was during the reign of Asimākṛṣṇa that the great *Sattra* of 12 years took place at Kurukṣetra on the bank of the Dṛṣadvatī. The date assigned to this king, viz. B. C. 850 by Pargiter is now discarded.

2. *Kurukṣetra* : The famous battlefield where the war between Kauravas and Pāṇḍavas was fought. The different battles in that war were fought at and around Thanesar in Haryana. Thus Abhimanyu was killed at Amin, 5 miles south of Thanesar; Bhīṣma died at Nagdu, 11 miles to the southwest of Thanesar. Historic battles were fought here from Vedic times to A. D. 1761, the date of the third battle of Panipat, ancient Paṇiprastha—a village claimed by Yudhiṣṭhira from Duryodhana (De, 110).

3. *Dṛṣadvatī* : The Chitang—a tributary of the Ghaggar between the Yamuna and Sutlej—M. Ali, p. 115. De has accepted this identification as correct (p. 58.) instead of with the Ghaggar.

4. *The Naimiṣa forest* : The description here shows that this forest must be located in Kurukṣetra (Kane, *H. D.* IV, 783). It is possible that there were two Naimiṣa forests, the original one on the bank of the Gomati round Nimsār, 45 miles from Lucknow and one in Kurukṣetra as Vā. P. is positive about the performance of the *Sattra* on the Dṛṣadvatī. Was it that sages resident of Naimiṣa forest on the Gomati in U. P. migrated to Kurukṣetra and the sages being Naimiṣeyas (inhabitants of Naimiṣaraṇya), the area of this *Sattra* came to be called Naimiṣaraṇya in Kurukṣetra?

13-16. The highly intelligent Sūta¹ who was the most excellent among the reciters of *Purāṇas* came there to see the sages.

He became well-known to the world as Lomahaṛṣaṇa² (the Thriller who made hair stand on their ends) as he thrilled the members of his audience with delight by his excellent (absorbing) narration.

He was the most intelligent disciple of the sage Vedavyāsa, the store-house of penance, Vedic learning and good conduct.

The association of the sages of Naimiṣāraṇya and their performance of a *Sattra* is as old as Vedic times. According to Kane (ibid) "*Naimiṣyā vai sattram āsata*" occurs in Kāthaka Saṁhitā X. 6 (I could not trace it). But if the references given by him to the Saṁhitā and Brāhmaṇas be correct and if the direction of the spread of Aryandom from the West to the East be presumed. the Vedic references might be to the Naimiṣāraṇya in the Kuruk-ṣetra area.

1. Sūta :

As stated below in vv. 26-33, Sūta is the offspring of a Brāhmaṇa woman from a Kṣatriya male, a view endorsed by Manu X. 11, Yājñavalkya I.93. He was not eligible for Vedic lore but was to recite *Itihāsa* and *Purāṇa*. Gautama regards Sūta as a *Pratiloma* (*Dharma Sūtra* 15-16). Kauṭilya agrees with this status of a Sūta but distinguishes this Sūta, the narrator of *Purāṇas* probably as a sage different from ordinary Sūtas (*Paurāṇikas tvanyaḥ sūto māgadhaśca brahmakṣatṛād viśeṣataḥ—Artha Śāstra* III. 7, p. 165).

There is another derivation of Sūta from √*Su*—'to extract (Soma juice)'. In the sacrifice of King Prthu, Sūta appeared for the first time while extracting Soma on the prescribed day (*Sutyāha*) but the libations of Soma intended for Brhaspati got mixed with that for Indra and were offered to Indra. Hence he became of a mixed class (vv. 28-30). KP. I. 1.6 regards Romahaṛṣaṇa as an incarnation of Viṣṇu born on *Sutyāha* with the mission of recounting *Purāṇa-Saṁhitā*. Romahaṛṣaṇa, however, does not claim here to be Viṣṇu's incarnation. The birth of Sūta on the *Sutyāha* is recorded in Bd. P. II. 36. 158-73, Pd. P. II. 27. 65-87, Sk. P. Prabhāsa 1.8.

2. Ro (Lo) ma-harṣaṇa:

This appears to be the special designation of this Sūta as he thrilled the audience with delight and made their hair stand on their end. Hence Brāhmaṇa performers of sacrifices offered him a higher place while he narrated a *Purāṇa*. This post of honour above the Brāhmaṇas cost him his life as the hot-headed Balarāma killed him when during his visit to Naimiṣāraṇya, he found Romahaṛṣaṇa occupying a higher seat in the assembly of Brāhmaṇas (Bh. P. X. 78. 28). Our *Purāṇa* pays high tribute to his scholarship (vv. 13-16, 21-24).

He was well-known in the three worlds. The entire Purāṇic lore was well established in him. His scholarship had become extensive through his study of the Mahābhārata. Stories conducive to (four *Puruṣārthas*, viz.) *Dharma* (virtue), *Artha* (wealth), *Kāma* (desire) and *Mokṣa* (liberation) were firmly rooted in him. Wise sayings and sage discourses came forth from him as medicinal herbs from the (mother) earth.

17. He (the Sūta) who was an adept in decorum, approached the highly intelligent and prominent sages as per proper procedure. After coming near, he paid them obeisance with folded palms.

That brilliant scholar pleased those sages by prostrating himself before them (to show respect).

18. The lustrous sages who were performing sessional sacrifices were delighted; so also were the members of the sacrificial assembly. They duly greeted him with gentle words and honoured him.

19. On seeing that highly reliable scholar Lomahaṛṣaṇa, there arose in them the desire to hear the *Purāṇa*.

20. The chief householder (the sponsor) of that sacrificial session who was an expert in all (sacred) lores, understood their desire from their gestures. Consequently, he urged the Sūta (as follows) :

21. "O Sūta ! For learning *Itihāsa* and *Purāṇas*, the venerable and highly intelligent sage Vyāsa, the greatest among the knowers of Brahman (or Vedas), has been properly served and propitiated by you. And you have (as if) milked from his intellectual store, legends based on ancient tradition.

22. The prominent sages are anxious to hear the *Purāṇa*. Therefore it behoves you to narrate those legends to them.

23. All the noble persons, the knowers of Brahman (or Veda) who have assembled here, belong to different clans (*gotras*). May they hear about their respective clan-genealogies through the *Purāṇas*.

24. Please expound (the *Purāṇa*) to these sages, who, along with their sons, have assembled here for this sacrifice of

a long duration. Indeed, you have been (strongly) remembered by us while we were being consecrated for this sacrifice.”

25. Urged thus for (narrating) the *Purāṇa* by the sages who were interested in (had some knowledge of) the *Purāṇas* and were devoted to truth and holy rites, the *Sūta* agreed to the proposal (and said).

Sūta said :

26-27. It is the incumbent duty of the *Sūta*, ordained by saintly men of yore to preserve the genealogies of gods, sages and the most glorious kings and the traditions of great men as recorded in (earlier) *Itihāsas* and *Purāṇas* by those well-versed in the Vedic lore (or expounders of Brahman).

28-29. But nowhere is the eligibility of the *Sūta* for the Vedic lore (such as recitation of the *Veda* etc.) seen (prescribed). While the sacrifice of the noble-souled (king) *Ṛṣhu*, the son of *Vena*, was being performed, *Sūta* appeared for the first time extracting *Soma* (on the prescribed *Sutyā* day) for offering unto the fire, but he became of a mixed caste as the oblation intended for *Bṛhaspati* was got mixed up with the one intended for *Indra* and was offered to god *Indra*. Therefrom was born the *Sūta* due to this grievous mistake and expiatory rites had to be performed (in that sacrifice) as atonement for the error.

30. As he was born (as a *pratiloma* child) from a *Kṣatriya* (male), a lower caste man, of a *Brāhmaṇa* woman, on account of his similarities of the inherent qualities of the former (i.e. *Kṣatriya*), he is proclaimed as having similar duties (like those of a *Kṣatriya*).

31. Thus the *Sūta* who was born of a *Brāhmaṇa* receptacle from a *Kṣatriya* source, has (some) qualities with the former (caste) and so has some identity of duties with them.

32. His middling duty (way of maintenance) is the pursuit depending on *Kṣatriya* profession such as maintaining chariots, elephants and horses. Practice of medicine was his inferior duty.

33. Since I have been commanded by expounders of Brahman like you, to follow my duty, how can I decline to narrate to you in details the *Purāṇa* so highly worshipped by sages.

34. *Vāsavi*¹ was born as the mental daughter of the *Pitṛs* (manes). Being cursed by her father, she was born in the species (womb) of a fish.²

35. *Vyāsa*, the great yogin and the foremost among the knowers of the *Vedas*, was born of her, just as fire is born of the *araṇi* stick.

36. I make obeisance to *Vyāsa*, the venerable sage, protagonist of *Bṛghu*'s lore, the ancient *Puruṣa*, the great lord *Viṣṇu* in the guise of a human being.

37. Even as he was born, the entire Vedic lore in all its compendiums appeared before him, but he formally attained it from *Jātukarṇa*, as it was his duty to study it from a preceptor.

38. He churned the ocean of the *Vedas* with the churning-rod of his intellect and produced the *Moon* in the form of the *Mahābhārata*.

39. Just as a tree proliferates into many branches after reaching fertile soil and in congenial season, the tree in the form of the *Veda* spread out in different branches after reaching him (*Vyāsa*).

40. I have listened to this *Purāṇa* from that omniscient expounder of Brahman, who is conversant with the *Vedas*, who is honoured by all and is of blazing brilliance.

41. I shall now relate in detail the *Purāṇa* narrated by *Vāyu* formerly³, when he was urged by the noble sages of *Naimiṣa*.

1. *Vāsavi* :

Mbh. Ādi. (63. 51-73) endorses this legend but there she is said to be born of *Uparicara Vasu* and *Adrikā*, a celestial damsel cursed to be a female fish and was then in her fish-form. The *Mbh.* records that twins were found in the belly of the defunct *Apsarā*-fish. The king of the place adopted the boy who became known as a pious king called *Matsya* and the girl with the foul smell was handed over to *Dāśa-rāja*. She became a sweet-smelling lady through the favour of sage *Parāśara* when she responded to his overtures (*Ibid. Ādi. 63. 70-85*).

2. *Satyavati*, the mother of *Vyāsa*, was born in the womb of a fish. (*vide Mbh. Ādi. 63. 50-69*).

3. It means that the present *Purāṇa* which is being narrated by the *Sūta* at *Kurukṣetra* was formerly recited by *Vāyu* to the sages of *Naimiṣa* forest (mod. *Nimsār* in U. P.)