

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### The Purāṇic Literatures

In this chapter Śrī Sūta Gosvāmī describes the expansion of the branches of the Atharva Veda, enumerates the compilers of the Purāṇas and explains the characteristics of a Purāṇa. He then lists the eighteen major Purāṇas and finishes his account by stating that any person who hears about these matters from someone in a proper disciplic succession will acquire spiritual potency.

Text 1:

Sūta Gosvāmī said: Sumantu Ṛṣi, the authority on the Atharva Veda, taught his saṁhitā to his disciple Kabandha, who in turn spoke it to Pathya and Vedadarśa.

Text 2:

Śauklāyani, Brahmabali, Modoṣa and Pippalāyani were disciples of Vedadarśa. Hear from me also the names of the disciples of Pathya. My dear brāhmaṇa, they are Kumuda, Śunaka and Jājali, all of whom knew the Atharva Veda very well.

Text 3:

Babhru and Saindhavāyana, disciples of Śunaka, studied the two divisions of their spiritual master's compilation of the Atharva Veda. Saindhavāyana's disciple Sāvārṇa and disciples of other great sages also studied this edition of the Atharva Veda.

Text 4:

Nakṣatrakalpa, Śāntikalpa, Kaśyapa, Āṅgīrasa and others were also among the ācāryas of the Atharva Veda. Now, O sage, listen as I name the authorities on Purāṇic literature.

Text 5:

Trayyāruṇi, Kaśyapa, Sāvārṇi, Akṛtavraṇa, Vaiśampāyana and Hārīta are the six masters of the Purāṇas.

Text 6:

Each of them studied one of the six anthologies of the Purāṇas from my father, Romaharṣaṇa, who was a disciple of Śrīla Vyāsadeva. I became the

disciple of these six authorities and thoroughly learned all their presentations of Purāṇic wisdom.

Text 7:

Romahaṛṣaṇa, a disciple of Vedavyāsa, divided the Purāṇas into four basic compilations. The sage Kaśyapa and I, along with Sāvarṇi and Akṛtavraṇa, a disciple of Rāma, learned these four divisions.

Text 8:

O Śaunaka, please hear with attention the characteristics of a Purāṇa, which have been defined by the most eminent learned brāhmaṇas in accordance with Vedic literature.

Texts 9-10:

O brāhmaṇa, authorities on the matter understand a Purāṇa to contain ten characteristic topics: the creation of this universe, the subsequent creation of worlds and beings, the maintenance of all living beings, their sustenance, the rule of various Manus, the dynasties of great kings, the activities of such kings, annihilation, motivation and the supreme shelter. Other scholars state that the great Purāṇas deal with these ten topics, while lesser Purāṇas may deal with five.

Text 11:

From the agitation of the original modes within the unmanifest material nature, the mahat-tattva arises. From the mahat-tattva comes the element false ego, which divides into three aspects. This threefold false ego further manifests as the subtle forms of perception, as the senses and as the gross sense objects. The generation of all these is called creation.

Text 12:

The secondary creation, which exists by the mercy of the Lord, is the manifest amalgamation of the desires of the living entities. Just as a seed produces additional seeds, activities that promote material desires in the performer produce moving and nonmoving life forms.

Text 13:

Vṛtti means the process of sustenance, by which the moving beings live upon the nonmoving. For a human, vṛtti specifically means acting for one's livelihood in a manner suited to his personal nature. Such action may

be carried out either in pursuit of selfish desire or in accordance with the law of God.

Text 14:

In each age, the infallible Lord appears in this world among the animals, human beings, sages and demigods. By His activities in these incarnations He protects the universe and kills the enemies of Vedic culture.

Text 15:

In each reign of Manu, six types of personalities appear as manifestations of Lord Hari: the ruling Manu, the chief demigods, the sons of Manu, Indra, the great sages and the partial incarnations of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Text 16:

Dynasties are lines of kings originating with Lord Brahmā and extending continuously through past, present and future. The accounts of such dynasties, especially of their most prominent members, constitute the subject of dynastic history.

Text 17:

There are four types of cosmic annihilation — occasional, elemental, continuous and ultimate — all of which are effected by the inherent potency of the Supreme Lord. Learned scholars have designated this topic dissolution.

Text 18:

Out of ignorance the living being performs material activities and thereby becomes in one sense the cause of the creation, maintenance and destruction of the universe. Some authorities call the living being the personality underlying the material creation, while others say he is the unmanifest self.

Text 19:

The Supreme Absolute Truth is present throughout all the stages of awareness — waking consciousness, sleep and deep sleep — throughout all the phenomena manifested by the illusory energy, and within the functions of all living entities, and He also exists separate from all these.

Thus situated in His own transcendence, He is the ultimate and unique shelter.

Text 20:

Although a material object may assume various forms and names, its essential ingredient is always present as the basis of its existence. Similarly, both conjointly and separately, the Supreme Absolute Truth is always present with the created material body throughout its phases of existence, beginning with conception and ending with death.

Text 21:

Either automatically or because of one's regulated spiritual practice, one's mind may stop functioning on the material platform of waking consciousness, sleep and deep sleep. Then one understands the Supreme Soul and withdraws from material endeavor.

Text 22:

Sages expert in ancient histories have declared that the Purāṇas, according to their various characteristics, can be divided into eighteen major Purāṇas and eighteen secondary Purāṇas.

Texts 23-24:

The eighteen major Purāṇas are the Brahma, Padma, Viṣṇu, Śiva, Liṅga, Garuḍa, Nārada, Bhāgavata, Agni, Skanda, Bhaviṣya, Brahma-vaivarta, Mārkaṇḍeya, Vāmana, Varāha, Matsya, Kūrma and Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇas.

Text 25:

I have thoroughly described to you, O brāhmaṇa, the expansion of the branches of the Vedas by the great sage Vyāsadeva, his disciples and the disciples of his disciples. One who listens to this narration will increase in spiritual strength.