

**THE ESSENCE
OF
THE SACRED GARUDA PURANA**

Dr. V.V.B. RAMA RAO



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THE ESSENCE OF THE SACRED GARUDA PURANA

Writer

Dr. V.V.B. Rama Rao

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FOREWORD

Human tendencies, inherited or acquired are said to be governed by Trigunas i.e., Satwa, Rajas and Tamas. The Eighteen Puranas are divided into 3 groups that glorify the power of the Trinity. Among the Trinity, Vishnu is said to be 'Sthitikaraka' Six Puranas of the eighteen (Ashtadasha Puranas) are related to the Almighty Sri Mahavishnu. Again Three Puranas namely Bhagavata Purana, Vishnu Purana and Garuda Purana are the most important Puranas of Satvika Puranas. Vedavyasa, the creator of Eighteen Puranas saw the people leading a lustful, sorrowful, attributed, short life. He detailed the attributes for man's sorrow and unfulfilled trends. He explained to Sootamuni and he inturn narrated this Garuda Purana to Shaunaka and others who were dwelling in Naimisharanya. Sage Vedavyasa depicted this in the form of conversation between 'Garuda' (the earnest & humility bound mount or Vahana of Vishnu) and Lord Vishnu. Garuda questions Maha Vishnu about the consequences of a man's post death conditions and asks a detailed mode of Sin and the punishments rendered to sinners after death. He poses questions to Vishnu about What exactly happens to man after death and how Yama's servitors treat the sinners after man leaves his mortal body or Shareera. The thoughts of Vedavyasa are delivered in the form of answers of Vishnu to the questions posed by Garuda. Sri Maha Vishnu narrates Garuda about the Yama's abode, the extreme pain suffered

by the jeeva, torments given to the sinner by Yama's servitors. He also gives a detailed wording of the duties that are to be discharged by the kith and kin of the departed soul. In brief, Garuda Purana is the narration about the sin and the fate of sinners after their earthly life.

There is a wrong belief that 'Garuda Purana' is not as holy as the other Puranas and hence ought not to be kept at home, because it deals with cremation and other attributes related to Yamaloka. Brahmasri Malladi Chandrasekar Sastry specified that the Garuda Purana is as good and worthy as any other Purana. It is good to know about the post death status of a jeeva. A clear and undoubted reading of this scripture will help any human being to lead a self disciplined life and will also become a goal to reach higher levels of existence. The sixteen chapters of this Purana will enable the living beings to perform righteous duties to liberate their forefathers from distress and torements.

In the Service of Lord Venkateswara


Executive Officer

Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams
Tirupati.

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PREFACE

Srila Prabhupada said once in a lecture that the eighteen Puranas conducted men of the three kinds in three different qualities or modes: modes of goodness, modes of passion and modes of ignorance. Garuda Puran belongs to the first in group of six Puranas meant primarily for those in the mode of goodness. Bhagavata Purana being the foremost and Vishnu Purana the next, Garuda Purana is the third in its greatness and importance. This Purana was conveyed to Garuda by Kashyapa and later Sage Veda Vyasa conveyed it to mankind. Some people read some portions of Garuda Puran during the period of obsequies to the departed soul immediately after a person's demise. For that reason, those portions too are included in this work presented in sixteen parts.

INTRODUCTION

Man is a bundle of *Vasanas*, acquired, inherent tendencies. He is swayed by the three *gunas*, attributes. Srila Prabhupada calls them modes. *Satwik*, *Rajasik* and *Tamasik* *gunas* are described as the modes of goodness, passion and ignorance respectively.

The eighteen grand scriptures are divided into three groups: each group extolling the power and the glory of one of the trinity: Brahma, Vishnu and Maheswara. The most important among the Vishnu *puranas* are *Bhagawat purana*, *Vishnu purana* and *Garuda purana*. *Garudapurana* is unique in that it was related by Vishnu Himself to his devout, mount, Garuda who asked him in all devotion and humility to tell him about the cycle of birth and death, the consequences of sinful behaviour, the nature of punishments that sin attracts after death and so on.

Sage Vedavyasa was tossed in turbulent distress (*Vyakulata*) when he saw people becoming weak and short lived, leading degenerate lives. He in his infinite goodness and compassion for mankind wrote the eighteen *puranas* (grand scriptures) besides dividing the bulk of Vedic lore into four Vedas. The *puranas* are called the fifth Veda. These are intended to raise the moral, devotional and intellectual levels of human beings.

Many *puranas* extol the worth of *Garudapurana*. *Narada purana*, *Agni purana* and *Matsya purana*

speak highly of this grand scripture. This has an encyclopaedic range for it deals with and explains in great detail creation, growth, sequence of events in the course of human evolution, the distinguishing qualities of the various eons, modes of worship, the incarnations of Vishnu, different sciences and the essence of the celestial song, the Bhagavadgita.

There is generally a prevalent wrong belief and misunderstanding among the ignorant that *Garudapurana* is not auspicious to be kept in our homes since it deals with rituals associated with cremation etc., and it describes after life and the punishments meted out to the sinners in hell. But time and again great seers and sages have been telling us that the study and understanding of this *purana* would yield great merit. It is as auspicious as any other *purana*. Brahmasri Malladi Chandrasekhara Sastry wrote that as one of the eighteen *puranas*, it is as venerable as any other *purana*. In fact it teaches valuable things. It has certain chapters which are read out only on certain occasions but, it is desirable for us to know all about after-life. A careful reading and understanding of this scripture helps us to discipline ourselves and stick to the path of goodness and rectitude. It illumines and inspires us to revere our forefathers and utilize our life here-and-now as a stepping stone to higher levels of existence.

- V.V.B. Rama Rao

1. THE EIGHTEEN *PURANAS*

Brief Summary

In the first chapter the way *Garuda Purana* has come down to us is described. Sri Maha Vishnu narrated it to Garuda, his eagle mount, who asked him to let him know about sin and the fate of sinners after their earthly life. Sage Vedavyasa gave this story to Sootamuni and Sootamuni narrated this *Purana* to the assemblage of seers and sages like Shaunaka in *naismishaaranya*. Sootamuni is highly revered as the narrator of great tales and legends that go into various *puranas*. To begin with, Garuda questions Him about sin, the sinners and the punishments meted out to them for their sins. What exactly happens to man after death and how he becomes *preata*, how he is transformed into *yaatanasareera* and later into *pindasareera* are described. Towards the end of the chapter is described the treatment meted out to the sinners by Yama's servitors.

Shlok 1-5

Shri Maha Vishnu is the slayer of the demon Madhu. So he is called Madhusudan. Dharma is strong like the trunk of a huge tree. The Vedas are the branches of the tree. The *puranas* are the smaller branches. Its flowers are the fire- rituals. The fruit of the great tree is salvation, or liberation from the cycle of Birth and Death. Shri Maha Vishnu is like a tree that gives man

all and protects him. Thus shri Maha Vishnu is praised at the beginning.

Naimisha is a forest. The forest is named after the sleepless sages and seers. There these great ones do not sleep at all. Once, the sages performed a fire sacrifice for one thousand years under the leadership of Shaaunaka. After offering him obeisance with great devotion and humility, those sages requested Soota Maharshi, who came there one morning. They prayed to the sacred seer to enlighten them about the fearsome way of Yama, the Lord of Death. The sages had already heard from him, the renowned disciple of Sage Vedavyasa, *puranas* that showed the way to the resplendent worlds. They submitted that they wanted to know about the miseries of those in the domain of Yama.

Shlok 6-7

Soota Maharshi then replied to them saying that he would describe the path to the Kingdom of Yama, the most difficult one to traverse.

Yama gives the most painful punishments for sinners. He told them that he would relate the purana as related to Garuda by Sri Maha Vishnu Himself.

Shlok 8-12

Once Garuda, the blessed eagle-mount of Sri Maha Vishnu with great humility and devotion, asked Sri Maha Vishnu for a favour. The Lord had related to him *puranas* that showed the way to regions of extreme

light and joy. In all those there was mention of sinners but there was no description of the places of the punishment and the punishments themselves. Garuda asked the Lord to tell him about Yama, his Kingdom and the people who are sent there. He was told of those who strayed from the path of devotion to him. In this context Garuda says that the tongue which does not sing the praises of the Lord would come to a bad end. Garuda requests the Lord to enlighten him, a devout seeker, about the Kingdom of Yama.

Shlok 13-18

Then the Lord told the best of birds, Garuda, that he would describe the most dreadful way to the Kingdom of Yama, where the sinners go after their death. Those who take delight in doing sinful deeds, those who are without pity and those who are wicked and those who have no regard for scriptures are thrown into hell. These people hate the good and righteous people and avoid them or abuse them. These sinners are full of self-praise. They are arrogant, proud and disrespectful towards those who have good qualities. They are lustful and shameless. Lord Vishnu is pleased with Garuda's question asked with humility and devotion. The Lord continued saying that the proud and ignorant, owing to their sinful nature think that the purpose of life is merely aggressive enjoyment of things. The love of earthly pleasures leads them to sin and sin drags them into hell. The wise, the thoughtful, the humble and the really knowledgeable go to higher planes

and reach Vykuntha. But the sinners described above would suffer the most powerful punishments. They must suffer long the torments of hell.

Shlok 19-29

The dead ones have to experience the fruit of all their deeds, good and bad. Death overtakes them: they may have experienced joy-the result of their good deeds. But invariably they suffer many diseases in old age before death. Even on death bed the sinner does not shed his attachments. He becomes old, decrepit and disease-ridden. Then gradually the body loses all its capacity to keep healthy. He loses appetite, his eyes sink into their sockets. His lungs get congested with phlegm. His breathing becomes heavy and laboured. He would not be in a position even to speak.

He dies while his near and dear ones break into sobs of grief. Then the phelgm and the accumulated saliva come out. His Prana, the vital breath, exits from the anus.

Shlok 30-33

Two of Yama's messengers come there to take away the dead one. (They are not seen by any one around-The dead one is able to see them. They are black like crows). They are stark naked and frightful. They have twisted mouths, angry red eyes. Their nails are sharp and look like weapons. Their hair stands stiff and erect. They come with clubs and fierce ropes. The dead man's excreta is emptied out without his

knowing or volition. The dead person gets transformed into a thumb-sized being shedding his sthoola sareera, gross body. The moment he casts around his looks, Yama's men capture him. Just as a criminal is treated by King's officers of justice, the yaatana sareera the torment body would be bound with a rope and dragged far and farther till Yamapuri.

Shlok 34-36

While dragging him along Yama's servitors would threaten him and frighten him describing the torments he has to eventually suffer and endure in hell. They talk about various hells like the frightful *kumbheepaka* and other such hells. The *yaatana sareera* or the thumb-sized torment-body of the sinner would be groaning and making hopeless and helpless appeals for mercy with shrieks. While he cries out in agony Yama's servitors go on beating him mercilessly. All the while, the loud groans and sobs of his near relatives would be audible to the sinner in his little, torment-tossed new body.

Shlok 37-46

On the way, the jeeva would trudge painfully trembling in fear, remembering his sinful deeds, while fierce dogs go on biting him. He has no strength to walk but the servitors of Yama goad him to walk fast along the hot sandy way while being whipped. He feels thirsty and hungry. He would be collapsing and rising again and again. Through darkness he is taken to Yama's abode. In a short while the *jeeva* is taken there.

The servitors of Yama show the jeeva the spots where tormentors constantly punish the sinners. Then he would be brought back on the air way to the earth. The *jeeva* yearns to get into his earlier body but he would not be allowed to by the nooses around his neck. He moans and groans and then the oblations of riceballs offered by his sons is his only food. Even these offer no comfort to him. His hunger and thirst do not abate. The one who does not get the oblations and the rice balls wander as evil spirits (*pishaachas*) in the uninhabited wilds till the end of the eon. The fruit of evil and wicked deeds needs to be suffered by the sinners for ages.

Shlok 47-60

Sri Hari tells Garuda as to how the son of the dead man (now only a *jeeva* the size of a thumb), must make oblation of rice-balls (*pindas*) for ten days. Every day the offering made would be divided into four parts. Two parts of that would go to the five elements of *yaatana sareera*, the tormented-body, one part to Yama's servitors and one part for the dead man. The *jeeva* having received the *pindas* for nine days gets strength on the tenth day. A new body the size of a hand (cubit-about 18 inches) would be formed to experience the fruits of his good and evil deeds. During the ten days the body grows. On the first day (after getting the *pinda*) the head is formed; on the second neck and shoulders on the third the heart. On the fourth day the back would be formed, on the fifth the navel,

on the sixth the waist and genitals, on the seventh the thighs, on the eighth the calves, on the ninth the feet and on the tenth, with his body grown-the *jeeva* experiences (or suffers) hunger and thirst. In the newly formed body, *pinda deha*, on the eleventh and twelfth days the *jeeva* eats and drinks in great hunger and thirst. On the thirteenth day, bowed like a monkey and being beaten by Yamas servitors, the *jeeva* walks along the way. The river Vaitarani excluded, the way to Yama's domain measures eighty-six thousand *yojanas* (*Yojana* is about eight miles). A *pinda sareera* walks a distance of two hundred and forty seven *yojanas* in one day and night. He has to pass through sixteen cities before he reaches the place of Yamadharmaraja, the Lord of Death. The cities are: Saumya, Sauripura, Nagendra Bhavana, Gandharva, Shailagama, Krauncha, Kroora, Vichitra Bhavana, Bahwapada, Duhkhada, Nanakrandana, Sutapta, Raudra, Payovarsha, Sheetadhya and Bahubheeti.

* * *

2. YAMA'S ABODE**Brief Summary**

Here is described the way one has to pass to reach the abode of Yama. This way is full of pain and grief. Sri Hari describes to Garuda, when Garuda asks him to let him know, how the sinners suffer on the frightful way.

Shlok 1

Garuda, the great devotee and the trusted mount of Keshava, asks his Lord to let him know the way sinners traverse.

Shlok 2-32

The Lord replies: "I would describe it to you, though you would be very disturbed and agitated to hear it." Then Sri Hari gives the details of the dark and rough path.

There is no shade there and thus no where to take even a little rest. To add to this there is no food to sustain him. Though the sinner feels agonizingly thirsty there is no water. As though a huge group of ten suns are blazing there would be terrible, insufferable heat all around. The heat is like the heat produced at the end of creation, in pralaya. If there is no heat, there would be intolerable cold, icy winds. There are thorns all around and on the way they pierce and sting like poisonous snakes. One has to cross, on the way, a forest with trees having sharp sword like leaves. This

thorny path is two thousand *yojanas* long. To make matters worse the way is infested with vicious birds like crows, owls, hawks, vultures, stinging bees and mosquitoes. Sometimes there are forest fires too on the way. In some places there are deep pits and in some places there are steep mounds and razor sharp edges. In some spots one has to tread on spear-points. There are patches of great thick, frightful darkness. In some others, there are muddy places infested with leeches that suck blood. Sometimes one comes across places with hot slime. There are places covered with hot sand. It would be like walking on molten metal. One has to pass through mounds of burning charcoals or thick dark clouds of black smoke. One has to suffer very painful showers of burning coal, hard stones, blood or boiling hot water. The *jeeva* sometimes has to wade through excreta, blood, pus and such detestable things. On the way, one comes across the river Vaitarini. This runs for a hundred *yojanas*. The water therein is overgrown with moss and the entire river is infested with dire crocodiles, hundreds of frightful birds hovering overhead. The river appears to react very sharply to the approaching of the *jeeva*. It is full of all kinds of hateful and dangerous insects, vultures and beaked-birds. There are porpoises besides crocodiles and many flesh-eating water creatures. The worst sinners fall into this river and go on screaming and shrieking, calling for help from father, son or brother. They wail and shriek, scream and howl. Hungry and thirsty they are compelled to drink foaming blood.

Some swoon and fall unconscious seeing and experiencing the horrors. Some are covered with scorpion stings and stung by black and dreadful snakes with none to go to their help. The sinners go down lower and lower and rise again but with no relief of any kind. The very purpose of the creation of the river is to put sinner-*jeevas* to great pain, suffering and terrible shame. The wretched ones are bound, dragged or pierced from behind and led on inexorably. Some sinners are led forward with ropes run through their noses and ears. Crows peck at them. There are some more terrible punishments; some are bound with ropes; their hands, feet are manacled. Some have to carry loads of iron too. Sinners are further humiliated and punished with hammer strokes on the head and dragged along with ropes tied to their body. They are made to swallow their own vomits. The sinners bemoan their evil and wicked deeds. They swoon in utter exhaustion.

Shlok 33-34

The sinners are thrown into great sloughs of despond. They repent with screams calling their parents and progeny for help. They painfully realize that they had misused and abused their birth as human beings. They have not performed their basic duties and revelled in their evil doings.

Shlok 35-41

The sinners send up prayers to the members of their family to make amends and reparations for all

their evil deeds. The sinners never made any fire offerings; never gave anything in charity; never observed pious principles like going on fast; never paid worship to any deities; never went on any pilgrimage. Every sinner regrets that he has not honoured the assemblages of pious and learned ones (Brahmins); that he has never taken a dip in any holy river as prescribed by the holy elders. Now he is sour that he has not lent any support for good causes like sinking a well or digging a water tank; never did anything for any birds or beasts in compassion and charity; never held holy cows and pious Brahmins in esteem. The sinner realizes in deep penitence that he never fed a cow, never paid obeisance to the holy men and sacred scriptures and never bothered to listen to the recitation and exegeses of *puranas*. The women among the sinners too are aware of their heinous past. A woman wails that she has not followed her husband's advice. She has not observed the principle of total and complete fidelity to him, and did not honour her in-laws. She suffers excruciating pain while repenting that she has not served her husband while being alive. Even as a widow, she has not observed the usual and prescribed austerities and did nothing to please her elders or God.

Shlok 42-47

Sri Hari continues his narration to Garuda. The sinner having lamented in agony wails that he has missed an opportunity and brought himself to that state.

Later, he proceeds fast with the speed of wind and on the eighteenth day the *jeeva* reaches the city of Saumya, the first in his long journey through the sixteen cities. The city is beautiful and several *jeevas* experience some relief. In Saumya, they see a fig-tree and the river Pushpabhadra. The *jeeva* has a little rest and so do the Yamakinkaras, Yama's servitors. Here, for a short while the *jeeva* remembers the joy of his wife and children and envies that. The *jeeva* bemoans the loss of his riches etc. He is taunted by the *kinkaras* as to where his wealth went and how his people did not offer him any comfort or solace in his anguished moments. He is reminded that he suffers for his own foolishness and stupidity in committing sins. The sinner is asked a number of uncomfortable questions to add to his suffering.

Shlok 48-49

The *kinkaras* of Yama ask him as to what provisions he has for his long journey. A traveller in a merciless world, there are no provisions that could give him any strength. He is in a path where nothing would be sold and nothing could be bought.

He is further taunted and heckled. Even children will have heard of this way to Yama: perhaps he, the sinner, feels has not heard of this mentioned in the *puranas*.

Shlok 50-53

Thus humiliated and in pain, being thrashed thoroughly by *Yamakinkaras*, falling and rising, with

great difficulty he goes further. During this stage of his long journey he eats the monthly *pindas* (rice balls) offered to him by his pious son or some other either through goodness or their pity for the dead as he goes to the next city called Shauripura. Shauripura is ruled by King Jangama who looks as dreadful as Yama, the God of Death himself. The sinner is so frightened that he would give up all efforts. But in that city he receives a little food and water given after three fortnights by his son or somebody and goes forward.

Shlok 54-56

From Shauripura he is taken to the next stop, the city of Nagendrabhavana. There he feels more miserable for he has seen dreadful wilds. He goes on weeping for he is dragged and urged to go faster by Yama's servitors. At the end of two months, he leaves Nagendrabhavana. About this time, on the elapse of two months after his death, he is offered oblations, rice- balls (*pindas*) and water again. The dragging continues.

Shlok 57-69

The *jeeva* arrives at the city of Gandharvas and in the third month also he receives the oblations. In the fifth month, he is slightly comforted. Then he is taken to the next city, Krauncha. He gets the rice-balls (*pindas*) and water (*tarpan*) there. He receives rice-balls (*pindas*) and *tarpan* again when five and half months go by. The sixth- monthly ceremony gives him some more comfort. But the servitors goad him on

and he is taken to the next city, Chitrabhavana. King Vichitra is the ruler there and he is Yama's brother. His very appearance strikes terror in the *jeeva* who tries to take to his heels in great fear. The fishermen there accost him saying that they had come there to ferry him across the river Vaitarani if he deserves to be served and if he has done enough good deeds to earn the necessary merit (Punya). They tell the *jeeva* that they were told by sages and seers that the river is called Vaitarani since it can be crossed only by Vitarana, giving away as a gift or a charity. Only those who are liberal in giving away money, property etc. either in charity or a gift, would earn merit sufficient to be able to cross the river. They finally tell the *jeeva* if he has performed *goudaan*, giving away a cow in charity, he would be ferried across the river. The *jeeva* is at his wits' end for he has acquired no merit at all. The river appears to be seething and the sinners helplessly sink into it with howls and screams. But the servitors impale the sinner's lips with a skewer and lift him to carry him across the river like a fish upon a hook.

Shlok 70-81

The *jeeva* proceeds further, or rather is taken forward after he eats the rice-balls (*pindas*) offered for the sixth month. He continues his wails of agony all along the way. He desires to eat more and more with his appetite increasing. Just before the seventh month approaches he is led into the city of Bahwapada.

In this city he gets the *pinda* and *tarpana* offered to him by his sons. From there he now passes to the city called Duhkhada by air and suffers more. There he gets his *pindas* and *tarpan* given for the eighth month. At the end of the ninth month he is led into the city called Naanakranda. The name of the city signifies the howls, wails and laments of multiple types. The akrandan or the helpless anguished wails terrify his faint heart; he screams in great fear and wretchedness. Then the servitors of the Lord of Wealth take him to the *Jeeva* city of Sutapabhava, the name signifying great heat and suffering. Even after getting the oblations for his tenth month he is not happy or satisfied. On the completion of the eleventh month he is taken into the city of Raudra where the oblations offered to him are enjoyed by him with little satisfaction. After the eleventh month the *jeeva* reaches Sheetadhya-the name signifying extreme cold. It is stated that the cold there is a hundred fold insufferable than the Himalayan cold. The *jeeva* is afflicted with severe hunger and looks to all the ten directions for someone who would offer him *pindas*. The servitors taunt the *jeeva* asking him if he has any merit at all. With the annual *pindas* and *tarpanas* coming the *jeeva*'s spirits rise once again. At the end of the twelfth month the *jeeva* arrives at Yama's abode called Bahubheeti, signifying manifold fears. The soul, the size of a thumb gets the body of torment to experience the fruit of his actions to work out his karma.

The servitors of Yama take him by the aerial way. Those who sin more by not offering gifts for the dweller in the upper body (oordhva sareera) are taken bound in tight bonds. There are four gateways to Yamapuri, the abode of Yama. The sinner is led through the southern gate. Sri Hari tells his faithful and devout mount Garuda that he has given an account of the hardest way to Yama's domain and asks him as to what he wanted to know further.

* * *

3. TORMENTS FOR JEEVAS

Brief Summary

In an answer to Garuda's question as to what torments are suffered by the jeevas in the abode of Yama, Sri Hari tells him that He would surely give him an account, the mere listening to which strikes him with terror. In this chapter the torments to which the sinners are put are described in graphic detail. The paramount purpose of this *purana* is to warn living men as to what they must suffer if they do not obey elders and follow the path of rectitude with care and minute attention. Any word, an unthoughtful, unconsidered action would lead man to sin. The slightest deviation from the moral code would prove deadly in the end. Devotion to God, charity, compassion and righteousness should be the guidelines for all human deeds. Those who believe in God and those who restrain their senses and stick to the right path would be saved from undergoing the torments described in this chapter by Sri Hari Himself.

Shlok 1-2

Garuda asks Sri Hari, his lord another question:

“O Keshava! Kindly tell me about the kinds of anguished torments the various types of sinners suffer on Yama's way. Replied Sri Hari: O Son of Vinata! I will tell you all but the very descriptions would send you shivering and continues:

Shlok 3-24

Forty-four yojanas away from the city of Bhahubheeti is situated Yama's abode. The sinner listens to the cries of pain and howls for mercy from a long way. At the gate Dharmadwaja would be standing all the time. He sees the sinner and reports to Chitragupta very quickly all the deeds of the sinner. Then Chitragupta goes to the dispenser of punishments, the King of Justice. He is called Yamadharmaraja too.

The king knows all the sins the *jeevi* is guilty of, but still asks Chitragupta for details. Though Chitragupta knows, as his custom, he asks Sravanas who are the sons of Brahmins, pious and righteous people, also called the twice-born. Their wives are Sravanis and they report the sins of women who come there. They report all both openly and in confidence. These reporters know the three sins committed by sinners, in thought, word and action. The Sravanas and their wives have authority vested in them all, whether mortal or immortal. They speak only truth. If a sinner should please them by sincere, honest and humble account of their own sins, they tend to become charitable. By reporting the misdeeds of sinners, these indirectly become dispensers of pain, anguish and humiliation. The activities (of man or woman) are constantly under watch by the elements, by the sun and the moon, day and night, dawn and dusk. The whole retinue of Yama knows all. Then the sinner is produced before Yama and has an audience of the frightful Lord, his buffalo

mount, his huge body and hand holding a rod. He roars like a cloud which is dark like lamp-black, with weapons that gleam like lightning having two and thirty arms. His body extends up to three yojanas. His eyes look like deep wells. His mouth agape shows frightful fangs. His eyes are frightening red and his nose is long and appears sharp. The sinner trembles in fear. Having no charity in the account of his deeds, he knows what his lot would be and shakes miserably. Chitragupta, at his Lord, Yama's command, speaks to the *paapis*, who keep weeping bitterly for the by-gones and their karma.

Shlok 25-30

Chitragupta upbraids all *paapis* / sinners and asks them as to why they committed such grave sins. He harangues to them saying that because of their egotism, pride and lust they committed extremely grave sins. They enjoyed committing sins and now they must suffer torments of many kinds. Merely turning their face away now would not help them in any way. The consequence of sins must be suffered with no exception. Yama's justice is equitable: he makes no distinction between the weak and the strong or the rich and the poor.

Shlok 31-59

Listening to the words of Chitragupta the sinners grieve remembering their deeds. They are struck silent and motionless. Yamadharmaraja pronounces the decrees of punishments. The servitors taunt the *paapis*

to proceed to the places allotted for their torments. They beat them severely. Prachanda, Chandaka and other servitors in the abode of Yama bind them and take them all in one noose towards hell. They arrive at a point where there is a huge tree covering the whole of five *yojanas*. It blazes with fire. The *paapis* are bound to the frightful tree head downwards and roughed up. The *paapis* wail burning in the heat and suffering severe pain. The sinners are hanged by huge silk-cotton trees. They cringe seeking forgiveness and implore compassion without avail. No mercy is shown to them. They are beaten with sharp spear-heads and beaten with maces, pestles and other such weapons. The *paapis* just swoon but even then the servitors do not stop railing at them. They ask the wretched as to why they could not give even water to the thirsty. They committed shameless acts of unkindness. They never fed anyone hungry, not even a dog or an animal or a crow. They did not make offering of water as tarpan for their parents and forefathers. They never contemplated on Yama or Chitragupta and repeated the *mantra*, incantation addressing the God of wealth. They never undertook pilgrimages to mitigate their evil deeds. They never worshipped deities and never showed kindness to anyone: man, bird or beast. They did nothing by way of offering service. Now they have to eat the fruit of their sins and suffer all kinds of punishment. “We have no way of being kind to you! O Sinners,” they say. Only Lord Hari or Iswara has the competence to forgive the sinners. As for

themselves they can only punish them. Thus explaining there was more beating. The *paapis* collapse to the ground cutting their limbs on the sharp leaves around and under them and are bitten by ferocious dogs. The mouths of the *paapis* left open are filled with dust by the tormentors. They beat the wicked sinners with hammers. Some of the *paapis* are sawn with saws just as wood is sawn. Some are chopped into two after being placed on the ground with sharp axes. Some are half-buried in pits. They would not be able to move. Then they are pierced in the head with sharp arrows. Some are squeezed in a machine like sugar-cane in a crusher. Some are just smelted like metallic ore when they are made to take punishment with blazing fires all around. Some are dipped into sizzling butter and some are thrown into boiling oil. Some are thrown in the way of rogue elephants with their feet and hands tied up. The punishments meted out are of frightful variety: some are thrown into wells, some are thrown down from mountain tops and some are cast away into deep pits infested with worms and insects which feed on them mercilessly. The *paapis* are pecked at by birds of prey with beaks formidable and frightful to look at. Vultures eat their eyes and scratch their faces. Sometimes the sinners have to listen to the angry demands of people who lent them money saying that they deserved the punishments in hell. The servitors of Yama tear off pieces of flesh from the sinner with horrid pincers. The *paapis* quarrel among themselves and are taken to more frightful hells like Tamisra. Hells

are situated in different regions where different kinds of punishments are given according to the depth of the individual sins. These are indescribably painful.

Shlok 60-64

Sri Hari tells his bird mount Garuda that the number of hells stand at eighty-four lakhs. Out of these twenty-one are the most dreadful and fear-inspiring. The twenty-one *narakas* have different names for each one of them. They are:

1. Tamisra (full of darkness)
2. Lohanshanku (with iron spears all around)
3. Mahauravashalmali (horrid silk cotton tree)
4. Raurava (terrible)
5. Kudmala (blossoming like a flower)
6. Kalasutraka (the thread of death)
7. Puti mrittika (foul-smelling mud or clay)
8. Sanghata (accumulated one)
9. Lohitoda (weights of heavy metal)
10. Savisha (with poison, poisonous)
11. Sampratapana (burning)
12. Mahaniraya (the great exit – the way out)
13. Kaka (crow)
14. Uluka (owl)
15. Sanjivana (living together)

16. Mahapatha (the great way)
17. Avechi (un-remitting)
18. Andha Tamisra (thick blinding darkness)
19. Kumbhipaka (baked clay pot)
20. Sampratapana (burning, scorching heat)
21. Tapan (very hot).

The sinners in these hells are also afflicted with various dreadful diseases.

Shlok 65-71

The *paapis* here have no redeeming qualities in them at all and they have to suffer the torments till the end of the eon (Yuga). Men and women who are guilty of adultery suffer different kinds of torments in terrible hells like Tamisra, Andha Tamisra and Raurava. The one who cares only for himself and does not take care of his family suffers the most after his death. When he is out of his mortal body, which is fattened at the expense of other creatures or men and women goes alone into hell with no company at all there. Like one physically handicapped robbed of his wealth, the sinner suffers intense hell according to his deeds. The *paapi* who supports his family by foul and evil ways is thrown into Andha Tamisra, the quarter of thick darkness. After undergoing torments he comes back to earth, purified as another being.

4. TORMENTS FOR DIFFERENT SINS

Brief Summary

Having listened to Sri Hari's narration with rapt attention Garuda asks his Lord further to tell him as to which torments would sinners be put to for what evil doings of theirs. In this chapter Sri Hari describes again the specific punishments meted out to sinners for particular sins. Once again the reader gets a further description of Yama's way, what the servitors of the Deity of Death do and how cruel the torments would be for various kinds of sin. A careful reading of this would surely act as a deterrent for one to desist from sin. Thus it helps one to keep to the path of good conduct and righteousness.

Shlok 1-3

Garuda asks Sri Hari to tell him why sinners fall into the river Vaitarani. He also requests his lord to let him know the specific torments ordered for particular sins committed by the arrogant and the wicked. Sri Hari tells Garuda that those who take pleasure in performing wicked deeds and those who turn away from God would go from hell to hell, from torment to torment and from one fright to another. There are four gateways on four sides. While the good and the well-behaved go through the east, west and north gates, the sinners get into Yama's city through the gate on the south.

Shlok 4-12

The Vaitarani is on the southern way. Killers of Brahmins, alcoholics, killers of women and those who are responsible for infanticide and foeticide and stealers of children's money, those who do not repay their debts, those who are wicked, who shun good—all these go in the way of Yama. The list is long. Those who take pleasure in criticising, those who hate pilgrimages, despise good and prefer wickedness, those who speak lightly of scriptures and Vedas and the various Vedangas go to horrible hells to suffer the torments they deserve. Those who take pleasure in seeing others suffer, inflict pain and speak wickedly and are foul-mouthed are sinners who must get torments in hell. Those who do not pay heed to good advice and wise counsel and those who violate the rules laid down by shastras would suffer tortures in hell. Basically, all those who stray from the path of rectitude and righteousness deliberately for their pleasure out of arrogance and pride are sinners.

Shlok 13-24

The servitors take sinners beating them all the way towards the river Vaitarani. Those wretched people who kill their parents, teachers or *gurus* and the highly revered ones like sadhus and sants fall into the river. Also those who desert their wives though they are good and virtuous sink in the river. Those who make false allegations against the good and malign them fall in the river. Breaking a vow made to a twice-born makes

sinner fall in the river. Those who turn away a Brahmin having invited him suffers the same end. He also falls in the river who takes away what he has given or takes away one's means of livelihood, or makes hurdles for performance of Yagas. The one who occupies the land of others and ploughs up grazing pastures falls into the Vaitarani. A Brahmin who eats non-vegetarian food, sells liquor and sleeps with a woman of a low caste or kills animals for sense gratification falls in the river. A Shudra who studies the Vedas or drinks the milk of the tawny cow or wears the sacred thread or sleeps with a Brahmin woman falls in Vaitarani. In short, all those who transgress or violate the rules of conduct as laid in shastras come to this terrible end of falling and sinking in the river Vaitarani.

Shlok 25-33

Having come upto the river and reached Yama's abode, some sinners are thrown into the river at the command of Yama. Vaitarani is the foremost of the hells. Sinners who have no merit, who have not performed ceremonies as prescribed for the body alone go to the huge silk-cotton tree on the river-bank. Those who give false witness, earn money by deceit and steal to make a living, cut down trees and damage gardens, neglect vows to make pilgrimages and violate widows are beaten near the silk-cotton tree. The servitors throw those who fall at being beaten into the river. Those who break the laws of the moral code, guilty of avarice, attached over much to sense-gratification, go to hell.

Ingratitude and hypocrisy also lead one to hell. People who damage or destroy water bodies in public use go to hell.

Shlok 34-58

Sinners are those who neglect the family, servants and teachers. They too, like those who neglect their duty to their forefathers; devatas taken out in precession are thrown into hell. Sinners obstructing highways and roads are hurled into hell. Those who are engrossed in sense-gratification to the extent of neglecting worship to deities like Shiva, Hari, Surya, Ganesha and others suffer hell fires as those who disrespect their teachers. A Brahmin who takes a harlot to bed falls into a mean, low condition. If he begets children to a low-caste woman he is downgraded and suffers hell. Those who are cantankerous, those who invite and enjoy quarrels and sow dissensions among the twice born, rot in hell. The sin of having intercourse with a woman who is with child and is helpless would attract the torments of hell fire. In the same way consorting with a woman during her periods, in water and on occasions like performing Shraadh, rites of offering oblation to the dead, make the sinner undergo tortures of all kinds in hell. Those who throw their excrement into water, fire, a garden or on to a path suffer in hell. Makers of weapons like swords, bows and arrows and other such and sell them to be used for wrong reasons would go to hell. Businessmen who sell hides and skins, women who sell hair and vendors of poisons go to hell. Men

and women who do not have compassion and hate good and punish the innocent go to hell. Sinners are also those who do not feed a hungry guest when the food is cooked and ready. They would go to hell. Harming and killing creatures are sins and the sinners go to hell. Those who undertake to go on fast or other observances and violate the vows out of an urge for sense-gratification would go to hell. Those who slight or disrespect the guru who teaches them the knowledge of God and other world and the people who read out scriptures to audiences would go to hell. Those who give the cold shoulder to or betray friends would surely go to hell. Those who disturb marriages or processions taking out deities during festive occasions go to hell from which there is no return or release (Aveechi). Incendiaries that torch houses, villages or woods would be baked in pits of raging fire. When with burnt limbs, the sinner appeals for mercy, they are taken into forests where the leaves are like swords and gash them all over their bodies. When the sinner suffers, Yama's servitors heckle him and ask him to enjoy the shades of cool comfort in that forest when the sinner begs for water out of extreme thirst and a parched tongue he is given boiling oil to drink. They taunt, heckle and ask him to drink that as his food. The sinner wails pitifully. Utterly exhausted he would not be able to speak at all. Sri Hari tells the Lord of Birds that such are the torments for foul sinners. In fact, he tells him that all the *shastras* mention these.

Shlok 59-64

Thus tortured in many ways, sinners, both men and women, are roasted in hell till the end of the eon, Yuga. Having experienced all the torments as per their own sins, the sinners return to earth as creatures of various kinds or as trees, plants, rocks or grasses, insects birds, animals and fish. There are eighty-four thousand creatures on the earth. These take birth according to their deserts and deeds in the earlier births.

In course of time, these too slowly acquire birth as humans. First they have human birth but in a lowly condition and if they still commit sins the punishments in hell would become unavoidable. When punished again for their sins, they would be struck with dreadful diseases like oozing leprosy or with blindness or with insufferable maladies. These sufferers are marked out and considered sinners in their earlier births also.

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5. MARKS ON SINNERS**Brief Summary**

Here there is a lucid detailing of the various manifestations of different sins committed by the sinner on his person and appearance. Each sin leaves a mark on the sinner. Sri Hari's listing of these to Garuda, at the latter's request, offers an extremely useful study for man to be wary and avoid sinning to ensure joy in the life to come.

Shlok 1-48

Garuda entreats his Lord, Keshava, to tell him in detail as to what signs appear in the man who commits a particular sin and what sins lead man to take a particular birth.

The Supreme Lord, Sri Hari told Garuda that He would list in detail the sins that manifest in different signs and how the sin determines the paapi's subsequent birth.

For easy remembrance the following tabular form would be useful

	Killer of a virgin (kanya)	leads to leprosy or birth as an outcaste.
	Killing a woman and destroying	birth as a savage.
	Intercourse with a sagotra woman	leads to birth as a eunuch.
	Intercourse with the preceptor's wife	leads to skin disease.
	Pious man eating meat	suffers disease or becomes a drunkard with discoloured teeth.
Sin	A Brahmin eating forbidden things or food	Manifestation or form in subsequent birth would be born with a big-belly.
Killing a Brahmin	Eating sweets without sharing with anybody	leads to suffering birth as a Chandala with swollen neck with consumption.
Killing a cow, 'Shraddha'	Offering impure food at	leads to birth as a spotted leper.
	Insulting a teacher	humpback, leads to birth as an epileptic.
	Hating vedas and shastras	leads to birth as one jaundiced.
	Bearing false witness	suffers dumbness.
	Breaking the "Pangkti" (meal row)	makes one to birth as one-eyed.

Causing hurdles to a marriage	leads to birth with no lips.
Stealing a book	leads to birth as one blind.
Striking, beating a cow	leads to lameness.
Lying, speaking falsehood	leads to stammer.
Listening to lies	leads to deafness.
One who poisons	is born insane.
Torching/setting or property aflame	leads to baldness.
Selling flesh	leads to bad luck.
Eating flesh of other beings	brings sickness.
Stealing jewels	birth in a low caste.
Stealing gold	leads to birth with diseased nails.
Stealing metal	leads to birth in poverty.
Stealing food	leads to birth as a rat.
Stealing grain	leads to birth as a louse.
Stealing water	leads to birth as a chataka bird.

Stealing poison	leads to birth as a scorpion.
Stealing vegetables and leaves	leads to birth as a peacock.
Stealing perfumes	leads to birth as a muskrat.
Stealing honey	leads to birth as a gadfly.
Stealing flesh	leads to birth as a vulture.
Stealing salt	leads to birth as an ant.
Stealing betel, fruit, or flowers	leads to birth as a forest monkey.
Stealing shoes, grass and cotton	leads to birth from a sheep.
Robbing, or hunting	leads to birth as a goat in a butcher's house.
Committing suicide drinking poison	leads to birth as a black serpent on a hill.
Having limitless desire	leads to birth as an elephant in a forest.
Not making offerings to deities, or eating all kinds of foods	leads to birth as a tiger in a forest.

A Brahmin not reciting Gayatri, not meditating at dusk or being outwardly pious but really vicious	leads to birth as a crane.
A Brahmin, who is officiating for another, unfit to perform a fire ritual, or eating without grace	leads to birth as a village pig, an ass, or a crow
Spitting on the teacher or arguing	leads to birth as a brahmarakshas (a demon) in waterless forest.
Not giving away to a Brahmin what is promised, and not being hospitable	leads to birth as a howling burning demon.
Deceiving a friend	leads to birth as a vulture.
Cheating while selling something	leads to birth as an owl.
Speaking ill of a caste	leads to birth as a pigeon in a forest
Destroying hope and affection-deserting a wife	leads to birth as a wild goose.
Hating mother, father or teacher or quarreling with brother or sister	leads to destruction in the womb many times

Running away with a lover,	makes a woman's birth as a house lizard or a kid of female serpent
Woman abusing her mother-in-law or father-in-law, or scolding her husband	leads to birth as a louse.
Marrying a woman of his <i>gotra</i> and breaking his lineage	leads to birth as a hyena or a porcupine or from a bear.
Marrying in lust an acetic (woman)	leads to birth as a desert demon.
Consorting with a girl before puberty	leads to birth as a huge snake.
Coveting a teacher's wife	leads to birth as a chameleon.
Going with a king's wife	leads to birth as a donkey.
Committing an unnatural act of sex	leads to birth as a pig.
Having excessive passion, or sexual desire	leads to birth as a horse.
Feeding on the 11 th day offerings	leads to birth as a dog.

Working for wages as a Devalaka-temple priest	leads to birth as a cock or hen
Worshiping deities for money - (being a Devalaka)	leads to become unfit for offering oblations
Stealing gold	leads to birth as a worm, insect or bird
Killing a Brahmin,	leads to birth as an ass, camel or she-buffalo.
Stealing another man's wife, Stealing the trust money, or robbing a Brahmin	leads to birth as a <i>brahmaraksha</i> , Brahmin-demon
Enjoying a Brahmin's wealth by guile etc.	leads to afflictions to the whole of one's family for many generations.
(There is no person who can digest a Brahmin's money obtained immorally, dishonestly or wickedly. Armies etc. maintained with a Brahmin's money wrongly obtained would crumble in battle.)	
Appropriating temple property	leads to the ruin of the family.
Neglecting or deserting Brahmin, giving away money to one not deserving	leads to birth as a blind man and as beggar.

Taking another's plot of land	leads to birth as a worm in excrement and living like that for 69000 years.
Taking back what is given in Charity	leads to going to hell and suffering till <i>pralaya</i> (deluge).
Not protecting the property which is transferred in charity to a Brahmin	leads to birth as a lame dog.

Shlok 48-57

The reward or the merit (*punya*) obtained by providing support to a Brahmin is equal to the fund of *punya* obtained by the charity of a lakh of cows. Having listed thus sins and the corresponding births or punishments a sinner attracts, Sri Hari tells Garuda that one's *karmas* contribute to and decide as to which body a sinner would get into.

The sinners having suffered in hell for long take birth in the world again to work out their residual sins in the forms mentioned above. The sinners may have to spend many hundreds of lives as animals carrying burdens. After as a bird, the sinner suffers wind, rain and heat and works out his *karma*, he attains birth as a human being since the sin is lived out. Man is born in due course when a man and woman copulate. Having

suffered on earth also he has to work out his *karma* to become pure again deserving a higher birth. Birth and Death come as a cycle and this Wheel or cycle is there in all Kingdoms of beings. The wheel of time goes round and round and mortals are in the cycle being born, living and dying all in accordance with their individual *karma*.

Charity is the key to elevation and upward movement in the order of beings. One who is stingy and does not practice charity, compassion and merit-yielding qualities sinks into sin and goes to hell. After working out his *karma* by suffering torments, he takes birth again and again and again. *Karma* the action of every sort has a fruit. Good deeds earn merit (*Punya*) and the bad yields (*Paapa*) sin. For all deeds, for all *karma*, man has the fruit: to enjoy or suffer according to his own deeds. *Karmic* suffering in hell can come to an end only by acquiring *punya* by performing good deeds. *Karma* as fruit can never pass unexperienced.

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6. JEEVAS' TRAVAILS IN THE WOMB

Brief Summary

Sri Hari describes to Garuda how the beings who return from various hells enter the wombs of women on the earth. The *jeevas* suffer great agonies in the womb. Attaining birth as a human being is difficult and thereafter the being must try to elevate one's self. This is the briefest of all the chapters in the *Puranas*.

Shlok 1-15

Garuda asks Sri Hari in humility as to how the *jeeva* suffers while in the mother's womb. Vishnu describes how a human being comes into the world. It is by the union of man and woman. In three days during the middle period of menstruation, the being is formed. In these three days if the *retas* and *rajas* get united on the first day, if the being is born, it is as an outcaste, on the second day as a killer of a Brahmin and on the third day as a washerman or washer woman. In the ages past long ago Indra killed Vrittasara, a Brahmin and earned the dreadful sin of Brahmin killing. He prayed to and performed a penance to propitiate Brahma who divided the heinous sin into four parts and arranged for their stay in the *rajas* of woman. The being or *jeeva* in one night becomes a lump in the mother's womb; after four nights, the *jeeva* becomes round like a bubble and in ten days gets the size of a jujub fruit. In one month the being's head is formed, after two months the shoulders, after three months, nails, hair,

skin and genitals and after four months the bodily fluids are formed. After the fifth the *jeeva* gets hunger and thirst. By the end of the sixth month the being is enveloped by *jaravaayu* (we call it amniotic fluid now but it was considered a kind of wind here) and by the end of seventh month gets movement. The *jeeva* is now grown enough to feel pain. This is the result of the mother eating foods tasting pungent bitter, sour etc. Now it is caged in the womb like a parrot in a cage. At this stage the being has a recollection of the many previous births and goes on sobbing in grief for the many sins the *jeeva* committed. He folds his hands though bound and goes on imploring Vishnu in pathetic tones for release. Right from the seventh month the *jeeva* is tossed in the womb by the winds in the uterus. He sends up prayers to the supreme Lord, Vishnu.

Shlok 16-23

Awareness dawning on him at this stage, the *jeeva* sends up prayers to the consort of the goddess Lakshmi, the destroyer of evil to be compassionate to him. He submits in repentance that he was swayed by ‘*maya*’, appearance or created illusion regarding relationships etc., and was a victim of his *ahankara*, ego-sense. In the mistaken faith in wife and children and the pleasures of family life he did misdeeds. Now, if and when released from the womb he would surrender himself to His command and will. He tearfully submits to the Lord that he has been wallowing in urine and excrement. He wonders in anguish as to how to

secure liberation from the cage. He very humbly seeks refuge in Him and prays for freedom from the birth and death cycle. He would rather stay there in the womb resorting to the refuge of His feet.

Shlok 24-43

Vishnu tells Garuda how the sinner in the womb comes thrown out by the ‘winds’ of parturition through the birth canal of the woman. He comes out head first and is almost breathless in the changed atmosphere and surroundings. He has no knowledge at all. If one’s mind were to be blank like that, who would not be liberated! Vishnu’s ‘*maya*’ bewilders and befuddles the new born. He experiences the miseries of the infant since he is totally dependent. His wishes cannot be expressed and none around understands him. He lies in a bed he wets and messes up intermittently. Though bitten by mosquitoes etc. there is nothing he can do except bawl out. He grows from infancy into childhood and from adolescence to adulthood. Youth is the period when man or the *jeeva* acquires bad habits and not too worthy behavior because of his acquired tendencies down the earlier births. He finds evil company attractive because of that and seeks consorting with woman in lust. The seductive guiles of females captivate him because of his eagerness to seek sense-gratification. The five senses lead the deer, the elephant, the bird, the bee and fish to their own death. It is because of being attracted by the music of the flute that the deer runs to go near it and gets trapped. The elephant is drawn by the loud trumpeting of the female elephant

and falls in the ditch dug by its catcher. The glowworm touches the flame out of enticement and gets burnt. The fish is attracted to the bait on the hook and swallows it to be caught and killed. If a single sense is enough to cause the destruction of a bird beast etc. how can a human being, being led astray by five senses at the same time, escape being killed? Man, out of his greed and lust wants to get what cannot be reached or obtained. His ignorance makes him haughty, emotional and impassioned. The evil grows in him if it is not constantly checked and held under control. As a lover, man loses his sense of proportion and brings down ruin on himself. Attachment to sense objects and eagerness for sense-gratification in methods unacceptable and evil, make man lose the wonderful opportunity to go upwards towards liberation from birth-cycle and *mukti*, salvation. He lets go a good opportunity which could come only after several births and many human births. To be born as a Brahmin is a great opportunity and sad it is that such a one seeks degradation by his obstinacy and disobedience to the moral code and righteous behavior taught by the scriptures, the holy and the learned. As a result of arrogance and ignorance man commits many sins and towards the end of his life falls prey to a variety of diseases. After death he goes to hell again. Persons of this type, sinners, can never get liberation. Sri Hari asks Garuda in his love and compassion as to what more he wants to know.

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7. INDISPENSABLE OBSEQUIES

Brief Summary

In this chapter Sri Maha Vishnu tells Garuda as to how even those who are not offered pindas and tarpans by sons too may get release from their '*preata*' forms if the obsequial ceremonies are performed by some others, by anybody in fact. To cite an example, Sri Hari relates to his mount, the Lord of Birds, the tale of the King Bhabruvahana, who causes the release of a Vysya by performing the obsequial rites for him. Sudeva remained a preata (a spirit before obsequial rites are performed for his release) though he had been a very virtuous, charitable and compassionate one. He had no sons and there was none to perform the rites and cause his release. The tale of Bhabruvahana and the Vysya Sudeva bear evidence to the fact that even those without a son can still get release from the '*preata*' form.

Shlok 1-16

(Having heard Sri Hari's narration of how the sinful, who were not offered rites, would go to hell, the mighty Garuda trembled with fear). Suta muni continued his narration to the assemblage of seers and sages in Naimisharanya. Garuda, trembling like a leaf, asks his Lord another question, the answer to which would benefit all men. What means are there for sinners to avoid or escape punishments in hell? These sin out

of their ignorance and get attached to sense-gratification. Are there any *puranas* which have dealt with the ways of attaining the condition of bliss?

Shlok 5-14

Sri Hari told Tarkshya, the glorious bird Garuda that the answer to what he had asked would be a favour for all men and continues His answer. Those without sons and those who are not offered tarpanas etc would roam as ‘preats’. Those who have sons who are righteous and are on the right path would be liberated from ‘*preata*’ form. Begetting a son is important. Every effort must be made. Listening to the *Purana* Harivamsa, performing Shata Chandi Yaga or worshiping Shiva with great devotion could be some of those efforts. The vedas declared that by seeing the face of a son one would succeed in discharging his duty to his forefathers. If one touches a grandson, the person would be released from his three-fold debt. With the help of his progeny, grandsons and great grandsons he would go to heaven. Illegitimate sons only drag one down and so one must avoid consorting with a woman of a lower caste. A legitimate son, born out of wedlock of a man and a woman of the same caste is eligible to offer pindas and tarpans to his dead father. Even if someone else (other than a son) offers pindas the ‘*preata*’ would be released from that form. So saying Sri Hari gives Garuda the example of gifts from a human body (as opposed to ‘*preata*’).

Shlok 17-48

Long ago, in Tretayug there was a great city called Mahodaya ruled by a Raja called Babhruvahana. He was righteous, strong and very powerful. He was very kind and performed his kingly duties befitting a *kshatriya*. He protected the good and punished the wicked. Once he went for hunting along with his retinue. The King chanced to see a deer and shot an arrow. The injured deer escaped leaving a trail of blood behind in the grass. The King went on and on and he became hungry and the thirsty. His followers lagged behind and lost him. The tired King saw a lake and had a cool bathe and drank refreshing water. Thus Babhruvahana came into the forest and tried to rest under a tree. He saw a ‘pret with a dreadful appearance. But the departed one spoke in a very soft and polite way. “O great King armed as a hunter! I am really fortunate in being able to see you in the wilderness. When I was alive I did all good deeds and led a life of righteousness. I was a *vysya* and my name was Sudeva.” The King was surprised to see the black open-mouthed one and asked him as to what he had done to deserve that. Sudeva narrated how he had none to offer pinda, tarpan or any other oblations and as such had to remain a horrid ‘preata’. He did not fail in his duties, pious and worldly but not having a son he came to be in that wretched condition. He prayed the King who appeared to be merciful and compassionate to perform the rites required to liberate him. If the King performed the sixteen monthly ‘*shraddhas*’ at least then, he would

be able to shed the form of a 'preata' Sudeva, after making his entreaties, offered to gift Babhruvahana, the King, a precious and invaluable diamond. He pleaded for mercy telling the King as to how he had been starved and left parched in spite of the forest having sweet water and ripe fruit to satisfy his needs. He appealed to the King to perform for him the rite called Narayana *bali* with the *mantras* from the Veda which would destroy his pathetic condition of roaming about as a heinous and horrid 'preata'

Shlok 49-56

The *preata* described the method of performing the rite called *Narayanabali*. This is a performance in the worship of Vishnu, the one who destroys the condition of being a preata. Two pieces of gold earned honestly should go into the making of Narayana's image. Then the image has to be dressed in a pair of yellow clothes and washed and decorated with ornaments and then be worshipped in a specified way. Then the form of Vishnu is to be put to the east of the image, Madhusudana to the south, Vamadeva to the west and Gadadhara, wielder of the mace, to the north. Maheswara and Pitamaha are to be in the middle. All these should be worshipped with *chandana* (sandal wood paste) and flowers. Then the one performing *bali* or sacrifice should perform the ceremony to the upper body, the form of the one above the preata. He has to cultivate a state of mind where there is no greed or anger and perform *vrushotsarjana* the release of a

bull. Then the one who performs the rite has to give away thirteen sets of pots to Brahmins and make a gift of a bed. Then a pot of water has to be consecrated for the departed.

Shlok 57-63

Listening to all this attentively King Bhabruvahana asked the preata for the details of preparing the pot which act would secure release for the *preata*. Then the preata, the departed one, gave the King the details of the good gifts which release the 'preata' from his horrible form. The pot for the departed is described as the destroyer of all evil. It is impossible for a preata to find and get one who would be able to drive away his evil condition. A pot of pure gold needs to be consecrated to the trinity: Brahma, Vishnu and Eesha and then has to be given away as a gift to a deserving, righteous, twice-born (Brahmin). Even a hundred gifts other than this would be of little use. One should worship the pot: the middle being Brahma, the top and the bottom being Vishnu and Shankara and the neck the Guardians of the universe and then fill it with milk and ghee and give it away in charity. This gift made earns great merit, if it is done with devotion and faith.

Shlok 64-69

Sri Hari went on. While the King had been holding a conversation with the preata the King's army arrived there with elephants, horses and chariots. Then the *preata* vanished giving the King the invaluable diamond.

After returning to his city, the King performed the ceremonies and rites to the upper body, *oordhva deha*. The '*preata*' (the departed one) was released immediately by the gifts and attained the higher world.

When a stranger performs *shraddha*, if the '*preata*' gets release, how much good would it be if one's own son performs them! The one who listens to this holy tale being read, or reads it himself, would never go to the 'departed condition' or become a *preata* even though he might have committed some sins.

* * *

8. PIOUS OBLIGATIONS

Brief Summary

Soota Muni continued his narration to the assemblage of seers in Naimisharanya. Garuda prayed to Sri Hari again offering salutations to clear his doubts about rites, performances and deeds relating to *aparakarmas* in more detail. This chapter describes what a son should do in his filial duty and pious obligation to his parents when they are in old age so as to facilitate their going to higher worlds. Indirectly, here is an account of the various offerings for the dying.

Shlok 1-2

Garuda prays to Sri Maha Vishnu to relate to him the rites to be performed for those who have done good and how they are to be performed.

Sri Hari is happy that He has been asked for information which would be relevant and useful for all. Then He describes the rites to be performed for those who were righteous and pious.

Shlok 3-16

The pious one, in his ripe old age, his body suffering from disease would know that death would soon take him away. At that time he must worship Salagrama, the sacred stone, a symbol of Shiva and Vishnu too. Prayers and worship must be offered in the prescribed form using perfumes, flowers, lamps and many items of sweet food. In this connection

special charity should be extended to Brahmins who chant *ashthakshari* and *panchakshari* incantations to propitiate the deities. The utterance of the very name of Vishnu or Shiva would make the entire area around sanctified. When relatives surround the dead body, they should not weep or wail. They should utter God's various names repeatedly. The wise and knowing-ones constantly remember the names. Only those who do this act of love for the dead one can be considered real relatives. In this context Sri Hari cites the instance of Ajamila the sinner who gets sanctified for merely calling out his son's name Hari. Even without knowing that he is doing the right thing or the pious thing when death is approaching him he called "Hari!". This very utterance sanctified him, a sinner. Sri Hari thus destroys sin even if His name is uttered inadvertently. Yama's command it is not to bring to him anyone who dies with Hari's name on his lips.

Shlok 17-36

Uttering a string of His names is worship indeed. The names are Atchyuta, Keshava, Rama, Narayana, Krishna, Damodara, Vasudeva, Hari, Sridhara, Madhava, Gopika Vallabha and Lord of Janaki, Sri Ramachandra. Yama's order is that only sinners-who always shun the lotus feet of Hari-held in the highest esteem and reverence by paramahansas, the purest and noblest, and the most knowing-ones are to be brought and produced before Him. The *kinkaras*, servitors are instructed to bring those who never uttered Hari's

name, who never bowed to Him or offered obeisance to Vishnu.

Sri Hari tells Garuda that singing His glories bestows His grace on the singer. That is the best expiation for any or all sins of the wicked, and even those in utter ignorance and stupidity. For the sinner mere penance would be of no use since he has shunned Hari and turned away from Him. One who utters the name of Krishna would be free from all sins. He would never even in his dreams see the servitors of Yama. The person who towards the end of his life performs *goudaan* would never fall in the frightful river Vaitarani. Merely uttering "*Nandanandana*" is an expiation of all sins.

For this reason *smaran* and *chintan* of Krishna's name is essential to absolve one's self of all sins. Repeating the thousand names of Vishnu, Vishnu *Sahasranama* and reading or listening to Srimad Bhagavadgita, would wash away all sins. There are certain observances too like fasting on the eleventh days of the lunar *pakshas* (fifteen day periods) which earn great merit like *gangasnaana*, bathing in the Holy Ganges. Giving away in charity to a twice-born (Brahmin) a cow along with its calf, with food, *ghee*, clarified butter and gold would save a man from being thrown into hell. A man must give away according to his own wishes, with his son's approval money, gold or property to deserve God's grace. The sons too have the pious duty of not coveting the father's money

earned by his own hard and honest work. The quality of a good son is also described. The son would make all gifts necessary or expected of him to make his father's life happy here and also in the other world. While in ill-health or before death two gifts made by man are reckoned as the best and the indispensable. These are *ashtha daan* eight-fold charity of sesamum (*til*) and then things. The eight are *til* (sesamum), iron, gold, cotton, salt the seven grains or *saptadhaanyas*, a plot of land and cow. These charities wipe away the sins of the dying man during his last days. The *til daan*, charity of sesamum pleases *dev*, *danav* and *daityas*. Sesamum seeds are of three colours, white, black and brown. The charity of these would wipe away sins committed by *vak* (speech), *manas* (thought) and *karma* (deeds).

Shlok 37-44

Charity of iron earns merit to the dying man and this saves him from treading Yama's way or go anywhere near Yama's domain. This charity propitiates the weapons in Yama's hand like axe, threshing pestle, rod, sword or dagger all made of iron. Yama's servitors would be happy too with this gift. The names of these *kinkaras* are - Urana, Shyamasootra, Sundamarka, Udumbara, Sesa and Bala. Charity of gold is the most valued gift which would please the inhabitants of all the three worlds: Bhoo, Bhuvan and Swar worlds. Deities, sages and the courtiers in Yama's royal court too would be pleased. For this reason, the most

valuable offering or charity is gold, which would elevate the condition of the dead man. He would reach the Kingdom of joy, swarga and stay there for long. He would have rebirth as a King or one with wealth, learning and strength.

Shlok 45-51

By giving away cotton in charity, one would be liberated from the fear of Yama Kinkaras, servitors of Yama. By giving away iron, salt, sesamum and gold in charity all those like Chitrugupta, inhabiting Yama's city would be pleased and propitiated.

By giving away *sapta dhanyas*, seven types of grain, rice, barley, wheat, red gram, black grain, *kaakun kangini*, and Bengal gram.

Shlok 52-57

The sages and seers observed and believed that charity of land, the size of a cow's hide along with the prescribed rites would save a man even from the sin of killing a Brahmin, saving him from *brahmahatyapaap*. The sins committed while being a King cannot be washed away-not by vows, pilgrimages or any other charity, except the charity of land. The person who gives away in charity a bit of land filled with grain would go direct to Indra's Kingdom. He would be worshipped even by divine beings and demons. Gifts or charity of any thing else would be of little avail. The merit of giving away land goes on increasing day by day. A King who does not give any

land in charity to the twice- born would be born as a beggar without the shelter of even a hut in a hamlet. A King who out of arrogance and pride does not give away land in charity shall have to remain in hell as long as Sesha holds up and supports the earth.

For this reason, Kings must make gifts of land. Others get the same merit by giving away a cow in charity. There are three kinds of hells and the charity of cows would make a sinner go beyond all hells beyond Vaitarani. One should give away three cows in charity, one to overcome death, one to redeem himself from debts and the third to obtain salvation.

Shlok 58-68

By making a solemn gift, or giving away in charity a milk- giving, tawny cow with its calf to a scholarly and pious Brahmin, known for his righteousness, one is sanctified and absolved of all sins. The sins may have been committed at any stage, in youth, manhood or old age-either in this birth or any of the earlier births. The sins may have been committed at any time, morning, afternoon, or night. They may have been any relating to, speech, thought or action. The gift of a cow would release the sinners from the totality of his sins. The gift of one cow or giving away in charity one cow while one is agile would equal the charity of a hundred cows when given in old age, while dying or while laid up with sickness. Such a solemn charity, if made to a person who has bathed in sacred waters like those in the Holy Ganges would raise the worth of the

good deed a thousand fold bringing endless merit both to the giver and the recipient. Receiving such charity, the righteous person, a Vedic scholar who made many offerings to deities and who does not eat any food cooked by others, would never be tainted, even if he receives as a charity the whole earth covered with diamonds. The cow when and if given in charity to an unworthy person leads the giver to hell. What is more, it has its effect in causing trouble to that undeserving person and his progeny for a hundred generations. The charity of one cow is to be made to one recipient never more than one. The reason is that he may sell it. Even sharing a cow with his own family would result in trouble for the recipient.

Shlok 69-77

Garuda is told further by Sri Hari about '*gaudaan*' which is a good means to cross the river Vaitarani. The cow given away in charity should be decorated. It may be black or reddish. Its horn tips should be covered with gold, its hooves with silver. It should be milked in a vessel made of copper. While milking it, the cow should be covered with a black cloth. A little bell should be hung round its neck. The copper vessel into which the milk is collected is to be placed on a cotton quilt or sheet. Over the cow a golden image of Yama is to be placed along with an iron rod and a bronze vessel with *ghee* in it too. A raft has to be made with sugar canes, tying them with silken ropes and a vessel with a hole, filled with water and then one

has to present the cow rafter and all to the Brahmin along with clothes and ornaments. While reciting the appropriate *mantras* one should place a foot on the raft and send up prayers to Sri Hari.

Shlok 77-90

The prayers are as follow:

“O! Supreme Being, compassionate one, merciful to all those who seek refuges in Your lotus feet, You are the only one to save all from Bhava Sagara, the ocean of earthly existence owing to the waves of sorrow and remorse. “O Brahmin, the very form of Vishnu, elevate me and uplift me for I presented this cow to you. O Vaitarani! my salutations to you. I desire to cross the hundred *yojana* river! May I live in the midst of cows, cows before, behind and in my heart too! May the goddess of affluence, Maha Lakshmi, who sustains the entire universe, remove my sins in the divine form of the cow!” Hands folded in supplication and uttering *mantras* propitiating Yama the person should give away the cow to the Brahmin, revered as twice-born. The one who observes this rite along with the prescribed gifts being given away goes straight into the court of the King of Justice, Yamadharmaraja. The Vaitarani observance is obligatory whether one is sound in body or afflicted with disease. The charity of giving away a cow is so efficacious that for the man performing the rite, the river Vaitarani on Yama’s way would not even appear. For this reason, it is imperative for all seeking

absolution to give a cow in charity. The giving away of the cow and the observance and performance of the ceremonies and rites are best undertaken in sacred bathing-places, in times of eclipses or while crossing a river. These may be observed and performed at the passing of the Sun from one constellation to another; when the sun and the moon are on the opposite sides of the solstice and on Yuga, the last or penultimate day of the lunar month. Obtaining birth as a human being is considered the most valuable and most difficult. Only a human being, by adequate effort following the path of righteousness as per scriptures, can attain the condition of the highest bliss or salvation (*mukti*). The one who neglects the right path of rectitude comes to a bad end. One has to make use of the opportunity to go upward. Affluence, riches, wife, children, family, even the body itself are all transient. Human attachments to love, money etc. are only very short-lived. Man comes into this world alone and leaves it alone without carrying anything worldly with him. Realizing this man has to live only to find himself in a better birth in the life to come, the ultimate aim being self-realization and the unification with the absolute reality. What man carries along with him after his sojourn on this earth is the good and evil he has done yielding him *punya* and *paapa*. Since death is near, while one is healthy in the best of his youth, one must accumulate merit (*punya*) by performing good deeds to the best of one’s own ability and give away in charity according to one’s capacity.

Shlok 91

The charity of even a little money earned by one's own hand yields a good deal of merit when it is made at a time when the recipient needs it. He who gives away liberally goes happily and comfortably on Yama's way. Without this he would not be 'provided' to pass the way easily. Charity in this world makes the passage easy. What is more, one attains human birth only by one's own righteousness and acquired, accumulated punya (*merit*). Since everything is transient what is enduring, the acts of *punya*, have to be performed, and righteousness observed. The only near one is one's own soul. Realizing this one should give away one's own hand. Relatives are not stable. The moment a man breathes his last, they turn away, leaving the corpse on the ground. Nothing goes along with the dead one except his own righteousness. When the body is consigned to flames, the *karma* of the *jeeva* goes along with him. In this *bhavasagara* the ocean of sorrow in earthly life, no relation is stable. One's own *karma* determines the birth to come. Like logs carried away by the current of water, humans meet for a while: mother, son, father, kinsmen all come together only to be separated and never to meet again. As long as one has wealth and prosperity, one is welcome as relation, grandson or son. When one dies none of them takes a second look at the one gone. A person should fend for himself in the matter of acquiring *punya*. While one has wealth, to the extent of one's own capacity, one should perform acts of charity. Good things and

wealth one has now are the results of his merit, punya, earned earlier. Rectitude and righteousness yield real freedom and lasting joy. These are the result of faith in god. Faith and riches are not related. The poor man may have faith: the rich may not have any faith. Faith and wisdom go together. The stupid ones do not believe in anything except transient things. Sri Hari tells Garuda that He would accept with satisfaction and joy any offering made to Him out of devotion: a leaf, a flower, a fruit or even a little water. He adds that the size of a gift or offering or its value is of no consequence to Him, for what counts is only devotion. Even the heavenly beings admire and honour a righteous son who following the prescriptions of the scriptures and sages. He should make his ailing, old father give away wealth and objects of value in charity. If a son performs acts of charity and gives away solemn gifts from the money left to him by his father, his sons and grandsons are elevated. What one gives away with one's own hands has a hundred-fold merit. What is given through the father, mother, sister and brother produces merit exponentially. Those who are meritorious having a fund of *punya*, there would be no torments of hell and no fear of *yama kinkaras* during the last moments of the earthly life. Sri Hari tells Garuda that gifts of those sinners who are misers too and so do not make solemn even in their last days would come to great grief. Near relatives, sons, grandsons or brothers who do not give away in acts of charity acquire sin-the intensity of which is equal to that of killing a Brahmin.

9. DUTIES OF THOSE ON THE DEATH BED

Brief Summary

Garuda prayed to his Lord, Sri Maha Vishnu in all humility and devotion to relate to him as to what is to be done at the time when Death is sure to take away a man's life.

The significance of this chapter lies in the fact that a man must remember to do certain things when death is about to approach him. No matter what a son or others may or may not do after one's death, it is necessary for the one on death bed to do or get things done. This is important to escape hell and its torments in case none performs the rites and ceremonies to assure him of a safe passage to the other world.

This chapter gives detailed information regarding the obligations of the dying ones.

Shlok 1-48

Garuda expresses his gratitude to his Lord, Sri Maha Vishnu for telling him in detail about charity, *daan*. Now, he requests to be told about the duties of the dying one to be performed. Sri Hari describes the duties to be performed by the one about to leave the earthly body. He also describes how these rites lead him to attain a good state after death. For the one about to die, certain preparations need to be made. Near the holy Basil Plant the ground must be prepared by giving

it a cowdung wash. Then sesamum seeds should be strewn over the ring-shaped ground already prepared. Over that the sacred *darbha* grass has to be spread on it and a *Salagrama* has to be put on the ground. If one dies in the vicinity of this sacred *salagrama*, the dying man's sins would be absolved. For those who cannot earn merit by charity, dying in the shade or the vicinity of the Basil would be sufficient to get liberation. Such is the greatness of the Basil plant. The very household which nurtures Basil is as holy as a second bathing place near a river. *Yama kinkaras* do not dare go anywhere near such a sacred spot. The dead man laid on the ground prepared as described above goes straight to Vishnu's city if he breathes his last with a Basil leaf in his mouth. Holy things like sacred grass, sesamum seeds and leaves of Basil prevent the dying man from getting into a wretched condition. Sri Hari tells Garuda that sesamum is produced from His sweat and for that reason evil beings like *Asuras*, *Daityas* and *Danavas* do not approach anywhere near to the sacred things *darbha*-grass is produced from His hair, and by a mere touch of it, the dying one would attain the happy other world. *Kusha*-grass is sacred for Brahma the Lord of creation is seated on that *asan* of *kusha*-grass. In the middle of the grass sits Madhusudana, another name for Vishnu, the slayer of the demon Madhu. On the tip of *Kusha* stays Siva. For this reason, no matter how many times they are used *Kusha*-grass, fire, mantras, Basil, Brahmins and cows do not lose their purity and sanctity. *Darbha*-

grass becomes unclean, tainted when rice-balls (pindas) touch it. Brahmins lose their sanctity by eating the offerings made to the departed. So too, the holy Basil, cows and *mantras* would be tainted when used for ignoble purposes. Fire also loses its sanctity when it is there on the cremation-ground.

When about to die, the dying man should be lowered to the ground prepared as described above. The ring shaped platform is so made as to have enough room for the Trinity, the deities and fire to stand on it. The ground should have no stain on it. If there is any impurity there evil spirits enter. For offering oblations (*Shraddha*), feeding Brahmins and worshipping the Holy ones, this ring is essential. The dying man should not be laid on any unprepared ground. Having placed the dying man on the properly prepared ground, one should pour water into his lips passing it through darbha-grass. This water must be *Vishnupaadodakam*, wash of Vishnu's foot. Water poured on *Salagrama* is collected for this purpose. The dying one who licks even a drop of this water is absolved from all his sins and he goes straight to Vaikuntha, the abode of the celestials. After that the dying one should be given the water of Ganges, *Gangajal*, the wiper of all sins and the giver of great merit. He gets the merit which one gets from a thousand *chandraayan vrats*, observances where food intake is increased or decreased according to the stages of the moon. *Gangajal* washes away sins just as bundles of cotton would be consumed quickly when thrown into flames. He who drinks the

water of Ganga made hot by the sun goes to the city of Hari. Bathing in sacred rivers has a sanctifying effect. The one who calls out: "Oh Ganga! Oh Ganga!" before death, would reach Vishnu's city and would never be born again. *Smaran*, remembering and uttering the name of the sacred Ganga purifies man and makes him absolved of all sins. Listening to Bhagavat Puran too leads to *mukti* or salvation. Repeating a verse, or at least a half or quarter of it would absolve his sins. He would reach *Brahmaloka* and stay there for all time. When one knows that death is nearby, one should relinquish all. A Brahmin must do this by giving up all attachments and become a Sanyasi. The one who declares relinquishment even a few seconds before breathing his last would go to Vaikuntha and would never be born again. He would be able to pass away in peace and in ease. Through the seven gateways, the mouth, eyes, nostrils and ears go the consequences of the dying man's good deeds. When a Yogi passes out, the life breath goes out of the head. When *apaana* wind joined with the wind of *praan* normally, *praan*, becoming very small, exits from the body. The body falls down like a tree stricken by time. The body from where the vital breath or life-wind has gone becomes hateful and untouchable and soon it exudes foul smell. It is detested by everyone. It is surprising that human beings take so much pride in the body which finally is worms, dung and ashes! After death the earth goes into earth, the water into water and fire into fire. Air passes into air and nothing remains. The human being

with the five senses, *panchendriyas*, is always attracted by sensual things and is fond of sense-gratification. He tries to cling to life in vain but he is always surrounded by his own *karma*. He comes back to the earth endowed with good tendencies *vasanas* in a new body - all due to his own karma deeds like a householder whose house is burnt in flames. Then, the divine messengers with plumes effulgent come, bringing a chariot decorated with tinkling bells. Those who know righteousness and are dear to the faithful and the good, carry the one whose rites have been performed along with them in their own chariot to the world above. That person in a body that shines splendidly, dressed in effulgent garments and decked with garlands, and diamond studded ornaments, (all because of the charity that went to his credit) obtains a place in the higher world of joy. He is honoured by the inhabitants of that higher world.

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10. CONSIGNING THE REMAINS

Brief Summary

This chapter deals with the gathering of the bones from the funeral fire to which the body is consigned after a person's death. There are many rites associated with the burning of the mortal remains of the dead.

Shlok 1-19

Garuda entreated his Lord Sri Hari to tell him about the rites performed to the dead body of the good man. He also asks the Lord to describe in detail the greatness of the faithful wife of the departed husband. The Lord replied that he would tell him all about the ceremonies for the dead body performed by sons and grandsons to get release from their filial, hereditary debt. Though there is no need for many gifts or acts of charity, one should perform the funeral rites, *antyeshthi*, to his parents. The son who performs the ceremonies gets fruit equal to the fruit of performing an agnistoma fire ritual. The son should have his head shaven along with all his relatives to be rid of all sins. A son, who does not have his head shaven when his father or mother dies, cannot be called a son at all. How can such a person help the dead one cross the ocean of *sansara*? Head shaven and having taken a bath along with his relatives he must put on new clothes. Then the corpse has to be washed with water brought from the river and laved with sandalwood paste and garlands. Having covered it with a new cloth and the sacred thread one

should present rice-balls (*pindas*) with a mention of the family name. He should offer the rice-balls (*pindas*) at the place of death. This would please the presiding deity and the earth too. Then the performer of the rites should make an offering at the doorway in the name of the one who has departed (the dead man). This stalls evil spirits from entering the house. The daughters-in-law of the house should perambulate (*pradakshan*) round the dead. Only after this the ‘carriers’ take the body on to their shoulders and make towards the cremation ground. If the son is to be one of the ‘bearers’ he gets the merit of performing an *ashwamedha yaga*. By carrying the parent, the son is redeemed of his debt. Halfway the bier-bearers need to stop. Again the corpse is given a wash and made an offering. Again oblations are offered to the evil spirits lest they should cause trouble on the way. After reaching the cremation ground the dead body should be laid down, head facing the north. The place-chosen for cremation needs to be cleaned, given a cowdung-wash and a platform prepared. On it the body is placed, worshipped again with flowers and *akshatas*, turmeric-coloured whole rice grains. The fire deity, the shining one, needs to be propitiated with a prayer to lead the dead one to heaven.

Shlok 20-35

Then a funeral pyre has to be made with sandal wood, Basil wood and the wood of trees called *palasha* and *aswaththa*. Then the dead body is placed

on the pyre and offered rice-balls (*pindas*). The dead one’s travel begins with the rice-balls (*pindas*) placed in the hand. The dead one gets five rice-balls (*pindas*). If the time of death is free from “*panchaka*” an astrological position which is considered inauspicious, the pyre is lighted. (Beginning with the star *dhanishtha* five stars *dhanishtha panchaka* is considered inauspicious). In case the cremation needs to be performed in that ‘*panchaka*’, special rites prescribed therefore should be performed. These are ceremonies to pacify evil spirits. Proper *mantras* need to be chanted and proper charities should be made. If these are not done, the family would come to harm. If the ceremonies are performed the dead one goes to an elevated state.

(Note: Shloks 36 to 55 are omitted in this rendering since Sati is prohibited by Indian law.)

Shlok 56-67

After the body is burnt, the dead man’s son should split open the *Brahmarandhra*, a small opening on the skull in middle and offer an oblation of butter. This would make the son attain the *lokas* of his *pitru devatas*, forefathers. The *mantra*’s purport is: “You born of him. May he be born again to you! Here is an offering to the upperworld.” So saying the butter is to be offered to the fire. After this the family of the dead man should take a bath. The son should make tarpan with sesamum and water. Then the son should eat neem leaves and the family should walk back home, the womenfolk in the front and others following them. Reaching home

the son should give food to a cow and eat off a leaf the food cooked after their return from the cremation. The ground where the dead one has been laid should be given a cowdung-wash. The son must leave a lamp burning towards the south on the twelfth day. For three days on the burning ground he should offer in unbaked earthen pots, milk and water. On the fourth day the bones need to be collected.

Shlok 68-101

For collecting the bones and ashes elaborate directions are given: The son would go home, bathe and change into a woolen cloth and wear a sacred ring round his ring finger made of *darbha*-grass known as *pavitra*. Thus prepared he makes grain oblations to the inhabitants of the cremation ground and circles the ground thrice. Sprinkling water on the burning pyre, now cooled down, he picks up the bones and places him on *palasha* leaves, sprinkles water and milk and performs *shraaddha* as prescribed by the purohit, or the panditji who leads the ceremony. All the bones and leaves are put in a pot. After *shraaddha*, the son walks fifteen steps northward digs a pit and the pot placed on a stool in the pit. Then another rice-ball (*pinda*) is offered to alleviate the pain of burning for the dead one. The jar is taken out to sprinkle water in the pot. The bones are worshipped again with milk, water, sandalwood paste etc. Then they are put in a leaf cup and dropped in the river Ganga. He whose bones are immersed in the water within ten days stays in

Brahmaloka, never having another birth. The water of the Ganga or even a breeze coming from the river sanctifies the sinner. This is so because Bhagirath brought water to enable Sagara's sons go to heaven by making the river flow on their bones. There is the tale of a hunter killed by a lion in the forest, who from hell went to heaven when his bones were dropped in the Ganga by a crow. Hence the son should immerse the bones in the Ganga. After this he should perform other rites prescribed for ten days. There is a provision for the obsequies of a person whose body could not be found. The figure of a man may be made of *darbha*. It can be burnt and the ashes thrown into the river on the very day his death is heard of. If a woman gone with child dies in fulness of pregnancy, the foetus should be brought out ripping the womb. Later the woman may be consigned to fire. A child which dies on the river bank may simply be thrown into the river. Otherwise, it should be burnt. (Only if the child is more than twenty-seven months old) Then also the bones need to be immersed in the Ganges. If the foetus dies, there would be no rites. If a youth dies, young are to be fed. If the youth dies after *upanayanam* along with children, Brahmins also should be fed. If one above five dies, ten rice-balls (*pindas*) should be offered along with milk-food and a lump of sugar. If the father is alive, the twelfth day ceremony is performed to the dead one. In place of *upanayanam*, in the case of *shudras*, marriage is the sacrament. Prior to marriage for the *shudras* too rites are done according to age

only. When a *yati*, a sanyasi or ascetic, dies there are very few rites. If one dies in boyhood or youth *shayyaadaan* (giving away of a cot) and other sacrifices/ceremonies (*daans*) are to be performed and made.

Shlok 102-107

For the ascetics there are no cremation and water rites, No ceremonies are needed. A man, merely by holding a tridandi, staff, becomes Narayana. He never goes into the condition of the departed. Rice-balls (*pindas*) and water are not offered to them at all.

They are ascetics, the knowing-ones, who realize their state and nature. They are always free and holy. But his near ones may perform *Gaya shraaddha* etc. Certain holy men like *hansa*, *paramahansa*, *kutichaka*, *bahudaka* are also *sanyasins*. But when dead, they are to be buried, or, when there is a river near by, they should be thrown into the river.

1. The holy men listed here are given those names by virtue of their spiritual development.
2. There are Dandi Swamis, very holy men-some are called *tridandis* too.

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11. TENTH-DAY RITUALS AND CEREMONIES

Brief Summary

Here, the ceremonies to be performed for the ten days after a person's death are detailed. Sri Hari continues to answer the questions asked by His mount, the devout Lord of Birds, Garuda. Garuda wants to know as to what good consequences would follow the performance of the ten-day rituals and ceremonies. He also asks Sri Hari as to who is entitled and required to perform these rites in case there is no son for the dead man. The reading of these things with understanding and faith would make any thoughtful person illumined and knowledgeable in the areas not very widely known to the common people.

Shlok 1-18

Garuda questioned Vishnu his Lord again to tell him of the results of the faithful performance of the ten-day rites. He also asked the Lord as to who can undertake performing these when the dead man does not leave behind a son of his own. Sri Hari told Garuda that He would gladly answer his question. The most important benefit for the one who performs the rites for his dead father is the redemption of the filial debt he owes to the father. The son is indebted to the father for siring him. This debt would stand discharged when the son performs this rite after his father's demise.

The son should not shed tears. He should offer rice-balls (*pindas*) with devotion. The relatives also should not weep for if they do, the dead man has to drink those tears. However much one weeps it is of no avail for the dead one never comes back. Death is certain and therefore the wise never grieve for something inevitable. Then, the dead one would be born again. If only it were possible to bring the dead back several great ones like Rama or Yudhishtir could have done it. There is no sense in having an excessive attachment to one's body and to this world too. Man lives in this world, like a traveller resting under a tree, for a while only. Things good eaten in the morning are destroyed in a few hours. The body too is transient. The good son keeps all this in mind and resists tears and goes ahead performing his pious obligation. In a situation where there is no son, the wife, if there no wife, a Brahmin or a relative can perform these rites. The law-giver Manu said that of all the brothers, if any one has a son, all the brothers are considered to have a son. In case the dead man has more than one wife, and only one of them has a son, all his wives are considered to have sons. For those who have no sons at all, a friend may offer rice-balls (*pindas*) and perform the rites, which should never be neglected. If it comes to that even a family priest can perform the rites. Anyone who performs the rites for a friend, man or woman would get the fruit (*phal*) of ten million sacrifices for he or she has performed a very good deed, a sacrament.

Shlok 19-24

The son has the pious obligation of performing the ten- days ceremony. The father should not perform it for his son. When there are many sons, only one should perform the rites, offer rice-balls (*pindas*) and perform the sixteen *shraaddhas*. If there has been a partition of property among the sons, each should perform the *shraaddha* separately. The one who performs (the eldest son) should observe austerities on the day like eating one meal, sleeping on the ground and staying off from consorting with his wife. The son acquires the merit equal to that obtained by seven parambulations round the shrines. The son who observes the rites for a year gets the fruit of performing *Gayashraaddha*.

Shlok 25-30

The one performing the rites should take a bath reciting some mantras. He should sit facing south under a tree and put up an altar or platform and get it a cow-dung wash. Over that an image of a Brahmin strewing leaves and *darbh*as on it first and then worship it in form. The rice-ball (*pinda*) has to be offered uttering the name of the gotra. He should worship the rice-ball (*pinda*) first. A small ball of rice is offered to a crow also. He should say "May his (the departed one's) name, stay long" offering crow-food, milk, water, and a few handfuls of castor oil in a small pot.

Shlok 31-42

As one rice-ball (*pinda*) is given on the first day, so should the nine-balls be given one each successive days. On the ninth day, all near relatives should lave their bodies with oil while wishing the dead man stay in heaven. Then bathing in the open taking with them sacred grass and dry grain should proceed to the place of the dead one, their women folk drawing the rear. They should utter these words, “May his family grow like this grass and shine like the dry grain”. The grass and grain should be left behind.

On the tenth day a ball of black grain should be given at the ceremony of forefathers.

The son who performs the rites must have his head shaven on the tenth day and so should the other relatives. During the ten days when rites are performed a twice-born should be fed well with rich foods. Meditating upon Maha Vishnu with joined palms the son should pray Him for the release of the departed one. For those who bow and make obeisance to Sri Hari or Govind, the Supreme Being, there could be no fear. The son should send up a prayer: “O the One without beginning or end! O the One with the discus and the mace and the One with a conch shell, the Lotus-eyed One, the Indestructible, May You give release to the departed!” On all the ten days the ceremonies and rites must be concluded with this prayer. After this, returning home, the son should give food to the cow and then only take his meal.

12. ELEVENTH-DAY RITES**Brief Summary**

Here is detailed the procedure of performance and the observation of rites on the eleventh day for the welfare of the departed one in the other world. This is the day when a bull is dedicated. This rite is called ‘*vrishotsarjana*’. After having performed the *dasaratra vidhi* the ten-day rites, on the eleventh day the bull-dedication needs to be done. The procedures laid down for the *tarpan*s and the ‘*daan*’ called *Shayyadaan*, giving away in charity a cot and bed are explained here by Sri Hari to his mount and the Lord of Birds, Garuda.

Shlok 1

Garuda entreated his Lord to tell him in detail about the eleventh-day rites also. Sri Hari told him that the one performing the rite should go to a water body, bathe and then only start the rites with devoutness and purity. Brahmins and scholars well versed in the Scriptures and *shastras* bowing their heads should recite prayers for the release of the departed. Along with the dead man’s son the one who conducts the ceremonies and the preceptor also should bathe and perform and complete his morning observances like *sandhya* and *gayatri japa* first. On the tenth-day *Shraaddha* should be performed with the family name (*gotra*) without mantras. On the eleventh day a rice-ball (*pinda*) should be offered to the departed one along with the chanting of the *mantras*.

Shlok 6-20

The images of Vishnu in gold, of Brahma in silver, of Rudra in copper and of Yama in iron are to be made. A pot filled with Gangajal, water of the Holy Ganges should be placed to the west. On this water Vishnu's icon robed in yellow has to be placed. To the east should be placed a pot of milk and water and on it the icon of Brahma robed in white has to be placed. Rudra's icon robed in red should be placed on a pot of honey and ghee (clarified butter) to the north. Yama's icon robed in black should be placed on a pot containing rain water. This is to be placed to the south. The son should place *Kusha* grass in a circle made in the middle facing south with the sacred thread over the right shoulder (this is called *apasavya*) and offer the water with Vedic *mantras* to Vishnu, Brahma, Shiva and Yama and make a fire offering on the eleventh-day shraaddha. Then he should do *goudaan*, charity of a cow, to ensure the well-being of his forefathers with a prayer to Madhava. The eight gifts (of brass vessel filled with ghee and the seven types of grains) need to be offered at this stage. A Brahmin should be fed and honoured with new clothes etc. with fitting devotion. Then the son who is performing the rites should place the golden icon of Vishnu on the bed after worshipping it; the bed has to be given away to the Brahmin uttering the prescribed words for this rite of *shayya daan*. By the two rites of *vrushotsarjana* and *shayya daan*, (gift of bull and bed) the departed would attain the highest condition.

Shlok 21-56

One should seek many sons in one's prayers so that at least one may offer on his death *Gaya shraaddha* or dedicate a bull and perform rites in a fitting manner. Only the one who performs these rites for the dead is considered a dutiful son. By *vrushotsarjana*, the ancestors who suffer the hell of Raurava (even upto twenty-one earlier generations) are redeemed. Even those forefathers who are in heaven would be eagerly waiting for one in their lineage who performs the *vrushotsarjana*. This charity releases or pleases forefathers too. After worshipping the planets, the man who has been laid up with sickness should perform the fire-ritual. He should bring a young bull and a young cow and first perform the wedding of the two as per a procedure laid down. The two, the bull and the cow should be marked with the insignia of Vishnu and thereafter the pair should be given away. The man who does not have a son too can do this to attain the elevated state. Certain months and occasions are appropriate for this daan, 'charity'. For example the month of Kartik, during eclipses, at sacred places and the equinoctial and solstitial points are highly suitable. When the Sun enters an auspicious "*lagna*" or constellation, a Brahmin well-versed and with auspicious signs should be chosen to be honoured with this act of charity. The body should be sanctified by the recitation of prescribed texts, by making fire offerings and gifts. *Vaishnava Shraaddha* should be performed first with a salagrama and later perform

Shraaddha for himself. By this and giving away the bull, whether one has a son or not, one would have his desires fulfilled. The bull-offering is the best. No amount of other rites or offerings ever equals this. *Vrushotsarjana* releases man from all his sins, those committed in childhood, youth, manhood or old age. Many other sins like betrayal of friends, being ungrateful, alcoholism, killing a Brahmin would be expiated by the bull- charity. For this reason one must perform the bull-sacrifice with all devotion and piety. If a woman who has her husband and son dies, this bull-charity should not be performed. She should give a milk- giving cow in charity to a deserving Brahmin. There are certain prohibitions. Burdening a bull gets punishment in hell for a long time, till *pralaya*, the extinction of the world.

Shlok 57-72

After the bull-dedication, the son or the *karta* (the one who performs the rite) should perform the prescribed sixteen *shraaddhas*, before the *sapindeerakarana* ceremony. In the ten days, one pinda is to be given at each of these six places:

- I. at the spot where the person breathed his last;
- II. at the threshold, entrance of the place;
- III. at a spot half-way to the road;
- IV. at the pyre;
- V. in the hand of the dead body;
- VI. at the collection of bones.

These six and the ten *pindas* given one each day are the sixteen pindas. These are not pure. Sri Hari tells Garuda about the second or the middle sixteen *pindas*. The first rice-ball (*pinda*) is offered to Vishnu, the second to Shiva and the third to Yama. The fourth is to be given to Soma. The bearer of the oblations should be given the fifth. The sixth is to be given to the one who takes these to the forefathers and the seventh to death. Rudra should be offered the eighth *pinda*, Purusha (Shiva) should be offered the ninth. The tenth is offered to the departed and the eleventh, in reverence, to Vishnu.

The twelfth pinda is to be given to Brahma, the thirteenth to Vishnu, the fourteenth to Shiva and the fifteenth to Yama. The sixteenth rice-ball (*pinda*) should be offered to Purusha. These sixteen are called the middle. The third sixteen are one each for the twelve months, one for the first fortnight, the third fortnight, before the six months and also before the first year. These are cooked food pindas. These forty-eight destroy the condition of *preata*. After these the *preata* becomes a member of the group of forefathers (of the performer). If these forty eight are not duly performed the departed one remains a *preata* (like the one of Sudeva the Vysya, whom King Bhabhruvahana rescued in the tale mentioned in an earlier chapter). These pinda pradaans or offerings of rice-balls (*pindas*) have to be performed either by the son or by someone else. But, the performance is compulsory. If the son, or if there is no son, if the rites are performed by the wife, there

is *akhanda saubhagya*, endless affluence. The wife who performs these is revered and called “*pati vrata*”- ‘the faithful wife’. Her life is fruitful and a fulfilled one. For one killed by fire, water or carelessness, the rites prescribed above must be performed. If one is murdered, or killed because of a snake-bite the man offering obsequies should worship a serpent on the fifth day of each fortnight. The procedure of the worship is as follows: With rice powder the picture of a hooded snake has to be drawn on the ground and the picture is to be worshipped with white flowers of fragrance, and sandalwood paste. The serpent drawn on the ground should be offered lamps and incense also. A serpent made of gold and (as per one’s own capacity) and a cow needs to be given away. While giving away the *daan* or charity of a serpent, one should pray “May the serpent be propitiated and pleased.” Thereafter the rite of Narayana *bali* too should be performed. This performance absolves the dead one of all sins he had committed and he attains the world of bliss, heaven. After this performance rice-balls (*pindas*) with water should be given regularly. On the eleventh day rice-balls (*pindas*) should be offered for all forefathers. When the person who performs is free from the ‘sullied’ state (*asaucha* condition) he should perform *shayya daan*, (charity of the bed) and the other charities.

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13. INTO THE COMPANY OF MANES

Brief Summary

Garuda asks Sri Hari to explain to him further the procedure of *sapinda* rites and how they absolve the sins of the departed ones and how *daanas* of various kinds ensure the welfare of the beings, which departed from the earthly life and its bonds. Vishnu explains to his devout mount how the performance of the rites would enable the preta shed its heinous, terrible form and enables it to join the company of manes, *pitru devatas*, forefathers who attained the blissful condition.

Shlok 3-57

Of the ancestors, the foremost are the great grandfather, grandfather and the father. They become Vasu, Rudra and Aditya respectively. All the three, in the present forms they acquired are to be worshipped. If the three are not worshipped by the living son who is performing the rites, the ceremonies become useless. Purity is acquired in ten days for a Brahmin, twelve days for a *kshatriya* and fifteen for *vaisya* and a month by a *shudra*. ‘*Sapinda* relatives’ are those who are related upto to the seventh line on the father’s side. These are purified after ten days. The *sakulya* relatives get purified in three nights; those with the same ‘*gotra*’ are purified just by bathing after listening to the news. The farther the relationship, the shorter is the time for getting purified or getting relief from ‘*asaucha*’. If one

dies in a foreign land and his death is only heard of, in the case of *sapindas* the impurity lasts for the remaining period beginning from the time of the death. If one listens to the news after ten days, he is 'impure' (in *asaucha*) only for three nights. If a whole year elapses after the death and then one hears the news he is purified just by bathing. If a second *asaucha* should come within the ten days, the purification comes from the first pollution. If a little boy who has not yet cut teeth dies, purification is immediate; if he dies before *mundan*, the *asaucha* is only one night. If he dies before *upanayan* (taking the vow or investiture with the sacred thread), the *asaucha* is only three nights, and afterwards, ten nights. If a girl child dies between birth and *mundan*, purification is immediate and this is so in all castes. Upto betrothal (in the case of the death of a girl) it is only a single day. Upto old age only three nights is the limit. If the girl dies after betrothal (*sagaayee*) the period of *asaucha* is three days for families on both sides. If after marriage the girl or woman's death occurs, of course the *asaucha* is only for the husband's family. If the foetus dies before the sixth month, the *asaucha* is for as many days as the months of its stay in the womb. If the embryo dies the purification of *sapinda* relatives is immediate. In *kaliyug*, (in the present eon) *shastras* declare that ten-day *asaucha* is the norm for all castes. While in *asaucha*, *agnihotra*, holy fire, cannot be lit and there can be no reception of guests, offering salutations, lying in bed (only one should sleep on the ground).

During the period of *asaucha* ('sullied' state) Sandhya ritual is not to be performed, there is no fire ritual, religious study or offering of prayers. If one were to do any of the above, the merit acquired for observing and performing rites upto that day would be totally lost. Certain people are exempt from '*asaucha*' They are ascetics, the king and those Brahmins who are in the pursuit of obtaining *Brahmajnaana*, the knowledge of absolute reality. Manu declared that food prepared before the pollution, or *asaucha*, can be eaten. If a mendicant or a beggar accepts innocent food from a householder while the latter is in *asaucha* he suffers no evil, but the giver suffers. To get free from *asaucha* one must perform the *sapinda* ceremony so that his father would join the company of his forefathers. This ceremony is to be performed on the twelfth day, the third fortnight, the sixth month and at the end of the first year. The scriptural prescription is that for all the four castes the twelfth day is to be the day for the *sapinda* ritual. This is so for the conditions prevailing in *kaliyug*.

If a Brahmin householder dies, no ceremonies like the sacred thread ceremony or marriage can be performed for twelve days. This is so because of *asaucha*. The house should not provide alms or make guest offerings. All ceremonies need to be stopped.

Since neglecting or omitting rites results in incurring sin, the *sapinda* ceremony with or without fire (*agnihotra*) should be observed on the twelfth day.

Great merit accrues by performing the twelfth-day ceremony which equals taking a holy dip in sacred rivers. Hence it is essential for the son to perform this ceremony in all purity. He should offer worship with foot-water (paadya) for ablutions and *aachamana*. Then he should sip in water (do *aachamana*). Worship must be offered with sandalwood paste (*gandha*), tulasi (Basil leaves), incense, (*dhoopa*), lamp (*deepa*) and *naivedya* (food offering). Then betel leaves and *supari* should be offered as mouth freshners (*tambula*) and new clothes. Having divided the food into three balls with a bar of gold, the food must be rounded up into balls and given to father, grandfather and one's great grandfather. *Sapinda* rite needs to be done for the mother along with the grandmother. If the father dies while the grandfather is alive, three rice-balls (*pindas*) should be offered to the great grandfather. If the mother dies before the grandmother, one should perform the mother's *shraaddha* in the same way as the father's. If a woman has no son, her husband should perform sapinda ceremony for his wife, along with that of his mother-in-law. The *sapinda* rite needs to be done with that of the husband, his father and grandfather, the wife being half of her husband. If the husband and wife get on to the funeral pyre at the same time their bodies should be separated-with grasses put between them, and the son should perform the ceremony with that of the mother-in-law and father-in-law. Only one son need perform the rites-first offering the rice-ball (*pinda*) for the father and then bathing again, offer the

pinda for the mother. If a woman dies during the first ten days of her husband's death the gift of the bed (*shayyaa daan* etc.) should be done on the same day along with the offerings for her husband. After performing sapinda the son should utter Vaidic *mantras* and say "Let there be swadha." Then the Brahmin guest must be fed till he says "*hanta*", which is a benediction. This would please the forefathers, sages, *agnihotra* and even *Danavas*. A mouthful is called 'alms' and four such are abundance called '*hantakara*'. During '*sapinda*' the Brahmin's feet have to be ceremonially washed and after that he should be given maintenance for a year, a cow or a horse or an elephant or a chariot or a plot of land. Then with appropriate *mantras* he should worship Devi, Vinayaka and the planets. Then the preceptor having bound a thread upon his hand (*deekshakankan*) should present *akshatas* cause consecrated with *mantras*. Then a feast should be offered to Brahmins and presents along with twelve pots with water and food should be made. After this, water, weapon, scales and a rod should be touched severally by the castes, which purifies them all.

Shlok 58-80

After the *sapinda* ceremony the son or the performer should cast off the clothes worn during the performance of the rites. He should wear white clothes to make the *shayyadaan*, gift of bed. All *devatas* headed by Indra, their Lord would praise the gift of cot. The cot should be made of the choicest wood,

decorated, canopied with silk and the bed be stuffed with swan's down and the coverlet is made fragrant with perfumes. An umbrella, a row of silver lamps, and fan, a seat, a vessel, a water pot and mirror also should be given away with the cot and the bed. On the cot, before giving it away, the images of Lakshmi and Narayana have to be placed with all the accoutrements of both. Then a Brahmin and his wife should be seated on the bed facing the divine couple Lakshmi and Narayana. The couple should worship the deities. The son should utter a mantra while holding flowers in his hands. The meaning of the *mantra* is: "O Krishna, Your bed is the ocean of milk like that may this bed be ever full in my future births also." The bed is to be given only to a deserving man. He (the recipient) should never give away or sell it. If he does, the giver is dragged down to suffer. By giving away the bed following the procedure to the minutest detail with devotion, the giver would surely get his desires and wishes fulfilled. The power of this 'gift' is such that the one, who gives away, would be happy and blissful in the kingdom of both Indra and Yama. He would ride in splendid chariots. Celestial damsels wait on him till the end of the Yuga.

Shlok 81-97

The charity of bed earns the person who makes it merit (*punya*) which is more and superior to bathing in all the holy rivers in sacred places. After the charity of bed, the son must offer *paada daan*, which involves

the charity or giving away of a staff, a copper vessel, rice (uncooked), foods, valuables and sacred threads. The seven articles are: an umbrella, foot wear, clothes, a signet ring, a water pot, a seat, a set of five vessels. These should be given away according to the means of the one who is performing these rites. By the performance of this rite, the one departed who goes on Yama's way is made happy and comfortable: The gifts are significantly useful even for the one departed, making his journey comfortable. Each item given in charity to a Brahmin in this world would immensely help the one who travels on Yama's way. After this *pada daan*, many Brahmins and people of other castes too should be fed. After *sapinda* and before the end of the year ceremony, every month, a water-pot with rice-balls (*pindas*) should be given. For the sake of the departed the *daanas* may be done again for further satisfaction.

Shlok 98-127

Sri Hari explained to Garuda the procedures and the rules to be followed in the performance of the fortnightly, monthly and annual ceremonies (according to the lunar calendar). If one dies at the full moon his rites should begin on the fourth day. If he dies on the fourth day the rites should begin on the ninth day. If one dies on the ninth day, the rites should begin on the fourteenth day. In these cases the fortnightly *shraaddha* should be performed on the twentieth day. When in one month two *sankrantis* occur, one according to the

solar and the other according to the lunar calculations, the shraaddha has to be performed only on the first, the regular one. When there are two months in one month (one extra and the other regular in some areas called *adhika maasa* or *malamaasa* or *nija maasa*) the *thithi* comes twice and the rites need to be performed twice. The *sapinda* ceremony should be done when there is no *sankranti*, (in *malamaasa*) rice-balls (*pindas*) are not used. When there is solstice, rice-balls (*pindas*) should be given. Thus annual *shraaddha* should be done in both (the *adhika* and *nija maasas*). At the end of the first year, one should perform the annual shraaddha and in that, Brahmins should be fed. After the first year, one should offer three balls at the shraaddha. These are for the father, grandfather and the great grand father. The ceremony for only one should never be performed since it causes the destruction of one's forefathers. The *shraaddha* at a holy place near a sacred river, the ceremony at Gaya and such places or rites should not be done before the end of one year. They should not be done at eclipses on special days like *Gajachchaaya Yog* a day when there is a unique yoga, when the moon is in *makha* star, the sun is in *Hasta* and the day is *Trayodashi* and *yuga* days. One can do these only after one full year. Performing *shraaddha* at Gaya should be with devotion. With Vishnu's blessing if this is performed at Gaya the forefathers are liberated from this ocean of existence on earth. During the performance of *shraaddha* on unique days and holy

places the son or the performer should worship Vishnu with leaves of Basil and in proper form offer rice-balls (*pindas*) arranged around Sri Hari's feet. The one who offers at Gaya a rice-ball (*pinda*) even the size of a Shami leaf helps seven gotras and one hundred and one families. The life of one performing the ritual at Gaya would be a fulfilled, accomplished one. The forefathers hear a song sung by Manu's son in Ikshwaku's garden as to whether there is any in his family who has performed Gaya *shraaddha*? For that reason, like Kaushika's sons, the son would become liberated and fulfilled. Bharadwaja's seven sons killed a cow and were guilty of *gouhatya*, killing a cow. They were liberated through several stages first as seven hunters in *Dasharna* then the deer on mountain of *Kalinjara*, and the *Chakravaka* birds and swans in *Manasa sarovar*. These were born as learned Brahmins by their devotion to their forefathers. Therefore devotion to forefathers makes one happy in this world and the world to come. Thus Sri Hari describes to Garuda all the ceremonies, rites and other practices which would yield merit to the son or the performer and liberation to the manes. The one who is poor and hence unable to perform the rites and ceremonies would be absolved from all sins by merely listening to this account. He who performs the rites and he who listens to this Garuda Puran gets immensely benefited and blessed. His father gives him good sons. His grandfather gives him wealth of cows and his great grandfather gives him affluence. The great-great

grandfather gives him plentiful food and all the three extremely gratified and pleased would grant the son all his desires. Finally the son who performs the rites, ceremonies would go by the way of rectitude and righteousness to Yamapuri and to the mansion of the king of Justice, Yamadharmaraja. There he would be highly respected in the great assembly of the righteous. Soota Mahamuni concluded the narration to the sages and seers assembled at Naimisharanya saying that Garuda having listened to Sri Hari's narration was extremely happy and contented.

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14. THE COURT OF THE DEITY OF DEATH

Brief Summary

Here the Lord, Sri Maha Vishnu gives a graphic description of the way to the world of Yama an extension of the previous chapters. Garuda, full of devotion, with a desire to know, asked his Lord Sri Hari to further describe Yama's way. In this chapter there are long and detailed descriptions of *Yama Sabha*, the Death Deity's court.

Shlok 1-30

“What is the extent of Yama's world? What does it look like? Who made that? How does the assembly or the Court of Yama look?” Asks Garuda avidly. He wanted to know the ways of the Lord of Justice, his mansion and the manner of the behaviour of the virtuous and the righteous. The compassionate Sri Hari undertakes to fulfill his mount's desire and tells him that the city of Justice can be reached by the virtuous, judicious and devout, and by sages and seers like Narada Maharshi. The city of the son of Vaivaswata is amidst the south and southwest. It is all diamond-studded, effulgent and very strong. It has four angles and four gate ways. It has high ramparts. It measures a thousand *yojanas*. Chitragupta's palace is situated there and its extent is twenty-five *yojanas*. His palace is surrounded by ramparts of iron ten-*yojanas* high. The shining city has hundreds of streets all fabulously

decorated with banners. The city was built by divine designers and architects. The city has gardens and parks, wonderful nesting places for a variety of fauna. Heavenly damsels and singers live there. The powerful and trusted assistant of Yama has a fabulous throne for him in Yama's court. He has wonderful competence and abilities of distinguishing between the sinners and the meritorious. He knows and keeps a record of all the deeds of all men, both good and evil. To the various sides of Chitrugupta's residence are the houses of various ailments and diseases. To the east there is the house of fever; to the south are the houses of Rheumatism and Skin Diseases. To the west there are the snares of Death, Indigestion and Biliousness the Houses of Consumption and Jaundice are to the west. To the north-west is the house of Headache and of syncope to the South-east. House of dysentery is to the south-west; to the north-west house of cold and heat. Chitrugupta is assigned the onerous responsibility of keeping a record of the various deeds of people on the earth. About twenty *yojanas* from this officer's residence is the wonderful mansion of the Lord of Dharma, Yamadharmaraja. Its extent is two hundred *yojanas* and the whole place is richly decorated with diamonds and gems of the rarest brilliance. The fabulous mansion has windows decorated and draped in magnificence. The whole palace is fabulous with doors, and around that are the most pleasant trees, plants and vegetation. It is the creation of the Deity's own Yogic powers. In the middle of the building

complex is the court, *raja sabha*, where the Lord holds court in splendour. This world has a temperate and pleasant climate all along the entire year. All inhabitants there are ever happy and healthy. They have plenty to eat and drink. The water is pleasantly cold or warm always sweet and satisfying. Here is a place where desires are fulfilled right away. Only the very meritorious live in this delectable world by virtue of their *tapas* or the performance god-loving deeds. These fulfilled beings are always clothed in radiance. They have ornaments all over their persons which signify their own deeds which won great merit.

Shlok 31-45

Yamadharmaraja, the Emperor of Justice, sits here on his resplendent throne which has an extent of ten *yojanas*. He is bedecked head to foot with jewels, diamonds and gems of the rarest radiance and splendour. Over the Emperor's throne is an umbrella, a sign of royalty. He wears a crown scarcely equalled by any in his world. Celestial damsels wave fans adding grace and further dignity to the position the Emperor of Justice holds. There are numerous damsels, heavenly choristers, singers and attendants to perform, sing and dance ceremonially. Besides these, there are sturdy armed servants to follow their master's commands with a mere movement of his eye.

The court is filled with pious, virtuous and noble people besides sages and seers of the order of Atri, Vashishtha, Pulaha, Daksha, Jamadagni, to name only

a few. It is really impossible to list the names of all such noble, enlightened, blessed ones. Ordered by the Supreme Being many extraordinarily brilliant personalities, like those who have written extensive commentaries on *shastras* and *dharma* are there, Monarchs of Chandra Vamsha and Surya Vamsha are there too in great numbers. It is a grand assembly of the wisest. The court is adorned with personages of law-givers like Manu, Dilipa, Mandhata, and highly revered sages like Yayati and Puru, and emperors like Nala, Bharata, Shantanu and many others.

Shlok 46-58

The assembly is a dazzling spectacle: both for its appearance and for its assemblage. The sinners who go to Yama loka, however, never have even a glimpse of it, for they are led in through the Southern gate. The three other gates lead to the assembly and only the meritorious and righteous see it. The eastern way abounds in all joys and pleasures. There is a pleasant fragrance of parijata flowers which the wayfarers enjoy there. There are paths on which brilliant chariots pass; ponds where swans offer a feast to the eye and many other fascinating things. The way is used by glorious sages, seers and breath-takingly beautiful damsels and such others. The meritorious ones who have done good deeds like giving water to the thirsty in the severely hot summers or providing shelter to helpless people in times of slashing rains use the path ways. The virtuous and the meritorious ones, who keep to the path of

righteousness, whatever their state or condition become honoured guests using this way. People who make gifts and perform charity of various things while alive, sons who revere their parents and forefathers, all are the fortunate ones who tread this path. Owing to the merit they earned by performing good deeds on the earth, these people join the *sabha* of the Deity of Death. This is verily the assemblage of the righteous.

Shlok 59-64

The second way is the northern way. Paved with yellow sandal-wood, this way is used by charioteers and palanquin-bearers. The lakes by its side are full of rare swans, fowl, and Brahmany ducks. The lake-water tastes sweet like nectar. Vedic scholars also use this way. Devotees of Durga and the Sun have a liking for this path. Certain righteous people like those who die in pursuit of the right path, those who treat guests with reverence and those die by *prayopavesh*, fast-unto-death take this road. Those who die for Brahmins, in the service of their masters near a sacred water body or holy ground would prefer this way. Those who die practising Yoga or by the will of deities and those who revere the deserving and those who give away munificently take to this way to enter the Assemblage of the Righteous in Yamadharmaraja's resplendent Court.

Shlok 65-73

The Western way is the third way to Yama's Court. It is lined with jewelled palaces and has on its both

sides ponds. Elephants from the lineage of Indra's mount Airavata and horses of the lineage of Uchchaishrava, the divine horses pass on that road. This way is used by highly devout worshippers of Vishnu and Gayatri. Very righteous people, celibates, people with total *vairagya*, non-attachment and such pure minds pass on this splendid path. Those people who have redeemed their *rinās*, indebtedness to the *rishi*, God and parents, find this route most suitable for their use. Great devotees of Shiva and Vishnu who are dispassionate and who take great pleasure and draw satisfaction by performing the *pancha yajnas* take this path. These five have the sanction of Shruti, Smriti and Sampradaya. Smriti has five: Deva, Pitree, Brahma, Bhoota and Manushya *Yajnas*. The route is supposed to be specially preferred by those who shun the company of the evil-minded, and those who dedicate themselves to do good to everyone around. This way they daily reach the assemblage of the righteous in Yamadharmaraja's resplendent court.

Shlok 74-81

The devotion and righteousness of these people who approach from the three ways cited above please the King Yamadharmaraja so much that He comes down His throne and walks forward with a gesture of welcome to all of them. Yamadharmaraja has a splendid appearance. He has four arms each holding a discus, a mace, conch and sword. Pleased with his assemblage, he speaks sweetly and delightfully. He makes gestures

of salutation to all in the court and honours them. He addresses the assemblage and asks them to pay obeisance to the Lord of Creation, Brahma. Such of those who do this would reach *Brahma Loka*, the world of the creator. He compliments all those who could make it to his loka. Those, attaining the state of being born as a human being, should not let go of the opportunity to rise higher. Those who foolishly let the rare opportunity go must end up in the horrid hell. The body is transient and fleeting and all comforts and enjoyments relating to sense-gratification are deceptive and short-lived. The wise one is he who realizes this and acts with righteousness. Merit needs to be earned and accumulated with intense effort. One should endeavour to reach a higher state of being and attain the upper world.

Shlok 82-86

The inhabitants in Yama's domain hear the Lord with reverence and deep concentration and when the address comes to a close salute him. The members of the assemblage slowly rise to their feet and wait till the great ones leave in their chariots and other means of conveyance. After spending their allotted time in that domain, by virtue of their righteousness, they take birth on the earth again. They would take human birth and by virtue of their good conduct would spend a life in comfort, peace and joy. So saying Sri Hari concludes his narration to Garuda.

15. PROGRESS TOWARDS THE MERGER

Brief Summary

Sri Maha Vishnu enlightens His mount, the Lord of Birds, Garuda further. He gives a detailed description of how a human being comes into this world. The making and the constitution of the various organs of the human being and their growth in the woman's womb are explained in this chapter. The two aspects of the body, the operative, physical (*vyaavahaarika*) and the extra-worldly (*paaramaardhika*) are described graphically. The 'Chakras', their constitution, the way man needs to exercise them to find his identity with the universal soul and the attitude of a true devotee the description of all these make the chapter very rewarding reading. Acts of goodness, charity and selflessness make man dear to the Supreme Being. The righteous and the law-abiding go to higher regions of existence. The purpose of human life, given and obtained for the 'merit' (*punya*) one acquires in this life needs to be understood carefully. Garuda is singularly blessed for Srimannarayana Himself, out of his love and affection gives detailed accounts of all these in this highly revered scripture. Ignorance and short-sightedness lead man to hell and its insufferable torments.

Shlok 1-13

Garuda submits to his Lord, Sri Maha Vishnu that he has understood that the 'meritorious' one

(*punyatma*) enjoys his stay in the upper world and after having spent his punya is born again in this world. He prays to his Lord to tell him how the being takes his birth in this world again. The Lord expresses his pleasure in answering such a question. He begins telling him that by knowing what he relates now one would become rewardingly knowledgeable. The nature of the human body is such that it has all the qualities of the Brahmanda, the universe-egg. This is the object of the contemplation of the great Yogis. The Yogis contemplate and constantly meditate on the shat chakras the six plexuses and then attain *sat-chit-ananda*, the bliss of the Supreme Being. The blessed ones are born into pure and righteous families of people who adore God and keep to the path of rectitude. A woman conceives a baby sometime in the middle of the period after the menstrual cycle by consorting with her husband. A man should avoid consorting with his wife during her 'periods' - After that she should bathe. From the seventh day only she can offer worship. When she conceives, sons would be conceived if the 'meeting' takes place on even nights and daughters on the odd nights. On the fourteenth night the seed is best sown. This results in the conception of a son who is sure to be pious, righteous and brilliant. Vulgar people do not pay attention to carefully plan as per the scriptures and the advice of the knowing-ones.

Shlok 14-24

The careful and law-abiding husband, sowing his seed judiciously gets a good harvest.

The mental condition of the man and the woman in the conjugal act determines the sex of the child to be born and its mental qualities and attributes. During the intercourse the *retas* and *rajas* join. At the proper time, the wise say, a rite called *punsavanam* has to be performed for the desired good result. The performance leads to the birth of a son endowed with good qualities, handsomeness, scholarship and affluence. He grows to be virtuous and benevolent in his youth, and becomes austere, god-loving and scripture-obeying. He performs meritorious deeds and makes his life an accomplished, fulfilled one. All this is the result of his merit earned in the previous birth. Owing to that in the current life also he understands what is self and what is not. He meditates on the Supreme Being (*Parabrahman*). To understand the *self* and *non-self*, one should understand the qualities or attributes of this world and all that is there in it.

Shlok 25-39

The *pancha bhootas*, five elements are stable. These are Earth, Water, Fire, Air and Ether.

The human body is made of these five.

The five attributes of the body are skin, bone, nerves, hair and flesh.

The five attributes of water are saliva, urine, sperm, marrow and blood.

The five attributes of fire are hunger, thirst, sloth, sleep and sexual urge.

The five attributes of air are bending, running, jumping, stretching and moving.

The five attributes of ether are, speech, thought, vacuity, delusion and mental instability. The Yogis have this understanding. Besides these, there are “Inner Means” which are the residual flavours of the earlier lives. These are called *antahkarana chatushtayam* the consequence of the deeds in the earlier lives. They are *manas*, *buddhi*, *chitta* and *ahankara*. There are five sense organs ears, skin, eyes, tongue and nose and through these man gets sense-gratification. There are five organs of action: speech, hands, feet, genitals and excretory organs. The deities for these organs of sense and action are Dik, Vata, Arka, Prachetas, the two Ashwinis, Vahni, Indra, Upendra and Mitra. Ten principal nadis are in the interior of the human body. These are Ida, Pingala, Shushumna, Gandhari, Gajajihva, Pusa, Yashaswini, Alambusa, Kuhu and Sankhini. These are ten ‘winds’ or airs. Prana, Apaana, Samana, Udana and Vyana - also there are other winds, Naga, Kurma. Krikala, Devadutta. *Prana* is the heart; *apaana* is in the anus, *samana* is in the navel, Udana in the region of the throat and distributed all over the body is *vyana*, also called Dhananjaya. Vomiting is also known as Naga. Kurma denotes the opening and shutting of the eyelids. Krikala causes hunger and Devadatta causes yawning. Dhananjaya is the all pervading. It carries nourishment all over the body and the corpse too has this wind in operation for a little while.

Shlok 40-68

Vyana is the important factor in all the 'nadis'. This splits food into two as soon as it is taken in or ingested. At the terminal point of anus the solid and the non-solid are separated. This wind vyana puts the water over fire and solid over the water. *Prana* wind standing under the fire slowly ignites it. The fire separates the substance from the water. (This fire is called *Jatharaagni*). Certain organs are considered unclean: ears, eyes, nostrils, tongue, navel, nails, anus, genitals, hair etc. The 'winds' derive their power from the self, perform functions assigned and influence people, as the sun does. There are two aspects of the human body: The *vyaavaharika* (operative) and *paara maardhika* (the non- earthly) At the *vyaavaharika* phase, in the human body there are thirty-five million body hairs, seven-thousand head hairs and twenty nails an fingers and toes. There are thirty-two teeth and the flesh which has nearly a weight of a thousand 'palas' and blood weighing about a hundred palas. Fat weighs about ten palas, marrow twelve. The bones are three hundred and sixty. There are tens of millions of nadis dense and subtle. Bile weighs about fifty palas and phlegm half of that in the human body. (This is the average) The *Paaramarthika* body has all the worlds, planets, oceans and the continents. Then there are six plexuses we call *chakras*. All these are said to be the attributes of Brahmanda, the universal-egg. These are the objects which the Yogis meditate on and thereby enjoy the effulgence of creation. There are several

lokas-worlds in the Brahmanda. Atala is the world below the feet of the human body and above is vitala. Sutala is at the knees. Mahatala is at the thighs. Talatala, is at the hips and at the genital areas is Rasatala. Patala is at the loins - These are the seven worlds or lokas. Bhooloka is at the navel; above the navel is Bhuvarka; at the throat is Maharloka, at the heart Swarloka Jnanaloka. In the mouth region and forehead is the Tapaloka and Satyaloka is in the Brahma-randhra - on the top of the head. These are the *Chaturdasha bhuvanas*, fourteen lokas. The mountains too are there in different regions of the triangle of the human body. Meru is situated in the triangle, Mandara is in the inverted triangle; Kailasa is in the right triangle and Himachala is in the left triangle. Nishada is in the upperlines, Gandhamadana in the lines on the right and Ramana in the lines of the left. These are the seven great mountains. The continents are there. Jambu is in the place of the bones; Saka, in the marrow; Kula in the flesh and Krauncha in the nerves. In the skin there is Shalmali continent, in the mass of hair is Gomedha; in the area of nails is Pushkara. Then the oceans are there as follows: The *Kshara* Ocean is in the urine, the *Kshira* Ocean in the milk, the *Sura* Ocean in phlegm and *Ghruta* Ocean in bone-marrow. The *Rasa* ocean is in the juices; the Dahi ocean is in the ova, the Swadu ocean is in the region of the soft palate inside the mouth. Then the planets are situated in the different Chakras: The Sun in Naada chakra, the moon in the Bindu chakra, Mars in the eye, Mercury in the heart; Jupiter in the

Vishnu- sthana, the place of Vishnu, Venus is in the seed; Saturn in the navel, Rahu in the face, Ketu in the lungs. The whole circle of planets is thus in the human body. The Yogi contemplates on all these situated in his very body.

Shlok 69-76

Rising early at dawn, pure in body and mind, sitting steadily and cross-legged, the Yogi must meditate on the six plexuses, or chakras, one should contemplate while in *ajapa* (Gayatri), the one who gives *mukti* securing release from all sin. The six *chakras* are *mooladhara*, *swaadishthana*, *manipooraka*, *anaahata*, *vishuddhi* and *ajna*. The contemplation should begin from the base, mooladhara at the root of the genital; and go up the pelvic region, the navel, the heart, in the throat between the eyebrows and at the top of the head. The *mooladhara* is four petalled and resplendent-with speech sounds ‘va’ to ‘sa’; the *swaadishthana* is six- petalled-and resembling the sun which has the sounds from ‘ba’ to ‘la’; the *manipooraka* is red with ten-petals with sounds from ‘da’ to ‘pha’ the *anaahata* is twelve-petalled, from ‘ka’ to ‘tha’ sounds and is golden in colour. The *vishuddhi chakra* is sixteen-petalled with vowel sounds and has the brilliance of the moon; the *Matra* or *Ajna* is a two-petalled lotus and has the sounds ‘ha’ and ‘ka’ and is red in colour; the one at the top, *ajna chakra* is the most resplendent with a thousand petals. This is the seat of truth and bliss this is ever-auspicious, light-

giving, effulgent and everlasting. The order of meditation of deities is in the *chakras*-Viddhi (creator Brahma), Vishnu, Shiva, Jiva, Guru, and Parabrahma, the all-pervasive eternal one.

Shlok 77-95

The knowing ones say that a man breathes in one day and night (in 24 hours) twenty-one thousand six hundred times. In exhalation the breath is let out with the sound of ‘ha’ and breathed in, inhaled with the sound of ‘sa’. Thus the individual goes on repeating ‘hamsa’ six hundred for Ganesha, six thousand for Vedhas (Brahma); six thousand for Hari (Vishnu) and six thousand for Hara (Shiva). Then a thousand and for Jivatma, a thousand for the Guru, a thousand for Chidatma,-this is how a Yogi understands the number of the repetitions. The Chakras are the rays of Brahman. Aruna and such other great sages and seers meditate upon the deities presiding over the *chakras*. This they know through their Guru Parampara, the succession of preceptors. Great preceptors and sages like Shuka Muni teach this to their disciples. A wise person should take the path of these divine preceptors and meditate in the way they are prescribed. After worshipping the *chakras* steadfastly, as per the instructions of the preceptor, with devotion, the *Ajapa*- Gayatri should be repeated. The *sadhaka*, the seeker, should meditate on *Brahma randhra*, in the *sahasraara chakra* the thousand-petalled lotus inverted and upon the Blessed preceptor, whose lotus- hand liberates one from fear.

The *sadhaka*, the seeker, the devout disciple should consider his body as one being bathed in the nectar flowing down after washing the preceptor's feet. He should throw himself down in devotion, prostrate before the Guru and sing His praises. After this he should contemplate on *Kundalini Shakti* moving upwards and downwards making a tour of all the six *chakras* up and down, as in the three and half coils of a serpent. Then he should meditate on *Sushumna nadi* which goes out of the Brahma randhra and thereby reaches the state of Brahma Jnaana and Absolute Bliss. From four-O'clock in the morning to sunrise he should meditate on Sri Maha Vishnu. He should organize his mind and thinking into a state of absolute steadiness under the instruction of his Guru, who is his main support. Without the Guru the *sadhaka* can not be on his own. After performing the sacrifice inwardly, he should perform the external sacrifice. Then he should go about performing Sandhya worship and then worship Hari and Hara. Looking inward is not possible till the body-ense *deha spruha* is totally given up. For the one who does not have the body consciousness, devotion and obtaining ultimate liberation come rather easily. There are many ways of securing the release, liberation or *mukti*, like *tapas*, *yoga* and such other things. Sri Hari tells Garuda that the path of devotion is far superior for all those who are attached to the world of change. Garuda is told that this has been the conclusion of deities like Brahma too. For purification

of mind rituals, performance of righteous duties and sacrifices are surely useful. But total devotion to Sri Hari yields a fruit which is the most valuable end everlasting. Sri Hari concludes saying that the man who follows all the things detailed above would find union with Him and gets eternal liberation from the cycle of birth and death. He enjoys the eternal bliss of unification with the Supreme Being.

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16. THE ETERNAL LIBERATION

Brief Summary

Eternal liberation is the release from the cycle of birth and death which goes on and on, one dying after birth and dying again.

Shlok 1-16

The learned ones tell us all that the aim and objective of human life should be the attainment of salvation, *mukti*, or liberation from the cycle of birth and death and finding unification with the supreme soul, the Paramatma. In this chapter Sri Hari instructs Garuda describing in detail the means for eternal, everlasting liberation. This chapter is the most important for all of us living in the world of change, in this ocean of all kinds of suffering and the allurements of worldly things. We are told about the importance and the essentiality of the performance of the prescribed rites in this *purana*. The rites properly performed would yield the blessings of Sri Hari and one's forefathers. Garuda renews his request and asks the Lord to tell him about the means for eternal liberation. In this world the jeeva is placed in various types of bodies with varied personalities and dispositions. He is born only to die and dies only to be born again. Breaking or ending this cycle of births and deaths for ever must surely be the end of life. The lord of liberation Sri Hari explains to Garuda how salvation has to be attained and achieved by man with his conscious efforts, by devotion to Him

in a sense of surrender and by following the path of righteousness and performing the rites for the departed ones. Shiva is the effulgent, shining one. He is the supreme Brahman, Parabrahma: all-pervasive, all-knowing and all-powerful. He is eternal, with no beginning or end. He is self-effulgent. He has no attributes. He is absolute bliss *sat-chitananda*. All creation has the spark of His fire. Man, born on this earth (like many any other creature) must die. Man is fettered by his own deeds, his *karma*, earning merit by doing good deeds and incurring sin which needs expiation. Man has a higher and subtle body called *linga sareera*, which lasts till it obtains *mukti*. Even the inanimate, non-moving things, right from a worm to man must one day cast away their respective bodies to be born again to work out their individual *karma*. Birth in the human form is the result of the good deeds and the *punya*, merit accumulated therefrom. The being must have had innumerable births before one is born as a human being. The one who does not make use of his birth as a human being to elevate himself and reach a higher state is an ignorant man, steeped in sin. If one does not know what is good for him, he is as good as the killer of a Brahmin.

Shlok 17-32

The human body is essential to acquire and accumulate merit by following dharma. It is of utmost importance to take care of the body with a view to doing good deeds and thereby to acquire merit in

various ways. The human body, once lost, is very difficult to get again without accumulating *punya*. Land, property, wealth, house etc., if lost once can be gained again-but not the human body which comes as a precious gift from the Supreme Being. Wisdom lies in taking proper care of the body. Normally no human being wants to leave the body. Everyone tries to live long and if possible for ever. Even though afflicted and rendered incapable even of movement, one wants to live on. One never wishes to die leaving the body. Very few people realize that the body is important to perform one's own duty following *dharma*, making the body a means for the end of realizing the self and attaining salvation or *mukti*. The body is necessary, in fact, it is a prime requirement, for the acquisition of knowledge; knowledge for the sake of higher things like yoga and meditation. Only in these things lie the methods for self-realization, elevation of the being. Man should try and work for his own elevation. There can be no benefit superior to this. If he does not take care of his body and take precautions against becoming sick and going to hell for misdeeds and sins, how can he work for his salvation? If stricken with disease or disability, can one help himself by going to a country or a place where there is no remedy or cure for such a condition? Old age is like a tigress and it can pounce at any moment, when one finds himself helpless owing to age. It is not necessary to become old by age. (Even in youth the condition of old age may occur.) The length of life may be very short. Life runs out as water

from a pot with holes. Diseases may attack one, no matter what one's age is. As long as one is healthy enough, one should do perform good, merit-yielding deeds. He should do his best for achieving noble things. Calamity may befall at any moment, misery may engulf one and one's senses may be become numbed unexpectedly. One must be aware of this and hasten to perform merit-yielding deeds following the path of righteousness. As long as there is life in one's body, one should pursue things which are worthwhile in the long run. Only the unwise one begins digging a well when a part of his house is already on fire.

Nobody can predict the onslaught of Death. Unfortunately the one swinging between joys and sorrows of the world does not know what really matters. Man lives in delusion, an improper belief that things would always be the same while he is enjoying them. He sees the sick, the infirm and the helpless in a calamity but he does not realize that he too may face disease or misfortune. Riches are not stable, wealth is deceptive; youth never stays for long, life is changeful, unsteady: knowing all this, can a man with an understanding of the real nature of things be careless or forget his own future? Even though one may live the full life of a hundred years - half of it is spent in sleep. It is lost in idleness and a lot of it would pass in ignorant childhood and the penitent helpless old age. Owing to lack of proper understanding, man does not do what he ought to do. He sleeps when he ought to be awake. He does not realize that life is a bubble in the water which may

burst at any moment. It does no good for anyone to be attached to objects or ways of sense-gratification.

Shlok 33-44

For an ignorant man what is bad appears good and what is impermanent and evil appears everlasting and good. Seeing very well, he falters, though his hearing may be good his understanding is poor. While in the jaws of fierce crocodiles like death, disease and old age, he does not understand the plight which he is in. Every moment passing takes a man nearer to death. The passage of time, quick and ever fleeting is not taken note of by the stupid person wallowing in sense-gratification. Time gets exhausted unnoticed just as an unbaked clay pot disappears melting in water unnoticed. Life can never be made permanent or everlasting. One can sooner make the air a prisoner, split ether, bind waves in captivity. Everything is transient. Earth disappears! Mount Meru may be ground into dust the seas may just go dry. What to say of the fragile, human body! Man is mortal! The wolf of death lies in wait to eat him just as a wolf eats a lamb. Man is thrown into an ignorance that is incurable. He works hard and takes pride in relationships boasting saying: “My wife! My son!” Man plans, proposes, decides to do certain things now and plans to do certain other things later, but death does not wait for him or for anybody for that matter. Prating about death is the quality of the immature and the ignorant. Man would not think of the saviour, even though old age approaches with an army

of infirmities and ailments to crush him. Man is stricken with all kinds of adversities. He suffers the pinpricks of thirst, the stings of serpents, and is roasted in the fires of desires and repulsions. In this world beings die and age is no bar for death. Death may kill a being at any age. Humans die as kids, young men, old men or even as infants and foetuses in the womb.

Shlok 45-64

After departing from this world the person goes to the domain and abode of the Lord of Justice, Yamadharmaraja. The person leaves his body here. He knows that relationships and association with wife and children or friends or relatives are transient but makes much of them. All unhappiness, misery and pain are caused by the changing nature of the world. He who understands this and is wary and wise never suffers grief for long. The wise man abandons this world of change, which is a source of sorrow and pain, a seat of calamities of all kinds, a refuge of all sins. It is possible for a man in fetters and chains to be released but it is not possible for a man fettered with relationships and bonds of wife, son, or friend. Attachments of all kinds may be pleasant to this mind but they are so piercing to the heart as a dagger. Desires for wealth etc., kill people every day. The foods obtained in sense of gratification steal away all good sense and judgement. A fish does not see the danger of the bait on the iron hook. So is the body which yearns for pleasure. It does not care to protect itself from the torments of

Yama. Sri Hari tells Garuda that the man who does not have discrimination-the sense of judgement as to what is good and what is bad-constantly yearns for the evil sense- gratification. This leads him to suffer the torments of hell. All creatures have desire for sleep, copulation and food. The man who controls these desires and urges is the strong, real man. The one who does not have control of any kind degenerates into a beast. Those who are tormented by nature's calls at day break, hunger and thirst when the sun is at the meridian and sexual passion and sleep in night are foolish. Those who can not keep their urges under strict control are doomed to hell. Those who have attachment to the body, to relationships and wealth etc., are born to die in ignorance. This is pitiful. A wise man shuns attachments since he knows where they lead him. It is not easy or always possible to give up all. But friendship may be cultivated as an alternative and as a remedy for excessive attachment. What one should be attached to is good sense, discrimination and restraint. Without these man becomes blind and can not help taking bad paths and treading dangerous ground. There are some people who are attached to performing ceremonies and rites. They are ignorant and carried away by deceit. By merely being intent on these alone, by repeating *mantras* without understanding or righteousness is of no use. Fools are those who desire to get enlightened by fasting or emaciating themselves. They are bewildered by *maya*, illusion created by God. Without proper understanding and following the teachings of

scriptures, liberation or *mukti* are not possible by such outward and deceitful activities. Such people are hypocrites who let their hair go matted, sitting on antelope skins and wandering as *jnaanis* (knowing ones), only to deceive people. The one who says "I know Brahman", while inwardly being attached, must be shunned. For the rites he performs are not inspired by knowledge or wisdom. Such people should be treated as outcasts.

Shlok 65-82

One does not become unattached and an ascetic by merely going about naked besmeared with ash, staying in a forest or by bathing in holy waters or taking vows. Sri Hari asks Garuda if a donkey which goes about without shame becomes free from attachment. A dog which is smeared with dust and ashes does not become a liberated one, free from attachments. The beasts that feed on grass, leaves or water, like jackals, rats or deer can not become accomplished by merely eating or feeding on things like grass. Crocodiles and fish living in sacred waters of the Ganga do not become *yogis*.

Pigeons eat stones. Chataka birds don't drink any water except the rain water only while it is raining. By merely following these can any one become a Yogi? The point is that these practices do not make one a yogi or an ascetic. What makes man a Yogi is the knowledge of truth, total resignation and following non-attachment. Though one falls in the well of the *shad*

darshanas, six systems of philosophy, he cannot become a Yogi. By merely studying philosophy one remains a sophist. He may have mastered Vedas and *shastras* but he does not know the real essence of these. He merely learns things by rote and repeats portions of these scriptures like a parrot. By mere scholarship and learning, one gets befuddled with the result that he turns away from truth. Sri Hari declares that people who decorate themselves with poetry, with novel and arresting turns of expression just remain fools with bewildered senses. Man may try with great strain to explain *shastras* but the highest purport of all *shastras* is something different. By reciting the scriptures or learning the Vedas by rote one does not get wisdom or go any the nearer to God. Sri Hari gives Garuda the example of a ladle. The ladle is used to serve an item of very tasty food. It remains in the vessel long, but it cannot taste or enjoy what it serves. The head wears the flowers but only the nostrils know the fragrance. Reading or reciting vedas does not make a person understand the ultimate reality. The ultimate and absolute truth is within one's own self, within himself. A mere scholar is like a goatherd who looks around for his goat which he has right under his arm. This is the result of mere knowledge or ability to preach. A man who has no wisdom is just like a mirror for a blind man. What is important is the understanding of the scriptures. *Shastras* show the way to understand truth.

Shlok 83-94

The scholar is never satisfied with his study and reading. He wishes to read everything, hear everything and know everything. But, it is impossible to exhaustively read, hear and study everything, even if he were to live for a thousand years in *devamana*, according to the reckoning of time of the deities. Life is short and *shastras* are many. What can be done is to know the essence; separating the worthy from the worthless, like a swan which only can separate the milk from a mixture of water and milk. Sri Hari tells Garuda that a wise man having read the *shastras* and the Vedas should just abandon all chaff and retain the rich grain. For one who is satisfied with the ambrosia he has, what use can he have for any other food? Both the *shastras* and the vedas give accounts of truth and information. It is only wisdom coupled with knowledge that can lead to liberation or salvation. The stages of life, philosophies or actions- these do not give wisdom coupled with knowledge. Sticking to *dharma*, the path of righteousness alone leads one to mukti. One word from the *guru*, the preceptor may secure liberation. Mere learning for its own sake is for showmanship. There are so many herbs, but among them Sanjivani is the best. It makes the dead one come alive. Advaita, the non-dual is proclaimed to be the most auspicious. Attaining this knowledge and acquiring this condition does not depend on some body or any action. Only the Guru's Kripa, compassion, and his word can give liberation for a *sadhaka*, an aspirant, committed to

know the ultimate reality. Sri Hari tells Garuda that there are two kinds of knowledge: study and discrimination. *Sabdabrahman* is a matter of study. *Parabrahman* is a matter of discrimination. Judgement, understanding and wisdom go into discrimination. Some take to belief in Advaita; some favour Dvaita. (The first is saying there are no two—there is only one. The second believes that the individual self and the universal self are two and different. *Advaita* or Monism believes in the unity of the two as one). ‘Mine’—makes for bondage. ‘I’ – ‘My’ ‘Mine’ is all indicative of *ahankara* (egosense). This leads to bondage. ‘Not-mine’ leads to selflessness and eventually to liberation. Acquiring knowledge is *karma* that does not bind. This kind of *karma* liberates. Other kinds of *karma* lead to bondage and can give only skills.

Shlok 95-101

There can be no realization of Truth as long as ‘actions’ are performed, as long as there are impressions resulting from the world of changes and as long as fickleness is in the mind and the senses. In the same way, there can be no realization of Truth, as long as one takes pride in the body; as long as ‘myness’ *ahankara* persists; as long as there are unwise efforts etc., with an unstable mind, there can be no real love and reverence for the Guru.

Shlok 102

The knower of Truth gets liberation by doing certain things. He cuts off all bonds with the sword of

unattachment or *vairagya*. *Vairagya* also involves shedding all kinds of desires of the body. The seeker leaves home and goes about bathing in holy places and holy rivers and staying aloof in contemplation or meditation. He concentrates his mind on the *parabrahman*. He controls his breath while contemplating inwardly the beejaaksharas, the mystic syllables or sounds. Making use of the charioteer (his wisdom and discrimination) he concentrates on the absolute Truth withdrawing himself from all sense-objects with the skill he has already achieved. He keeps his mind on the utterance *aham brahmasmi*. Sri Hari tells Garuda that he who breathes his last with the single mystic syllable ‘Om’ or ‘Aum’ would be liberated to join the Supreme Being. Thus he achieves the highest goal. People who are pious and committed only outwardly are hypocritical. They cannot go anywhere near the achievement of the ultimate goal. They do not have *jnaana* or *vairagya*, knowledge or unattachment. The *jnaani* is humble, free from pride and delusion and he gives up attachments of all kinds. He treats both pleasure and pain alike with equanimity for he is aware of the higher-self. He is on the path to liberation. The one who bathes in Manasarovar obtains liberation immediately since the waters in that divine lake wash away all impurities and make the individual completely cleansed and sanctified. Sri Hari then tells Garuda that a person who worships Him with total devotion and complete surrender would attain *mukti* or salvation. The one who leaves his home and dwells in a holy

place, usually a place of pilgrimage like the following cities is blessed by Him with liberation. The cities are Ayodhya, Mathura, Maya, Kashi, Kanchi, Avantika, and Dwarawati. Sri Maha Vishnu tells Garuda that listening to what he has described to him would liberate anyone. By hearing this read out or reading it independently one would acquire knowledge and dispassion and thereby attain *moksha*. Knowers of Truth attain liberation. People who are righteous go to heaven. Sinners would be condemned to hell and are tormented for a long time. Having said all this Sri Hari asks Garuda what more he wanted to know. Sutamuni concluded his narration describing how Garuda went on prostrating to his Lord again and again. Garuda was completely fulfilled. May Sri Hari protect us! May He give us the condition of everlasting devotion to the Supreme Being!

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