

VIṢṆU STOTRAS IN GARUḌAPURĀṆA

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Abstract

The Purāṇas in general are records of various transformations that have taken place on this earth and in the universe as a whole. Every time of human knowledge is recorded here along with His awareness that He is a speck in this large creation of the cosmos. He is also very much aware that if there is a creation there should be Creator; this Creator, though only One has been variously addressed by our ancient Ṛṣis. In their gratitude to the Supreme Being they have extolled this Creator in numerous ways.

Stotras are one type of praising the Creator as a record of our awe and devotion. The Purāṇas are replete with stutis on the different deities. Lord Śiva and Lord Viṣṇu and goddess Śakti are the recipients of majority of stutis.

Here the stutis specifically on Viṣṇu as found in the Ācāra Kāṇḍa of *Garuḍapurāṇa* are analysed.

The *Garuḍapurāṇa* is one of the eighteen Mahā Purāṇas in Sanskrit literature. This Purāṇa is classified into three sections namely Ācāra Kāṇḍa, Preta Kāṇḍa and Brahma Kāṇḍa.

The Ācāra Kāṇḍa of *Garuḍapurāṇa* has several *stotras* like Gaṇapatistotra, Śivastotra, Sūryastotra, Gāyatrīstotra, Durgāstotra, Lakṣmīstotra and Viṣṇustotras. Of these, the *Viṣṇustotras* namely the *Vaiṣṇava Pañjara*, *Viṣṇu Sahasranāma*, *Kulāmṛtastotra*, *Mṛtyāṣṭakastotra*, *Acyutastotra* and *Nārasimha stotra* tell us about Lord Viṣṇu's supremacy and his great fame; and these are discussed.

VAIṢṆAVA PAÑJARA :

The thirteenth chapter consisting of fourteen *ślokas* of Ācāra Kāṇḍa in *Garuḍapurāṇa* is called the *Viṣṇu Pañjara* also known as *Vaiṣṇava Pañjara*. Lord Hari describes in these *ślokas* the greatness of himself as Viṣṇu, the Supreme God of gods. The *Pañjarastotra* is about Lord Hari's prowess as Viṣṇu along with his various weapons and wonderful adornments. This stotra once chanted will help devotees

to operate it as a *kavaca* to protect themselves by invoking Lord Viṣṇu's various weapons and embellishments to one's help.

Lord Viṣṇu's various weapons protect the devotee from different directions as - the Sudarṣana cakra in the east, the Gada-Kaumodakī (mace) in the South, the Hala (ploughshare) in the west and the Musala (club) in the North¹:

नमोनमस्ते गोविंद चक्रं गृह्य सुदर्शनम् ॥
 प्राच्यां रक्षस्व मां विष्णो त्वामहं शरणं गतः ।
 गदां कौमोदकी- गृह्य पद्मनाभ नमोऽस्तु ते ॥
 याम्यां रक्षस्व मां विष्णो त्वामहं शरणं गतः ।
 हलमादाय सौनन्दे नास्ते पुरुषोत्तम ॥
 प्रतीच्यां रक्ष मां विष्णो त्वामहं शरणं गतः ।
 मुसलं शातनं गृह्य पुण्डरिकाक्ष रक्ष माम् ॥
 उत्तरस्यां जगन्नाथ भवन्तं शरणं गतः ।

The Khaḍga (sword) protects in the North East and the Pāñcājanya (conch) in the South East, the weapon Cāndramasa in the South West and his beautiful adornments in the form of the Vaijayanti garland and the Śrīvatsa (gem) in the North West²:

खड्गमादाय चम्मार्थ अस्त्रशस्त्रादिकं हरे ॥
 नमस्ते रक्ष रक्षोघ्न ऐशान्यां शरणम् गतः ।
 पांचजन्यं महाशंखमनुघोष्यं चपञ्जकम् ॥
 प्रगृह्य रक्ष मां विष्णो आग्न्येय्यसां रक्ष सुकर ।
 चन्द्रसूर्य्य समागृह्य खड्गं चान्द्रमसं तथा ॥
 नैर्ऋत्यां मां च रक्षस्व दिव्यमूर्ते नृकेसरिन् ।
 वैजयन्ती- सम्प्रगृह्य श्रीवत्सं कण्ठभूषणम् ॥
 वायव्यां रक्ष मां देव ह्यग्रीव नमोऽस्तु ते ।

The Lord is further prayed to for protecting a person from above seated on Garuḍa and from the powers of the nether worlds in the form of Kūrma and Matsya³:

वैनतेयं समारुह्य त्वन्तरिक्षे जार्दन् ॥
 रक्षस्वाजित सदा नमस्तेऽस्त्वपराजित ।
 विशालाक्षं समारुह्य रक्ष मां त्वं रसातले ॥
 अकूपार नमस्तुभ्यं महामीन नमोऽस्तु ते ।

The entire upper body of the devotee is to be protected by Bāhupañjara of the Lord⁴:

करशीर्षाद्यंगुलीषु सत्य त्वं बाहुपंजरम् ॥
कघत्वा रक्षस्व मां विष्णो नमस्ते पुरुषोत्तम ।

The various names of the Lord used in these fourteen *ślokas* are- Viṣṇu, Puruṣottama, Puṇḍarīkākṣa, Rakṣoghna, Nṛkesarin, Hayagrīva, Janārdana, Akūpāra, Mahāmī, Ajita and Aparājita.

Lord Śaṅkara had narrated this *mantra* to Goddess Kātyāyanī and the Goddess chanted this *mantra* with reverential faith; the infinite power of this *mantra* protected her well and it helped the goddess in killing the mighty Mahiṣāsura, Raktabīja and other evil powers⁵ :

एतदुक्तं शंकराय वैष्णवं पंजरं मूहत् ॥
पुरा राक्षार्थमीशान्याः कात्यायन्या वृध्वज ।
नाशायामास सा येन चामरान्महिषासुरम् ॥
दानवं रक्तबीजं च अन्याँश्च सुरकण्टकान् ।

It is further added that by reciting this *stotra* with reverential faith, one can destroy one's enemies at all times from different directions as it helps him draw Lord Viṣṇu's powers⁶ :

एतज्जपन्नरो भक्त्या शत्रून्विजयते सदा ॥

There is a similar *śloka* seen in the tenth Skanda of Bhāgavata purāṇa which is called *Bālarakṣā stotra*. It is addressed by Yaśodā to Lord Viṣṇu as a prayer to protect child Kṛṣṇa.

VIŚṆU SAHASRANĀMA :

Like the *Vaiṣṇava Pañjara* which tells us about Lord Viṣṇu's weapons protecting on all directions, in the fifteenth chapter (260 ślokas) of *Garuḍapurāṇa* we have Viṣṇu Sahasranāma which speaks of Lord Viṣṇu's many praiseworthy names that burn one's sins. When Lord Rudra asks for a means of deliverance, Lord Viṣṇu imparts to him the hymn of His own names. This hymn is different from the well-known one uttered by Bhīṣma in the Anuśāsanaparva of the Mahābhārata. Despite the differences between the Viṣṇu Sahasranāma in the *Garuḍapurāṇa* and the Viṣṇu Sahasranāma in *Mahābhārata*, there are some similarities. Out of Lord Viṣṇu's many wonderful names, 127 names are the same and 56 names are closely related to each other.

Here are a couple of examples that show the similarities between the two Viṣṇu Sahasranāmas :

*Viṣṇu Sahasranāma from
Garuḍa Purāṇa :*

प्रधानं पृथिवीपद्मं पद्मनाभः प्रियप्रदः ।
सर्वेशः सर्वगः सर्वः सर्ववित्सर्वदसुरः ॥
महागतिर्महाकीर्तिर्महारूपो महासुरः ।
मधुश्च माधवश्चैव महादेवो महेश्वरः ॥

*Viṣṇu Sahasranāma from
Mahābhārata :*

सर्वगः सर्वविधदानुः विश्वक्सेनो जनार्दनः ।
वेदो वेदविद्व्यङ्गो वेदाङ्गो वेदावित्कविः ॥
महाबुद्धिर्महावीर्यो महाशक्तिर्महाद्युतिः ।
अनिर्देश्यवपुः श्रीमान् अमेयात्मा महाद्रिघृत् ॥

NĀRASIMHA STOTRA :

This *stotra* in twenty-five *ślokas* forms the content of chapter 231 of the Ācāra Kaṇḍa. The circumstances leading to the composition of this *stotra* is briefly stated in the first five *ślokas*. Lord Śiva had created the Mātṛkās with the purpose of killing the demon Andhaka. Once Andhaka was killed, the Mātṛkās started devouring all the other living souls of the universe without listening to Lord Śiva's admonitions. Lord Śiva meditates on the figure of the mighty Narasimha who appears before him. Here the terrific form of the Lord is described in great detail⁷.

Śankara paying obeisance describes the glory of Lord Nṛsimha and pleases him with his hymns in which he praises the Lord as below– the Lord is the destroyer of the demon king Hiranyakaśipu whose entrails were torn asunder by the Lord's finger-nails; Lord Narasimha is radiant like millions of suns with a voice of roar of universal ocean of dissolution; His riches exceed thousands of Kuberas; He is mightier than thousands of planets and Rudras; He is prayed to by thousands of Brahmās; He is looked upto by thousands of Indras; He is the remover of thousands of rebirth⁸ :

नमस्तेऽस्तु जगन्नाथ नरसिंहवपुर्धर ।
दैत्येश्वरेन्द्रसंहारिनखशुक्तिविराजित ॥ ...
कल्पान्तेऽम्भोदनिर्घोष सूर्यकोटिसमप्रभ ॥
सहस्रधनदस्फीत सहस्रचरणात्मक ॥
सहस्रचन्द्रप्रतिम सहस्रांशु हरिक्रम ॥
सहस्ररुद्रतेजसक सहस्रब्रह्मसंस्तुत ॥ ...
सहस्रजन्ममथन सहस्रबन्धनमोचन ॥

Śiva then states that he does not wish to destroy the Mātṛkās as he is their creator. Lord Nārasimha, being the supreme god of gods, merges them into His own person and re-establishes peace in the world⁹.

The penultimate *sloka* says that by reciting this hymn, all that is desired is said to be fulfilled and a person is capable of getting his miseries destroyed just like the morning dew getting dissolved by the rising sun¹⁰ :

जपेदिदं सन्ततदुःखजालं जहाति नीहारमिवांशुमाली ।
समातृवर्गस्य करोति मूर्त्तिं यद् तदा तिष्ठति तत्समीपे ॥

KULĀMRĪTA STOTRA :

Kulāmrta stotra in twenty-four verses (of chapter 232) has been narrated for the first time by Lord Śiva to sage Nārada, the foremost of Ṛṣis. The *stotra* explains about the Supreme Being of all Deities, Lord Viṣṇu. It is a secret hymn of Jñānāmṛta that dispels all the miseries associated to the chain of rebirths¹¹ :

ज्ञानामृतं परं गुह्यं रहस्यमृषिसत्तम ।
वक्ष्यामि शृणु दुःखघ्नं भवबन्धभयापहम् ॥

The next twelve verses explain how by praying to Lord Viṣṇu one can be liberated from the shackles of samsāra. Of them, the first five verses¹² give in detail how gods and men get deluded about their own supremacy and how by constantly meditating upon Lord Viṣṇu one can attain liberation.

The ensuing eight verses¹³ are beautifully composed with the repetition of the phrase – *Viṣṇum sadā dhyayet sa mucyate* – at the end of each verse reiterating thereby the supermacy of Viṣṇu as the Almighty. Also his qualities such as being birthless, omniscient, eternal, blissful, pure, the embodiment of knowledge, decayless, fearless and so on are also enumerated:

यस्तु विश्वमनाद्यन्तमजमात्मनि संस्थितम् ।
सर्वज्ञमचलं विष्णुं सदा ध्यायेत्समुच्यते ॥
देवं गभोचितं विष्णु सदा ध्यायन्विमुच्यते ।
अशरीरं विधातारं सर्वज्ञानमनोरतिम् ।
अचलं सर्वगं विष्णुं सदा ध्यायन् विमुच्यते ॥
निर्विकल्पं निराभासं निष्प्रपञ्चं निरामयम् ॥
वासुदेवं गुरुं व् विष्णुं सदा ध्यायन् विमुच्यते ॥
सर्वात्मकस्य यावन्तमात्मचैतन्यरूपकम् ।
शुभमेकाक्षरं विष्णुं सदा ध्यायन् विमुच्यते ॥
वाक्यातीतं त्रिकालज्ञं विश्वेशं लोकसाक्षिणाम् ।

सर्वस्मादुत्तमं विष्णुं सदा ध्यायन् विमुच्यते ॥
 ब्रह्मादिदेवगन्धर्वैर्मुनिभिः सिध्दचारणैः ।
 योगिभिः सेवितं विष्णुं सदा ध्यायन् विमुच्यते ॥
 संसारबन्धनान्मुक्तिमिच्छन् लोको ह्यशेषतः ।
 स्तुत्वैवं वरदं विष्णुं सदा ध्यायन् विमुच्यते ॥
 संसारबन्धनात् कोऽपिमुक्तिमिच्छन् समाहितः ।
 अद्भुतमव्ययं देवं विष्णुं विश्वे प्रतिष्ठितम् ।
 विश्वेश्वरमजं विष्णुं सदा ध्यायन् विमुच्यते ॥

Anyone who recites this *mantra* or listens to this recitation gains the blessings of having done Aśvamedha Yāga and Vājapeyī Yajña; he is also relieved of all fears and miseries that are attached to the chain of rebirth¹⁴:

अश्वमेधसहस्राणि वाजपेयशतानि च ।
 क्षणमेकाग्रचित्तस्य कलां नार्हन्ति षोडशीम् ॥

MRITYVAṢṬAKA STOTRA :

The *Mṛtyvaṣṭaka* (chapter 233 with 11 verses) is said to have been taught by Lord Viṣṇu himself to Mārkaṇḍeya who conquered the Lord of death by reciting this¹⁵ :

मृत्यु-अष्टकमिदं पुण्यं मृत्यु प्रशमनं शुभम् ।
 मार्कण्डेयहिताथार्थाय स्वयं विष्णुरुवाच ह ॥

And Sage Mārkaṇḍeya contemplated on Lord Viṣṇu who is eternal, infinite and the most effulgent in his *hr̥dpadma*¹⁶ :

हृत्पद्ममध्ये पुरुषं नारायणं शाश्वतमप्रतेयम् ।
 विचिन्त्य सूर्यादतिराजमानं मृत्युं स योगी जितवांस्तथैव ॥

In a hymn praising the Lord, Mārkaṇḍeya says at the end of each of the six *ślokas*¹⁷ a refrain – *kinno mṛtyuḥ kariṣyati* (what shall Mṛtyu do unto me?) since he has taken refuge with Lord Viṣṇu.

दामोदरं प्रपन्नोऽस्मि किन्नो मृत्युः करिष्यति ॥१॥
 शङ्खचक्रधरं देवं व्यक्तरूपिणमव्ययम् ।
 अधोऽक्षजं प्रपन्नोऽस्मि किन्नो मृत्युः करिष्यति ॥
 वराहं वामनं विष्णुं नारसिंहं जनार्दनम् ।
 माधवञ्च प्रपन्नोऽस्मि किन्नो मृत्युः करिष्यति ॥
 पुरुषं पुष्करक्षेत्रबीजं पुण्यं जगत्पतिम् ।

लोकनाथं प्रपन्नोऽस्मि किन्नो मृत्युः करिष्यति ॥
 सहस्रशिरसं देवं व्यक्ताव्यक्तं सनातनम् ।
 महायोगं प्रपन्नोऽस्मि किन्नो मृत्युः करिष्यति ॥
 भूतात्मानं महात्मानं यज्ञयोनिमयोनिजम् ।
 विश्वरूपं प्रपन्नोऽस्मि किन्नो मृत्युः करिष्यति ॥

The seventh *śloka* declares that Mr̥tyu on hearing this hymn fled away and Mārkaṇḍeya thus conquered death¹⁸ :

इत्युदीरितमाकर्ण्य स्तोत्रं तस्य महात्मनः ।
 अपयातस्ततो मृत्युः विष्णुदूतैः प्रपीडितः ॥

It is also stated that those who chant this *mantra* thrice a day with devotion will not suffer a premature death and will live a full life¹⁹ :

इदं यः पठते भक्त्या त्रिकालं नियतं शुचिः ।
 नाकाले तस्य मृत्युः स्यात् नरस्याच्युतचेतसः ॥

There are similar *ślokas* like *Mr̥tyuñjaya śloka* and *Candraśekarāśṭakam* which were recited by sage Mārkaṇḍeya on Lord Śiva to conquer death.

ACYUTA STOTRA :

Sūta narrates the *Acyūta stotra* to Śaunaka (chapter 234 in 66 verses). The *stotra*, it is said, was originally narrated by Brahmā to Nārādā.

The hymn describes the various characteristics and deeds of Lord Acyuta. From *śloka* 5 - 17, paying obeisance to Lord Acyuta, his various names are enumerated.

From verses 18 - 22, the greatness of the Lord is extolled; from verses 23 - 36, the Lord is addressed directly. From 37-49 the inexplicable cosmic presence of the Lord which can be understood by the Yogis and self-controlled people is once again described.

In short, He is the supreme preceptor, the *mantra* itself, the object of worship as well as the worship itself, the supreme power, the sacrifice, the implements of sacrifice, the sacrificial *mantra*, the oblation as well as the priest²⁰ :

त्वं गुरुस्त्वं हरे शिष्यस्त्वं दीक्षामन्त्रमण्डलम् ।
 त्वं न्यासमुद्रासमयास्त्वं च पुष्पादिसाधनम् ॥ ...
 धर्मज्ञानादयस्त्वं हि वेदिमण्डलशक्तयः ॥

In the next few *ślokas*²¹ the Lord Himself is eulogised as the Vedas Brahmā, Indra and other deities, all the different types of beings in the world like Devas, Dānavas and Manuṣyas. Thus the omnipervasive nature of the Lord is brought out in these *ślokas*.

By chanting this hymn with devotion, a person gets his worldly ties broken immediately and attains supreme Bliss instantaneously²²:

अचिराल्लभते मोक्षं छित्वा संसारबन्धनम् ।

अन्योऽपि यो जपेद्भक्त्या त्रिसन्ध्यं नियतः शुचिः ॥

The positive effect of the hymn is said to be that a person can fulfill his desires by reciting it thrice a day even during Kaliyuga. Instances of a son less man getting a son, a sick man getting rid of his diseases, a poor man attaining wealth and a captive man attaining liberty are also given²³ :

इदं स्तोत्रं मुने सोऽपि सर्वकाममवाप्नुयात् ।

पुत्रार्थी लभते पुत्रान्बद्धो मुच्येत बन्धनत् ॥

रोगाद्विमुच्यते रागी लभते निर्द्धनोऽधनम् ।

विद्यार्थी लभते विद्यां भाग्यं कीर्तिं च विन्दति ॥

A self controlled person is said to become absolved of all sins by reciting this hymn with devotion²⁴ :

इमं स्तवं यः सततं मनुष्यः पठेच्च तद्वत्प्रयतः प्रशान्तः ।

स धूतपाप्मा विततप्रभावः प्रयाति लोकं विततं मुरारेः ॥

CONCLUSION :

The *stotras* from the Ācāra Kāṇḍa of the *Garuḍapurāṇa* seen above tell us of Lord Viṣṇu's great supremacy and how he is the supreme god of all gods and Brahmā of all Brahmā's. These *stotras* help us to attain good virtues through meditation and devotion to the Lord. The devout recital of his names of the Lord absolves us of our sins.

ENDNOTES :

1. *Garuḍapurāṇa*, 13.1cd-4.
2. *ibid.* 13.5-8
3. *ibid.* 13.9-10
4. *ibid.* 13.11.
5. *ibid.* 13.12cd-14ab
6. *ibid.* 13.14cd
7. *ibid.* 231.6-11

8. *ibid.* 231.12-6
9. *ibid.* 231.18-22
10. *ibid.* 231.24
11. *ibid.* 232.5
12. *ibid.* 232. 6-11
13. *ibid.* 232.12-8
14. *ibid.* 231.21
15. *ibid.* 233.9
16. *ibid.* 233.11
17. *ibid.* 233.1cd-6
18. *ibid.* 233.7
19. *ibid.* 233.10
20. *ibid.* 234. 23, 24cd
21. *ibid.* 234. 28-36cd
22. *ibid.* 234.52
23. *ibid.* 234. 53-4
24. *ibid.* 234.64

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