

Ganesha Purana – Upasana Khanda

by

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Obeisances unto the Glorious Lord Ganesha

Chapters 6 – 10

Chapter 6

Arrival at Bhrigu's Hermitage

Suta Gosvami said, "After Bhrigu's son, Cyavana, heard the plea of Sudharma, he quickly picked up his water pot filled from the clear lake. Distressed, he silently returned home in great sorrow. Bhrigu then asked his son what had caused his delay".

Bhrigu said, "Son, you look like you're trembling. Have you seen something out of the ordinary? Why are you so late? Tell me everything from the beginning!"

Cyavana said, "Dear father, in the region of Surastra, in a city known as Devata, there was a lotus-eyed king called Somakanta. He ruled a vast kingdom, protecting his subjects by dharma. Yet because of fate, misfortune befell him. Having bestowed the kingdom upon his son, he has come here, tormented by extreme sorrow, with his wife Sudharma and two ministers, Subala and Jnanagamyā. Oozing with leprosy and covered with worms, he wanders about, traveling with great difficulty. He has become like Indra, who was cursed by the sage Gautama to have one thousand vaginas. Some time passed while I was asking the King's wife about what had happened to them. I asked her questions such as, 'how did this delicate queen arrive at this place and how did her husband contract leprosy?' Hearing their sorrowful story, my heart filled with pity. After I filled my pot with water, I quickly returned".

Suta said, "Cyavana reported everything Sudharma told him, and after the sage heard it, he again spoke to his son".

Bhrgu said, "Son, you have my permission to go. Quickly bring them to me. I want to meet these uncommon people and would like to introduce myself to them".

Suta said, "Thus insisted by his father, Cyavana, full of compassion, went from pond to pond, anxious to find Sudharma. At that very moment, the two ministers Subala and Jnanagamy, laden with fruits and tubers, came before the King. Cyavana then spoke to the delicate-eyed Sudharma, 'My father invites all of you to his hermitage. Distressed with grief, Sudharma became depressed, and her body looked as though lifeless. After the virtuous queen had heard his wonderful words, she left for the hermitage, accompanied by the two ministers. With her husband, Somakanta, she walked in front of Cyavana, like Shiva and Durga accompanied by Ganesha and Skanda. She looked splendid in the middle of the path as she walked in front the boy sage.

They reached the area of Bhrgu's hermitage which was filled with the sounds of mantras and strewn with various kinds of flowers and creepers. This place resounded with the cries of many animals which played there. The wind blew gently and the air was not too warm. There was only light rain and the clouds poured down only at the sage's wishes. Walking before the sage's son, they happily entered the hermitage. Sudharma then saw the wondrous Bhrgu there. Clad in deer and tiger skin, he was the image of the sun. Accompanied by his wife and two ministers, the King offered obeisance, and with his hollowed hands joined together, he spoke".

The King said, "My fortune in coming here has certainly come to fruition because of my accumulated good works and austerity. Since birth I have been completely pure. Life

has been good to my mother and father. Just the sight of you instantaneously destroys all bad karma and creates good fortune in the future. Indra of sages, to be in your presence affords one a pure birth in the past, present and future.

Sage of perfect spiritual vision, in the region of Surastra, in a city know as Devata, I ruled a kingdom by utilizing prudent politics, honoring the demigods and Brahmins, and by adhering to goodness. What is this unforeseen bad karmic reaction that has presented itself as a most terrible and miserable state of being? I know of no possible remedy for it! Medications were tried but nothing helped. I now seek the remedy of your compassion as the real medicine. We have come for refuge to your hermitage where there is natural peace and accord”.

Suta said, "Having heard this speech, Bhrgu became filled with compassion, and after looking at Somakanta, he spoke thoughtfully".

Bhrgu said, "King, there is a solution, so don't worry! Those who stay in my hermitage experience no misery. Excellent King, I will explain to you about what happened in a previous life and about your misdeeds, due to which you have been forced into this condition. Firstly you must all have a meal, as you have been gathering your own food for too long. You have traveled through many forests exhausted and your faces have become extremely thin, but now you have come here”.

Suta said, "After Bhrgu had spoken, he bathed, having first massaged himself with fine oils. After being duly prepared, well bathed and rested, and at the direction of Bhrgu, whose splendor is immeasurable, the royal party dined. They ate large quantities of food seasoned with the six flavors; sweet, sour, salty, bitter, pungent, and astringent. Having

forgotten their extreme anxiety, they slept on soft beds offered by the sage, as though back in their own kingdom".

Thus ends the sixth chapter of Upasana Khanda of the glorious Ganesha Purana called "Arrival at Bhrigu's Hermitage".

Chapter 7

Somakanta's Previous Life

The Sages said, "What did Somakanta do after he arrived at the hermitage? What remedy did the omniscient Bhrigu suggest? Wonderful Suta, tell us more of this tale as we carefully listen. Although we have drunk in your ambrosial words, we have not heard enough".

Suta Gosvami said, "You have asked fitting questions, fortunate sages! You are certainly oceans of knowledge. Brahmins, it is usually difficult to finish a story if interrupted, but if a pupil does not ask a question, and when questioned, if the teacher does not reply, both may be considered to be deaf and dumb. Excellent Brahmins, please listen now because I am going to continue to recite Somakanta's story.

When night had passed away, and the sun, lord of the day, rose, the best of the Bhrigus', having completed his early morning bath, prayers and offerings, began to tell the King the tale of his previous life. Along with his wife and two ministers, they had also bathed and completed their prayers.

Bhrigu said, "In the enchanted city of Kolhara , which was located near the Vindhya Mountains , there was a famous Vaisya called Cidrypa who was very wealthy. His wife was called Atisubhaga, who was famous for her beautiful eyes. She was very virtuous,

generous, and obedient to her husband's wishes. In a previous life you became her son, best of kings, and as proclaimed by the Brahmins, you were named Kamanda. Eventually your parents become old. Day and night they showered excessive affection on you and over-fondled you too. Then in an auspicious ceremony and giving away a large amount of wealth, they married you to a woman known by the name of Kutumbina, who was very delicate and had eyes like a doe. She was deeply attached to you, and attentive to your guests, the demigods and Brahmins. She was very beautiful, a veritable jewel amongst women, and as lovely as Kama 's wife.

After a long life your father died, and your good mother, destined for heaven, entered the funeral pyre with him. After some time, a group of friends and yourself spent all of your parent's great wealth. Whatever money that was acquired, some was lost and some spent, until all of it was gone. Your wife became very upset. She separated from you because you ignored her wishes and sold the house. After being given permission to leave you, who had become a thorn in your lineage, she went to her father's home in order to take care of your children.

Like an arrogant and intoxicated drunkard, you acted improperly throughout the city, and behaved like a rutting elephant. You stole other's property and had affairs with many women. You became a thief and a troublemaker. A chief amongst gamblers, your heart a torrent of deceit, you roamed the city causing harm, like a hero without real strength. Most townspeople were moderate in their sense pleasure. After you had stolen from those people, using every possible pretext - friendship, false promises, sentimentality, you became maddened by your accumulation of great wealth. You lied and used foul language, and gossiped about the town's women. The townspeople became frightened of

you, as though a highly venomous snake had come into their house. Just like a thorn in a meal made from milk, you became intolerable. After they obtained the king's permission, you were banished from the city.

You became a murderer, killing women, children and the elderly. Just like a wolf or a deer, after seeing a lion, flees, you fled on seeing a posse of men coming after you. Fleeing to the forest, you needlessly killed fish, cranes, swans, wild roosters, wolves, deer, monkeys, cuckoos, rhinoceros, rabbits, and iguanas. In this way you viciously acquired your food. After ridding a mountain cave of lions, tigers and jackals, you formed a gang of absolutely terrifying thieves, that came from many places. With wood, lumps of earth and stones you built an extraordinary dwelling in that cave. It was broad, a kroda in length, and decorated with many oddities.

Because your wife's father was afraid of the king and the people, he forced her to go with her children to your dwelling. The children wore a variety of clothes and adornments, and your wife shone splendidly like a goddess. When she arrived you were accompanied by your gang of thieves, having returned to the cave after killing and robbing some unfortunate people on the road. In your home with the thieves and your wife and children, you appeared like a king.

On one occasion you saw a learned Brahmin named Gujavardhana quite alone in the road at midday. After seizing his right hand, you captured him. As he was assaulted he began trembling. Realizing your intention, he became afraid for his life, so he spoke to you words of extraordinary pity and reason".

Gujavardhana said, "You already have good fortune and wealth, so why do you wish to kill me? You are not the type to rob a Brahmin who is a peaceful husband and has

injured no one. Leaving behind your evil inclinations you should do the right thing. My first wife has died, so in order to settle the debt to my father and to create a righteous lineage, I have obtained another lovely wife, who is submissive, very generous, virtuous and endowed with all good qualities. She has worked with great zeal, endeavoring to become a good wife. Our lives would be meaningless without each other. Become like my father and mother and I will become like your son, since in the Sastras it is proclaimed that the father is the protector from fear, and the sustainer of life. Even thieves will protect a Brahmin who seeks refuge, so you must release me, who seeks your protection. If not, you will descend into the hellish worlds for a thousand kalpas, while your sons, wife, friends and subjects will enjoy your wealth. Your gang of thieves will be very happy not to share in your bad luck. I don't think you really want to experience this terrible reaction over so many births".

Thus ends the seventh chapter of Upasana Khanda of the glorious Ganesha Purana called "Somakanta's Previous Life".

Chapter 8

Restraining the Birds

Bhrgu said, "After Gujardhana had spoken to you in such a pitiful way, he became quietly depressed. As you heard his speech, your heart was not softened at all. Could Brahma have made you any more hard-hearted? After killing living beings by the thousands, you became completely uncompromising and ungrateful. Then as unyielding as death, you spoke to him".

Kamanda (King Somakanta) said, "Wicked man, it is useless to direct your collection of axioms at me. Appealing to the intellect of one who is not interested is like water in an overturned pot. Stupid man, on the one hand we have my disinterest! On the other hand, we have your advice! Just as a drunkard has no concern for the truth, your reasoning does not impress me. I am addicted to wealth and have absolutely no concern for my father's family name. Overwhelmed with desire, I possess neither fear nor shame. Have you ever seen cleanliness in a crow, honesty in a gambler, courage in a eunuch, a woman without desire, or patience in a snake? Through the influence of fate, providence has sent you while I have nothing else to do. I will never release you".

Bhrgu said, "After you had spoken, taking a sharp sword in your right hand, you cut off the Brahmin's head, just as a cat does to a mouse. The number of murders you have committed against Brahmins cannot be calculated, nor, above all, the murder of other living beings, including women, children and the elderly. One who even thinks about a person like you were takes a share of the bad karma of those deeds himself.

After a long time had passed, as Kamanda, you became very old. You experienced tremors, hiccups, sweating, indolence and congestion. You were always very tired but your fatigue did not abate even when you were seated or asleep. Your sons, female servants, camel attendants, friends, bards, grandsons, and even your close friends, showed you no respect. There was only one Brahmin among them who was considered trustworthy, who could keep a secret, and who was free to move about unhindered. You sent him to invite all the sages dwelling in the forest. They came at the Brahmin's request because they were afraid of you. After having paid obeisance to them, you said, 'Please accept these gifts from me!' The sages said, 'We will not accept your gifts because you

are an evil man. One becomes contaminated by engaging in sacrificial offerings, teaching, birthing, associating with, talking, walking, or sitting and eating with such a person' as yourself'. Alarming you with their words, the sages returned to their own hermitage, bathed completely, clothing and all, and then muttered Vedic hymns for purification. Then within your heart, Kamanda, there arose a sharp pain caused by your own contaminated condition, as well as from being left alone by your own family members, and from the Brahmins' rejection.

After you had counted the amount of your vast wealth, which comprised precious metals, jewels and so forth, you developed a strong desire to restore an old temple. In this temple, in a small wooded area, the Brahmins, under your direction, placed a wonderful deity of Lord Ganesha, which was very beautiful. The temple was long, broad, and had four beautiful doorways, four entrances and was adorned with four pyramidal towers. It was inlaid with numerous columns, filled with many altars and contained a beautiful courtyard inlaid with jewels, corals, strings of pearls and other gems. It was laden with many flowering trees, decorated with fruit trees and glorious ponds of sweet water were located at the four directions.

Because you had renovated this temple, your wealth began to diminish, some of it having been taken by your wife, sons, friends and kinsmen. After a very short time you died, and Yama's messengers bound and whipped you severely. Your whole body was pierced by thorns, crushed on a stone, and sunk in a ferocious hell of slime, blood and pus. In such a state these messengers led you into the presence of Yama and Citragupta. Yama asked, 'In your next birth will you utilize your good or bad karma first'? You said, 'Yama, born from the sun, I will utilize my previous good works'. Thereupon, you were

appointed king in the country of Surashtra. Relying upon the power I derived from austerities and because I feel compassion towards one who seeks my help, I have told you of your previous birth which caused this disease you are suffering from. Because you constructed that lovely temple for Lord Ganesha, you have become King

Somakanta, and you have a most charming consort who in loveliness is as beautiful as Indra's wife".

Suta Gosvami said, "That most wretched King, having heard what Bhrgu said, was beset with doubts about his story of Kamada, and became still as a stone. Because he doubted the word of the ascetic Bhrgu, who understands the meaning of the Sastras and who is omniscient, in less than a moment birds of many shapes and colors came forth viciously out of the sage's body and attacked the King. Flying here and there, they pecked at the king's chest with their hard, pointed beaks, cutting off bits of flesh, as they ate them near the sage. After this episode, the King took refuge of the sage, his body in terrible agony. In pitiful words he spoke to Bhrgu, the repository of austerity and knowledge".

The King said, "How is it that in your forest there exists no enmity among species hostile by nature, but in your presence, they seek to kill me? I am a miserable leper who is devoted to your feet. You are the refuge for all living beings. I have come for shelter, so free me now, sage".

Suta said, "Addressed in this way, Bhrgu, who is always affectionate towards the dejected, spoke again to the King. Bhrgu said, 'This happened because you doubted my word but I have the antidote that will instantly help you. Merely at the sound of the transcendent sound hum, these birds will leave'. After the birds heard the sound hum

from Bhrgu, they disappeared. The King, as well as his wife and ministers then became free from all worries”.

Thus ends the eighth chapter of Upasana Khanda of the glorious Ganesha Purana called "Restraining the Birds".

Chapter 9

Instruction to the King

Suta Gosvami said, "After contemplating the misery caused by King Somakanta's previous karma, Bhrgu became very perturbed. Thinking about this for a short time, he again spoke to the King".

Bhrgu said, "On the one hand we have your bad karma and on the other we have different remedies we can discuss. Still, I will tell you one particular remedy for destroying the reactions of this karma. If you listen attentively to the Ganesha Purana, then you will certainly be released from the ocean of misery. Of this there is no doubt".

Suta said, "After he had told this to the king, he recited the superexcellent "One Hundred and Eight Names of Lord Ganesha". He sanctified some water with holy mantras as he sprinkled it on the King. As soon as he had sprinkled the water, a small figure, with a black face fell, emerged from the King's nostril, and then fell onto the. He instantly grew very big. His gaping mouth measured seven talas. It was frightful. His tongue was terrible and his eyes were fire red. He had long arms and wore braided hair. A huge fire began spewing from his mouth, as did pus and blood, causing everyone's eyes to become blinded as though it were a very dark night. After seeing this startling being,

whose gnashing teeth were everywhere to be seen, all the other inhabitants of the hermitage fled.

Bhrgu questioned the male demon who was standing right before his eyes. 'Aren't you clever? Tell me about yourself, and what is your name?' The demon replied, 'I live in the body of the King, and my name is Papapurusa. As a result of your sprinkling water on him, I have come out of his body. I am extremely hungry and I need to eat, so give me food! If you don't I will eat this King and all of these people right in front of you, sage. Also, tell me about this charming dwelling place and where I have originally come from'. The sage again spoke to the demon, 'Now that you have come out of Somakanta, go, at my command, and stay in the hollow of that straight, sapless mango tree. You can eat the leaves that fall down from that tree. If not, I am going to reduce you to ashes. I tell you the truth, vile creature'.

Suta said, "When the sage had finished speaking to the demon, Brghu touched that mango tree. Merely by his touch the tree became ashes, Brahmins. As a result of the sage's steadfast gaze, the terrified demon also vanished into ashes. After the demon had disappeared, the sage turned to Somakanta".

Bhrgu said, "By hearing this Ganesha Purana, your good karma will appear again, excellent King. Until that tree sprouts again, you must remain here day after day in its ashes. When the tree has grown up, King, your bad karma will have been completely eradicated".

The King said, "I have neither seen nor heard of the Ganesha Purana before. Where was it written, and who is its author, sage"?

The Sage said, "Brahma first told it to the wise Vedavyasa and Vyasa recited this Purana, which destroys all sins, to me. I will now recite it to you. Firstly, perform your ablutions in this sacred lake, and firm-vowed King, make the resolution, 'I will continue to hear this Purana'".

Suta said, "Encouraged by Bhrgu, and having bathed in the famous Bhrgu-tirtha, Somakanta was overjoyed. Then he undertook his resolution, saying, 'Henceforth I will listen to any story about Ganesha. As soon as he made this resolution, he became released from his illness. By Bhrgu's mercy, the King lost his reddish color and became free of his wounds and worms. Appreciating the outcome, Bhrgu embraced the King, who was amazed and thrilled. After sitting down in his own seat, he then offered the King a seat. Then that great King, divinely inspired, spoke to Bhrgu'".

The King said, "Through your favor, and merely by this resolution, all my overwhelming anxiety has gone. Please completely recite this wonderful story of Dviradanana'".

Bhrgu said, "Listen carefully. After you are relaxed, I am going to recite this Purana. Just the desire to hear it arises because one possesses endless good karma. It could not be otherwise. For the wicked, simply by hearing this Purana, slightly bad, grossly bad, or vast, though these karmas may be acquired over many years, they are destroyed immediately because of Ganesha's blessings. Ganesha is imperishable, immeasurable, without material qualities, and without a material form. He cannot be understood just by speaking about Him or through the mind. His form is comprised of pure consciousness. Brahma, Shiva and the demigods cannot fathom the nature of his real appearance. Even

one as wise as the thousand-faced Sesa is unable to completely describe his glories, excellent King.

I have heard this Purana, which bestows such blessings, from the mouth of Vyasa, who is endowed with incalculable spiritual power, and has pure knowledge of the Self. Sick with grief after the destruction of his sacrifice, Daksa heard about Ganesha from Mudgala. He also was told that only a person who has firm devotion to the giver of all success, Ganesha, should listen to this Purana, but should never relay it to others. If everyone were to perform service to Ganesha, then no one would experience the heaps of obstacles and miseries that are created by the mind, therefore causing separation from the Lord.

Vyasa, who is omniscient, wrote these stories millennia ago for those without spiritual knowledge, who had not studied the Vedas, who were lacking in good conduct, and for those who do not understand the true meaning of dharma. As Vyasadev concluded, people living in the iron age of Kali are generally dishonest and mischievous, so he composed eighteen Puranas for the preservation of dharma. He also composed many Upapuranas for understanding God, but one will understand the truth of the Lord's appearance as Ganesha from this Purana.

*Thus ends the ninth chapter of Upasana Khanda of the glorious Ganesha Purana
called "Instruction to the King".*

Chapter 10

Vyasa's Questions

Bhrgu said, "As I mentioned, there was a great sage known as Vyasadev, the literary incarnation of Vishnu, and the son of Parashara Muni. Vyasadev knew the inner meaning of the Vedas, as well as the past and future. In order to help us understand its meaning, he divided the Vedas into four parts. To make the Vedas easily understandable for the common person, he then compiled the Puranas. Due to pride, however, he had not properly worshipped Lord Ganesha before starting to compose them. Vyasa then became overwhelmed by the task and could not even understand the purpose of his undertaking. Although he was omniscient, and the guru of Vedas and Sastras, he became quite confused. Like a snake whose poison is neutralized by mantras and herbs, he became inactive, and could not understand the cause of his own condition.

He then went to Satyaloka to respectfully question Brahma. The sage, Parashara's son, was shy, and his heart became overcome with wonder. He first paid obeisance to the host of demigods and divine sages, and finally to Brahma, whose seat is a lotus flower. He was in turn honored by Brahma, and offered a splendid sitting place. The great sage touched Brahma's feet with both hands. Having bowed down reverently, Vyasa began questioning him".

Vyasa said, "Brahma, circumstance has caused this bewildering condition of mine? My intention was to compose the Puranas which contain the meaning of the Vedas. This task began after observing that people in the age of Kali engage in nonsensical activities and are dull minded. They also lack faith, and are disrespectful of the Vedas, plus they are devoid of spiritual knowledge and goodness. They will only understand the principles

and the prohibitions of what I teach. My knowledge has disappeared, and I ramble on as if I have become drunk. I can see no reason for it! How could this have begun so suddenly? I have come here to ask you about the cause and the reason for it. Four-faced Brahma, besides you, whom else can I turn to for help? You are omniscient and the creator of everything. Remove my confusion! As an expansion of Narayana, I am also omniscient and constantly engaged in good works, but please tell me the cause of my bewilderment Lord!"

Suta Gosvami said, "Having heard Vyasa's speech, Brahma, astonished, smiling and pondering his difficulty, addressed the humbled sage."

Brahma said, "Look here! Having carefully considered that activities, good or bad, must be performed, and that a man can do anything in one way or the other, I am going to explain to you the subtle path of action. A wise man should accomplish difficult or easy tasks with honesty, purpose and intelligence, but without pride and selfishness. Because of pride, Hanuman, Lord of monkeys, was captured by Ravana, and due to selfishness, Dhrtarastra, Ambika's son, caused the destruction of his own dynasty. Due to selfishness, Parasurama Jamadagni destroyed the Kshatriya race.

There is a person who has neither beginning nor end, who is the source of the creator the universe, who contains the universe, who is the controller and sustainer of the universe, including those who exist and the non-existent, the manifest and the eternal. He can, at any time, create, destroy or change anything. The demigods, led by Indra, are always subject to his command, and have great faith in him. He removes obstacles for his devotees like Vishnu, Rudra, Surya, Agni, Varuna and the rest, but creates obstacles for others.

Relying on the power of your own wisdom, Vyasa, omniscient as you are, you have become arrogant, and because of your conceit, you have not worshipped Ganesha first, or even remembered him, or any other form of God, for that matter. If you do not think of Ganesha before any pursuit, be it a spiritual or worldly concern, or even when entering and leaving your home, he creates an obstacle. Those who explain the meaning of the Sastras and the Vedas speak of him as supreme bliss, as the supreme path, and as the supreme Brahman. Child! Go, and respectfully take shelter of Dviradanana. If the illustrious Lord is kindly disposed, he will do whatever you wish. If not, you will not obtain your desire in a thousand years".

Vyasa said, "Who is Ganesha? How can I understand him and his real appearance? To whom has he been previously kind to, four-faced Lord? How many incarnations does he have and what pastimes does he perform? Who has worshipped him in the past, and why? I am asking all of this, though my mind feels confused. Great-grandfather, you are an ocean of compassion, so please tell me all of this in great detail".

*Thus ends the tenth chapter of Upasana Khanda of the glorious Ganesha Purana
called "Vyasa's Questions".*

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