UNIT - I
INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER I
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CHAPTER II
INTRODUCTION TO PURANAS

CHAPTER III
INTRODUCTION TO COSMOGONY IN THE PURANAS
1.1.1 SIGNIFICANCE

The creation of the universe has baffled mankind since time immemorial. Moreover we have a numerous questions arising in the puny minds of almost every individual such as “how the universe came into being?”, “who created it?” and “by what the universe was created?”

Many ancient literary works of India like Vēdas, Epics, Purāṇas, the six Darśanas and other texts like Prasthānatrayam, Vivēkacūḍāmaṇi have propounded their own theories about creation. Consequently we have different theories of creation in front of us, for our consideration.

This research work tries to provide a solution for the aforesaid queries in terms of the Purānic outlook.

The explanation of cosmogony in the Purāṇas, by its innate nature, brings out the relationship between Brahman, world and the jīva. In so doing, an individual acquires perfect knowledge. This is because study of creation in the Purāṇas calls for an understanding of both Kṣētra (field) and Kṣētrajña. The Gītā declares:

“Know Me, the Supreme spirit in all beings, as the real knower of the field (Kṣētrajña) - of the body and the extended external world. The knowledge of the Kṣētra (field) together with the knowledge of the Kṣētrajña is the true and perfect knowledge.”

So the study of creation imparts true knowledge (Vidya) to an individual. Consequently it reshapes the world-view and outlook of life of an individual.

The main objective of spiritual accounts of creation, in the viewpoint of Ācārya Śaṅkara Bhagavatpāda, is to drive home the identity of the Brahman and the world. Ācārya Śaṅkara Bhagavatpāda in his commentary to Aitarēya Upaniṣad, indicates that:
"Verily, by knowing thoroughly and in great detail about the 'stories' of creation of the universe etc, nothing worthwhile can result; but by clearly realizing the fact of oneness of the self (Ātman) in all and its identity with Brahman, one achieves immortality."

One of the main aims of this thesis is to formulate groundwork to the future researchers who may find it extremely difficult to go through the entire Purānic literature just to get the details of creation alone. Consequently it would save the time, labour and interest of the researcher. This project may prove handy to a future researcher in the want of any detail regarding creation in the Purāṇas.

The process of evolution presented in the Purāṇas have a scientific basis. The details acquired can be equated with the basics of science and developed further to derive a concrete solution to the mystery of creation. This rational theory of creation propounded by Purāṇas, when taken in the right spirit, will be lauded by the modern science. This will result in the study of Purāṇas to be taken more seriously.

The work is so significant that a true understanding of creation and the principles (tattvas) involved therein, when assimilated in right spirit, may lead one to the ultimate goal of life, the very Summum Bonum of life namely - 'LIBERATION'.

I.1.2 THE SCOPE OF THE RESEARCH

This work of research deals with the topic of creation of the universe (COSMOGONY) as presented in the eighteen Purāṇas.

This lengthy work as it deals with the topic of Cosmogony explains creation in detail. As it proceeds further there is an acute necessity to describe the process of dissolution also since it forms an inextricable portion of the subject. Every creation is inevitably followed by a
dissolution. Creation and dissolution are cyclic in nature and bound to follow one another without any deviation. Thus without dissolution the process of creation would become incomplete.

Another important aspect that has been dealt to a respectable extent is the concept of 'Time'. Time is a significant factor, which intervenes between the process of creation and dissolution.

The entire work is divided into three units which are further subdivided into many chapters. The first unit acts as an introduction to the subject, the second serves as a collection of the complete data from all the Mahāpurāṇas and the third unit proceeds further to draw conclusion on the subject, as seen by the Purāṇas.

The first unit comprises of two chapters introducing both Purāṇas as well as Cosmogony in Purāṇas.

The second unit comprises of three chapters containing the data of collection. The eighteen Mahāpurāṇas are classified into three namely:

Śāttvika Purāṇas, Rājasika Purāṇas, and Tāmasika Purāṇas, each having six Purāṇas under them. The first of the three chapters presents the complete Cosmogony details as found in the Śāttvika Purāṇas. In a similar manner the second chapter presents the Cosmogony details as found in the Rājasika Purāṇas followed by the third chapter supplying the data for the Tāmasika Purāṇas.

The third unit consists of the concluding sections, comprising of four chapters.

The first chapter of this unit, places the entire theme of creation as found in the Purāṇas in an organized manner and is supported by Ślokas taken from various Purāṇas.
The second chapter of this unit attempts to corroborate the Purāṇic viewpoint of creation by offering several verses culled out from various scriptures.

The third chapter of this unit makes out a humble attempt to equate the basics of Purāṇic creations with that of the science of today. In other words it reveals the scientific basis of creation.

This is followed by the conclusion stating the theme of Cosmogony as revealed in Purāṇas.

In explaining the process of Purāṇic creation many Charts have been incorporated at the necessary stages. The aim of these charts are to present the flow of process to the reader in a very lucid manner.

I.1.3 LIMITATION OF THE RESEARCH

Creation and dissolution has been dealt in an elaborate manner in this work. However an inter-mediatory state namely 'Sustenance' has not been treated here, since it is a topic out of scope of this present work. Moreover it is found to be insignificant in relation to this topic.

Yet another topic namely Manvantara has also been not presented. The inclusion of the details of Manvantaras will make the work voluminous and carry us far from the intended objective.

This work on cosmogony as found in the eighteen Mahāpurāṇas does not include the Upapurāṇas at all. In line with the topic (Purāṇēṣu Sṛṣṭi Prakriyā), the work strictly adheres to the eighteen Mahāpurāṇas. The materials regarding creation extracted from Mahāpurāṇas are sufficient and so the Upapurāṇas have been overlooked.

I.1.4 METHODOLOGY ADOPTED IN THE RESEARCH WORK

The Methodology adopted in this work of "Purāṇēṣu Sṛṣṭi Prakriyā" is both analytical as well as critical by nature. One section of the work is
a sheer translation of Ślōkas found in all the Mahāpurāṇas pertaining to cosmogony. Characteristic of the Purāṇas it is 'descriptive' in nature.

The various details pertaining to cosmology lay scattered throughout the Purāṇas in a disordered manner lacking continuity. In one section an analytical approach is undertaken to draw a conclusion from the available data. Thus it is both Critical and Analytical in nature.

This work of cosmogony can be considered to be comparative in nature, at least partially. One stage draws a comparison within Purāṇas to bring to light the moot differences in ideologies amongst themselves. A comparative study between systems is undertaken through charts. Thus the work is comparative in nature.

1.1.5 BRIEF SKETCH ON PREVIOUS WORKS

There are several works in which creation is found. It is found either as a work completely dedicated to creation or as an work which has creation as part and parcel. However book on Purāṇas contain the topic of Cosmogony for the reason that it is one of the 'Pañcalakṣaṇas'. It will be worthwhile to notice that no work, dedicated to creation in the Purāṇas alone has been found. However, some of the works pertaining to the topic are as follows:

1. 'THE MYSTERY OF CREATION' published by Central Chinmaya Mission Trust is basically a collection of essays on creation by different authors. It highlights the Vēdantic viewpoint of creation.

2. One more work 'THE PURĀṆAS- IN THE LIGHT OF MODERN SCIENCE' deals with topics Sarga, Prati-Sarga, Kāla etc and is authored by K. Nārāyaṇaswami Aiyar. It
discusses the topic briefly and attempts to relate it to the modern science.

3. One more book named 'VEDANTA-VIS-A-VIS MODERN SCIENCE' by Swami Mukhyananda deals with Cosmogony in length. It brings home the shortcomings of the scientific (Modern Western Science) viewpoint of creation as it interprets creation from an 'Advaitic' standpoint.

4. THE PURANAS-THE ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF INDIAN HISTORY AND CULTURE (Vol. II) by Dr.S.D.Kulkarni discusses a plethora of topics found in the Puranas. It throws light on creation, time etc briefly.

5. Yet another Sanskrit work 'ASTADASA PURANA PARICHAYA' by Dr.Shrikrishnamani Tripathi discusses several topics of creation. One of the topics namely 'Siṣṭirahasyam' deals about creation presenting Ślokas from different Puranas. The topic of dissolution is also discussed briefly.
1.2 INTRODUCTION TO PURĀNAS

The Purānas are ancient works that represent the traditional view of Cosmogony, God and man, Social order through fables, stories, symbols, and parables in a simple and lucid style. In relation to the Vēdas, the Purāṇa is like a magnifying glass. The Purāṇas are key to the understanding of the Vēdas. The main objective of the Purāṇas is to convey the ideologies of ancient thinkers and to preserve the ancient tradition.

The principal Purāṇas are eighteen in number. These are the Mahāpurāṇas while there are secondary ones called Upapurāṇas.

1.2.1 DEFINITION OF THE TERM PURĀṇA

The word Purāṇa literally means 'old'. Some of its various meanings are as follows:

a. The etymological explanation of the term 'Purāṇa' as given by Yāskācārya in Niruktam is:
   पुरा नर्वः भवत्।
   Which means, although it is old, it is always new.

b. According to Sāyaṇācārya, the commentator of Vēdas:
   The Granthas which tells us about the evolution and progress of the world is Purāṇa.
   जगत: प्रागानुस्थानुक्रम्य सर्गप्रतिपादकं वाक्यजनाति पुराणम्।

c. One interpretation by Jivagoswami holds:
   पूरणात्पुराणम्
   That which supplements the matter dealt within Vēdas.
d. The Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa states Purāṇa as:

यस्मात् पुरा ह्यमूढ्येयत् पुराणं तेन तत् स्वतं ।

'So happened in the olden times or it was like this in old days.'

1.2.2. CHARACTERISTICS OF PURĀNAS

The most widely accepted definition known as 'Pañcalakṣaṇa' comprises of five characteristics. The following Śloka points out these characteristics:

सर्गस्य प्रतिसर्गस्य वंशो मन्न्यतराणि च ।
वंशानुचरितं चैव पुराणं पश्चालक्षणम् ॥

They are

i) Sarga (Creation)
ii) Pratisarga (Secondary Creation)
iii) Vaṃśa (Genealogy of Kings and Sages)
iv) Manvantara (Periods of Manu)
v) Vaṃśānucaritam (Anecdotes of Kings)

1.2.3 CLASSIFICATION OF PURĀNAS

The Purāṇas are classified based on several aspects such as the Pañcalakṣaṇa definition, subject matter, deities etc. We consider the classification based on the three Guṇas of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas on the simple grounds that it sounds more pertinent to the present reasearch topic and we get six Purāṇas under each classification. The Sāttvika Purāṇas glorify Viṣṇu, the Rājasika Purāṇas glorifies Lord Brahmā and Agni while the Tāmasika Purāṇas glorifies Lord Śiva. The eighteen Purāṇas under such a classification is charted below:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sāttvika Purāṇas</th>
<th>Rājasika Purāṇas</th>
<th>Tāmasika Purāṇas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Viṣṇu</td>
<td>Brahmāṇḍa</td>
<td>Matsya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nāradīya</td>
<td>Brahmavaivarta</td>
<td>Kūrma</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guruḍa</td>
<td>Mārkaṇḍēya</td>
<td>Liṅga</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bhāgavata</td>
<td>Bhaviṣya</td>
<td>Śiva</td>
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<tr>
<td>Padma</td>
<td>Vāmana</td>
<td>Skānda</td>
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</tbody>
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1.3 INTRODUCTION TO COSMOGONY IN THE PURĀÑAS

Cosmogony forms the first topic of the Purāṇas. The topic ‘Purāṇeśu Srsti Prakriyā’ meaning ‘Cosmogony in the Puranas’, forms a part and parcel of the Pañcalakṣaṇa, the very characteristics of the Purāṇas. In fact two of its topics ‘Sarga’ and ‘Pratisarga’ have a direct bearing on the topic.

The word ‘Srṣṭi’ strictly speaking, stands for projection and not creation. Because the word ‘creation’ means bringing out something out of nothing, not applicable here. Hence ‘Srṣṭi’ stands for projection. However it may be noted that the word ‘Creation’ is used all along in the work for the benefit of the reader.

The Purāṇas hold that at the outset there existed a Supreme principle called Brahman - the Ultimate reality. It bifurcates itself into two principles called Puruṣa and Prakṛti. Brahman is like electricity, which cannot be perceived directly but can be understood through its different manifestations such as light through bulb, sound through a music player, cool air through an air conditioner etc.

Puruṣa is a modification of the Supreme Being and is sentient, conscious and is referred to as spirit. Prakṛti is also known as Avyakta (unmanifested), Pradhāna (crude matter), Māyā, Avidyā etc. It is also referred as the matrix, the chaos, crude matter etc. The Prakṛti is akin to a computer, which performs wonderful tasks and at times, carries out tasks, which even human beings cannot accomplish. Nevertheless, computer is only a product of human intelligence.

The Lord enters both Puruṣa and Prakṛti causing an agitation in them. The conjunction of Puruṣa and Pradhāna, subject to the operative will of the Supreme Lord, evolves Mahat. Mahat produces Ahaṁkāra.
This is followed by the five subtle-elements (Tanmātras), gross elements and the eleven organs - the Jñānendriyas, Karmendriyas and Manas. This is the primary creation (Prākṛta Sarga). All these modifications procreate the cosmic-egg which is material. The potency of consciousness is drawn from Puruṣa.

The Supreme Lord, in the capacity of Brahmā creates the world, as Viṣṇu protects it and, in the capacity of Rudra, destroys the world.

The primary creation is followed by the secondary creation (Vaikṛta sarga) comprising of five types of creation. The last is the Kaumara Sarga which is primary as well as secondary.

The Purāṇas provide us the details of four types of dissolutions. Of them, the Naimittika pralaya takes place at the close of Brahmā’s day. Another dissolution named the Prākṛta pralaya occurs at the end of the life of Brahmā wherein everything with the exception of the Supreme soul is annihilated.

Creation is an act of bringing out or unfolding of what is already contained in God, in a potential format. Dissolution is its undeveloped state. Dissolution sets the background for the next creation. The process of creation and dissolution are cyclic and eternal.

We find numerous theories about creation in the scriptures. The inherent complexity of the subject, has evidently, led to various theories. To quote some:

"Some creationists believe it to be the projection of the glory of God's own super human power, while others consider the world to be of the same nature as dream or illusion. The creationists consider this manifestation as having been caused by the mere will of God, while there are others who, looking upon time as real, declare that time is the cause for the manifestation of all things."
Others think that the world is being created for the purpose of God's enjoyments, while still others attribute it to a mere play of the Lord. But it is the very nature of the effulgent being, the Ātman, for what desire is possible for Him, whose desires are always in a state of perfect fulfillment4.

It is to be seen, among these theories of creation, what the Purāṇas accept, discard, disregard, supplement and subscribe to. It would be well to note that no single school of thought is generally accepted as a concrete and complete solution to the mystery of creation. At best, we can look forward for the most comprehensive and rational account of creation.

This work, it may be noted, strictly confines itself to the Purāṇic outlook on creation. But it includes shades of other school of thoughts pertinent to the topic.

The work is of paramount importance for it attempts to provide a comprehensive explanation to the mystery of creation that has dogged the mankind since time immemorial. Each and every individual, irrespective of his/her intellectual capacity, ponders over questions like - how did the universe originate? What is its substance? Why are we born? What is the purpose of life? Etc. In its explanation it brings out the relationship between the triad of Īśvara, Jīva and Jagat.
REFERENCE

1. Bhagavadgita, Chap – 13, Sloka No – 2, Page no 127
3. Varahapuramnam, Chap – 2, Sloka No4, Page no – 4
4. Mandukyopishad, Agama Prakarana, Sloka 7-9, Page 57-60