CHAPTER VIII : CONCLUSION
CHAPTER-VIII

CONCLUSION

In the foregoing chapters we have examined and stated various aspects of the philosophy of the *Visṇu Purāṇa*. It is clear from our discussions that this *Purāṇa* commends a special position among the vast literature called the *Purāṇas*. It is the only *Purāṇa*, which really conforms to the five characteristics recommended for the *Purāṇas*. Unlike many other *Purāṇas* its contents are not sectarian in nature. Philosophically the *Visṇu Purāṇa* is very rich. Its philosophical importance can be attested from the fact that the great philosophers like Saṅkarācārya, Rāmānuja and others have quoted from and referred to this *Purāṇa* in order to establish their own view or to refute other’s views. It is also noteworthy that though Saṅkarācārya has mostly avoided referring to the *Purāṇas* in his writings, yet he has cited some verses from the *Visṇu Purāṇa* though without mentioning its name. The excellence of the *Visṇu Purāṇa* lies in its ability to convey the highest truth through stories and anecdotes in an extremely easy and interesting manner. One of the noteworthy aspects of the *Visṇu Purāṇa* is that it lacks all descriptions and glorifications of such topics as the *vratas* (devotional vows), *upavāsas* (fasts), *tirthas* (places or
pilgrimage) and such other matter, which are found abundantly in other Puranas.

Now, in the following lines we are going to collect together our findings –

1. The Ultimate Reality in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* is Viṣṇu or Brahma. *Viṣṇu* is here both saguna (possessed of qualities) and nirguna (qualityless). The *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* describes Viṣṇu as possessing infinite number of auspicious qualities. Again the nirguna aspect of Viṣṇu is also emphasized in this Purana. His nature is inscrutable and can be described only negatively. Viṣṇu is Vāsudeva, which means that He exists everywhere and everything exists in Him. The *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* also points out that the indescribable and inconceivable Brahma is denoted by the term Bhagavat which is only a convenient word used in adoration of that Supreme Being to whom no term is applicable. The *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* also elaborately deals with the derivation of the word Bhagavat. In the view of the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, this word is denotative of the Six-fold qualities of Viṣṇu. Thus, the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* has tried to bridge the apparent gap between the saguna and nirguna Brahma by identifying the both.

2. According to the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* Viṣṇu has three powers or Sakti viz, Parāsakti, Kṣetrajña -Sakti and Avidyā-Sakti. The Parāsakti of Viṣṇu
is called Lakṣmī. Viṣṇu is always associated with Lakṣmī, who is described as the mother of the world. Viṣṇu is never without Śrī, whenever He incarnates Himself, Lakṣmī also incarnates Herself as His wife.

3. The doctrine of incarnation, which is a distinctive feature of Purānic Vaiṣṇavism is not systematically developed in the Viṣṇu Purāṇa. Though the Viṣṇu Purāṇa has mentioned the names of 21 incarnations, yet these are scattered in the whole book. The Viṣṇu Purāṇa also mentions the names of the ten most popular incarnation of Viṣṇu with the exception of the name of Buddha. The Viṣṇu Purāṇa has nowhere mentioned the name of the Buddha incarnation. Regarding the other incarnations also the Viṣṇu Purāṇa describes some incarnations in more detail, eg., Varāha and Kṛṣṇa, while others are only referred to by this Purāṇa. In place of Balarāma the Viṣṇu Purāṇa includes Kṛṣṇa incarnation.

4. The whole of the 5th Book of the Viṣṇu Purāṇa is devoted to the description of the exploits of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The Kṛṣṇa incarnation of Viṣṇu is the most famous and is very much adored by the Vaiṣṇavas. The Vaiṣṇavas regard Kṛṣṇa as the Lord Himself as is declared by the Bhāgavata Purāṇa. But the view of the Viṣṇu Purāṇa is different in this respect. Though the Viṣṇu Purāṇa agrees mostly with the Bhāgavata Purāṇa about the birth and exploits of Kṛṣṇa, the difference lies in the fact that here Kṛṣṇa is
regarded as only a part of the Lord and not the Lord Himself. It is one of the hairs of Viṣṇu, which has descended as the incarnation of Kṛṣṇa.

5. So far as the theory of creation of the Viṣṇu Purāṇa is concerned it tallies to a great extent with the Sāṅkhya system. Prākṛti is regarded as the cause of the material world. The creation process from the Prākṛti is described here in the same way as in the Sāṅkhya system with only a small difference. It is said here that from Prākṛti Mahat is born, from Mahat Ahaṁkāra which is of three types viz, Sāttvika, Rājasika and Tāmasika is born. From the Sāttvika Ahaṁkāra manas and the ten presiding deities of the sense- organs are produced. From the Rājasika Ahaṁkāra are Produced the ten cognitive and conative organs. All the elements are produced from the Tāmasika Ahaṁkāra. But the difference lies in the fact that in the Sāṅkhya system Rājasika Ahaṁkāra is not productive, there the ten sense-organs and the mind are produced from the Sāttvika Ahaṁkāra.

6. Though there is similarity between the Viṣṇu Purāṇa and the Sāṅkhya system regarding the evolution of the material world, yet there is a great difference. In Sāṅkhya system, Prākṛti is independent. But the Viṣṇu Purāṇa regards Viṣṇu as the Ultimate Cause of the world. Viṣṇu manifested Himself as the Puruṣa, Prakṛti and Kāla. At the time of
creation Viṣṇu produces agitation in Prakṛti and Puruṣa as a result of which creation starts. The Viṣṇu Purāṇa also maintains that the proximity only of the Lord is sufficient to produce disturbance in Puruṣa and Prakṛti. Again for creation, according to the Viṣṇu Purāṇa, the combination of Puruṣa and Prakṛti is required as creation starts only when Prakṛti is presided over by Kṣetrajña or Puruṣa. Puruṣa is also not independent, but is a form of Viṣṇu.

7. In the theme of creation of the Viṣṇu Purāṇa, Kāla or time occupies a very important position. Viṣṇu in the form of Kāla brings about the conjunction of Prakṛti and Puruṣa at the time of creation and disjunction of both these at the time of dissolution.

8. The cosmogony of the Viṣṇu Purāṇa is more or less similar to that of other Purāṇas. The Viṣṇu Purāṇa also describes nine types of creation in accordance with other Purāṇas. These are again classified into three types, viz, Prākṛta, Vaikṛta and both Prākṛta and Vaikṛta.

9. In the Viṣṇu Purāṇa we also find the description of the creation which proceeds from Brahmā. This is different from elementary creation and refers to the final productions of the world. Brahmā creates the planets, animals, gods, men etc. Regarding the creation of the different things and
creatures of the world the *Visṇu Purāṇa* puts forward a theory where in these are said to be born from the different limbs of Brahmā, the progenitor. The four Vedas, the four castes, human beings and other beings are all originated from the body of Brahmā.

10. The *Visṇu Purāṇa* also gives a vivid description of the three types of dissolution, viz., *Naimittika, Prākṛtika* and *Ātyantika*. But the *nitya* or perpetual dissolution is described very briefly, only in one line. Regarding the first three *Pralayas* the view of the *Visṇu Purāṇa* is similar to that of other *Purānas*.

11. The word ‘ātman’ is used in two different senses in the *Visṇu Purāṇa*, viz., individual self as well as transcendental self. In many cases these two are identified. The real nature of the self is that it is one in all bodies and all-pervading. This one self appears as many in different persons because of the difference of the limiting adjuncts of the bodies. Everything in this world is of the nature of that Self which is none other than Viṣṇu.

12. Following the Upaniṣads the *Visṇu Purāṇa* propounds the non-difference (*Advaita*) between the individual self and the Supreme Self. The Advaitic tenor of the *Visṇu Purāṇa* is evident in several contexts. In some
places, however, empirical self is also described as a part of the transcendental Self or Viṣṇu. But from our discussion it is clear that the passages declaring the identity of the individual self and the Supreme Self are much more than those where the relation of part and whole is declared. However, on the basis of these passages Rāmānuja has endeavoured to establish the relation of part and whole or body and self between these two. He has also tried to explain the verses where there is clear Advaitic tenor in a different way. In one case he has also changed the reading of the verse. His contention is that the Viṣṇu Purāṇa being a Sāttvika Purāṇa cannot be Advaitic in character; rather it is an authority for his Viśistadvaita Philosophy. However, from our discussion we can conclusively say that the Viṣṇu Purāṇa is actually Advaitic in nature. Rāmānuja’s explanations are not always true to the context and sometimes appear as far-fetched.

13. So far as the concept of the world is concerned the Viṣṇu Purāṇa upholds the view that Viṣṇu is the sole cause of the world. He is both the material (upādāna) and instrumental (nimitta) cause of the world. The Viṣṇu Purāṇa also maintains that the world is not something different from Viṣṇu; it is only a manifestation of Him. The world is also regarded as erroneous and not real. The Viṣṇu Purāṇa also declares that all the advices regarding the three worlds imparted in this Purāṇa are of empirical
14. The concept of māyā also corresponds to some extent to that propounded by Saṅkarācārya. According to the Viṣṇu Purāṇa, māyā is identical with avidyā (ignorance) and is the cause of all the sorrows and sufferings of the jīves. It is because of this māyā that the eternal self becomes entangled in the worldly process of birth and death. But unlike Saṅkara's māyā, the māyā in the Viṣṇu Purāṇa is not unreal—anirvacaniya. It is a real power of Viṣṇu and is identical with Goddess-Sākti.

15. As regards the problem of bondage and liberation the Viṣṇu Purāṇa agrees with the Advaitic concept. According to this Purāṇa, bondage consists in the wrong perception of the not-self as the self. Liberation is described as of the nature of Brahman. The jīva attains final liberation when it perceives that all things are non-different from the self and the self is Brahman.

16. According to the Viṣṇu Purāṇa, again, the self is always free. bondage is not natural to it. It is because of avidyā that the self...
associated with pains and sufferings. When \textit{avidyā} is destroyed the self realizes its real nature, which is always free and liberated.

17. The \textit{Viṣṇu Purāṇa} prescribes different means of liberation, \textit{viz.} \textit{jñāna, karman, bhakti} and \textit{yoga}. But it gives more stress on the path of knowledge because \textit{avidyā} is the main cause of one’s bondage and \textit{avidyā} can be removed by knowledge only.

18. Action is also regarded as a means of liberation. But action as it is, is not the final means. Performance of actions is recommended as introductory to the acquirement of knowledge. However, \textit{niṣkāma karman} or performance of action without any desire for its fruit leads to liberation.

19. The \textit{Viṣṇu Purāṇa} assigns an important position to \textit{yoga} in the path of liberation. Here the word \textit{‘yoga’} means spiritual union of the individual self with the Supreme Self. The eightfold methods of \textit{yoga} are described here in the same way as are found in the Yoga philosophy. But the last three \textit{yogaśāṅga} are described somewhat differently in this \textit{Purāṇa}. For the \textit{Viṣṇu Purāṇa} \textit{dhāraṇā, dhyāna} and \textit{samādhi} relate to Viṣṇu only. The state of self-realisation where the imaginary difference between the subject and object of meditation disappears is known as \textit{samādhi} in the \textit{Viṣṇu Purāṇa}. 

234
20. *Bhakti* as a means of liberation is upheld by the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* in clear terms. It states that the devotion to Lord Viṣṇu is the only remedy of the worldly evils. But the concept of *bhakti* is not much developed in this *Purāṇa* as we find in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*.

21. From our discussion it is also clear that the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* was much influenced by the philosophy of the Pāṇcarātra system. The most striking influence of the Pāṇcarātra is noticed in the reference of the four *Vyūhas* of Viṣṇu in this *Purāṇa*. Just like the Pāṇcarātrins the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* also describes Viṣṇu as possessing six ideal qualities of *jñāna*, *aśvārya*, *bala*, *virya*, *sakti* and *tejas*. In the conception of Śakti as Lakṣmī the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* closely resembles the Pāṇcarātra system. Lakṣmī is always associated with Viṣṇu even in the event of His incarnation.

22. The influence of the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* on the Vaiṣṇava philosophy like Rāmānuja, Nimbārka and Śrī Caitanya is clearly visible. Rāmānuja has extensively referred to the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*. He also tried his level best to explain different verses of the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* in accordance with his Viṣīṣṭādvaita philosophy. Though Nimbārka has not referred to the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, his followers have quoted verses from the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* to show the similarity between his view and that of the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*. This *Purāṇa*
is also very much revered in the school of Śrī Caitanya and his followers have quoted and explained different verses of the Viṣṇu Purāṇa.

In this way we find that the Viṣṇu Purāṇa is very important from the philosophical point of view. However, we must also admit here that being a work of mythological character the Viṣṇu Purāṇa has not fully escaped the hand of interpolation. This accounts for the difference of views, which is noticed, on some points of the Purāṇa. Moreover, the philosophical views of this Purāṇa have not been presented in any systematic manner. The philosophical views are interwoven in the stories and narratives. This humble attempt of ours has been made to bring forward the hidden philosophy of this important Purāṇa and thus to give it its real place in the philosophical literature of India. It is our firm belief that as the teachings of this Purāṇa has influenced many people in the past, it will influence many others in the future also.