PREFACE

In the present dissertation an attempt has been made to present the philosophy of the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* which is one of the earliest and the most authoritative *Purāṇas*.

The *Purānic* literature occupies a position of immense importance in the religious and philosophical realm of Hinduism. In fact the *Purāṇas* are regarded as a popular encyclopaedia of Hinduism from the standpoint of religion, philosophy, history, social and ethical values etc. Traditionally the *Purāṇas* are accepted as eighteen in number. Of these *Purāṇas* the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* is very much important from the standpoint of philosophy and religion. The Vaiṣṇava philosophers like Rāmānuja and Śrī Caitanya hold this *Purāṇa* in a high esteem and frequently refer to it. This *Purāṇa* is important to understand the Advaitic concepts also.

The *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* is Vaiṣṇavite in nature and is dedicated to the glorification of the Lord Viṣṇu. In Vaiṣṇavism, Viṣṇu or Nārāyaṇa is regarded as the Ultimate Reality. This Nārāyaṇa or Viṣṇu is again equated with Vāsudeva. This main tenet of Vaiṣṇavism is clearly visible in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*.

But inspite of its importance, so far the philosophy of the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* is concerned a detailed and systematic study of the same is found lacking. Of course there are scholars like S.N. Dasgupta, T.M.P. Mahadevan, Satya Swāmī Saraswat and other who have written scholarly treatises on this *Purāṇa*. But then
works deal with some aspects of the philosophy of the Visnu Purana. The profound philosophical teachings of this Purana are not fully presented in these works. Hence, a systematic and comprehensive study of the philosophy of the Visnu Purana is proposed to be done here.

   The primary source of our study is the Visnu Purana having six parts together with the commentary of Śrīdhara Svāmin. We have also depended heavily on the English reading of the Visnu Purana by H.H. Wilson. The present study is carried out under eight chapters, of which the first chapter is introductory. The second chapter deals with the concept of Viśnu. The third chapter comprises the theory of creation in the Visnu Purana. In the fourth, fifth and sixth chapters we have dealt with the concept of the jīva, world and bondage and liberation respectively. The seventh chapter is concerned with the relation of the Visnu Purana with other Vaiṣṇava sects. In the concluding chapter we have collected together our findings.

   I now humbly submit my work for adjudication by the learned scholars

   (MANI SARMAR)