

kings, in your dynasty Viṣṇu, the propitious highest lord will be born as Daśaratha's son for the good of all people. Therefore, the Ikṣvākus, among whom lord Rāma, of lotus-like eyes, is born, are honoured even by gods, O king.

## CHAPTER TWO HUNDRED FIFTYFIVE

### *The Three Gods Subjected to Test by Bhṛgu*

*Dilīpa said:*

1-6. O brāhmaṇa, you have fully told (me) about all the practices, and about the general and particular nature of the highest (lord) and the individual soul. O best brāhmaṇa, through curiosity I am asking you one other (question). Due to your great love (for me) properly tell (i.e. answer) that also. Rudra, the destroyer of Tripura, is the best among the great devotees of Viṣṇu. Due to what did he, along with his wife, have a condemned form? How did the very illustrious one have the form of clitoris? O best brāhmaṇa, how did the five-faced one, four-armed one, trident-holder and three-eyed one have a condemned form? O son of Mitra-Varuṇa, tell all this (to me).

*Vasiṣṭha said:*

7-13. O king, listen; I shall explain to you what you have asked me respectfully. In the pure hearts of men a thought for bliss is produced. Formerly on the best mountain Mandara Svāyambhuva Manu performed, along with sages, an excellent prolonged sacrificial session. There came all sages who had fulfilled their vows, who were proficient in various holy texts, whose lustre was like that of the young sun and fire, who, the brāhmaṇas, were well-versed in all Vedas, and who had mastered all religious practices. When the great sacrificial session took place, the sages whose sins had been exhausted, and who had penance as their wealth, spoke among themselves in order to find the truth about the deity. Which excellent deity should be honoured by brāhmaṇas proficient in the Vedas? Who, out of Brahmā, Viṣṇu

and Śiva, being praised, gives salvation to men? Water of (i.e. flowing from) whose feet should be resorted to? So also the purifying remnant of whose food should be enjoyed? Who, the immutable one, is the highest abode, the highest soul and who is eternal? Whose favour and holy place would gratify the manes?

14-20. Such a great discussion took place among those who were seated. Some great sages said: "Rudra alone (is the greatest deity)." Other best sages said: "Brahmā alone is fit to be worshipped." Other best one said that the Sun alone was fit to be worshipped among the souls. Other brāhmaṇas said: "The immutable lotus-eyed Vāsudeva, the highest one, the one without a beginning or an end (viz.) Viṣṇu alone is the highest lord. He, the best among the deities, deserves to be worshipped." To them, who were discussing, Svāyambhuva Manu said: "He, the lord, who is full of good nature, who has auspicious qualities, who is lotus-eyed, who is glorious, who is the lord of Lakṣmī, who is the highest Brahman, is the only lord adored by brāhmaṇas, proficient in Vedas. Others mixed with passion and vice are not fit to be worshipped." Having heard these words of him, all the great sages, joining the palms of their hands, said to the brāhmaṇa, Bhṛṅgu, the treasure of penance:

*The sages said:*

21-25. O you of a good vow, you are able to remove our doubt. Approach, O you of a good vow, Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheśa. O sage, go near them and observe their bodies. Out of them, he who possesses the pure sattvaguna, is alone fit to be worshipped, and never anyone else. He, full of pure sattva, will be friendly to brāhmaṇas. To brāhmaṇas he will be a holy place and a favour. Even to deities and manes the remnants of his food will be purifying. Therefore, O best sage, go to the residence of gods. O lord, O best sage, quickly bring about the welfare of all people.

26-27. Thus addressed, the best sage, along with Vāmadeva, quickly went to Kailāsa where the bull-bannered (god) lived. Having gone near the door of the house of the magnanimous Śaṅkara and seeing very fierce Nandin with a spear in his hand, he said (to him):

28-34. "I, the brāhmaṇa Bhṛṅgu, have come to see Hara, the

best god. Quickly announce me (i.e. my arrival) to the magnanimous Śaṅkara." Hearing the words of him, Nandin, the lord of (Śiva's) attendants spoke harsh words to the great sage of an unlimited splendour: "The lord is not in the vicinity. Śaṅkara is sporting with goddess (Pārvatī). O best sage, go back if you desire to live." Thus repudiated by him the (sage) of a great penance remained there, at the door of the great lord, for many days. "Since he, arrogant due to the company of a woman, thinks lightly of me, he shall have the form of clitoris. Approached (i.e. overcome) by vice he slights me, a brāhmaṇa! Reduced to an impious state, he will not be adored by brāhmaṇas. Therefore, all the food, water, flowers and oblations offered to him will undoubtedly be useless."

35-40. The very lustrous one, having thus cursed Śaṅkara honoured by the world, said to the very fierce attendant, Nandin, holding a spear, O king: "May Śiva's devotees, having ash, phallus and bones be impious and out of the Vedic fold." The sage, having thus cursed Rudra, Tripura's killer, went to Brahmā's world, respected by all people. The very intelligent one, having seen Brahmā, saluted him by joining the palms of his hands. The great ascetic, having saluted him, remained silent before him. Seeing the best sage, Brahmā, possessed of an abundance of rajas did not honour him, the great sage that had approached him. He also did not rise to honour him, nor did he speak pleasing words.

41-45. The lotus-seated (Brahmā) remained there with great majesty. Seeing him with preponderance of rajas, the great sage, the grandsire of all worlds, who was very lustrous, said (these) words to Brahman: "Since you, having preponderance of rajas, are slighting me, therefore, be dishonoured by all people." Bhṛgu, the brāhmaṇa, having thus cursed the magnanimous Brahmā, respected by the world, suddenly went to Viṣṇu's residence. The brāhmaṇa, having entered Viṣṇu's world on the northern coast of the Milky Ocean, and being properly honoured there by the glorious ones remaining there, and not being stopped there, entered the inner apartment.

46-52. Having entered that spotless palace, resembling the sun, he saw Lakṣmī's lord lying on the bed of the serpent. Both his feet were being rubbed by the lotus-like hands of Lakṣmī.

Seeing him, the best sage Bhṛgu, full of anger kicked with his left foot Viṣṇu's chest. The lord, getting up quickly, and gladly saying, "I am fortunate", joyfully pressed his foot with his hands. Slowly stroking his feet he spoke (these) sweet words: "O brāhmaṇa-sage, I am fortunate. I am always blessed. Due to the contact of your foot, there will be propitiousness in my body. May the dust-particles from the foot of a brāhmaṇa, which are the cause of the acquisition of affluence, which are the comets to the host of calamities that have come up, which are bridges over the boundless ocean of the mundane existence, purify me. All the holy places like Gaṅgā etc. undoubtedly remain in the body of him, on whose body dust-particles from a brāhmaṇa's foot always remain."

53-54. Saying so and quickly getting up with goddess (Lakṣmī), Viṣṇu devoutly honoured him with divine garlands, sandal etc. Having seen him, the best sage, with his eyes full of tears of joy, got from the best seat, and saluted that treasure of compassion. The great ascetic, having joined the palms of his hands, gladly said :

*Śrī Bhṛgu said:*

55-64. Oh, what a (handsome) form! Oh, (great) tranquillity! Oh, (great) knowledge! Oh, (great) pity! Oh, his patience is spotless! Oh, the goodness of Viṣṇu! Similarly the ocean of virtues has natural, auspicious, goodness. It is not at all present in all other gods. You alone are hospitable to the brāhmaṇas. You alone are the protector. You alone are the highest Brahman. You alone are the lord of brāhmaṇas. No other god is respectable. O Puruṣottama, those who worship any other god than you, have become impious, and are censured by all the world. You, Janārdana, are alone fit to be worshipped by brāhmaṇas, well-versed in the Vedas. None else among the gods is ever venerable. Brahmā, Rudra and others, mixed with rajas and tamas are not fit to be worshipped. You, having pure sattva, are fit to be worshipped by brāhmaṇas. The water (flowing) from your feet should be resorted to by manes, gods, and all brāhmaṇas. It gives salvation, and destroys sins. Manes, gods, brāhmaṇas should take what is left over after you have eaten, and not what is left over after others have eaten. The food, flowers, so also water of

(i.e. offered to) other gods, would all be unfit to be touched. It is useless like liquor. Therefore, a wise brāhmaṇa should constantly worship you, the eternal one, everyday and should take water of (i.e. sanctified by) you and food eaten by you.

65-68. A brāhmaṇa should not see another god; should not worship him. He should not partake of another god's favour; should not enter the sanctuary of any other (god). (If) a man does not give in this world the food and holy water enjoyed by you in the rite of śrāddha offered to his ancestors, all that would be fruitless. His dead ancestors fall into (and live in) the hell of pus and blood for thousands of crores of kalpas and hundreds of crores of kalpas. O master, when one offers an oblation (into fire) or gives (offerings) to deities and manes after offering them to you, there is satisfaction (of deities and manes), (i.e. he satisfies them) and he gets immortality.

69-78a. Therefore, you alone are adorable to gods, and none else. He who, through folly, would worship other (deities) will be impious. You are Nārāyaṇa; you are glorious; you are the ancient Vāsudeva. You are omnipresent Viṣṇu. You are eternal, highest soul and the great god. You alone are fit to be worshipped by brāhmaṇas. You are hospitable to brāhmaṇas. You possess pure sattva. Due to your being venerable to brāhmaṇas and due to your virtue of having pure sattva, obtain the status of a brāhmaṇa among all the gods themselves; for all brāhmaṇas will resort to you, the highest Brahman, alone. They were brāhmaṇas and not others. There is no doubt about this. Devakī's son is holy. Madhusūdana is holy. The lotus-eyed one is holy. Viṣṇu, Acyuta is holy. Lord Kṛṣṇa is holy. Vāsudeva, Acyuta, Hari (is holy). Narasiṃha is holy. So also is the immutable Nārāyaṇa. Śrīdhara, Śrīśa, Govinda, Vāmana is holy. The Yajñavarāha, Keśava, Puruṣottama is holy. Glorious, lotus-eyed Rāma, descendant of Raghu, is holy. Padmanābha is holy. So also Dāmodara, the lord, Mādhava, Yajña, lord Trivikrama is holy. Hṛṣikeśa is holy; Janārdana, wearing yellow garments (is holy).

78b-87. Salutation to the holy god, to Vāsudeva, holder of the Śārṅga (bow); (Salutation) to Nārāyaṇa, Śrīśa, having lotus-like eyes. Salutation to the holy god, Vāsudeva, Viṣṇu. Salutation to the highest god full of auspicious qualities. Salutation to

the holy god, of the form of all gods. Salutation to you having the body of the Boar. Salutation to you, the lord of the triad (of the Vedas). Salutation to the holy god, lying on the bed of the serpent. Repeated salutations to Rāghava having eyes like lotus-petals. O lord, all gods and sages, deluded by Māyā, do not know you, the lord of all worlds and a great soul. O revered one, even all those proficient in the Vedas do not know you by your name, form and qualities and your acts difficult to be performed. I, capable of knowing your sattva, suggesting your superiority, have been sent by the great sages; (and therefore) I have approached you. O Keśava, in order to know your character and qualities, I put my foot on your chest. O Govinda, O treasure of pity, forgive it.

Speaking like this, and repeatedly saluting Viṣṇu, and being honoured there by the divine, magnanimous, great sages, Bhṛgu, with his mind delighted, again went to the place of sacrifice having an auspicious name.

88-93. The great sages, having seen the magnanimous one to have come back, rose, saluted him, and duly worshipped him. The best sage told them all that: "O best sages, Brahmā and Śiva, the best sages have preponderance of the qualities of rajas and tamas. They were cursed by me. They are not fit to be worshipped by brāhmaṇas. Śaṁkara enveloped by tamas was cursed by me on the peak of Kailāsa. Viṣṇu full of pure sattva is the ocean of auspicious qualities. Nārāyaṇa is the highest Brahman. (He i.e.) Viṣṇu is the deity of brāhmaṇas. Śrīpati, Viṣṇu, Vāsudeva, Janārdana is holy. Govinda, Hari, Acyuta of lotus-like eyes is holy. O best men, he alone is fit to be worshipped by brāhmaṇas, and none else.

94-97. He who, through folly, would worship another (god) will be impious. Even sinners get salvation just by remembering Kṛṣṇa. The water (flowing) from his feet should be taken. The remnants of the food (offered to) him are purifying. It gives heaven and salvation to men, especially to brāhmaṇas. (A man) should everyday offer an oblation which is (first) offered to Viṣṇu, to the gods. He should also offer it to his dead ancestors. (Then) he gets complete immortality. O brāhmaṇas, the dead ancestors of him who does not offer (food) enjoyed by Viṣṇu,

to them at a śrāddha-rite, always eat (and drink) feces and urine.

98-101. Therefore, brāhmaṇas should always eat the remnants of the food offered to Viṣṇu. The remnants (of food offered to other gods) are useless and (therefore) condemned. A brāhmaṇa, weak in knowledge, who even once eats the remnants of food etc. offered to Śaṅkara etc., would certainly be a cāṇḍāla. For thousands of crores of kalpas he is roasted in the fire in hell. O best brāhmaṇas, the remnants of offerings to gods like Rudra, are said to be equal to food offered to demons, yakṣas, goblins and like liquor and flesh. Brāhmaṇas should not eat that food, the offering enjoyed by (these) gods.

102. Therefore, O best brāhmaṇas, leaving another god, worship diligently, till you live, the ancient Viṣṇu only.

103-109. With your doubts removed, endowed with the five purifications like imprinting the body with heated marks, with good hearts, looking upon that as the highest abode of Viṣṇu, properly worship that extraordinary Viṣṇu, O best brāhmaṇas. The brāhmaṇas marked with the disc(-impression) are good and extraordinary. Those without the disc-marks are said to be ordinary and vicious. Therefore, a man should have the heated marks of a disc and a conch at the roots of his arms, which (marks) of (i.e. sacred to) Viṣṇu burn the stream of sins due to contact with ordinary persons. Having had the upright sectarian marks on the body according to the manner prescribed in the holy texts, he should worship Viṣṇu according to the rules with the gem of the hymn (viz. Viṣṇu-sahasranāma). Being diligent he should also partake of the remnants of food offered to him. He should always worship gods at the time of finishing his worship. O brāhmaṇas, knowing him to be the highest lord enjoying all sacrifices, one should always offer (oblations into fire), give (presents to him) and mutter (his names)."

*Vasiṣṭha said:*

110. All the sages, thus addressed, and with their sins exhausted, saluted Bhṛgu and with the palms of their hands duly joined, said:

*The sages said:*

111-112. O revered best brāhmaṇa, you alone remove our

doubts. You are the refuge of the people. O brāhmaṇa, you are the highest asylum. You alone are the best piety. You alone are the highest penance. We shall exist due to your favour, and not otherwise, O brāhmaṇa.

*Vasiṣṭha said:*

113-117. All the great sages, having thus praised that brāhmaṇa Bhṛgu, and having got the hymn from him, worshipped Viṣṇu. O best king, I have told all this to you as the occasion has arisen. O best king, due to the touch of the lotus-like hand of Rāma the entire form condemned by the world will be spotless. Rāghava, the highest Brahman, is the purifier among all gods. Touched and seen by him all these, Śaṅkara and others, become spotless. Viṣṇu, the ocean of the virtue of affection, is the father, the mother of all gods. He is also the protector of all people. If you desire the highest position, then seek his shelter only.

118. O king, I have told you the entire Purāṇa, acceptable to the Vedas, and narrated by Brahmā in the age of Svāyambhuva Manu.

119-125. This account, (causing) liberation, of Viṣṇu should be told to the one modest due to devotion for Viṣṇu and having pure sattva, and not otherwise (i.e. to none else). The reader (or reciter) of this should have the marks of a conch, a disc, an upright sectarian mark etc. It should always be heard from his mouth. (Then only) you will have a son. Not otherwise. In him who, being well-composed, would recite to others or read (for himself) this (Purāṇa), is always produced undivided devotion for Viṣṇu. A student obtains knowledge; one seeking religious merit obtains it. One seeking salvation obtains it. One desiring enjoyment gets happiness. A man, full of devotion, should read it on the twelfth day, when the Sun is in the Śravaṇā (constellation), on a Saṁkrānti day, or at an eclipse, or on the full-moon day or the new-moon day. He who, being composed, reads half a verse or a quarter of it, undoubtedly obtains the fruit of a thousand horse-sacrifices. I have thus narrated to you this Purāṇa-text. Worship Viṣṇu if you desire the highest position.

*Sūta said:*

126-127. The best king (Dilīpa), thus addressed by his preceptor Vasiṣṭha, saluted and duly honoured him. Having properly received the hymn from the best brāhmaṇa, and having, till the end of his life, diligently worshipped Viṣṇu, he reached, in (due) time, the ancient position of Viṣṇu, fit to be reached by meditating saints.