Text title: viShNupanjarastotram from Agnipurana
File name: viShNupanjaraagnipurANasArtha.itx
Category: vishnu, panjara, vishnu
Location: doc_vishhnu
Transliterated by: N Balasubramanian
Proofread by: N Balasubramanian
Translated by: N Balasubramanian (Commentary)
Latest update: December 4, 2021
Send corrections to: sanskrit@cheerful.com

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December 5, 2021

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Shri Vishnupanjaram Agnipuranantargatam

श्री विश्नुपञ्चरम् अग्निपुराणान्तर्गतम्

॥ ॥

पुजव उवाच -

निपुंसः जयेऽप व्रजपतिः विश्नुपञ्चरम् ॥

शकुनत्वः द्रिजहस्तः रक्षायाख निरुपितम् ॥ ॥

वाजिक्षीणं य शक्तिं बलं कन्तुः प्रवाहस्तः ॥

तस्य स्वरूपं वक्ष्याय ततः स्वरूप ज्यादितम् ॥ ॥

विज्ञानां स्थितिः स्याः सेषाः श्रीमहाराजाः गाढी ॥

प्रतिम्यां शार्धः-शुचिः-शिखः-बहु भूमि ममतरे ॥ ॥

धृष्टेशोऽपि कोषेषु तस्येशु जनाद्वेयः ॥

कोषेषु कर्तस्य भूमिः-नतलिंको-सयमे मम ॥ ॥

हृषीकेशाः-काणेः-तच्छद्रेषु जनादर्नः ॥

कृष्णे हिर-भूर्माः-नराः-हरे मम ॥ ॥

कृष्णारतममलं चक्रं भ्रमत्ये ततः सुदश्रनम् ॥

अस्यां शुमालं दुष्प्रेक्षा छन्तु प्रेत-निदानकाः ॥ ॥

गदा यें साक्षाः यमः प्रदिधा पावकोऽजः ॥

श्च तु-वृत्ततिः सायणां रक्षिनीहि च नाशिनी ॥ ॥

शार्धः-सुक्वकिंता वै वासुदेवः मद्यपूर्णः ॥

नियमनुशः दुष्प्रेक्षा-प्रतिधातिः-सत्यशेषः ॥ ॥

प्रभु-धारोजनविज्ञोंतया निरूप्ता ये समाहितः ॥

ते यान्तु साधता सदैव गरुडेने पञ्चगः ॥ ॥

अर्थं भवन्तु ते सौम्यः-क्रुष्ण-शुकुर-वाक्तः ॥

शिर-वृत्तिः-कश्य ये मे जनः स्मृति-कर्तकः ॥ ॥

आवीक्षाः व उत्साध्याः-विलक्षाकाः ये ॥

अयोध्योग-उत्साध्ये ये व लक्ष्मणः-नाशकः ॥ ॥

॥ ॥
Commentary by N Balasubramanian

COMMENTS:- The following abbreviations are used in the comments.
BG - Srimad Bhagavadgita.
BH - Srimad Bhagavatam.
SS - Shiva Sahasranamam (Padmapuranam) with the commentary of Shri Paramasivendra Sarasvati.
VS - Vishnu Sahasranamam with the commentary of Shri Shankaracharya.
LS - Lalitha Sahasranamam with the commentary of Shri Bhaskaracharya.
SA - Shiva 108 namavali with the commentary called Shivatattvarahasyam by Shri Nilakanta Dikshita; a relative of Shri Appayya Dikshita - the author of this poem.

પૃંચર્ણ means a cage. A bird or animal inside a cage is protected and so is secure from enemies. In the above verses the devotee prays to Lord Vishnu to form a protective cage and protect him from enemies from all directions. All living beings face a wide variety of problems from forces, both visible and invisible and crave for security from these forces. These forces may be termed enemies since they cause physical and mental anguish. The visible enemy may be a person, animal etc., who can cause us harm. The invisible enemy may be a disease that lurks inside the body and manifests one day suddenly or sorrow, fear etc. There is also a third type - known as acts of God (ie) problems caused by natural calamities such
as pestilence, earthquakes, droughts, cyclones etc. These are beyond our control. Sage Sushruta classifies the suffering or pain one has to suffer in this world into three categories and calls them -threefold suffering. They are (1) आत्मिक = caused by the mind and body (pain, sorrow etc ), (2) आध्यात्मिक = caused by fate or acts of God as said above and (3) आयनिक = caused by animals, elements etc.

This is said in the last verse (No.23) of the hymn above as तिलिन्म ममाशुभम्. The craving for security and freedom from fear and anxiety is instinctive in all living beings and is known as samsara. We all seek freedom from this samsara.

The question that haunts everyone all the time is why do we get these problems? Is there a way to avert them and thus the consequential misery? Our scriptures are very well aware of our concern. They have dealt with the topic in great detail in many places and attempt to help us. Here, we will cite some of the references. First question that arises in one’s mind is why do we encounter problems or suffering? We see that some get into problems or sufferings often but not some others. In some cases the problems come in hordes and overpower the individual. As Shakespeare says (in Hamlet), "When sorrows come, they come not single spies, but in battalions. So do happy events too happen sometimes in a file. So, it is said सत्यायं लोकवाणि, योक्षमायं विपदिए अनुज्जालि यति। (Kadambari). These are the questions that befuddle everyone of us and we continue to search for answers that seem to elude us. But the topic, as said earlier, has been discussed in our scriptures in extenso and we only have to take the trouble to study them to cull the information. The epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata contain stories that explain the subject in great detail. The heroes in these epics suffered immensely and like all human beings faced with dire circumstances bemoaned their
fate. Even mighty warriors like the Pandavas rued their fate when faced with adversity. Rama who was an incarnation of Lord Himself had to face severe adversity. He showed how to face difficult situations in life. His stories bear weighty lessons for us if only we care to study them carefully and not skim through them. It is said that Lord’s incarnation as Rama was mainly to teach lessons to us and not merely for the destruction of demons. BH(5-19-50).

Let us now see what the scriptures say on this matter. Firstly, why do we get to suffer? The scriptures say that when one strays from the path of dharma or righteousness he sows the seeds of trouble. The Yagnavalkya Smriti says

That is, by not doing those duties prescribed by the vedas and doing those prohibited by them and also by succumbing to the wiles of the sense organs one falls. Krishna emphasises this in His advice to Arjuna. BG (16-24,25).

He says that if one rejects the prescription of the shAstra and lives a life according to his own sweet free will, he will not achieve happiness in this world nor in the other. So, keep shAstra as the guide as regards what should or should not be done and do your work. Dharma is the result of our acts and it paves the way for happiness in this life and the lives that follow. The basis for dharma are the vedas. Now a
problem arises. That is, one cannot expect us to study the vedas in these days. So, what is the recourse for such people? To complicate matters further, it is said that vedas are vast and subject to different interpretations by scholars. In order to alleviate the problem, the kindly sages have written supplementary texts called smritis, puranas and itihhasas like Ramayana and Mahabharata that explain the nuances of dharma. If we say that we cannot or do not have the time or inclination to study and understand even these texts the scripture asks us to study the conduct of great men who adhere to the path of dharma with great fervour and finally our own mental satisfaction. Manu says this as follows.

Why should vedas be accepted as the guide for one’s conduct? What is so great about them- if it is asked. The answer is this. We have to remember that the vedas which prescribe dharma are not of human origin. They were given out by the Lord Himself at the time of creation for the good of the people. They are therefore known as अपावेषत्। Purusha Sukta says this as: ऋष्य सामान्य जाध्विरे। छन्दोसिः जाध्विरे सत्यात्। श्रुत्तत्त्वाग्रजत। The Lord withdraws everything (including the vedas) into Himself at the time of dissolution (pralayam) and releases them again at the time of creation. Thus they are eternal.

The sage Avirhotra said this to King Nimi while talking about karmayoga. He said that what should be done, and what should not be done, and what is not done but enjoined to be done - these are matters that can be known not from the world but only from the Vedas, that have originated from Lord; even the learned people are perplexed as to the import of such injunctions. (BH-11-3-43).
This, then, is the third alternative. What happens if the sadhu himself gets a doubt about how he should act in a particular situation and he cannot find the proper guidance in the scriptures? In such a tight situation he goes by the dictate of his conscience. Here again, we should remember that the devotee who has enshrined the Lord in his heart cannot take a step in the wrong direction. The poet Kalidasa says this in his work Abhijnana Sakuntalam:

What happens, on the rarest of the rare occasion, if a sadhu himself takes a wrong step? The sage Karabhajana tells King Nimi that the Lord annuls such actions of His devotee! (BH-11-5-42).

What is said above will amply stress the need to adhere to the path of dharma. Sage Vyasa says this with great emphasis in his Mahabharata (Swargarohanaparva):

The body that has been got as a means to enjoy sorrow and happiness is impermanent and one cannot take it with him after death. Only the puNyam or merit one earned by faithfully treading on the path of dharma and the sins or pApam earned by doing evil deeds due to lack of faith in dharma follow him. Keeping this fact in mind one should firmly adhere to the path of dharma and scrupulously refrain from indulging in acts that will invite sins. Shri Shankaracharya says this in his Prasnottaratnamalika as: - अन्तःप्रेम भिन्न? अकर्मम् Then, the next question is that why should a person do something wrong, sometimes knowing well that what he is doing is not right and will beget sin? This question
appears to have been there for long and perturbed the minds of people. Arjuna put this question to Krishna and sought an answer.

The Lord replies:

\[
\text{काम अेष क्राठे कोष रजोगुजः-समुज्यवः:} \\
\text{महास्वानो महा-पायमा विद्येनमिल वैविद्यम्} \quad \text{(BG-3-37).}
\]

He says that desire and anger impel one to indulge in wrongful acts. The starting point is the desire to get something. When the desire gets strong and does not get fulfilled due to some obstruction, the mind is frustrated and then agitated. This frustration and the craving derails him from the righteous path and makes him take to devious ways. He will be prompted to do acts that are immoral or illegal. This will land him in sin. Accumulated load of sins result in birth or births to expiate for these acts. From the vedantic point of view puNyam resulting from performing good deeds is akin to sin because one has to take birth(s) to enjoy the fruits of puNyam. One is like an iron chain and the other like a golden chain. Both bind. The result of great deal of puNyam will be birth in noble or affluent families or births in higher worlds. In contrast, the consequences of great deal of sin will be births in poor family, sickness or births in inferior worlds or even as animals or plants. Yama tells this to his disiple Nachiketas in Katha Upanishad as:

\[
\text{योिमनये प्रपधते शरीरस्याय देविन:} \\
\text{स्थायुम्ययेनुसंधिनि यथाकम कथामवथायतम्} \quad \text{(2-2-7).}
\]

Thus a human birth is the result of a mix of puNyam and pApam. Because of this, one’s life will necessarily have smooth and rough patches. The stories in Ramayana and Mahabharatha bear ample testimony to this fact. So, what should one do? We cannot refrain from actions. We cannot remain inactive in our lives. Krishna shows
the way in detail. He asks us to take Him as a partner in our lives and do our duties faithfully and keep Him in our mind all the time.

He says that whatever you do, eat, sacrifice, offer as gift, perform as austerity - dedicate all of them to Me. What will be the result of doing so? Krishna adds -

He advises that whatever one does with his body, speech, mind, senses, intellect, or will, or following his natural impulses, he should dedicate all to the Supreme, Lord Narayana. This shows that one should offer to Lord not only what one does as ordained by the shAstraS but even those which he does according to his latent tendencies. Based on this advice, we have the practice of offering what we do as Sandhyavandanam or any other ritual to the Lord by saying:

By doing so the karma we do becomes karmayoga. Earlier it was said that the suffering or pain one has to suffer in this world was classified into three categories by the sage Sushruta. He calls them -threefold suffering. They are
(1) **आत्मिकः** = caused by the mind, body (pain, sorrow etc.),
(2) **आधिदत्त्वः** = caused by fate or acts of God as said above and
(3) **आधीश्चत्वः** = caused by animals, elements etc. Sage Narada advises the sage Vyasa that dedicating all actions to the Lord is the certain cure for the three fold afflictions that inevitably bother us. He says:(BH-1-5-32).

One may ask as to how actions which invariably create bondage that leads to suffering can become certain cure for them. Sage Narada provides the answer in the very next two verses. He says that some chemical substance that may cause a disease cannot normally become a cure for that particular ailment. But if it is processed medically it will serve as a cure for the same ailment. (BH-1-5-33, 34).

In this manner, by involving God in our activities, we become insulated from the deleterious effects of karmas. To sum up: we should first take efforts to learn the injunctions of the scriptures, then diligently do the works enjoined therein. And, most importantly offer the same as worship to the Lord. Shri Sankaracharya gives this important advice in the very first verse of his Sopana Panchakam.

In this manner, we are made to think of Him frequently. This process plants the seed of bhakti or devotion in our mind imperceptibly. When devotion takes root our mind will slowly veer away from secular activities and to the religious side. Our mind will like to
read and listen to sacred texts like Ramayana and Gita. All this nurtures thought of God in our mind and flushes away the sins from the mind and along with that the afflictions they can create in our lives. Thus, of Srimad Bhagavatam it is said to be श्री विष्णुपदम् अश्विनुराजतम् (BH-1-1-2). It is the bestower of supreme bliss and uproots the threefold agony. Sage Chyavana says that repetition of Lord’s name will destroy the three fold agony. श्रुति-स्मृति पुराणेषु सांनारे नामस: समीतियम्।
तत्राम दीर्घ तापत्रय विनाशनम्॥

The lists of 108 and 1008 names of various Gods contain names that refer to this aspect. Some examples are given here. पापनाशकरः। श्रृवानि तापत्रयां गठनेन विनाशन। (VS-992).

Lalita Devi is like the cool rays of the moon that offers solace to those who are fried in the fire of threefold sufferings. Keeping this fact in mind, the great acharya Shri Vedanta Desika prays to Laxmi Devi to comfort him as he is scorched by the searing summer heat of threefold suffering. (Shri Stuti-21).

We should note one important point here. The verses in the hymn
above contain names of Lord Vishnu. But these names are also names of other forms of Lord like Shiva. This is because it is the one Supreme Being that appears as Shiva, Vishnu and so on. We should notice that the hymn ends with the name केशवः।

Shri Shankaracharya defines the word as meaning the Supreme Being in his commentary on Vishnusahasranama as follows.

केशवः - कः अश्च ईशः तत् \( \text{केश} \),

ते अवलेखन वर्तन्ते अ केशवः। (VS 23).

ka ( क ) represents Brahma the creator,
a as in at ( आ ) represents Vishnu and Isha ( ईशः ) stands for Shiva. These three are under the control of the Supreme Being. This explanation is given by sage Vyasa in Harivamsam. Thus whatever be the form one worships it goes to the Supreme Being only. Krishna says this in Gita. BG 7-21.

\( \text{तस्य तस्यार्धनमीहते} \) \( \text{तस्याचलां} \) \( \text{श्रद्धां} \) \( \text{तामेव} \) \( \text{विद्धां} \) \( \text{एत्यहम्} \)॥

And He adds that the worshipper gets the objects of his desires from Him only through that form of divinity. (BG-7-22).

\( \text{स तथा} \) \( \text{श्रद्धा} \) \( \text{युक्तः} \) \( \text{तत्स्वरूपः तत्स्वरूपः} \) \( \text{विहृतः} \) \( \text{दुःखान्ति} \) \( \text{दुःखान्ति} \)॥

The message, therefore is that by remembering the Lord, in any of His forms (keeping in mind that the form is His only), and associating Him in all our activities (this is bhakti only) we can, without much difficulty, transcend the effects of action and be free from the threefold sufferings described earlier. Shri Bhishma states this in answer to the question of Yudhishtira in the introduction to Vishnusahasranama. The question of the latter is how can one get free from all sorrows in life. Shri Bhishma says:

\( \text{लोकव्यं स्वप्नितं सर्वदुःखाति} \) \( \text{ग्राम्य} \) \( \text{ब्यवहरत} \)॥ (VS-6).

Shri Sankarachrya defines

\( \text{सर्वदुःखाति} \) \( \text{ब्यवहरत} \) as \( \text{सर्वाः} \) आयुतीयानि नैतिकतिगतार्थानि सर्वदुःखाति ब्यवहरत स्थातः।
He explains that by the word all sorrows in meant the sorrows caused by the threefold agonies.

We have to note one subtle point while concluding. At the beginning it was said प收官 means a cage. A bird or animal inside a cage is protected and so is secure from enemies. In these verses, the devotee prays to Lord Vishnu to form a protective cage and protect him in all directions from external enemies. When it is said to form it seems as though that right now Lord Vishnu has not formed a cage around us. Strictly speaking this is not correct. The name Vishnu means omnipresent, all pervading - one not limited by space, time etc.

there is no question of HIS forming a cage around us as He is ever around us. Nor can one gain entry into Him as a cage since we are already in Him. It is like a bird that is not aware of the fact that it is supported by the vast invisible air. One has only to become aware of this fact. It is like a person safely ensconced in his bed and sleeping has a scary dream in which he is chased by a tiger. He is terribly frightened and suffers immensely - all in his dream. In extreme fright, he wakes up with a start and is greatly relieved to realise it has all been only a bad dream and he is safe in his house. In the same manner, we are now not aware of the fact that we are ever in Him safely. But we imagine, just like the dreamer imagining he is being chased by a tiger, we are chased by problems and consequently suffering. We are now covered by spiritual ignorance called avidyA and limited by the power and range of our senses. Because of this we are not able to perceive the divine envelope around us and protecting us. We now feel that the waking state is real and the dream state is not. But our upanishads question this assumption and point out that just like the dream state vanishes in the waking state so does the waking state vanish.
while we are in the dream state. And both these states do not exist in the deep sleep state and vice versa. So, all the three states we experience daily are truly transient and unreal as each one of these states does not exist in the other two. In all these three states we are blinded by spiritual ignorance called avidyā and so not able to see the Lord who is ever around us. Krishna said this: 

\[ 
\text{મયા તત્તં સવં જગદવ્યક્ત} - \text{(BG-9-4).} 
\]

that the entire universe is pervaded by Him in His unmanifest form that is beyond the range of senses of perception. When we wake up from the spiritual slumber and go beyond these three ephemeral states and transcend this barrier of avidyā, we realise our oneness with the Lord. The upanishad asks us to wake up to this fact. विदितत जगत (Katha Upanishad - 1-3-14). and urge us not to rest till this supreme goal is achieved. The way to reach the goal is to be learnt from the wise people who have reached the goal already. प्राप्य वश्निभोधत। It is reached by one who has developed a discriminating intellect and has gained control of his mind. The goal is the highest one can reach and it is the very nature of the Supreme Being called Vishnu. (Katha Upanishad - 1-3-9).

The Taittariya Upanishad says (2-7) that only when one gets established in this Supreme Being (Vishnu) he gets free from all fear. The moment he sees even a wee bot of difference between himself and the Supreme Being he gets engulfed with fear - however much he may be learned in scriptures.

\[ 
\text{yada वैैश अतिसिद्धेऽवेयेऽवेयेऽवेय-}\n\text{वर्णं प्रतिरं विन्दते। अथ सोऽवं गच्छे}\n\text{भवति। यथा वैैशीष अतिसिद्धं-मन्तः कुरुः।}\n\text{अथ तथा भवं भवति। तर्केऽ भवं विद्योऽध्यायः।} 
\]

So, it becomes very necessary for one to reach this supreme goal if we want to be totally free from fears and anxieties. One has to
remember the important fact that this supreme goal can be attained only by we humans and not by birds, animals or plants; because they are inferior births meant to work out the heavy load of sins. They cannot do good deeds like do charity, go on pilgrimage to holy places or study scriptures like Gita and earn puNyam. This was mentioned earlier in this article as: the consequences of great deal of sin will be births in poor family, sickness or births in inferior worlds or even as animals or plants. Yama tells this to his disciple Nachiketas in Katha Upanishad as:

\[\text{તેષાં સતતયુક્તાનાં ભજતાં પ્રીંતપૂવર્કમ} \]
\[\text{તં યેન મામય પ્રીતપૂવર્કમ} \]

Thus a human birth is a rare gift from God obtained by virtue of some good deeds performed by us in earlier births. If we miss out this chance we do not know when we will get a human birth again. Our kindly acharyas implore us to be keenly aware of this fact and urge us to make use of the precious human birth we have got now. So, what should one do now to reach the goal. Krishna says that if one worships Him devotedly He will grant him the wisdom that will show the way to the goal. BG (10-10).

\[\text{તં છં સતતયુક્તાનાં ભજતા પ્રીતપૂવર્કમ} \]
\[\text{કાલક્ત બુધયાેગં તં ચેન મામય પ્રીતપૂવર્કમ} \]

Krishna mentions two essential qualifications for the devotee here. Firstly he should be uninterruptedly united with Him. That is, the devotion should be constant and not sporadic. Secondly, the devotion should be selfless. The devotee should not serve Him in order to gain some object or material benefit in return for his devotion. This will debase the devotion. For such a devotee, Krishna promises to show the way to freedom. It implies that He will not personally come and guide the devotee. It means that when He, as the Inner Self, finds that the devotee is sincerely yearning for deliverance, He will send a suitable guru to lead the person on the spiritual path. In fact,
the scriptures say that He Himself out of immense compassion takes the form of the guru and appears before the devotee and transmits the wisdom concerning the ultimate truth. This enables the devotee to cross over the ocean of sorrowful samsara.

So, let us keep to the path of dharma and pray to Him to grant us unwavering devotion to His feet that will eventually deliver us from sorrows. For, it is said that constant remembering of the Lord puts an end to all evils and increases tranquility of mind. It enhances the purity of the mind. It stimulates devotion to the supreme Being and promotes spiritual enlightenment etc .. BH-(12-12-53)

Encoded, proofread, and commentary by N Balasubramanian bbalu at sify.com

Shri Vishnupanjaram Agnipuranantargatam pdf was typeset on December 5, 2021

Please send corrections to sanskrit@cheerful.com