

Vishnu Sahasranamam - Commentators



Vishnu sahasranamam Collection

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 Description: Exploring the profound commentary "Bhagavat Guna Darpanam" by the great Vishishtadvaita scholar Parashara Bhatta

 Tags: vishnu-sahasranamam, parashara-bhatta, vishishtadvaita, commentary, bhagavat-guna-darpanam, srirangam

Parashara Bhatta's Vishnu Sahasranamam Commentary



The Sacred Lineage of Preceptors



Based on the sources provided, Parashara Bhatta offers salutations to a specific chain of Purvacharyas (preceptors) in the invocatory verses of his commentary, Bhagavat Guna Darpanam. Following his obeisance to the divine couple (Shri Mahalakshmi and Sriman Narayana) and Vishwaksena, the lineage of six historical figures he reveres is as follows:

- Shatakopa (Nammalvar)** - The mystic saint celebrated as the first in this specific line of human preceptors
- Nathamuni (Ranganatha Muni)** - The successor who came later in the lineage
- Yamunacharya (Yamuna Muni or Aalavandar)** - The grand student of Nathamuni
- Ramanujacharya** - The world-celebrated "Jagadacharya" and grand disciple of Yamunacharya
- Kuresha (Shri Vatsanka)** - The foremost student of Ramanuja and the biological father and Acharya of Parashara Bhatta

6. **Govinda Yati (Embar)** - Another figure identified as an Acharya to Parashara Bhatta alongside Kuresha

Parashara Bhatta recites specific verses, such as "Vande Govinda Tatau..." and "Nathamide Shatharim," to offer his prostrations to this chain of Acharyas before beginning his commentary.

The Choice of Commentary



The discourse explicitly states the choice of Parashara Bhatta's commentary, a great scholar from the Vishishtadvaita school of thought. The reasoning behind this choice includes:

Primary Source

The commentary titled **Bhagavat Guna Darpanam** (The Mirror of the Lord's Qualities) serves as the primary source for interpretation.

Philosophical Approach

Parashara Bhatta interprets every name as indicating a specific quality (guna) of the Paramatma, viewing the thousand names as a reflection of the Lord's thousand attributes.

Supplementary Sources

While primarily focusing on Parashara Bhatta, the discourse acknowledges the significance of Adi Shankara's Bhashyam and incorporates portions from Shankara's commentary where appropriate or particularly beautiful. For the Phala Shruti section, both commentaries are combined.

Mukhyartham is defined as the **straight meaning** or direct signification of a word.

Gaunartham is defined as the **secondary meaning**.

In the specific context of the *Vishnu Sahasranamam* commentary regarding the verse *Yani namani gaunani...*, the sources highlight a distinction in how the term *Gauna* is interpreted by the two major commentators: * **Adi Shankara** utilizes the definition of *Gauna* as **secondary** in his commentary. * **Parashara Bhatta**

interprets *Gauna* as derived from the root word **Guna** (quality). He argues that the names are not secondary, but rather that every name indicates a specific auspicious quality (*Guna*) of the Paramatma.

About Parashara Bhatta: The Scholar Saint

Identity and Reputation

- **School of Thought:** Vishishtadvaita philosophy
- **Titles:** Renowned as a "walking university" (mobile university) and "mobile Panini," indicating mastery over Sanskrit grammar and language
- **Time Period:** Lived approximately 900 to 1,000 years ago, around the time of Ramanujacharya or shortly thereafter
- **Character:** A great devotee who was very accessible and a repository of auspicious attributes

Lineage and Location

- **Father:** Son of Kuresha (also known as Shrivatsanka), the foremost disciple of Bhagavat Ramanuja
- **Residence:** Srirangam, a temple town and river island in the Kaveri river in Tamil Nadu
- **Family Deity:** Ranganatha Swami

His Masterwork: Bhagavat Guna Darpanam

Core Philosophy

Parashara Bhatta's commentary operates on the principle that every name (nama) indicates a specific quality (gunam) of Paramatma. The thousand names reflect the Lord's thousand auspicious attributes.

Interpretation Style

- **Avoiding Repetition:** To prevent redundancy, he assigns different meanings to names appearing multiple times (such as Govinda, Achyuta, or Ajaha) based on context, root words, and different avatars

- **Understanding "Gauna":** Unlike Adi Shankara, who interprets "Gauna" as "secondary," Parashara Bhatta interprets it as names derived from gunas (qualities/attributes)
- **Six Characteristics:** He defines the Vishnu Sahasranamam's essence through six unique features: essence of Mahabharata, sung by Rishis, compiled by Vedavyasa, revered by Bhishma, beneficial for world welfare, and consistent with Bhagavad Gita teachings

Theological Contributions

Vyuha Forms

Associates specific names with the Vyuha forms of the Lord: - Sankarshana, Pradyumna, Aniruddha - Their respective attributes: Jnana, Bala, Aishwarya, Virya, Shakti, Tejas

Avatar Descriptions

Groups specific sets of names to describe various incarnations: - Hamsa avatar - Rama avatar - Krishna avatar - Narasimha avatar - Vamana/Trivikrama avatars - Buddha avatar (interpreted as an incarnation meant to delude the wicked)

Definition of Bhagavan

Offers commentary defining Bhagavan as one who is completely worshipable because he is the repository of all auspicious qualities and opposed to all blemishes.

A Tale of Humility

An touching incident illustrates Parashara Bhatta's profound humility: When stopped from entering the Srirangam temple because a dog had entered (requiring purification rites), he wept not out of anger, but asking why purification was done for the dog but not for him, considering himself lower than the dog. This demonstrates his belief that the Lord is supreme and he himself was unworthy.

Other Contributions

Besides his renowned Vishnu Sahasranamam commentary, Parashara Bhatta composed the **Rangarajastavam**, a beautiful hymn in praise of Lord Ranganatha.

Reference

[Vishnu Sahasranamam Commentary Discussion](#)



Acknowledgment & Disclaimer

These articles are based on discourses by **Sri Dushyanth Sridhar**, who renders discourses in English & Tamil on Rāmāyana, Mahābhārata, Bhāgavata, Vishnu Purāna, Bhagavad Gitā, Vishnu Sahasranāma, and Divya Prabanda in the upanyāsam, pravachanam, or kālakshepam style. Visit <https://desikadaya.org> for more information. These notes are presented solely for educational purposes to help viewers download and benefit from these teachings. Any incorrect interpretations or inaccuracies are mine and unintentional—please forgive me. For any feedback, please send an [email](#).

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