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Maha·bhárata

Book Twelve

Peace

Volume Three

The Book of Liberation



Translated by

ALEXANDER WYNNE

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY PRESS & JJC FOUNDATION

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Artwork by Robert Beer.
Typeset in Adobe Garamond Pro at 10.25 : 12.3+pt.
XML-development by Stuart Brown.
Editorial input from Dániel Balogh, Adam Bowles,
Ridi Faruque, Chris Gibbons,
Tomoyuki Kono & Eszter Somogyi.
Printed and bound in Great Britain by
T.J. International, Cornwall, on acid-free paper.

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VOLUME THREE

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TRANSLATED BY

Alexander Wynne



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2009

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First Edition 2009

The Clay Sanskrit Library is co-published by
New York University Press
and the JJC Foundation.

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www.nyupress.org

ISBN-13: 978-0-8147-9453-1 (cloth : alk. paper)

ISBN-10: 0-8147-9453-x (cloth : alk. paper)

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Mahābhārata. Śāntiparva. English & Sanskrit.

Mahābhārata. Book twelve, Peace. -- 1st ed.

p. cm.

Epic poetry.

In English and Sanskrit (romanized) on facing pages;
includes translation from Sanskrit.

Description based on: v. 3, published in 2009.

ISBN-13: 978-0-8147-9453-1 (cl : alk. paper)

ISBN-10: 0-8147-9453-x (cl : alk. paper)

1. Epic poetry, Sanskrit--Translations into English.

I. Wynne, Alexander, 1974- II. Title. III. Title: Peace.

BL1138.242.S26E5 2009

294.5'92304521--dc22

2008049541

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THE DIALOGUE BETWEEN BHRIGU
AND BHARAD·VAJA

YUDHIṢṬHIRA uvāca:

182.1

KUTAḤ SRṢṬAM IDAM viśvaṃ jagat sthāvara|jaṅgamam?
pralaye ca kam abhyeti? tan me brūhi, pitā|maha.
sa|sāgaraḥ, sa|gaganah, sa|śailah, sa|balāhakah,
sa|bhūmiḥ, s'|āgni|pavano loko 'yaṃ kena nirmitaḥ?
kathaṃ srṣṭāni bhūtāni?
kathaṃ varṇa|vibhaktayaḥ?
śauc'|āśaucam kathaṃ teṣāṃ?
dharm'|ādharma|vidhiḥ katham?
kīdrśo jīvatāṃ jīvaḥ? kva vā gacchanti ye mṛtāḥ?
asmāl lokād amuṃ lokam, sarvaṃ śaṃsatu no bhavān.

BHĪṢMA uvāca:

182.5

atr' āpy udāharant' īmam itiḥāsaṃ purātanam:
Bhṛguṃ" ābhihitam śāstraṃ Bharadvājāya pṛcchate.
Kailāsa|śikhare drṣṭvā dīpyamānam mah" |āujasam
Bhṛguṃ maha" |rṣim āsīnam Bharadvājo 'nvapṛcchata
«sa|sāgaraḥ, sa|gaganah, sa|śailah, sa|balāhakah,
sa|bhūmiḥ, s'|āgni|pavano loko 'yaṃ kena nirmitaḥ?
kathaṃ srṣṭāni bhūtāni?
kathaṃ varṇa|vibhaktayaḥ?
śauc'|āśaucam kathaṃ teṣāṃ?
dharm'|ādharma|vidhiḥ katham?
kīdrśo jīvatāṃ jīvaḥ? kva vā gacchanti ye mṛtāḥ?
para|lokam imaṃ c' āpi, sarvaṃ śaṃsitum arhasi.»

YUDHI-SHTHIRA said:

WHAT IS THE SOURCE of the universe, this world of animate and inanimate things? And to what does it return during a period of cosmic dissolution? Please tell me this, grandfather. Who fashioned this world of oceans, sky, mountains, clouds, earth, fire and wind? 182.1

How were the different creatures created, and how were they divided into different classes? How did they become pure and impure? How did the order of right and wrong come about?

What is the nature of the soul that abides within living beings? And where do the dead go? Please explain all this to me, from this world to the world beyond.

BHISHMA said:

On this subject people relate an ancient tradition: the instruction imparted to the enquiring Bharad-vaja by Bhṛigu.* 182.5

The great seer Bhṛigu was seated on the peak of Mount Kailāsa, glowing with great energy. Upon seeing him, Bharad-vaja asked these questions: “Who fashioned this world of oceans, sky, mountains, clouds, earth, fire and wind?

How were the different creatures created, and how were they divided into different classes? How did they become pure and impure? How did the order of right and wrong come about?

What is the nature of the soul that abides within living beings, and what happens to people when they die? Please tell me everything about this world and the world beyond.”

182.10 evaṃ sa bhagavān pṛṣṭo Bharadvājaena saṃśayam,
brahma'rṣir Brahma|saṃkāśaḥ sarvaṃ tasmai tato 'bravīt.

BHṚGUR uvāca:

«mānaso» nāma yaḥ pūrvo viśruto vai maha'rṣibhiḥ
an|ādi|nidhano devas, tath' ā|bhedyo 'jarā|marah.
«avyakta» iti vikhyātaḥ, śāśvato 'th' ā|kṣayo 'vyayah.
yataḥ sṛṣṭāni bhūtāni, jāyante ca mriyanti ca.

so 'srjat prathamam devo «mahāntam» nāma nāmataḥ.
mahān sasarj' āham|kāram; sa c' āpi bhagavān atha.
«ākāśam» iti vikhyātam sarva|bhūta|dharah prabhuḥ;
ākāśād abhavad vāri, salilād agni|mārutau,
agni|māruta|saṃyogāt tataḥ samabhavan mahī.

182.15 tatas tejo|mayam divyam padmam sṛṣṭam svayam|bhuvā.
tasmāt padmāt samabhavad Brahmā veda|mayo nidhiḥ.
«aham|kāra» iti khyātaḥ, sarva|bhūt'|ātma|bhūta|kṛt.
Brahmā vai sa mahā|tejā, ya ete pañca dhātavaḥ.

śailās tasy' āsthi|saṃjñās tu, medo māṃsam ca medinī,
samudrās tasya rudhiram, ākāśam udaraṃ tathā.
pavanaś c' āiva niḥśvāsas, tejo 'gnir, nimnagāḥ sirāḥ.
agni|ṣomau tu candr'|ārkaḥ nayane tasya viśrute.
nabhaś c' ōrdhvaṃ śiras tasya, kṣitiḥ pādau; bhujau diśaḥ.

Thus questioned on these perplexing matters by Bharad- 182.10
 vaja, the blessed Bhrigu, a Brahminic seer who looked just
 like the god Brahma himself, explained everything to him.

BHRIGU said:

The great seers used the expression “pure consciousness”
 to eulogize the ancient deity, which is indivisible, without
 beginning or end, and beyond decrepitude and death. It is
 eternal, unfailing and immutable, and also called the “un-
 manifest.” All creatures which are born and then die are its
 creation.

In the beginning this deity emitted a substance called
 “the absolute,” and this ejaculated the utterance “I!”; this
 utterance was the blessed Lord.* The Lord, upholder of the
 world, created that which is called “space”; water came into
 being from space. Fire and wind came into being from the
 water, and the contact between them produced the earth.

After the creation of the five elements, *brahman*, the self- 182.15
 existent absolute created a divine lotus of lustrous light.
 From that lotus emerged the lord Brahma; the Vedas are his
 substance, and he is the source of everything. He is both
 the soul of all beings and their creator, and is known by the
 name “the utterance I!”* Brahma is brilliantly lustrous, and
 comprises the five elements.

The mountains are said to be his bones, the earth is his
 bone marrow and flesh, the oceans are his blood and space
 is his belly. The wind is his breath, fire is his energy and the
 rivers are his veins. The sun and moon, *agni* and *soma*, are
 said, in eulogies, to be his eyes. The sky above is his head, the
 earth below is his feet; the directions are his arms. Even the

dur|vijñeyo hy a|cinty' |ātmā siddhair api, na saṁśayaḥ.

182.20

sa eva bhagavān Viṣṇur, «an|anta» iti viśrutaḥ.
sarva|bhūt' |ātmā|bhūta|stho, dur|vijñeyo ' |kṛt' |ātmabhiḥ.
aham|kārasya yaḥ sraṣṭā sarva|bhūta|bhavāya vai,
yataḥ samabhavad viśvaṁ—prṣṭo 'ham yad iha tvayā.

BHARADVĀJA uvāca:

gaganasya, diśāṁ c' āiva, bhū|talasy', ānilasya vā
kāny atra parimāṇāni? saṁśayaṁ chinddhi tattvataḥ.

BHṚGUR uvāca:

an|antam etad ākāśaṁ, siddha|daivata|sevitam,
ramyaṁ, nān' |āśray' |ākīrṇaṁ, yasy' ānto n' ādhigamyate.
ūrdhvaṁ gater adhastāt tu candr' |ādityau na dṛśyataḥ,
tatra devāḥ svayaṁ|dīptā bhāsvar' |ābh' |āgni|varcasah.

182.25

te c' āpy antaṁ na paśyanti nabhasaḥ prathit' |āujasaḥ
durgamatvād anantatvād: iti me viddhi, mānada.
upariṣṭ' |ōpariṣṭāt tu prajvaladbhiḥ svayaṁ|prabhāiḥ
niruddham etad ākāśam a|prameyaṁ surair api.

prṥthivy|ante samudrās tu, samudr' |ānte tamaḥ smṛtam.
tamaso 'nte jalaṁ prāhur, jalasy' ānte 'gnir eva ca.
Rasātal' |ānte salilaṁ, jal' |ānte pannag' |ādhipaḥ.
tad|ante punar ākāśam, ākāś' |ānte punar jalam.

Siddhas find it hard to perceive him, undoubtedly, because his essence is unthinkable.

He is the blessed lord Vishnu, who is eulogized as “the limitless.” Incomplete men cannot perceive him, the one who abides within as the soul of all beings. 182.20

He is the one you asked me about—the source of the universe, the one who ejaculated the utterance “I!” in order to bring all creatures into existence.

BHARAD·VAJA said:

What is the extent of the sky, the cardinal directions, the earth and the wind? Please dispel my doubts, in accordance with the true nature of things.

BHRIGU said:

This space here is infinite, a realm of pleasure frequented by Siddhas and gods. It contains dominions of all kinds, but no end to it is found. The self-lustrous gods, resplendent and as brilliant as fire, are to be found where the sun and moon cannot be seen, being beyond their range.

Although the gods have power in abundance, even they cannot perceive an end to the sky. This is because it is infinite and impassable: understand that this is my opinion, courteous one. This region of space cannot be measured by the blazing, self-luminous gods, since it comes to an end beyond them. 182.25

It is held that there are oceans at the end of the earth, and darkness after that. Beyond the darkness there is more water, so they say, after which there is the fire of the Rasátala hell. Beyond this hell there is water, and after that the Lord

evam antaṃ Bhagavataḥ, pramāṇaṃ salilasya ca,
agni|māruta|toyebhyo, dur|jñeyaṃ daivatair api.

182.30 agni|māruta|toyānāṃ varṇāḥ kṣiti|talasya ca
ākāśād avagr̥hyante; bhidyante tattva|darśanāt.

paṭhanti c' āiva munayaḥ śāstreṣu vividheṣu ca,
Trailokya|sāgare c' āiva pramāṇaṃ vihitam yathā.
a|dṛśyāya tv a|gamyāya kaḥ pramāṇam udāharet?
siddhānāṃ devatānāṃ ca yadā parimitā gatiḥ,
tadā gauṇam an|antasya nām' «ān|ant'» ēti viśrutam
nāmadhey'|ānurūpasya mānasasya mah'"|ātmanaḥ.

yadā tu divyaṃ yad rūpaṃ
hrasate vardhate punaḥ,
ko 'nyas tad vedituṃ śakyo?

yo 'pi syāt tad|vidho 'paraḥ.

182.35 tataḥ puṣkarataḥ sṛṣṭaḥ sarva|jño mūrtimān prabhuḥ
Brahmā dharmā|mayāḥ pūrvaḥ prajā|patir an|uttamaḥ.

BHARADVĀJA uvāca:

puṣkarād yadi saṃbhūto, jyeṣṭhaṃ bhavati puṣkaram.
Brahmāṇaṃ pūrva|jaṃ c' āha bhavān; saṃdeha eva me.

of serpent demons has his lair. Then there is more space, after which there is water once again.

And so even the gods cannot fathom the limit of the Blessed One, and the extent of water, fire and wind.

The nature of fire, wind, water and the ground is different from that of space; they are distinguished from each other when a person sees the truth. 182.30

The silent sages pronounce the extent of the world in various treatises, just as it has been laid down in the "Ocean of the triple world." But who can declare the extent of that which cannot be seen or traversed? Since the movement of even the Siddhas and gods is circumscribed, the term "infinite," which is pronounced of the infinite, macrocosmic "pure consciousness" which fits this description, is but a figurative designation.

When the divine form of *brahman* contracts and expands over and over again, who else is able to know him? Such a person would have to be of a similar nature. It is for this reason that the all-knowing Lord emerged from a lotus in an embodied form. This is the personal god Brahma, the ancient, incomparable Lord of creatures whose substance is the religious order. 182.35

BHARAD·VAJA said:

If Brahma was born from a lotus, then the lotus must be older than him. I am confused, because you say that Brahma was born first.

BHṚGUR uvāca:

mānasasy' ēha yā mūrtir brahmatvaṃ samupāgatā,
tasy' āsana|vidhān'|ārthaṃ pṛthivī padmam ucyate.
karnikā tasya padmasya Merur gaganam ucchritaḥ.
tasya madhye sthito lokān sṛjate jagataḥ prabhuḥ.

BHARADVĀJA uvāca:

183.1 PRAJĀ|VISARGAṃ vividhaṃ kathaṃ sa sṛjate prabhuḥ
Meru|madhye sthito Brahmā? tad brūhi, dvija|sattama.

BHṚGUR uvāca:

prajā|visargaṃ vividhaṃ mānaso manas" āsṛjat.
saṃrakṣaṇ'|ārthaṃ bhūtānāṃ sṛṣṭaṃ prathamato jalam,
yat praṇāḥ sarva|bhūtānāṃ, vardhante yena ca prajāḥ,
parityaktās ca naśyanti—ten' ēdaṃ sarvam āvṛtam.
pṛthivī, parvatā, meghā, mūrtimantaś ca ye pare,
sarvaṃ tad vāruṇaṃ jñeyam, āpas tastambhire yataḥ.

BHARADVĀJA uvāca:

183.5 kathaṃ salilam utpannaṃ? kathaṃ c' āiv' āgni|mārutau?
kathaṃ ca medinī sṛṣṭ"? ēty atra me saṃśayo mahān.

BHṚGUR uvāca:

brahma|kalpe purā, brahman, brahma'|rṣiṇām samāgame
loka|saṃbhava|saṃdehaḥ samutpanno mah"ātmanām.
te 'tiṣṭhan dhyānam ālambya, maunam āsthāya nīscalāḥ,
tyakt'|āhārāḥ, pavana|pā, divyaṃ varṣa|śataṃ dvijāḥ.

BHRIGU said:

The material form of pure consciousness is endowed with its divine essence, whereas the earth is called a lotus because it provides a seat for Brahma. The pericarp of that lotus towers up into the sky as Mount Meru. Abiding at its center, the Lord of the world creates all the worlds.

BHARAD·VAJA said:

HOW DID THE LORD Brahma bring about the numerous emanations of different creatures while abiding at the center of Mount Meru? Tell me that, exalted brahmin. 183.1

BHRIGU said:

Pure consciousness created all the different creatures through mind. First of all, in order to protect living beings it created water, because water is the breath of all beings and that through which creatures flourish. Water envelops the entire world—without it everything would be destroyed. The earth, mountains, clouds and anything of a corporeal nature should be understood as forms of water, for it was the waters themselves that became solid.

BHARAD·VAJA said:

How did water come into being? And what about fire and wind? How was the earth created? I am very confused about this. 183.5

BHRIGU said:

Long ago, brahmin, in the Brahma aeon, a doubt about the origin of the world arose during a council of holy Brahminic seers. These brahmins remained in meditation for a hundred celestial years, during which they practiced silence

teṣāṃ dharmā|mayī vāṇī sarveṣāṃ śrotram āgamat,
divyā Sarasvatī tatra saṃbabbhūva nabhas|talāt.

purā stimitam ākāśam an|antam, a|cal'|ôpamam,
naṣṭa|candr'|ārka|pavanam; prasuptam iva saṃbabbhau.

183.10 tataḥ salilam utpannam, tamas' îv' âparam tamaḥ.
tasmāc ca salil'|ôtpīḍād udatiṣṭhata mārutaḥ.

yathā bhājanam a|cchidram niḥ|śabdān iva lakṣyate;
tac c' âmbhasā pūryamāṇam sa|śabdān kurute 'nilaḥ.
tathā salila|saṃruddhe nabhaso 'nte nir|antare
bhittv' ârṇava|talām vāyuḥ samutpatati ghoṣavān,
sa eṣa carate vāyur arṇav'|ôtpīḍa|saṃbhavaḥ:
ākāśa|sthānam āsādyā praśāntim n' âdhigacchati.

tasmin vāyv|ambu|saṃgharṣe dīpta|tejā mahā|balaḥ
prādur abhūd ūrdhva|śikhaḥ, kṛtvā nis|timiraṃ nabhaḥ.

183.15 agniḥ pavana|saṃyuktaḥ kham samākṣipate jalam.
so 'gnir māruta|saṃyogād ghanatvam upapadyate.
tasy' ākāśe† nipatitaḥ snehas tiṣṭhati yo 'paraḥ,
sa saṃghātātvam āpanno bhūmitvam anugacchati.

rasānām, sarva|gandhānām, snehānām prāṇinām tathā
bhūmir yonir iha jñeyā; yasyām sarvaṃ prasūyate.

and were motionless, shunning all food and drinking the wind. And then they heard the sound of religious order, as the celestial Sarásvati river burst forth from the roof of space.

Before that the infinity of space had been calm, and seemingly motionless, for it was devoid of sun, moon and wind; it was as if it had been sunk in a deep sleep. But then water sprang forth, like another great darkness within the gloom. The pressure within it produced wind. 183.10

It is just like a pot that, if it is not cleft, is seen to be virtually noiseless. But when it is filled with water the air in it makes a noise. So it was when the interior of space, which really has no interior, was immersed in water: wind pierced the surface of this foaming mass of water and rose up in a thunder. That wind, produced by the pressure within the water, is the same wind that still blows here: when it escaped into space, it could not be stilled.

In the friction between wind and water a powerful, radiant flame arose. With its crest rising up this fire lit up space, and when it came into contact with the wind it forced space and water together, but because of its contact with wind, some of the fire congealed. This viscous part of fire stood apart descended within space. In the process it was compressed, and so it turned into earth. 183.15

This earth should be known as the source of all tastes, smells, fluids and sentient beings; everything is generated within it.



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NEW YORK UNIVERSITY PRESS

Washington Square
New York, NY 10003
www.nyupress.org

ISBN 978-0-8147-9453-1



9 780814 794531