

Peter Schreiner (ed.)

INDEX OF CONTENTS TO THE NARASIṂHAPURĀṆA

This index of the Narasiṃhapurāṇa was begun while the Tübingen Purāṇa Project was still operative. I gratefully dedicate it to

Heinrich von Stietencron

who allowed it to happen!

The index of topics and motifs of the Narasiṃhapurāṇa (NSP) is conceived in analogy to the (published) index of the Brahmapurāṇa (BrP). The index is meant to supplement but not to substitute search routines (or search tools as those published for the BrP on microfiches) of the Sanskrit text. Generally the contents of a text is most objectively represented by its own words, i.e., by the original Sanskrit. As in the case of a translation, even the choice of terminology for representing contents and motifs in another language involves a certain amount of interpretation. Thus, this index may serve as an additional tool for orientation, but priority must always be given to the original wording. For that reason unqualified proper names (e.g., of the kings listed in a genealogy) are not included in the index (they can be looked up in the Sanskrit original). On the other hand, it includes entries which classify literary categories (e.g., metres, rhetorical techniques, stylistic units).

The index to the Brahmapurāṇa was formulated while preparing a summary of contents (and thus it is primarily an index to that summary, not to the Sanskrit text). This index of the NSP, however, is based on the translation by Siddheswar Jena. It formalizes the wording of the contents to form entries according to the conventions of a specially devised syntax. This syntax allows for an algorithm which automatically repeats an entry by changing the order of its parts. In doing so the index standardizes and classifies the contents by restricting the potentially infinite synonymous ways of how contents and motifs are worded in the original to the more restricted vocabulary of a thesaurus.

The word 'motif' is used here without explicit reference to the technical terminology of literary criticism, textual analysis, narratology, etc., but rather in a colloquial everyday sense. The title of volume 2 of the *Purāṇa Research Publications, Tübingen* (Wiesbaden 1989) uses it and the introduction explains that the index includes „catchwords denoting concrete things and their interrelations, as well as narrative motifs, if they are thematic in the passage concerned.“ (p. xxxiii)

Seen from the point of view of the pragmatics of indexing, motif is something like an „indexable item“, i.e., a name, a narrative unit, a textual genre, a literary technique, a narrative element, an action, function, relation, attribute, philosophical theme, a concept, any topic of dispute, a topos, a thing or object in the narrators' real or imaginary

(fictional) world shared with that of an audience. Ideally, anything that anybody can find in a text and that consequently one should be enabled to search for, should be indexable and should be indexed. And this is more than and is different from the Sanskrit vocabulary. An index that includes everything anybody may ever want to search for in a text is an utopian ideal, as I believe to have learned, based as it is on the metaphysical assumption of a static, atemporal, unhistorical concept of reality and of truth and a corresponding positivistic, objectifiable role of the researcher and her or his perspective, commitment, motives, and context.

The following examples may illustrate the actually chosen strategies and conventions. Index entries were formulated while reading the text (in this case, its translation) and collected in the source file for the index. The colon indicates the place(s) where the order of an entry is changed while duplicating it.

Static relations and attributions are indexed by using prepositions and conjunctions, e.g., „Rāma and: Sītā“, „bow of: Śiva“ (which generates also „Sītā, Rāma and“, „Śiva, bow of“).

Proper names are indexed only when they are related to a context or an action; or they should be classified, e.g. „Kailāsa [mountain]“, alternatively „Kailāsa-mountain“. The text uses a great number of names and epithets referring to Viṣṇu, apparently indiscriminately – the frequent occurrences of *Narasimha* and *Nṛsimha* possibly being a distinctive feature of this text. Since I have not prepared a summary of contents which would have had to represent a more accurate picture of the terminology in the original, the name „Viṣṇu“ has been used in the index to comprise all references to that god, no matter under which name he may be mentioned. To find the frequency and distribution of the occurrences of all the different names, the reader must consult the transliteration (or a Key-Word-In-Context index, KWIC). A number of cross references to „Viṣṇu“ have been included in the index as a reminder of the actually occurring variety of names and epithets, e.g., lord of gods, lord of Lakṣmī (*lakṣmīśa*), lord of the world (*lokanātha*, *jagannātha*), lord of sacrifice, Bhagavat, Devakīnananda, Garuḍadhvaja, Īśāna, Keśava, Kṛṣṇa, Madhusūdana, Mahādeva, Murāri, Nārāyaṇa, Parameśvara, Puruṣottama, Rāma, Vīrabhadra – and of course Narasiṃha.

Actions can be indexed a) by agent (e.g., „Hanumat killing demoness“), b) by object (mostly passive formulation, e.g. „demoness killed by Hanumat“), c) by action (using verbal nouns or participles, e.g., „killing of demoness by Hanumat“). Only the order of b) can be changed comfortably, which makes form a) redundant.

While preparing an index like this one, there comes a point when – while formulating the entries – one becomes wary of repeating „merit of“ or „of Viṣṇu“. But on the other hand, that is what the text insists on repeating almost irrespective of content and context. Completeness of occurrences of every once formulated entry can of course not be guaranteed. The indexer's focus of attention may have shifted, a different wording may have suggested itself, the content of passages indexed earlier may have slipped from

memory. In retrospection it seems obvious and natural that there cannot be ascertained that each motif and catchword indexes each and every occurrence throughout the text. To tackle this problem would have meant to index the text again with the thesaurus of catchwords in mind (and on paper). The entries in the index of the Brahmapurāṇa were in fact *not* consulted as a systematic and regular work routine.

There is a great number of singular entries, i.e. facts, events, connections which were felt to characterize a particular passage but which turn out not to have been encountered a second time. The longer a formulation, the smaller the probability of its repetition. But does it make sense to call a singular entry a „motif“? Or, looked at not from the point of view of the smallest constituent but from the point of view of a whole text, is it conceivable that a text consists only of singular entities? And what type of text would that be?

The strategy of 'turning around' the parts of entries linked by prepositions etc. changes the weight of each element depending on its position. E.g. „mantra of eight syllables“ is indicative for „mantra“ and for „eight“ more poignantly than for „syllables“. But only if „syllables“ is also treated as catchword can the index be informative about which counts of syllables are actually mentioned (and incidentally, about the fact, that syllables are associated with colours). The recommendation to be drawn from the shifting weight of catchword in sequences can only be that one should read all the entries under a catchword of the first index-level and to follow up the cross references implied by the consecutive levels.

A related phenomenon is the emboxing effect caused by the number of specifications of an entry. For example, if there is an entry „meditation on Viṣṇu“ (with three references) and another one „meditation on Viṣṇu in the sun“ (with one reference) sorting will cause both entries to follow each other in the index, but the one reference of the longer entry is *not* included amongst the references of the first entry, though logically speaking the more specific entry is 'contained' in the more encompassing one.

This index and the above notes were prepared MANY years ago and have been waiting all this time until the transliteration could be finished (in March 2006). I dare not question the conventions that seemed useful and practical at that time, nor can I invest in reformulating the index entries or adding to them on the basis of a new reading of text and/or translation – lest another twenty years may have to pass ... But some day somebody (perhaps even myself) should write an article on the task, the pragmatics and the perspectives of „indexing Purāṇas“. The readers' comments and critical observations or additions are welcome and may be addressed to „pesch at indoger.uzh.ch“.

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