



Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

Revealing Śiva's superiority by retelling Viṣṇu's deeds: Viṣṇu's manifestation myths in the Skandapurāṇa

Dokter-Mersch, S.

Citation

Dokter-Mersch, S. (2021, April 15). *Revealing Śiva's superiority by retelling Viṣṇu's deeds: Viṣṇu's manifestation myths in the Skandapurāṇa*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3160305>

Version: Publisher's Version

License: [Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3160305>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Cover Page



Universiteit Leiden



The handle <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3160305> holds various files of this Leiden University dissertation.

Author: Dokter-Mersch, S.

Title: Revealing Śiva's superiority by retelling Viṣṇu's deeds: Viṣṇu's manifestation myths in the Skandapurāṇa

Issue Date: 2021-04-15

Revealing Śiva's Superiority
by Retelling Viṣṇu's Deeds

Viṣṇu's Manifestation Myths in the *Skandapurāṇa*

Sanne Dokter-Mersch

Revealing Śiva's Superiority by Retelling Viṣṇu's Deeds
Viṣṇu's Manifestation Myths in the *Skandapurāṇa*

Proefschrift

ter verkrijging van
de graad van doctor aan de Universiteit Leiden,
op gezag van rector magnificus prof. dr. ir. H. Bijl,
volgens besluit van het college voor promoties
te verdedigen op donderdag 15 april 2021
klokke 11.15 uur

door

Sanne Dokter-Mersch
geboren te Vlaardingen
in 1989

Promotores: Prof. dr. Peter C. Bisschop
Prof. dr. Yuko Yokochi (Kyoto University)

Promotiecommissie: Prof. dr. Jonathan A. Silk
Em. prof. dr. Hans T. Bakker (Rijksuniversiteit Groningen)
Dr. Elizabeth A. Cecil (Florida State University)

Foreword

In the past five years, I have had the privilege to experience the versatility of research and to find some of the best mentors to teach and to guide me. It is now time to officially thank them for their support and time. First and foremost, I wish to express my gratitude to my *guru* for twelve years at Leiden University and promotor during my PhD trajectory, professor Peter Bisschop. From the second year of my Bachelor to the finalization of my dissertation, Peter has supported my love for Sanskrit and mythology and has introduced me into the world of Śaivism, with this dissertation as my final initiation. I would also like to thank my second promotor, professor Yuko Yokochi. I share with her my passion for manuscript research and the *Skandapurāṇa*. During my three-months stay at Kyoto University, she always found the time to work with me on my critical edition, which is just a tip of the iceberg of her contributions in the past few years.

In the context of the *Skandapurāṇa* project, I was fortunate enough to see up close the amount of work and in-depth research that precedes a critical edition. Each verse is read out loud, no error in the critical apparatus is left undiscussed, and every augmentless imperfect comes under close scrutiny. I would like to thank the team members and other participants of the yearly meetings in Leiden and Kyoto for their insights concerning my critical edition, in particular Diwakar Acharya, Hans Bakker, Kengo Harimoto, Judit Törzsök and Somdev Vasudeva. My colleagues in Leiden should certainly not be forgotten either. Lucas den Boer, Elizabeth Cecil and Nirajan Kafle, thank you for the reading sessions, academic ins and outs and of course, the coffee breaks.

And, last but not least, I would like to thank my loved ones: starting with my parents who from the start have supported me to do what I love, and concluding with the man I love, my husband Laurens. Thank you for keep trying to remember the Sanskrit names of Hindu gods, for pretending to be my husband during my fieldtrip in India, and for making the past few years the best of my life with Nelson and his sister as unquestionable highlights.

Sanne Dokter-Mersch

March 2021

Table of contents

List of abbreviations	7
1 Introduction	9
1.1 Purāṇa according to the <i>Skandapurāṇa</i>	11
1.2 Tell and retell	22
1.2.1 Śaivization	27
1.2.2 Dramatic visualization	32
1.2.3 “The” <i>Skandapurāṇa</i> composers	35
1.3 Viṣṇu’s manifestation myths in the <i>Skandapurāṇa</i>	36
1.4 Research questions and methodology	44
2 Tales as old as time: Viṣṇu’s manifestation myths in the epics and the Purāṇas	50
2.1 The Narasiṃha myth	53
2.2 The Varāha myth	61
2.3 The Vāmana myth	73
2.4 The <i>Skandapurāṇa</i> and the <i>Harivaṃśa</i> (HV App. 1 No. 42B)	80
2.4.1 Analysis	84
2.4.2 Hypothesis	90
2.5 Conclusions	92
3 Limits to the permissible: Viṣṇu in the <i>Skandapurāṇa</i>	96
3.1 The saviour who needs to be saved	99
3.2 From Viṣṇu’s <i>cakra</i> to Maheśvara’s <i>cakra</i>	108
3.3 “The Śarabha did not even budge”	113
3.4 Viṣṇu as Śiva’s devotee	115
3.5 A Śaiva eulogy of Viṣṇu	119
3.5.1 Viṣṇu as warrior and mythological references	124
3.5.2 Viṣṇu’s manifestations	126
3.5.3 Epithets related to Śiva and the <i>Skandapurāṇa</i>	131
3.5.4 Which narrative consistency prevails?	133
3.6 Conclusions	134

4	And they lived happily ever after... or not? A new ending for Viṣṇu's manifestation myths	138
4.1	An additional problem and solution	145
4.1.1	Narasimha vs. Śarabha	149
4.1.2	Varāha vs. Skanda	152
4.1.3	Vāmana on a pilgrimage	156
4.1.4	Viṣṇu's problem or Śiva's solution?	164
4.2	Śiva's boons to Viṣṇu	166
4.2.1	Slayer of Daityas	166
4.2.2	Pāśupata initiation	168
4.2.3	Final liberation	171
4.2.4	From <i>kṣatriya</i> to Viṣṇuśaṃkara	176
4.3	Conclusions	177
5	Royal succession and divine wars: the textual context of Viṣṇu's manifestation myths	181
5.1	Direct immediate context	184
5.1.1	The Narasimha myth	186
5.1.2	The Varāha myth	189
5.1.3	The Vāmana myth	193
5.1.4	Differences between the three myths	197
5.2	Relative immediate context	198
5.3	Conclusions	207
6	Conclusions	211
7	Bibliography	226
	Appendix I: Summaries	250
I.1	The Narasimha myth	250
I.2	The Varāha myth	251
I.2.1	What preceded	251
I.2.2	The Varāha myth	252

I.3 The Vāmana myth	256
I.3.1 What preceded	256
I.3.2 The Vāmana myth	256
Appendix II: Figures	260
Appendix III: Critical edition of chapters 108, 109 and 110 of the <i>Skandapurāṇa</i>	263
Summary	287
Samenvatting	289
Curriculum Vitae	291

List of abbreviations

AgP	<i>Agnipurāṇa</i>
Aś	<i>Arthaśāstra</i>
BḍP	<i>Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa</i>
BhāP	<i>Bhāgavatapurāṇa</i>
BhG	<i>Bhagavadgītā</i> , see Van Buitenen 1981
BrP	<i>Brahmapurāṇa</i> , see Schreiner and Söhnen 1987
HV	<i>Harivaṃśa</i>
KāP	<i>Kālikāpurāṇa</i>
KS	<i>Kumārasambhava</i>
KūP	<i>Kūrmapurāṇa</i>
LiP	<i>Liṅgapurāṇa</i>
MaS	<i>Manusmṛti</i> , see Olivelle 2004
MBh	<i>Mahābhārata</i>
MkP	<i>Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa</i>
MS	<i>Maitrāyaṇī Saṃhitā</i>
MtP	<i>Matsyapurāṇa</i>
NsP	<i>Narasimhapurāṇa</i>
PBh	<i>Pañcārthabhāṣya</i>
PdP	<i>Padmapurāṇa</i>
PPL	<i>Purāṇapañcalakṣaṇa</i> , see Kirfel 1927
PS	<i>Pāśupatasūtra</i>
Rām	<i>Rāmāyaṇa</i>
ṚV	<i>Ṛgveda</i>
śB	<i>Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa</i>
śiP	<i>Śivapurāṇa</i>
SkP	<i>Skandapurāṇa</i> , edition by Nag Publishers 1982
SP	<i>Skandapurāṇa</i> , critical edition
SP _{Bh}	<i>Skandapurāṇa</i> , edition by Bhaṭṭarāī 1988
SP _S	<i>Skandapurāṇa</i> , Nepalese (S) recension

TS	<i>Taittirīya Saṃhitā</i>
VāP	<i>Vāyupurāṇa</i>
VDh	<i>Viṣṇudharma</i> , see Grünendahl 1983—89
VDhP	<i>Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa</i>
ViP	<i>Viṣṇupurāṇa</i>