

NARRATIVE COHERENCE IN THE UPĀSANAKHAṆḌA
OF THE GAṆEŚA PURĀṆA: THE INTERLOCUTORY SYSTEM

Anyone who has ever read a Purāṇa will agree that from chapter to chapter content and style often change and that the logical flow of a narrative across the entire Purāṇa and the semantic coherence of this narrative are often hard to find. One clue to the way the contents of a given Purāṇa can be read, and a fair indication of its overall coherency as a text, is found in the *anukramaṇikā*, if one is available, but sometimes, as in the *Gaṇeśa Purāṇa (GP)* this is too vague to be of more than general help¹. Repetition of myths within a single Purāṇa or several recapitulations of a myth or didactic passage is also effective in producing coherence, especially semantic coherence. So too is the repetition of motifs such as *stotras*, *darśanas*, battles, boon giving and so on, a form of repetition which also operates to produce semantic coherence. Yet despite this the narrative of a Purāṇa may still lack cohesion to the eyes of the Western reader². But what may appear devoid of cohesion to one might to a traditional audience (educated in hearing Purāṇic recitation) appear as

1. See *GP* 1.10.29-30 which is really a series of questions put by Vyāsa to Brahmā, but the contents of the *GP* do correspond broadly with these questions. The edition of the *GP* I have used is that of Gopal Narayan and Sons, Bombay, 1892.

2. For example, see the views of Hacker as given in my article, *On the Object of Study in Purāṇic Research; Three Recent Books on the Purāṇas*, in «Asian Studies Association of Australia Review», 10/3, (1987), p. 108.

cohesive because it conforms to a particular set of implicit expectations.

What is it that we are looking for in attempting to isolate cohesion in a literary work? Here is now van Dijk postulates the aims of discourse analysis in such a way which has relevance for the problem of cohesion:

«Just as we want to know how meanings of words and phrases within a sentence are related so as to form the meaning of the sentence as a whole, we want to know how the meanings of sentences are related so as to form the meaning of the sequence as a whole. In other words, how are the propositions of a discourse linked up in a sequence, and how do they add up to more complex meanings »³

Though van Dijk restricts to spoken discourse his own analyses arising from these postulates, acceptance of the relevance of such postulates for an understanding of the Purāṇic text can be productive of giving Purāṇic studies a clear direction. At the most basic level adoption of this direction would require us to define the minimal units of a Purāṇa which are joined together to form its syntagmatic chain. Once this has been accomplished, and by no means can we expect universal agreement as to the specific dimensions of these units, it will be necessary to further define these units into types, out of which a Purāṇa is constructed. Accordingly it is on the surface of the narrative, in the methods of combining these small units into still larger units, that my initial effort to study the cohesion of a Purāṇic narrative will be made. And even here I will restrict myself to examining only the interlocutory system as a device for establishing narrative cohesion⁴. The raw material for my analysis is the *Upāsanākhaṇḍa* (*Ukh*) of the *GP* which encompasses ninety-two chapters and includes myths focussing on the results of worshipping Gaṇeśa, on the reasons for worshipping him, as well as some *pūjā* material

3. T. van DIJK, *Semantic Discourse Analysis*, in T. van Dijk ed., «Handbook of Discourse Analysis», (4 volumes, Academic Press, London, 1985), volume 2, pp. 107-108.

4. The only similar work of which I am aware on this subject is the valuable book of R. SÖHNEN, *Untersuchungen Zur Komposition von Reden und Gesprächen im Rāmāyaṇa*, (2 volumes, Reinbek, 1979).

which lays down precise details of his worship. Though most of my analysis is centred on chapters 10-16 of the *Ukh* it is applicable to the entire ninety-two chapters.

The interlocutory scheme of the *Ukh* operates on two levels across the narrative and as terms designating the interlocutory systems corresponding to these levels I propose 'frame interlocutory system' and 'episodic interlocutory system'. The frame interlocutory system occurs virtually right across the entire *Ukh* and it functions as a dialogic frame (as distinct, for example, from a mythic frame) for the *Ukh*. As such it operates on the horizontal level because of its extension across the entire narrative and because, with a few exceptions, it does not significantly penetrate into the individual narrative units which make up the *Ukh*. The frame interlocutory system provides a reference point in each of these individual components, but it is a reference point which recurs constantly across the narrative and stands out as one constant feature amidst rapid change in narrative content and style. It also provides a dialogic structure upon which the entire narrative can be hung.

The episodic interlocutory system occurs within the individual myths and didactic passages which are the individual components of the *Ukh*. It operates on the vertical level in the sense that it determines the interlocutory levels within a single textual component and although sometimes five interlocutory levels make up one episodic interlocutory system, the usual number is about three. On the horizontal plane of the *Ukh* the episodic interlocutory systems are normally confined to complete bounded narrative components, such as a self-contained myth, the spatial extent of which can overrun the boundaries of individual chapters. They perform the function of exposing the emotions and attitudes of the characters in the myth in which the dialogue occurs. The action of these characters is usually described by the respective frame interlocutors who normally employ the past tense in describing this action, whereas it is usual for the episodic interlocutors to employ the present tense when speaking. The exception to the latter is those occasions when the episodic interlocutors are summarizing a preceding sequence of action in which they or some other characters have participated.

In the *Ukh* the frame interlocutory system is divisible into three levels each of which is determined by its spatial extent across the *khaṇḍa*. Chapter 92, 53-55 (cf. 1, 1, 19) gives the lineage of the text reciters (and these correspond to the frame interlocutors) in the following order:

- (1) Sūta→sages in Naimiṣa forest
- (2) Brahmā→Vyāsa
- (3) Bhṛgu→King Somakānta.

As they occur in the *Ukh* only the second and third set of interlocutors are important as Brahmā narrated the myths of the *Ukh* to Vyāsa (1, 10, 20) who in turn communicated them to Bhṛgu and he to Somakānta. The primary set of interlocutors maintain only an artificial continuity across the *Ukh* as their appearance is substantially restricted to its beginning and end. This set really only maintains a high profile in the first seven chapters, has almost wholly disappeared by the end of chapter 17 only to reappear again in chapter 92. Its semantic, as opposed to its combinatoric, function is to anchor the *GP* into the Purāṇic genre, this being so on the grounds that the existence of the Sūta and the Naimiṣa Sages as constitutive of the primary level of the frame interlocutory system is a virtual invariant feature of the Purāṇic genre.

The second and third interlocutory levels, which also double as episodic interlocutory systems in the early chapters of the *Ukh*, perform the main combinatoric function across the narrative of the *Ukh*. In conjunction with the episodic interlocutory systems they also play a combinatorial role within individual narrative units. Of the second and third levels it is the second which is most important in the *Ukh*, that is if we use frequency of appearance as a measure of importance. The mutual profile of the three levels can be best appreciated in diagrammatic form:

<i>Ukh</i>	1		92
FI	1	12	17
FI2	10		
FI3	8		

The break in the lines of one and three indicate where the

respective interlocutors leave the narrative for an extended period of the narration.

I will now provide illustrations of the combinatorial functions undertaken by both frame and episodic interlocutory systems by focussing on chapters 10-15 inclusive of the *Ukh*. Though I will include a running summary of the contents of these chapters, this summary remains secondary to my principal aim which is to describe the workings of the interlocutory systems. I will, in addition, plot the change from the use of the past to the present tense in these six chapters as tense usage is one further feature which distinguishes the respective interlocutory systems.

The first nine chapters of the *Ukh* narrate the story of Somakānta, a king who becomes a leper in consequence of the ripening of some bad karma. On agreeing to hear Bhṛḡu narrate the *GP*, Somakānta is immediately cured of leprosy. This offer and agreement then functions as a pretext for the narrative of the remainder of the *Ukh* and in chapter 10 Bhṛḡu begins his narrative by introducing the secondary frame interlocutors, Brahmā and Vyāsa, whom he introduces through the medium of a myth in which they are the actors.

The first nine verses of this myth are recited by Bhṛḡu in the past tense, thereby setting the action in the distant but unspecified past. These verses recount that Vyāsa, due to his arrogance, was unable to compose the *Purāṇa* (presumably the *Ur-Purāṇa*) after he had completed his fourfold division of the Vedas. Uncertain as to the course of action he should take he went to consult Brahmā. In verses 10-14 he speaks to Brahmā, initially using the past tense to explain how he fell into his predicament, later changing to the present tense to ask why his predicament arose so suddenly. In verse 16 the first primary interlocutor breaks in with a stock phrase (*evam ākarṇya tadvākyaṃ...*) introducing Brahmā and noting Brahmā's reaction to Vyāsa's speech. The *Sūta's* speech is given in the past tense and then (vs. 17) Brahmā responds to Vyāsa in a speech that runs for twelve verses and alternates between use of present and past tense. He uses the past tense (vs. 19-20) to provide examples of people from earlier myths whose arrogance was like that of Vyāsa and to restate

(24-25) why Vyāsa was unable to compose the Purāṇa. In the other verses where the present tense predominates with the occasional occurrence of the future Brahmā talks about Gaṇeśa and the positive results which accrue from worship of him, claiming that Vyāsa's problems arose because he did not call to mind (*smaraṇam*) Gaṇeśa before attempting to compose the Purāṇa. After Brahmā's speech, Vyāsa, using the present tense, asks about the identity of Gaṇeśa and returns to the past tense to specify further the direction of his question:

« Who is this Gaṇeśa? What is his bodily form and how can it be known? Towards whom has he been previously kindly disposed, O Brahmā? How many are his incarnations and what are the deeds they performed? Who previously worshipped him and on what occasion was he called to mind? » (1.10.29-30).

These questions perform a dual function: they are an *anukramanikā* for the entire *GP* and set the direction for Brahmā's immediate response to Vyāsa, thereby establishing the ongoing direction of the narrative. The latter point is obvious, but it should also be noted that these questions also determine narrative space to the extent that they limit the continued flow of a particular narrative. In this case they restrict the flow of narrative which pertains to Vyāsa's inability to compose the Purāṇa, restricting the continuation of one narrative topic in order to facilitate the beginning of another.

Vyāsa's questions conclude chapter 10 and chapter 11 begins with a return to the third frame interlocutor, Bhṛgu, who simply announces in the past tense that Brahmā continues speaking to Vyāsa. This verse re-introduces Brahmā as the speaker and also shifts the narrative back to the third frame interlocutor, a process that may appear to be redundant, though the second level frame interlocutors are also the episodic interlocutors in chapter 10-14. In the next fifteen verses (11, 2-16) Brahmā speaks in the present tense, telling Vyāsa about the mantras of Gaṇeśa and the mental and physical practices one should perform before recitation of a particular mantra. The narrative is then halted whilst there is a return to the third frame interlocutor, who states:

« After he had said this to the sage and in consideration of that great mantra which was of one syllable and one vowel, and on considering the day to be auspicious, Brahmā taught everything to the confused sage » (1, 11, 17).

The only new piece of information contained here is Brahmā's judgement that the day is auspicious. From earlier verses we know already that he is proposing to teach Vyāsa the mantra, so why is the narrative interrupted, by the inclusion of this verse, in what appears to be an abrupt manner? The verse is probably included in order to mark a change between the previous five verses which are didactic in style and content and the following verses (1, 11, 18ff.), containing Brahmā's instructions to Vyāsa about what should be done in case Gaṇeśa appears before him, which are not in didactic style. Accordingly the purpose of Bhrgu's interruption is to allow a new topic to be introduced into the narrative at this point whilst still maintaining the continuity of the basic myth about Vyāsa which had begun in chapter 10. I call this verse a 'transitional verse' because it is used to regulate a change from one topic to another. Other types of transitional verses occur in the *Ukh* and I will say more about them when I come to them. One of the major differences between these types is that some effect transitions between large scale narrative units (i.e. from myth to myth), whereas the one (1, 11, 17) just cited marks a transition between smaller units of different content and style that occur within the one myth.

In addition to Brahmā telling Vyāsa what to do when he sees Gaṇeśa, he also predicts in these three verses (1, 11, 19-21) that when Vyāsa sees Gaṇeśa that god will provide him with the divine knowledge that will enable him to compose the Purāṇa. The narrative (1, 11, 22) then returns to Vyāsa who acknowledges that his mind has already become clear as a result of Brahmā's statement and that he will recite the mantra. Vyāsa's statement has been included here because Brahmā's speech had reached its natural conclusion, a fact that Vyāsa's statement signals, but equally this statement opens the way for a continuation of the narrative into a description of Vyāsa's performance of the mantra. But Brahmā resumes the conversation immediately, speaking in the present tense in didactic style, about possible recipients to

whom this mantra should be taught and about those to whom it should definitely not be taught. Note that in this chapter it is the episodic interlocutors who have marked the boundaries of each narrative unit by the use of statements which have sometimes functioned as transitional verses.

At the beginning of chapter 12 the narrative is immediately resumed by the *Sūta*, the first of the frame interlocutors, but his interjection is simply mechanical and it is difficult to determine what purpose it serves in the narrative⁵. It could be read as a kind of transitional verse that marks the change between the didactic verses that conclude chapter 11 and Vyāsa's request to Brahmā that is found in chapter 12, 2. Even so it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that it is redundant as the didactic verses which conclude the previous chapter form an appropriate conclusion in their own right and a new chapter, without transitional verse, would have been sufficient to introduce a new topic. That is, chapter boundaries could equally function as subject boundaries. Notwithstanding its possible redundancy its inclusion here does re-inforce the cohesive function of the primary frame interlocutor as, so far, the *Sūta* has been the one continuous factor marking the first twelve chapters of the *Ukh*.

Verses two and three of chapter twelve are questions put by Vyāsa in which he asks who first recited the mantra. These questions foreshadow a change in the direction of the narrative and so they should be adjudged as being instrumental in the movement of the narrative. This is so because questions put by the interlocutors demand a response, as if the second side of each interlocutory system represents a potential interjecting audience. As with most of the statements of the episodic interlocutors, Vyāsa's questions are in the present tense, but instead of a response being given immediately, the narrative returns to the third frame interlocutors and Bhṛgu (1, 12, 4) simply reports that

5. Maybe the difficulty of discovering its role in the narrative may explain why it does not appear in the printed editions of the *GP* (Bombay, 1892 and Wai, 1905), though the latter edition is virtually a reprint of the former. I have included it because it occurs in the five manuscripts at my disposal.

Brahmā, having been questioned, answered Vyāsa. Yet like the first verse of this chapter this one may also be redundant as the narrative would suffer nothing from its absence. Six verses (1, 12, 5-11) follow it, all of them in the present tense, and these constitute Brahmā's response to Vyāsa's questions. In content they include Brahmā's praise of Vyāsa for putting his questions, his injunction to Vyāsa to address Gaṇeśa with the syllable *Om*, his prediction of the appearance of obstacles if this is not done and his assertion that all the gods worship Gaṇeśa. The final verse of these six again changes the direction of the narrative for in it Brahmā says:

« Now I will tell you an ancient tale (*kathām ekāṃ purātaṇīm*) about how Gaṇeśa became pleased by the recitation of this king of mantras ».

Found with minor variations throughout all the Purāṇas this is another type of transitional verse, one which signals the beginning in the narrative of a new self-contained myth and not of a single unit of action within a myth.

The recitation of Brahmā which follows this verse begins with a cosmogonic myth which quickly becomes a variant of the well known *liṅgodbhava* myth, but a variant in which the *liṅga* is represented by Gaṇeśa, not by Śiva. This recitation continues to the point where Gaṇeśa appears, at which point the chapter ends.

One might expect this myth to continue straight through into chapter 13 and it does except for one introductory verse which slows down the narrative. Vyāsa asks Brahmā how he, Viṣṇu and Śiva, all of whom are actors in the *liṅgodbhava* myth, worshipped Gaṇeśa. Like other verses of its kind one can ask whether it achieves anything other than a slowing down of the narrative, especially given the fact that the narrative had reached the point at which these three gods began worshipping Gaṇeśa. One possible explanation for its presence here is that it may be a marker of emphasis such that emphasis on a particular point has been indicated because the narrative has been stopped. Brahmā's response to Vyāsa's question is to recite a *stotra* (1, 13, 3-14) which the three gods address to Gaṇeśa. Aside from its content this *stotra* is characterized by its recitation in the present tense and by the uncommon meter, *bhujāṅgaprayātā*, in which it is com-

posed. The cumulative effect of these two features in conjunction with Vyāsa's question is to lay special stress on this *stotra*.

Verse fifteen of this chapter is given in the past tense by Brahmā but it does not form part of the *stotra*. It is yet another type of transitional verse because it marks the concluding boundary of the *stotra* and introduces the next topic — Gaṇeśa's reaction to the *stotra* — dealt with in the chapter. Gaṇeśa's reaction is given in three verses (1, 13, 16-18) all given in the present tense and involves an offer of boons to the three gods. Next there follows another verse spoken by the third frame interlocutor, a verse which simply states that the three gods, who had arisen from the three *gunas*, were pleased with his speech. Is this verse redundant as well? The verses (1, 13, 20-21) that follow it detail the boons the three gods request of Gaṇeśa. Has this apparently redundant verse been introduced for stylistic reasons or has it been included as one additional way of highlighting the status difference between the three gods and the one god who in the *GP* has the status of supreme being in the universe? The first way in which this status difference is highlighted is in the explicit distinction between the addressers and the addressee of the *stotra* but the stylistic technique of narrative rupture may also achieve the same effect. That is, Gaṇeśa's separateness in status may equally be marked in the narrative by a separate spatial position for him in the narrative itself, a position bounded by two apparently redundant statements of the frame interlocutor.

Immediately following the verse which bounds Gaṇeśa's offer of a boon the gods make the request that they be made Gaṇeśa's devotees and that they perform duties at his direction. This request is given in the present tense and then for half a verse (22ab) the frame interlocutor speaks in the past tense, introducing Gaṇeśa who speaks again in the present tense. Then follows a return to the frame interlocutor (25cd-28) who redirects the narrative towards Brahmā whom he portrays in a state of dejection. Then Brahmā speaks (29-30) in the present tense, revealing the reason for his dejection. After this there is another return to the frame interlocutor, Bhṛgu, who utters (31) a transitional verse that further alters the direction of the narrative. Using the past

tense Bhṛḡu states that Gaṇeśa gave Brahmā the divine eye, an event which is normally, as any Purāṇic audience would know, the prelude to a theophany. Immediately the narrative returns to Gaṇeśa who in the present tense tells Brahmā to look inside his body. Then for the next seven verses (33-40) the frame interlocutor describes the theophany in the past tense, at the end of which Brahmā recites a brief *stotra* (41-43) which, as before, is in the present tense and the *Sālinī* meter. After he has concluded the *stotra* he goes on to make a summary in the past tense detailing his own impressions of what has occurred to him in consequence of wandering in Gaṇeśa's belly. It is worth noting here that it is a consistent feature of the Purāṇic narrative that the *stotra* is put into the present tense. Is it because the god is described in this mode to convey this impression that he is beyond time, always in the present as it were, whatever the supposed antiquity of the events in which the *stotra* occurs? Equally it can also be understood as underscoring the immediacy of the *darśana* situation of which the *stotra* itself is a part.

In the final two verses of this chapter there is a return to the frame interlocutor who states in the past tense (44-45) what happened to Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva after Brahmā had left Gaṇeśa's body, a fitting conclusion given that the climax of the myth has already been reached in the theophany.

The first verse of chapter 14 returns to the third frame interlocutor, Somakānta, who asks what Brahmā did after he had seen the eggs (that is, the separate creations) in Gaṇeśa's body and whether or not he accomplished the creation. Here the interlocutor's question is certainly not redundant as it gives direction to the narrative which ended in the previous chapter without having a firm direction imposed on it. Verse two gives Bhṛḡu's response and it recounts how Brahmā became arrogant on account of his perception that knowing the Vedas, Sāstras etc., and having witnessed a theophany, he could successfully undertake the creation. All this is expressed in the past tense except for Brahmā's thoughts (2-3) as recounted by Bhṛḡu, which are given in the present. The remainder of the chapter is narrated in the past tense by Bhṛḡu, the third frame interlocutor, though embedded in it are three sections where the present tense is

used. Each of these sections communicate Brahmā's thoughts and as such have the same status as conversation between episodic interlocutors, since both types of narrative are expressed in the present tense. In the first section (15-16) Brahmā calls to mind Gaṇeśa and re-affirms his devotion to him, stylistic emphasis being provided here by the use of the *Śikharīṇī* meter. The second section (19) is Brahmā's response to a voice from the sky which enjoins him to perform austerities and, thirdly, there is a long section (20-26) where he is depicted meditating on Gaṇeśa and here an iconic description of Gaṇeśa is included. The final verse of this section recounts how a voice from heaven tells Brahmā to observe a banyan tree in the midst of the primeval ocean which is the setting for the *liṅgodbhava* myth.

These twenty-four verses uttered by the third level frame interlocutor require no transitional verses or other interruptions to the narrative because there are no conversations recorded in them between two episodic interlocutors. However, the three sections that are included in the present tense can be accounted for on stylistic reasons which themselves may reflect religious factors. The first section is like a 'confession' of devotion and resembles a *stotra* and, as we have seen already, and as is the rule in most Purāṇas, a *stotra* is put in the present tense because the qualities and epithets of the god it lists are timeless and cannot be restricted to the past; as too is the 'confessional' statement because it involves two episodic interlocutors (Brahmā and Gaṇeśa). Both types of statement also serve a didactic function and could be used as a verbal means for the devotee to express devotion. In such a case the devotee would always address the god in the present tense. The second section occurs in the present because it includes Brahmā's response to the voice from the sky and the third section, the iconic description of Gaṇeśa, because like the qualities enumerated in the *stotra*, the image of the god can be continually recollected for those who experience a *darśana*.

Chapter 15 continues this narrative from the point where the previous chapter left off and the only boundary between the two chapters is the colophon of chapter 14. However, the first verse is preceded by the words 'Bhṛgu said', perhaps a deliberate

reminder of the interlocutory unity that can be glimpsed behind all the chapters that have so far been narrated. The first part of this chapter contains twenty-five verses which are narrated by Bhṛgu in the past tense with the exception of a few verses of direct speech in the present tense. All of the latter are recited by Bhṛgu and none of them contain separate introductions of the type which includes the speaker's name and the word *uvāca*. The first section (8-11) spoken in the present tense is a speech of Gaṇeśa to Brahmā where the former reveals his awareness of the latter's problems brought on by Brahmā's inability to produce the creation and where he offers to teach him his one-syllable mantra which will allow him to overcome this problem⁶. The second use of the present tense in these twenty-five verses occurs in respect of another iconic description (17-18) of Gaṇeśa, who has appeared in a cosmic form as a result of Brahmā's austerities, which is expressed mainly with the use of present participles. With phrases in verse 18 such as 'he who nourishes the wishes of his devotees, he who uniquely destroys all obstacles for gods, men and sages', the iconic description fades into *stotra*.

After the iconic description has been concluded Bhṛgu re-enters the narrative in order to describe (19-20) Brahmā's emotional reaction to the sight of Gaṇeśa. But he also introduces Gaṇeśa as the next speaker, who speaks (21-23) in the present tense, revealing to Brahmā that he taught him the one-syllable mantra in a dream and that he now wishes to offer him a boon. This offer is followed by another verse (24) in *Vasantatilakā* which describes Brahmā's changed reaction (previously anguish, but now joy) at being offered a boon. Note that in this verse Brahmā's reaction is expressed at a distance as it were, by means of the past tense, whereas in the next five verses (25-29) his own utterance of Gaṇeśa's epithets, followed by a request to become his devotee, a request to complete the creation and a request that

6. Here (1,15,11-12cd) there is a parallel with 1.11.10, where Brahmā offers to teach Vyāsa the one syllable mantra of Gaṇeśa when he cannot compose the *Purāṇa*. Other parallels in content and plot could be cited and their repetition is another means of establishing cohesion in the text. But I have no space in which to discuss this subject here.

all his duties be accomplished merely through calling Gaṇeśa to mind, achieves the same result using the present tense. Gaṇeśa then responds (30-31) directly to Brahmā's request which demonstrates that it is not always necessary to have a transitional *śloka* in cases when a devotee is addressing an object of devotion. This may seem inconsistent with what I said previously (p. 38) about the use of transitional verses in 1.13.15 and 19 to mark the difference in status between Gaṇeśa and the three gods of the *Trimūrti*. Clearly it is not mandatory for transitional verses to be inserted in such situations, though our view on this must be provisional until a full statistical analysis of these occurrences in the *Ukh* is carried out. But if there is a system, as I think, to the interlocutory system, it is one that guides rather than coerces.

Gaṇeśa's response to Brahmā simply confirms that he will have everything he asked of Gaṇeśa. Then the frame interlocutor takes up the narrative (32-39) until the end of the chapter and tells how Brahmā gave Gaṇeśa two young girls — Siddhi and Buddhi — and then proceeded to perform the creation. Here the chapter ends and the logic of the myth which has been recounted would suggest this is an appropriate place for a conclusion. The myth portrays Brahmā as experiencing a lack — his incapacity to create —, a lack which has been removed (since he can now create) by virtue of Gaṇeśa's mediation. This, as it happens, is the basic plot of all the myths in the *Ukh*.

However logic is defied and the myth does not end here. The theme of creation is taken up again in chapter 16, but not before two transitional verses intervene:

The king said:

« There is a thrill in my heart now that I have heard Gaṇeśa's tale, but I am not yet satiated by the ambrosia of that tale, so recite further, O sage of brahmans. Describe how Brahmā fashioned the creation after the illustrious, supreme Gaṇeśa had disappeared, O Lord! » (1, 16, 1-2).

The first verse signals that the tale about Brahmā's lack of capacity to create has been completed and that the frame interlocutor, Somakānta, wants another topic to be introduced into the narrative. Instead of leaving Bhṛgu to suggest the topic, he suggests a topic, the way in which the creation was completed,

for the resumption of the narration. From verse three onwards Bhṛḡu takes up the narration, telling how Brahmā's ascetic sons refuse to engage in the activity of creation, preferring instead to perform austerities. Then he goes on to tell how Brahmā completed the creation by emitting the parts of the triple-world from his own body and this then leads into a version of the myth of Madhu and Kaiṭabha. At this point I cease the description of the two interlocutory systems as sufficient description has been undertaken to illustrate their main features, and I will now draw some conclusions about the interlocutory systems in the *Ukh*.

Both interlocutory systems I have studied in this paper create an impression of global coherence and local coherence in the *Ukh*. There are two reasons for this. In the first instance they are a stylistic element of Purāṇic narrative that is constant across the entire text and it is they that provide the constant reference point when the text changes, as it sometimes does, from mythic to didactic. Secondly, and primarily at the local level, they establish coherence because they control the extent of narrative rupture in the *Ukh*. Narrative rupture occurs in all the Purāṇas and its cause is the tendency of the Purāṇas to treat of so many different topics in their narratives. It is the norm rather than the exception that a new topic will be introduced before the previous one has been completed and so this creates the impression of a narrative consisting of myth embedded within myth, plot within plot. Both interlocutory systems control narrative rupture by producing it. That is, it is the interlocutors who break up the raw literary material, available to any Paurāṇika, into smaller units because their speeches, introductions, questions and responses regulate the transitions in the narrative flow and in so doing smooth over the potential ruptures.

The frame interlocutory system performs a dual function in firstly, maintaining a global cohesion across the ninety-two chapters of the *Ukh*, and secondly, in splitting up the individual parts of the narrative into smaller units corresponding to entire myths or didactic units. It is also the case that the second function is performed by the episodic interlocutory system but only in respect of literary and dialogic units within myths. Accordingly

both systems can be designated as combinatoric systems which stop and start the narrative in such a way as to reduce to a minimum narrative rupture and, conversely, to establish a logical flow between literary units of divergent content and literary style. In the final analysis the interlocutory systems are as important in terms of their ubiquitous presence across the narrative as by their effect of cutting the narrative into small literary units.

Whilst recognizing the importance of the combinatoric function of the interlocutory systems we should not lose sight of their other function which is to limit the size of the narrative units. It is not just that both systems interrupt the narrative flow and mediate narrative rupture, they also restrict the size of the respective narrative units. In the six chapters of the *Ukh* I described above it is rare to find a continuous narration, without an interruption by an interlocutor, which extends for more than fifteen verses. Only in the didactic portions of the *Ukh* and other Purāṇas do longer sections of uninterrupted narration occur. This tendency towards the use of short narrative units produces a fairly complex narrative, made more complex still when several sets of episodic interlocutors occur in close proximity in the same myth or chapter. The number of episodic interlocutors in any chapter of the *Ukh* never exceeds five sets embedded into each other. Any more than this, in conjunction with the brevity and number of narrative units occurring in any chapter, and a narrative would be produced which would be too complex for any audience to follow. Ultimately here too the frame interlocutors represent a cohesive influence because they are the constant referential frame into which the episodic interlocutors fit, with the exception, of course, of the myths themselves in which the episodic interlocutors participate as actors.

The final point I wish to make concerns the verb tenses used in the narratives. Whenever an interlocutor of either type is named as speaking, the verb 'to speak' is always in the past tense, usually the perfect. This may well be appropriate given that the Purāṇa as a literary genre narrates events that occurred in the past, events which the primary interlocutor (the *Sūta*) did not witness. But use of the past tense goes much further than this and is carried over into the speeches of the frame interlocutors

who rarely ever use any other tense. Their use of the past tense can be accounted for because they are describing the events of each myth which from a Purāṇic perspective always occurred in the past. The episodic interlocutors, however, always speak to each other in the present tense, as of course they must, since what they say to each other and the attitude with which they say it forms part of the action of the myth seen as a narrative of connected events. As actors in these myths it would be incongruous were they to speak continually in the past tense⁷. The use of the present tense to communicate the attitudes of the actors in the myth, juxtaposed with the use of the past to describe their actions gives the narrative a palpable visibility and a present relevance that would be lacking if only the past tense were used.

7. The only occasions on which they use the present tense are when they are describing past events relevant to the myth in which they are actors or when giving summaries of their own actions which have already been narrated in the same myth in the temporal sequence of events narrated in that myth.