

3. Bhagavatha Is A Sacred Text Which Can Cater To The Needs Of Everyone

What we say does not exist, exists. What we say exists, does not exist. In truth, there is only one thing that exists at all times; and that is God—the omnipresent God. Without God, there is nothing in this Universe.

Pavitratma Swarupas:

Srimad *Bhagavatha* can be described as a mansion of twelve floors or *skandas*, and Narada has given a name for each of these *skandas*. Although all the *skandas* are equally important, there is one which may be regarded as the most important and which constitutes the basic for all other *skandas*. That has been called the *Vasudeva Upasana*. The other eleven *skandas* are based on this *Vasudeva Upasana* which is like the foundation. This word *Vasudeva* means God and it also represents the *Deva* who is resident in every *Jiva*. This *Deva* resides not only in every *Jiva* but is also the basis for all creation. An individual in whom all thoughts, words and deeds are fully synchronised can truly be described as a *Bhagavatha*. All actions of a *Jiva* must be directed towards *Vasudeva*. It is impossible for us to seek directly the unmanifested form of God. Since you have a body, with a form and a name, it is very difficult for you to recognise the unmanifested form of God. So long as you have attachments in the world, it becomes possible for you to comprehend the Lord only through a name and a form. In this context, *Bhagavatha* has also taught us that *Vasudeva Upasana* means the comprehension of the Lord with the help of a name and a form. It is thus necessary for us to do

things, see things and hear things only in the context of *Vasu-deva*. It is the divine aspect alone that we will really find in all places. That individual who has understood the aspect of *Atma* deserves to do this *Sadhana*. Following the tradition of the *Vedas*, it has become common for us to recognise the importance of time and to worship time as a sacred entity. In this aspect of time, we divide a year into twelve months and to sanctify these twelve months, God's name is also spelt out in twelve letters as "*Om Namō Bhagavate Vasu-devaya.*" Here, we see that the God of time has twelve letters. It is in this context that Vyasa had composed the *Bhagavatha* in twelve *skandas*.

The *Kali Yuga* is a measure of time. It constitutes a measure for measuring the *Kritha Yuga*, the *Dwapara Yuga* and the *Thretha Yuga*. There are certain rules prescribed for the use of this measure of time. The measure in time for *Kali Yuga* is four *lakhs* thirty-two thousand years (4,32,000 years). The *Dwapara Yuga* is two times this unit or 8,64,000 years. The *Thretha Yuga* is three times or 12,96,000 years. The *Kritha Yuga* is four times or 17,28,000 years. The period which consists of all these four *Yugas* together is described as the *Maha Yuga*. The *Maha Yuga*, therefore, has 43,20,000 years. The difference between the duration of a *Kali Yuga* and that of a *Maha Yuga* is the addition of an extra zero to the former at the end. Just as the days, months and seasons repeat again and again, the *Yugas* also repeat again and again periodically. During the confluence of these *Yugas* and at the time of transition from one to another, various components of creation like mountains, rivers, habitations, etc., undergo major changes. The aspects of *dharma* also change when the *Yuga* changes. As a result of these changes several good things might change into evil.

In this context, four categories of people were recognised. They are Thapasvi, Maharishi, *Brahma*-rishi and Rajarishi; and each one, depending on his background and capability, was following a certain code of *dharma*. For the story of *Bhagavatha*, a *rishi* by the name of Sami is the chief architect. By his attainments, he was a Brahmarishi. He had a son by the name Sringi who was a Thapasvi. Brahmarishi Sami knew all about *Brahman* and was living in a state of equanimity and equal-mindedness. He used to take pain and pleasure, sorrow and joy, blame and praise with the same attitude and was unmoved by events. He was meeting them with the same detachment. He had several disciples and along with them, he was immersed in the study of the Philosophy of *Adwaitha*. He was living in a state of total surrender to God and was enjoying the bliss of divinity. His son Sringi was also a great individual, but he could be called only a Thapasvi. He did not have the ability to discriminate between things. Although he was a person with great strength, he did not acquire the right to give a curse. On one occasion, he lost his equanimity due to anger and cursed king Parikshith, himself a great Rajarishi. Here, we find two types of faults. A fault, committed with full knowledge, will cause a great deal of harm to the world. On the other hand, a fault committed accidentally and without full knowledge will cause harm to the individual only but not to the world. Parikshith was a great king who was in a state of total devotion and surrender to God. Parikshith committed a mistake unknowingly and so the consequence was to affect only him and would not bother others. His mistake was committed unknowingly and without a bad motive. At this act of Parikshith's, Sringi lost control over himself and gave a curse to Parikshith. This curse, coming as it did under such circumstances, caused a great deal of harm to the entire kingdom.

Be that as it may, the origin of *Bhagavatha*, the meaning of *Bhagavatha* and its objectives are clearly laid out in the first *skanda* itself. This great text of *Bhagavatha* commenced with Narada, and Vyasa contributed a great deal to it. Suka brought about the culmination. During the interval of time between the commencement by Narada and culmination by Suka, several stories got attached to *Bhagavatha* and they constitute the contents of the succeeding eleven *skandas*.

The conversation between Droupadi and Aswathama constitutes an important event in the *Bhagavatha*. The sacred story of the surrender to Uttara, the divine praise of Krishna by Kunthi, the advice which Bhishma gives to Dharmaraja in the form of *shanthiparva* and finally the teaching which Krishna gives to Arjuna in the form of *Bhagavad Gita* are all great events of the *Bhagavatha*. The *Uddhava Gita*, the story of Prahlada, the story of Kuchela and several other episodes relating to great devotees constitute the essence of the *Bhagavatha*. In reality, the text of the *Bhagavatha* is extremely sweet. Human beings who have experienced the sweetness of *Bhagavatha* will not have rebirth. It is because of this, that Pothana said that even the very act of his writing the *Bhagavatha* in Telugu is the result of the great good that he had done in his previous life.

Pothana felt that he had the great good fortune of describing the *leelas* of Lord Narayana himself, who had come in human form. In the *Bhagavatha*, the aspects of *bhakthi*, or devotion, and surrender to God are the most important ones which we should recognise. In both these, the aspect of *prema* is fully exemplified. *Prema* signifies the sweet thoughts that are generated in one's own mind. The *Bhagavatha* is also like milk, a sacred extract that has been taken out of all the *Vedas*. In this context, we should realise that there are many great

people who attained salvation from the story of the *Bhagavatha*. The *Bhagavatha* should not be regarded as a text which depicts only the story of the *gopikas*. There are only a few individuals who are capable of recognising the sacred aspect of the *prema* that is contained in the *Bhagavatha* and can indeed become intoxicated and elevated by such thoughts.

Thinking of the name of Krishna, one can lose one's consciousness. Thinking of *Brahma*, one can become identical with *Brahma*. So also, by constantly thinking of Krishna, one can become identical with the Lord. It is not easy to describe the exact nature of the *Bhagavatha*. It can cater to the average person, to the seeker of truth and also to the highest intellectual. *Bhagavatha* has the ability to cater to everyone. A mango tree can give you only mangoes, a lime tree can give you only lemons but *Bhagavatha* can give everything to all its seekers, depending on the latter's desires and yearnings. There is a small example for this.

There was a wealthy businessman who went abroad. He had four wives and he wrote letters to each of them asking what they wanted him to bring when he returned home. In reply, the eldest wrote that she would be very happy if he returned home safely and in good health. The second wife replied that she would like to have some medicines that would help her get over her illness. The third wife was always interested in reading some spiritual texts, and she wrote that she would like to have spiritual texts belonging to the foreign country. The fourth wife had very mundane qualities, and she asked the husband to bring back some saris and jewels of the latest fashion. All the letters reached the husband and he brought all the items needed and gave medicines to the second wife, spiritual texts to the third wife, saris and jewels to the fourth wife and himself sat in the residence of the first wife.

This made the other wives very jealous. The wealthy individual explained that as the eldest wife only wanted him, he went to her and as the others had material requests, he gave them various items as per their requests.

In a similar manner, we may imagine that *Paramatma* has four wives by the names—Arthi, Artharthi, Jijnasi and Jnani. The Lord satisfies the requirements of each of the first three, and He, Him-self, sits in the heart of the *Jnani*. *Paramatma* will only give you the fruit of your work and not the work itself. Depending on your *karma* and your deservedness and your prayers, God gives you the fruit of your action. In many ways, *Bhagavatha* teaches us lessons of great importance. On one occasion, even Kuchela was doubting Krishna. He thought that although Krishna was his childhood friend, as later he became a very rich and powerful King, Krishna may not even recognise him. Kuchela was very agitated. However, Kuchela's wife never had such doubt, and she encouraged him to go and see Krishna, who has a very broad mind, and would not forget his friends. God is such that He will give value to one's own mind and purity of character. He will not give any value to external appearances. After passing through such doubts and several tribulations, Kuchela entered Krishna's mansion. Krishna welcomed him heartily and honoured him.

Even without being asked, Krishna gave a lot of material wealth and a lot of grace to Kuchela. The moment God's grace spreads, one will even forget his own desires. After this, Kuchela returned to his own home and to his great surprise, found his poor home transformed into a big mansion. He explained to his wife how Krishna looked after him and said, "He received me as if He was longing to meet me, and He showed such kindness that He appeared as kindness and compassion personified. He accepted a small quantity of parched rice from

poor Kuchela and gave us this large mansion.” If you give the Lord even a small quantity, He returns it back several fold. If you are willing to take at least one step forward, God will take ten steps towards you to receive you. Only when you direct your vision towards God, can He direct His vision towards you. If you are looking in some other direction, what is the use even if God looks at you? There is a small example for this. When you are right in front of me, you can look into my eyes and I can look into your eyes. If you are far away and are looking in a different direction, how can I look at you and how can you look at me?

Krishna was one who always directed His vision towards His devotees, and the *Bhagavatha* is the story of Krishna. This *Bhagavatha* describes how Krishna gave supreme bliss to different *gopikas* by appearing before each of them in a form which each liked most. He thus demonstrated that the diversity of forms is indeed the unity of God. Thus *Bhagavatha* tells us about the oneness which we should see in this diversity. The story is full of love and will give you the contents in a manner in which you can assimilate the same. It is my hope that you can understand and absorb at least a part of what you listen to.