

CHAPTER 30

THE BHAGAVATHA PATH

The sage Suka adjusted himself in his seat and began: “The Supreme Sovereign Lord manifesting Himself as Brahma, Vishnu and Maheswara, through the prompting of Primal Desire (Moha) is engaged in creating, fostering and destroying the worlds. In what is thus created, there is always the principle of Dualism. There is difference and disparity between one and another. If these differences and disparities are harmonised wisely, the world will have happiness and peace. If, on the other hand, living beings behave wrongly, the world will be sunk in anxiety, misery and confusion. When these arise, the Lord assumes appropriate Forms and affords necessary protection and correction. He sets right the damaged world, removes the evil forces that caused the damage, and instructs mankind in the science of fostering the right and the good.

“It is not possible to limit the freedom of God in assuming Forms. He adopts endless Forms to manifest Himself in the world and saves it. His incarnation is in conformity with the need of the crisis at the time. When the Earth moaned under the injustice of Hiranyaksha, He had to appear as a Boar, taking form and equipped with attributes, though in essence, He is without Form and Attribute. The will of God is mysterious. It cannot be explained by categories or as consequences. It is above and beyond human reasoning and imagination. It can be comprehended only by those who have known Him, and not by those who have acquired scholarship or sharp intellect. The cause and the consequence are integrally related.

“One day, when Brahma was resting awhile on His seat, there fell from His nose a boar as small as one’s thumb-tip! Brahma who had assumed in sportive exuberance the Human form, knew the why and wherefore of everything; but He pretended not to, and looked upon the tiny boar with astonishment. Meanwhile, it developed faster and faster into greater and greater size, like a frog, rat, and a cat, and into the proportions of a monstrous elephant in rut. Brahma was smiling within Himself at its antics. Very soon, the Boar grew so huge that it seemed to cover both earth and sky. It slid into the sea and emerged from it with Goddess Earth (who had hidden herself under the waters through humiliation) borne aloft safe and secure, on its tusks.

“Meanwhile, a cry was heard from behind, ‘You wretched swine! Where are you fleeing to? Stop where you

are.’ The Boar paid no heed to that cry. He moved on, as if He had not heard it. Then, Hiranyaksha, the Evil-minded Ogre-chief confronted It like a terrible monster, and challenged It to overcome his might. A mortal combat ensued between the two. Witnessing the frightful thrusts and counter thrusts, Goddess Earth shivered in fear but the Boar consoled Her saying, ‘Oh Goddess, do not be frightened. I shall end this ogre’s life immediately. I shall ensure safety and peace for you, in a moment.’ Soon, the Boar became terrible to behold, the Goddess was greatly agitated about the encounter. The Boar fell upon Hiranyaksha with overwhelming might and the Goddess closed Her eyes in sheer terror, unable to bear the sight of the devastating Form of the Boar. The duel was fought with indescribable fury, but in the end, Hiranyaksha was torn to pieces and cast upon the ground.

“Thus, the Lord assumed various Forms according to the needs of the situation, the Forms best suited for the destruction of the wicked Danavas (the race of evil-minded Ogres), and for the protection of the good and godly, and the preservation of the Scriptures that reveal the Truth, the Vedas. In this manner, the Lord incarnated as the Fish, the Tortoise, the Man-lion, and the Short-statured (Matsya, Kurma, Narasimha, and Vamana). Of all the incarnations, the most supreme and the most blissful is the Krishna-form. Still, you must realise that the chief purpose of all incarnations is the preservation of Dharma (Justice, Righteousness, Morality, Virtue).

“He who instructs must gauge the qualifications of the learner to receive the lesson. It will be vain effort, to try to communicate the highest knowledge to a person belonging to the lowest level. For, he cannot comprehend it. So too, if the instructions that have to be given to the lower levels are given to those of the higher levels, they will derive no satisfaction from that teaching. To make this clear, I shall tell you about a discussion that ensued once between Brahma and Narada. Listen carefully.” Suka began to narrate the story of Narada.

“Brahma once addressed Narada, ‘Oh My Mind-projected Son! Creation is My task, the way in which I fulfil My Mission, My Thapas. I will, and Creation happens. But I lay down certain rules and modes for each species; and if they are properly adhered to, the wheel will turn aright in Dharma. Instead if the modes and rules are neglected and they toil for the satisfaction of their own wishes, along crooked and misleading paths, they will have to suffer various miseries.

““Day and night are willed by Me. The rulers of living beings are parts of Me. The urge that people have to increase and multiply is the reflection of My Will. Sometimes, when the created worlds have to be sustained, I myself assume Name and Form and initiate *Manvantharas* (the Eras of Manu), and provide the Earth with appropriate Divine personalities and Sages, who set examples to be followed and indicate the paths for progress.

“I end also the unlimited increase of beings, when it happens. For this, I take on the Form of Rudra too. I create the bad, in order to highlight and promote the good. In order to protect the good, I set certain limits, both to the good and the bad, for, they would otherwise stray into wrong ways and inflict great harm.

“I am immanent in every being. People forget Me, who is within and without them. I am the inner core of every being, but they are not aware of this. So, they are tempted to believe the objective world to be real and true, and they pursue objective pleasures, and fall into grief and pain. On the other hand, if they concentrate all attention on Me alone, believing that the Lord has willed everything and everyone, I bless them and reveal to them the Truth that they are I and I am they. Thousands have been blessed thus. They are the seekers, the aspirants, the Mahatmas, the Sages, the Divinely-Inspired, the Manifestations of the Divine, the Guides who show the Path. They have acquired the experience that Truth is Dharma.

“I shall tell you about some of them, listen. Sagara, Ikshvaku, Prachinabarhi, Rubhu, Dhruva, Raghumaraj, Yayathi, Mandhatha, Alarka, Sathadhanva, Dileepa, Khali, Bheeshma, Sibi, Pippalada, Saraswatha, Vibhishana, Hanuman, Muchukunda, Janaka, Satharupa, Prahlada, and many Rajarshis, Brahmarshis, Princes, Nobles—who can be grouped under one category, the Godly (Bhagavathas). They all yearn for the chance to listen to the glories of God. They have all been blessed, irrespective of cast, age, status,

or sex. They have among them women Brahmins, Sudras and Chandalas.

“I am the Cause of all Causes. I am Eternal. I am *Sath-chith-ananda* (I am Existence, Knowledge, Bliss). I am Hari and Hara, too; for, I transform Myself into these Manifestations as occasion arises. Creation, the Universe, is but the projection of My Will. It has no basic reality. My son, I declared this truth to you, as a result of My deep love towards you. Others will not be able to grasp the mystery of this creation. What I have just revealed to you is known as concise Bhagavatha.

“Bhagavatha connotes three sections of knowledge: (1) The glory and majesty of the Incarnations of God, (2) The Names of those who are fully devoted to God and (3) The intimate relationship between God and the Godly. Where these three are found together, there we have the Bhagavatha. All that is visible is not beyond or outside God. Therefore, to put it succinctly, everything is Bhagavatha! Everything is worthy of being honoured so.’

“While Brahma was thus teaching Narada, with great joy, Narada interrogated Him, in amazement and anxious yearning, thus: ‘Lord, as directed by you, I am engaged without intermission in singing the glory of God and enabling the world to derive bliss therefrom. But this insidious and powerful Maya (Delusion) may overpower me any moment, plunge me into wrong, and create obstacles in the path of my mission. Is there any measure by which I can escape

this calamity? Kindly instruct me in that and show me this additional sign of your parental affection.’

“Brahma laughed at this question. He replied, ‘Son! Your words seem childish. The clouds of Delusion (Maya) cannot darken the inner consciousness of those who revel in the glory and majesty of God, those who know and make known that God is the Master of Maya, the Wielder of the Operative Forces that both delude and destroy delusion, those who are engaged in good deeds executed with faith and devotion, and those who endeavour ever to maintain Truth and Righteousness. Therefore, move fearlessly all over the three worlds with the Veena in your hands, singing in adoration of God. Listening to the recital and elaboration of the mystery of God and the Godly, the inhabitants of the Worlds will save themselves from the cycle of birth and death.

“‘Karma (activity and deeds resulting therefrom) are binding, because they have consequences that must be suffered or enjoyed. But deeds of service are free from this handicap. Be ever fixed in the thought of God. There is no other means than this to turn the mind away from sensory pursuits and objective activities.’”

Suka told the King, “Oh Parikshit! Since this supreme wisdom cannot be communicated to all except those who have reached a high level of purity and understanding, Brahma taught only Narada. And Narada too continued, as advised, to sing and adore God through his songs—the

Lord who is immanent as well as transcendent. He did not ignore or discard the teaching that Brahma favoured him with. You too are qualified to receive this sacred lesson. That is the reason why I, who am inaccessible, have spontaneously come directly to you, to describe to you the Bhagavatha. I am no ordinary minstrel. I never approach a person who has not earned the right to listen to me. Imagine the height that Narada must have reached, to acquire the qualification needed for instruction in the attributes of the Attributeless God!”

When Suka was thus gravely assessing him, Parikshit interceded, “Master! The Ancient Four-faced Sovereign Brahma directed Narada to sing the Bhagavatha, you said. To whom did Narada narrate the same? Who are those highly favoured personages? Tell me about them in detail.” Suka replied, “Oh King, why do you yield to hurry? Be courageous and controlled. I shall relate to you everything in its own time. Be calm and collected.”

The King explained, “Master! Pardon me. I am not excited at all. I am only yearning to fix my mind at the last moment of my life on the charming smile that dances on the lips of Lord Krishna, to drink deep, at that moment, the nectar of the Lotus Feet of the Lord. I have no other desire. If I am unable to establish in my mind the captivating picture of the Lord at the moment of death, I will have to be born again as one of the 84,00,000 species of living beings, isn’t it? Since that calamity should not happen and since I must remember with my last breath, the Dispenser of Life-breath,

make my life worthwhile by relating to me the Divine characteristics and the Divine activities of the Lord.”

Suka laughed at this. He said, “King, how can the mind be established at the Lotus Feet of the Lord if the ears listen to the characteristics and activities of the Lord? What is your opinion on this point? Tell me.” Parikshit said, “Master, I believe that there is no distinction between God, His name and His Attributes; is that correct? When the story of the Lord is narrated and listened to, the Name of the Lord and the attributes enter the heart, through the ears and disperse the darkness of ignorance, isn’t it? When the lion enters the forest, the timid jackals flee with their tails between their legs, don’t they? The sincere listener will certainly fix his mind on what he heard through the ear. While listening rapturously to the ravishing attributes of the Lord with the captivating smile, the mind will be so attached to the sweetness derived thereby that it can no more be attracted by low and vulgar objects, isn’t it? The ear and the mind will both act in unison then. That alone will yield ananda.”

The King was thus enthusiastically extolling the benefits of listening intently to the activities and majesty of the Lord. Suka interrupted his exultation and said, “Oh King! The mind has inconstancy as its very nature. How can it give up its nature and attach itself to the feet of the Lord? Is it not an impossible feat?” Suka was attempting to gauge the feelings that filled the mind of Parikshit. Parikshit smiled and replied, “Master, I shall answer, if you kindly permit me, and direct me to do so. The bee will hover around the

flower, humming and droning, until it settles down to drink the nectar from it. Once it has entered the flower and tasted the nectar, it will hover, hum and drone no more. It will have no extraneous thought, to disturb its bliss. It will become so intoxicated with the bliss that it will not heed its own safety; for, when the petals close and the flower folds, it allows itself to be imprisoned inside it. Similarly, when once the mind settles on the Lotus Feet of that embodiment of beauty and goodness it can never more crave for anything except the Nectar of the Lotus Feet.”