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“Srimad Bhagavatam”

Discourse by Master Parvathi Kumar - Canto 1 – Discourse 1

[For private circulation to WTT members.]

Today is Full Moon day in the month of Sravana. We are starting the discourses on Bhagavatam to experience the presence of Bhagavan (The Lord). Bhagavatam is the merger of all the classics. It gave complete harmony of great classics. This is the work written by Veda Vyasa as the last one with intensity of emotion. He read Vishnu Purana given by his father and expanded it into seventeen Puranas and later wrote Brahma Sutras. His other work is Mahabharatam, the fifth Veda which is the comprehensive work of Dharma. Bhagavat Gita, a part of Mahabharatam, emerges as the work through which we understand the Lord. He gave us the story of Lord in the Bhagavatam Scripture.

In today's class as an introduction we will know certain important aspects of this great book. Our focus is on the explanation given by Master EK on Bhagavatam. We should remember or recollect those things which we always forget. We have to worship and experience God's presence while reading Bhagavatam. It is not that we get it after finishing reading it. There is a sublime experience that one gets from it. Veda Vyasa gave it with such expertise.

To the luck of the Telugu people Pothana, the great writer translated it into Telugu. He did it with such precision and beauty that it stands even better than Sanskrit Version. Each poem, as you read, makes you visualize God and tears rolled down your cheeks with ecstasy. Till recently those poems were recited and heard in villages and towns. Now we must read, recite and make our children learn them. Even if Master EK was well-versed in Sanskrit he chose Telugu Bhagavatam for his commentary. So Pothana's Bhagavatam is the treasure of Telugu people. The adoration which the devotees show in Bhagavatam evokes the same adoration in the minds of the reader as well.

God is present in every object in nature. Human body is a form of God. People think that the body is their own or they have this body. Some think that the body is only a vehicle, an implement or a voice. Those who have a belief in the soul, they try to regulate the body and lead this life without becoming a slave to the body. Human is vehicle/form of God and the body is the vehicle given to him by God. He and the body, both are divine.

God is present everywhere in four states.

God is present everywhere. God is permeating every human being individually. Master EK gives the example of the river Godavari. If every one of us takes a mug of water from it, Godavari is present in our mug. Godavari in the mug is a part of the big Godavari. Like that we become Godavari in the mug. Mug is body. One electricity is flowing through all these appliances. The filament gives out light when acted upon by electricity entering the bulb and then there is the Bulb (body) which covers the filament. So there are 4 here:

- 1) All the electricity as one.
- 2) Electricity entering the bulb in the form of current.
- 3) Filament in the bulb
- 4) The bulb (body covering the filament)

In the same way:

1. Our Body
2. I/We (the being)
3. God in us
4. God present every where

Understanding the 4 states of the Lord is the primary thing to be understood. Without understanding this, other concepts cannot be understood.

These four states are referred to as Para, Pasyanthi, Madhyama and Vaikhari.

They are also referred to as:

- 1) Pure Existence
- 2) Individual Existence or Awareness
- 3) Buddhi (The light of the soul/being)
- 4) Body (Mind, Senses & Body are together referred to as Body)

“Buddhi” is the light that comes from God into the body. God’s light is shining in us as Buddhi. If you remember the Lord, Buddhi illuminates. Then we behave properly with the light of Buddhi. Otherwise we behave like moving in darkness. When electricity flows, bulb glows. Without electricity, the bulb does not glow.

The 4 are also called Super Soul/Universal Soul, Soul, Buddhi and Mind. The 4 states are also referred as Vasudeva, Sankarshana, Pradyumna and Anirudha.

As God is present in every thing, in order to get His grace we must be compassionate to others. Because Of “Maya” (Illusion) we feel others as different individuals though it the one Lord permeating everything. By being compassionate to others, everyone may not be pleased/ recognize you but the Lord will be pleased and recognize you. One aspirant went to Aurobindo and asked him whether he should work to please others or self. Sri Aurobindo replied “Work to please God”. The presence of a Master [not physical] is available to those who adore the feet of God. Compassion/Sympathy is the first quality one must have to walk the path of Bhagavata. “Sympathy is different from pity” says Master Maruvu. If you feel pity about others, then you will be crying most of the time. One who feels pity falls, he is not stable. One who shows sympathy/compassion does not fall. So do not feel pity on anyone. Pray for their well being and do some help if possible. Such ones gain the presence of the Master. A Master is one who experiences the presence of the Lord all the time. So by gaining the presence of such a Master, we can gain the presence of Lord as well. This is possible only to the compassionate ones. Those, who follow the footsteps of a Guru and are compassionate, are blessed with the transmission of his knowledge into their minds.

Those who think Gods like Sri Rama, Sri Krishna, Jesus, Buddha, etc. are different, are not eligible to read Bhagavatam. There is only one light which is evident in different forms as we view. There is only one God. He is present in different beings like tree, animal, human being. He is present every where. The differences are only for the sake of splendor. This is the ‘Truth’. Only one who believes this truth can read Bhagavatam. Even with the five senses you can see God. That is possible in the path of Bhagavata. A devotee sees the Lord in everything. We have many stories. He can see the Lord even in a donkey. So try to see the one Lord permeating everything in creation. Our problem is that we forget the one basis when we go into the differences.

If we have many Gods and consider one God greater than the other, then it becomes a religion. That is why we have so many religions like Saivism, Vashnavism, Christianity, Islam, etc. If you pray to Shiva, Vishnu, Allah, Christ or Ganapati with the same thought/feeling, that is Bhagavatam.

If you understand and recite the poems in Bhagavatam, lot of transformations happen inside you. It is a process of purification.

“You can experience the divine in everything” says Bhagavatam. Conquering desire, overcoming desire, suppressing desire is not the way. Even Bhagawatgita says that desire need not be conquered. It is not possible. Even a great man falls for something. It is due to the illusion in creation. Only the one who sees the Lord in everything, experiences everything without falling (desiring) for anything.

We have eyes and we feel happy when we see a beautiful thing with our eyes. A flower, a cloud, a lady, a man; everything that is beautiful is divine. Whatever gives you happiness is divine. This is what Bhagavata says. When you are thirsty the first two sips of water is divine. Whatever work you do should be done with divine feeling. We think of future action and fail to experience divinity in the present activity. These are all fundamental principles for a aspirant to remember and follow.

Sweetness is a common for sugar though many kinds of sweets are made out of it. Same way all forms of God emerge from one principle though they appear different. Everything is acceptable in the path of Bhagavata. We should not feel that religions should not exist, some Gods should not be worshipped, etc. A Master has no religious discrimination. He accepts every religion. He does not see what is great but he sees the divine in all.

So the second important aspect of Bhagavatam is seeing THAT in all. It is called “Antaryami Darsanam” in Sanskrit. Once we went with Master EK to seashore and we bought something to eat. There was a dog sitting opposite to us. Master EK asked us to get bread for the dog and after feeding the dog only ate. Master then said “When an animal is looking at you and you eat without offering it something, all your prayers are waste and all doors are closed for you.” It can also be a human being who is very hungry. We should offer the hungry person/animal first and then we should eat. Such is the path of Bhagavata.

See the one principle in all. See all the differences as splendor. Hunger is one but we have many dishes to satiate our hunger. Master CVV used to prepare and eat 16 dishes everyday. It is all splendor. If you see it as splendor then you can experience it very well. There is divine experience in every act that we do if we do everything remembering the divine. In bathing, there is an experience, in brushing; there is an experience and so on. This body is given to us by the Lord and is divine. So anything that we offer to the body is an offering to the divine if we remember the Lord during the offering. If you think of

God you will have dedication and sincerity in every action. So every 'Experience' becomes divine.

Experience is more than knowledge. Does knowing the number of calories in apple important or eating the apple & experiencing it is important? Mere learning is useless if you have no experience. Experience comes if you remember the Lord while learning. In Bhagawatgita 2nd canto Lord says foundation is important Branches and specializations are not important. If your mind is bent on God all branches of knowledge come to you. Bhagavatam is a book of experience.

Bhagavatam gives the creation of the universe and also of human being. While reading all this, remembering THAT is important. If you forget THAT and read all this, it is useless and the knowledge does not come to your help. Great Scholars also go in a wrong way. Those who are helpful to others and see everyone as equal are the real knowers says the Bhagawadgita. Mere show of knowledge is useless if it is no help to others. We should remember all these principles while reading Bhagavatam.

In present times, most of them pray to the Lord to satiate their desires and to have a comfortable life. So to bring such ones into this path, experience is important. If there is no experience, practices become dry. People feel that nothing is happening even after doing so many practices for so many years. Why people feel so? Doing rituals and going on pilgrimages might have been done. But without "Antaryami Sadhana-Seeing THAT in all", they all are useless. Without a 'One' at the beginning of seven zeroes, all the zeroes add up to no value.

Pothana lived in utter poverty but he never felt it as he was always in the company of the Lord. No other poet experienced God as was felt by Pothana. No problem is big if you have faith in God. Meera bai asks Krishna not to split her from Him. God comes down for the sake of his devotee. Sri Rama came down and mingled with monkeys. This is the grace of God on his devotees.

Bhagavatam was first told to Brahma by the Lord Himself. Then Brahma narrated it to Narada. Veda Vyasa was told by Narada. Veda Vyasa narrated it to Suka who in turn narrated it to Parikshit. Lord Krishna told Maitreya directly and Maitreya told it to Vidura. Now Master EK is telling us.

Bhagavatam is not for grand Masters. In Kali yuga, we people need it .You are alert when you think of God. Ramakrishna Paramahansa was a great worshipper of Goddess Kali. Several people like Totapuri, Bhairavi came to test him. His equanimity surprised them to a great extent and they realized their futile attempt to test such a devotee.

So we must love god through our worship. How to love God is given in Bhagavatam. Adore him from the bottom of your heart. You can visualize the form of God (any form you like or even light) while you adore. If you visualize that you are sitting in your heart centre and pray to God, he descends into you in the form of light. While visualizing a form of God, you should also remember that it is one of the forms of God and not the only form of God. We visualize a form because it is very difficult to pray to formless God. Once the form stabilizes and the light descends more and more, the form slowly disappears and the light stabilizes in you. In this month of Sravana, this type of worship is done. If we sit in the golden cave of the lion (heart centre), we also become gold; that is we get a golden body.

So you visualize a Master or some Deity of your liking and imagine that you are sitting at his feet in your heart centre. You can also imagine that you are offering flowers to the feet of the deity. Full moon of Sravana is a special opportunity presented to us for such worship.

The All permeating god is called 'Vishnu' in Bhagavatam. Bhagavatam asks us to visualize Vishnu because he himself came down as you. God made man in his own image and likeness. So Bhagavatam says that we should worship the all permeating God as Vishnu.

-Swasthi.