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“Srimad Bhagavatam”

Discourse by Master Parvathi Kumar - Canto 1 – Discourse 3

[For private circulation to WTT members.]

In the forest of Naimisha, Rishis wanted to perform a Grand Ritual for thousand years in order to establish faith, devotion and practice among people. When Sutha came to these Sounakadi Munis, they asked him to teach them Bhagavatam. When you go to a Master, you must not ask for material gains or tell him your personal problems but you should ask for spiritual things. This is what we should learn from these great sages.

Sage Sutha and Sage Suka were classmates when they were students of Veda Vyasa. Though Suka was his classmate, Sutha considered him as his guru because of his scholarship and equanimity. They preach knowledge and spread it to those who aspire to learn from them.

Sage Sutha was truthful, obedient, disciplined, and wise and always uttered the sacred word “Narayana”, and derived pleasure in describing the stories of the Lord. He was always recollecting Hari and nothing else. What we require in the present age is the recollection of “Hari”. Hari means the Lord who descended unto us. It is the absolute one who is beyond creation descending into the creation and into its beings.

Sutha not only had such virtuous qualities but he also had the ability to induce those qualities in others through his presence. In some there may be virtuous qualities but limited to them. In some the virtuous qualities are so expanded that they can induce those qualities into others as well. So Good qualities were flourishing and increasing in plenty in Sutha. Good qualities reduce the ego and mould a person into a perfect human being. Sutha could give the eighteen Puranas with ease and versatility. All the puranas contain stories of the Lord descending into creation.

The Lord or Master in the form of Sutha came to Saunakadi Munis. They praise him as follows. “You are well versed in Itihasas and Puranas and you are the one who brought all these to mankind. You heard and learnt all the grand teachings and secrets discoursed by Veda Vyasa and other great Masters due to their grace.”

Master EK here gives us more about Sutha. “What all he learnt from his Masters, Sutha could discourse that adding his experience as well.”

In order to teach one must have the competence of adding something more from his experience to what he learnt from his Master. This is possible only when a student is capable of absorbing, assimilating and spreading to others. Due to many good deeds done in his past lives, Sutha had

the opportunity of learning from Veda Vyasa and meeting several great people who came to Veda Vyasa, who lives in “**Pushkara Dweepam**”, an island situated in seventh sub-plane of earth. Sutha had discussions with those learned people. He was enriched with that experience.

There are four steps for a disciple to become full fledged under his guru. He has to serve his guru with full devotion. He must understand the teachings. He must put them in practice. He must experience them fully. He has to spread that knowledge with more additions out of his experience. Veda Vyasa did not write Bhagavatam in such an elaborate manner. It is due to the highly aware and capable disciples like Sutha that he had that the Scripture became so huge.

Scriptures like Ramayana, Mahabharat and Bhagavatam became bigger in size as the explanations were added to original story by learned sages in course of time from generation to generation. The original story of Mahabharata was small and it was written and named ‘**Jaya**’ by Veda Vyasa. It was elaborated by Vysampayana during the Sarpa Yagam (a ritual) performed by Janamejaya and so it became a bigger and was then called ‘Bharat’. As Sutha added more and more stories and elaborations and it became a great epic by name ‘Mahabharat’. Same is the case with Bhagavatam. Brahma was given Bhagavatam by the Lord in the form a small Mantra which he passed it onto Narada. Narada gave it to Veda Vyasa. Meanwhile Krishna gave it to Maitreya and Maitreya gave it to Vidura. Veda Vyasa instructed it to Sage Suka, who instructed it to King Parikshit. Sage Sutha summed up all these instructions and elaborately discoursed on it to Sounakadi Munis. That elaborate Bhagavatam which Sutha gave is available to us now in Sanskrit. Maharshi Pothana translated it to Telugu.

Distinction between “Itihasas” and “Puranas”:

In order to make Vedic principles easier for people to understand, besides their meanings, some stories both real and creative were given by some Rishis and these stories are called Itihasas. Ramayana and Mahabharat are Itihasas. In Bala kanda of Ramayana, Vishvamitra tells some stories to Rama. Even other Rishis tell some stories to Rama during his exile in forest.

Puranas describe the story of creation. There are thousands of Puranas given by many Masters to their disciples. They are present in books like Brahmanas, Aranyakas and Upanishads. Realizing that in the age of Kali, people would misinterpret the Scriptures, Parasara recognized 18 of those Puranas and wrote Vishnu Purana including those 18.

Veda Vyasa again elaborated in each of those 18 Puranas on the advice of his father, Parasara. Even after completing all this work, Veda Vyasa was not happy as he felt that the Vedic principles are still not available in an understandable way to the common man. Finally on the advice of Narada, he wrote Bhagavatam which fulfilled his happiness.

Misinterpretation is common in the age of Kali. So we should try to avoid teaching concepts to other until and unless we put them to practice and experience them to the core. In someone asks you something which you know but did not experience, it is better that you give him a book

which contains the related knowledge. Book is more evident of the scholarship of the truth. Misinterpretation is wrong.

Gurus tell sublime secrets of THAT principle to their disciples who are dearer to them, in the sense they can grasp with commitment and dedication. They teach mantras and tantras according to their orientation. Only a few are like their sons of heart. Sutha is like a son to Veda Vyasa. Sounakadi Munis ask Sutha to tell them that which would lead them all to a stable state.

Guru is an embodiment of knowledge, devotion, yoga, renunciation and the Lord. If any one asks you about your Master, you should be able to tell him the teachings of your Master. If you are unable to tell about your Master, give the other person the books written by your Master. They speak of his grand teachings and greatness. But do not tell something without knowing anything properly.

So the request made by Sounakadi Munis to Sage Sutha is not for them alone but for all of them. In Kali age, people cannot do much of good work, they get easily tired, they are weak in their Buddhi, they are short-lived and they suffer from many diseases. So they ask Sutha to tell something that which would give comfort and happiness in all aspects to the people in Kali age. That which would result in the descent of divinity into the beings from the head centre to heart centre.

Happiness is not related to external happenings. That is available in your heart itself. If you recognize the presence of God in your heart centre, you will not get agitated by anything in this world. Even when there is cyclone outside, we are safe if we are in our house. If it is a hut then there is problem but if it is a strong house then no cyclone can touch it. Heart is the strongest house and that is why it is called Ayodhya, that which is unconquerable.

Inside peace gives you outside peace. So we should enter inside. Many ways to enter inside are given in this Scripture. All these ways are very attractive and devotionally oriented. We attach ourselves to everything in this world and we say that it is not leaving us. It is like a book or pen in hand. It is attached to you because you are holding it in your hand. In the same way, a feeling holds you as you are holding it. Is this world holding you? Or are you holding onto it? Everyone holds onto this world and says that it is very difficult to live in this world. We say it is very difficult to live with a family. What did the family do to you? Family does not do you anything. You desire it and hold to it and say that it is holding onto you. Some people get stuck in their business. If you have taste for THAT, you do not hold onto anything else. Those who adore God get attached to him and then other things just happen without you holding onto them.

The Lord is present in your heart in the form of pulsating consciousness. One who reaches the heart centre and holds onto him has no death. If you are with him, death cannot touch you. You can transcend death. That means you lose hold over your body and stay apart from it. So there is no death to you. Parikshit is an example. In spite of knowing death is approaching him he bent his mind on Bhagavatam in order to get liberated.

There is one story of King of space. He was born in space and is the king of space. There can be clouds, moon, planets, sun, stars and many other bodies in the background of space but none of these can touch or affect space. Just as the clouds cannot touch space, death cannot touch the one who is with the Lord.

Hari that we speak of is not of one form and his story is not the story of one person. The stories of all grand Masters are also stories of Hari because he took birth in them and they became him. So we should read all such stories. We can read stories of Jesus, Moses, Pythagoras, Socrates and many other stories. It is better that we read in groups because that ensures stability of that story in our mind.

Bad thoughts do not enter the mind while reading Bhagavatam. We must not worry too much about unimportant things in life. When you are with the Truth, the thoughts that are related to death, problem, or suffering do not bother you. We forget it very easily. Even though we forget, we should make a constant effort to recollect him again and again every time you forget. Read the poems and meaning in Bhagavatam whenever you have some time. That purifies our speech as well. Goddess Saraswati would be pleased.

We hold onto our wrong thoughts regarding death and to our problems. Happiness goes away very fast where as unhappiness sticks to us longer. It is due to our ignorance that we keep have problems in our thought and leave away happiness. Your bondage with such thought becomes bondage to life. Problems do not have any interest in staying with you all the time. They appear to be with you because you have them in your thoughts all the time.

Chanting the name of Hari and listening to the stories of Hari gives us a feeling that he is entering through our ear and touches our hearts. Once you develop a taste for him, we want to listen to his stories all the time.

All this is the prayer being done by Sounakadi Munis requesting Sutha to tell them the stories of the Lord.

The poems of Bhagavatam must be read slowly so that it is more evident to us and the required transformation happens in us. The sweetness of the story of Krishna is depicted in Bhagavatam. Krishna is not only Krishna in a form alone but also about the whole creation and its beings.

Sutha is very happy to tell all this because he got a good batch of listeners who are very much willing to hear him speak. Just as a keen listener needs an ideal speaker, a good speaker also needs a keen listener. Just as a disciple needs the presence of a Master, a Master also needs a good disciple, who is the preserver of the knowledge of the Master in order to pass it on to posterity. So the Sounakadi Munis are ready to listen to Sutha for eternity and they request him to enlighten them.

In Kali age, the whole world would be full of unethical and sinful deeds which are endless. One should stay above it but can never put an end to such deeds. It is a vain effort to change this world in the age of Kali. However cleanly you wash a pig, it will still move in a gutter. There are other people to take care of the world; you first change yourself and later think of changing the world. You first put yourself at a state much above this world, and then you see everything in this world as a movie. You are not in the world but above it. Just put yourself at the feet of the Lord in your heart centre and the world cannot touch you. It is like wearing safety wear and moving in this world whenever necessary and staying above it the rest of the time.

Chanting the name Narayana can be done silently. It need not be chanted loudly. We will be liberated from the weaknesses of attachment and hatred. We will not differentiate one from the other. We will get rid of ego, malice, jealousy, greediness, desires etc. We can easily cross the world which is like an ocean. We get liberated from this world and stay above it. Sounakadi Munis are requesting Sutha to help them cross the ocean as he has a boat which can cross that ocean.

Krishna, in his physical form, protected the eternal law (dharma) of creation but he is no more in physical form. What will happen to dharma now? Please enlighten us. They ask him with lot of devotion, interest and intent. Their request is not casual. If they asked casually, Sutha would have spoken something casually and left. So there is a way to please a Guru and receive teachings from him.

Now Master EK tells us about Sutha. The original name of Sage Sutha is Ugrasrava Vasu. He was the son of Roma Harshana.

So after hearing the request of Sounakadi Munis, Sutha started speaking. He started with a prayer to his classmate, Sage Suka. Though he was his classmate he considered him equivalent to his Guru because of his exemplary qualities. Suka is a great sage and Yogi. He stands above the 3 qualities and nothing can touch him in this elemental world. He does not differentiate one from the other and to him everything and everyone is Hari.

At the age of 5, Suka went into a forest. When Veda Vyasa called him by his name, all the trees answered his call. What does it mean? He permeated all those trees just as the omnipresent Lord permeates everything in this creation. He became THAT seeing THAT in everything.

So Sutha prays to Suka to begin with and then continues. We will continue in the next class.

-Swasthi.