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“Srimad Bhagavatam”

Discourse by Master Parvathi Kumar - Canto 1 – Discourse 4

[For private circulation to WTT members]

We are talking about Sounakadi Munis who were performing “Satram Yagam” (a grand ritual), for one thousand years in Naimisha forest and Sage Sutha comes there. Sounakadi Munis ask Sutha to discuss the most auspicious subject. We came to know about all that in detail in the previous classes.

Master EK gave definition for “Satram” as the “act that protects truth”. In the olden days Rishis used to construct Ashrams with all the facilities far from the madding crowd and lived there engaging themselves with spiritual activities. Most of our group livings in Western Countries are conducted like that far away from the crowded cities. It was peaceful in the forest without any disturbance. Even the scriptures called “Aranyakas” (Aranya = forest) were born due to discourses in forests only. Their aim was to protect the customs, traditions, rituals for the posterity. They used to give discourses and conducted them with dedication and adoration. These practices are as old as times of Sage Vasishta and even Naimisha forest is also that old.

Sounakadi Munis came to know tradition is under threat during the Kali age through Veda Vyasa and on the advice of Veda Vyasa, they gather in the forest of Naimisha with an aim to protect the tradition and Scriptures for the future generations.

Veda Vyasa wanted to preserve the knowledge of these scriptures for generations to come for which he selected one from his disciples, Sutha as the right person to do this job. He taught everything to Sutha and sent him to this Naimisha forest to continue his mission. So we have Sutha here to narrate the story of Bhagavatam to these Munis.

Sutha and Veda Vyasa are not the real names of these persons. These are titles awarded to them with a sublime meaning. Vyasa actually means ‘One who can elaborate and explain the Vedas’. There is the birth of Vyasa at the end of every Dwapara Yuga to protect the Scriptures during the Kali Yuga. Vyasa, we know belong to the previous Dwapara Yuga and his name is Krishna. Parasara, the father of Veda Vyasa gave him the name “Krishna” and he was called “Krishna Dwaipayana” (Dwaipayana = inhabit of an island) as he was Krishna living in the Island. He grew up in the Ashram called “Badarika” among the plants by name “Regi”, so he was called ‘Badarayana’. There are three Krishnas in Mahabharatam. One is Veda Vyasa whose real name was Krishna, Lord Sri Krishna and Draupadi, wife of Pandavas whose original name was

Krishna. The titles Panchali and Draupadi came after wards as she belongs to the place Punjab and daughter of the king Drupada, respectively.

When it comes to the name of Sutha, his original name was Ugrasrava Vasu given by his father Roma Harsha. The meaning of it is that he is capable of listening with immense attention and he could transform the sound he hears in the form of words. He could grasp the words from silence. Bruhaspathi is known for Buddhi. His listening and grasping was so great that even scholars were scared of him and could not discuss with him. Such was his special quality in listening. He is called by another name Sutha because he has the expertise of squeezing the essence from Vedas and Upanishads like squeezing milk from a cow and sharing it with others. Pundits also used to fear about his ability. His father's name was Roma Harsha (Roma = hair on the skin) and it means that it was thrilling for him and the hair on his skin stood erect on hearing about THAT principle.

Before starting his discourse on Bhagavatam, Sutha prayed to four people.

1. Sage Suka.
2. Veda Vyasa.
3. Nara & Narayana (Soul & Super-Soul) – Nara is the one within the bound of 3 qualities and Narayana is the one beyond the 3 qualities. Nara and Narayana are eternal. The first one sits outside and the 2nd one sits inside. If Nara is in good alignment with Narayana, then everything goes very well otherwise he falls into trouble.
4. Bharathi

In order to start a speech it is essential to pray to Goddess Saraswati as she is the goddess of Speech. If one must be able to speak what he knows, he should have the grace of Saraswati. All wise people cannot speak. All those who speak do not know what to speak. While speaking it should touch the heart of the listener. There are many orators but very few can touch the heart of the listener. Those who have both the qualities are really blessed and are great persons. It is possible only those who have the grace of Saraswati and Brihaspati (Jupiter). The speech that is related to God must be told in a divine way. It should flow like a clear stream. The greatness of Sutha is evident in the way he does prayer to the Guru. Even if the Munis praised him he did not start his narration without praying to his Guru and Saraswati properly. He was the one who was selected by his Guru for this narration and he was the one who knew all the scriptures so he knew the importance of prayer to the Master which is very important in our tradition.

Sage Suka (a brief about Sage Suka):

He did not distinguish one from the other in this creation and considered everything as the manifestation of God. So he had what is called “Sama Drishti” (to be able to see THAT in all).

He reached a state of Samadhi (the highest state of existence). It means became THAT which is permeating the whole creation. He got liberated from all the activities of life. He was travelling alone in that state. Veda Vyasa goes searching for him and calls aloud 'O My Son' in fear as he could not find him. All living beings responded to that call and when Veda Vyasa called Suka by his name.

Here there are three things – Vyasa, Suka and the Call. Vyasa sees THAT in all and Suka became THAT itself. So when Vyasa calls Suka, who is all pervading, everything around responded to his call. Vyasa has the ability to call the one is pervading all and Suka is the one who pervades all. Vyasa is one who has the strength to travel from the centre to circumference (I AM to THAT I AM). The nature does not respond if we call Suka. It is only because Vyasa called Suka, nature responded because Suka was pervading all nature, though Suka was not present there in physical. In that state, Suka did not exist as an individual, he was THAT. The medley of Vyasa and Suka is Bhagavatam as viewed by Master EK. As Suka is THAT, Sutha prays to him first.

This is a secret given in Bhagavatam. The way of Bhagavatam is the way of devotion. It tells us that everything around is divine irrespective of our likes and dislikes. Not to like a thing is limitedness. To like everything means to see God in all. We have examples of Prahalada, Meera Bai, etc. The Lord came down to earth for the sake of his devotees. Prahalada could see and even show his father the Lord, in a pillar and that is how a devotee sees God in all.

Bhagavatam tells us that the grace of the Lord needs no qualification. There is no rule and rhyme to God's grace. The Lord graced even an elephant when it prayed to him ardently. The path of Bhagavatam is the path of grace.

The harmony and unison of Vyasa and Suka is Bhagavatam. Vyasa wrote Bhagavatam gently while Suka voiced it like a melodious music. It is actually Bhagavatam through Suka's voice that gives us sublime experience. Suka discoursed Bhagavatam to King Parikshit for 7 days.

So Vyasa calling Suka and the nature responding is actually a mystical statement which tells us the state of Vyasa and Suka. As Suka is in a state of Samadhi, the Lord is in a completely awakened state in him. When Vyasa calls Suka's name, the Lord who is present as Suka responds.

So to be wholly absorbed into the divine principle, one should recite Bhagavatam. The great devotees like Kabir, Meera bai, Ramadas, Annamayya sang songs in the praise of God with such devotion that they were absorbed into singing and finally into God. This is possible only when your love for God is immense.

Here Veda Vyasa did not call for his son Suka. His son, Suka became THAT and due to his immense love for God, Vyasa calls his son who became God. The path of Bhagavatam is the path of love. The personality of Krishna is full of love. His heart melts spontaneously at the ardent call of His devotee. In deep love, everything else disappears. We say “Love is blind”.

So here the love of Vyasa is the love for God, not for his son. If you call God with love with full-throated voice, you get absorbed into him. In that state, you forget yourself. That is a state of Samadhi.

All these principles are the foundations of Bhagavatam. They should get stabilized in us. They keep coming again and again as Bhagavatam goes on.

Now here is another understanding to Vyasa’s call given by Master EK.

All the plants and trees got absorbed into THAT by just hearing the word ‘Suka’ through the voice of Veda Vyasa. This tells us that Suka is a Grand Master who can grant his state to anyone who hears or recollects his name with devotion. Suka is the greatest of great ones. So Sutha before beginning the discourse on Bhagavatam prays to Sage Suka because he knows that Suka’s name can absorb the listeners into the highest state.

Suka’s discourse is as sweet as the flute of Krishna. The soundless sound (Nada) manifested through the voice of Suka and flute of Krishna. Anyone who listens either of it, goes into a state of Samadhi. For the mantram of Bhagavatam, Krishna is the presiding God, Suka is the Rishi, the creation with its being is the meter and its recitation is itself the chanting of mantra.

For every work we do, there is a cause and every work has its effect which becomes the cause for another work. So we are carried with cause and effect in our lives. One who sees all the activities with their causes and effects as the play of the Lord is the Spiritual one. One who forgets the play, gets lost in it. We all came down to play but got stuck in it as we do not know how to play. One who knows how to play enjoys the play. Suka is the one who can grant us that knowledge to play. What is the use of planning that so and so should happen in a dream? Everything disappears once you come out of your dream. Even our life is like a dream. Once we awaken from this dream, there is nothing. Suka grants us that state where we awaken from this dream.

In a dream, everything appears to be real. Only when we come out of the dream, we know that everything is unreal. This has to be pondered upon. Just like a dream during your sleep, this life is also a dream, the only difference being the duration of the dream. There may be many cause and work relations in life but once you wake from this dream, everything just disappears in a flash. We cannot come out of this dream on our own. Suka can wake us up from this dream instantaneously. Suka is above the cause and effect theory. He is personification of the Absolute one.

When Krishna showed His grace on Sisupala, Dharma Raja felt surprised. Krishna graced those who hated Him earlier than those who adored Him. When Maitreya questions Krishna, Krishna replies “You made a syllabus set some rules and regulations but they do not apply to me. My grace knows no rule and rhyme.”

Suka is like the light that instantaneously glows to show way to those who grope in darkness doing some practices with an aspiration to find the light. That is Suka! Once that light glows, the darkness of cause and effect disappears. All the worldly darkness disappears. Our life is miserable because we treat every small issue and happening as a problem. Instead if you treat them as if they are the deeds of God, there is no misery. One can see divinity even in the anger of another person. Sage Suka grants us such a state.

So Sutha prays to Suka so that his presence would disperse the fear in the minds of Sounakadi Munis at the coming of Kali age.

We generally hold certain opinions about each person around us and it is these opinions that hold us in turn and they become the cause for our misery. Our calculations and opinions are only up to us. If we think that everything happening around is the play of the Lord and we should enjoy watching the play, then we are happy otherwise not. It is all up to us but we are too weak to bring about the required transformation. Sage Suka can make it happen. That is why we should pray to Suka.

Bhagavatam will liberate you of all the bondages including the bondage of birth.

Bharati means ‘liking for light’ is another name for Saraswati. Saraswati, the word (or flow) emerged through Brahma and Brahma went after that word (flow) which resulted in the creation. This is a secret statement which is explained later.

This word exists in 4 states –

1. One who utters
2. The will to utter
3. The uttered thought
4. The utterance itself

Similarly we exist in 4 states as well.

1. Existence
2. Will (or Idea)
3. Thought

4. Action

The first 3 states happen within and the 4th state manifests which can be seen. Even the creation happens in 4 states of which only the 4th state is visible.

The 4 states of the word are said to be the 4 heads of Brahma. Only one head can be seen while the remaining 3 are invisible. Generally we show 3 heads of Brahma in a picture which means we can see 3 of our states. We can see our idea, our thought and our action while we are the 4th one. The other person can only see our action.

Again we can associate them with Para, Pasyanthi, Madhyama and Vaikhari. The first 3 remain in the cave, which is within the uttering one while the 4th one comes out separate from the uttering one.

That is why it is said in Purusha Sukta “Padosya Viswa Bhutani, tripadasya Amrutamdivi” which means the visible creation is 1/4th of the cosmic person while the remaining 3 parts are invisible (in a state of light).

While chanting, one must listen to his own utterance because our utterance comes from that Word. We should observe our utterance and trace back to source of the word, from where the will to utter emerged. This practice was done and given to us by our Rishis. It is a way of doing penance. Another practice given is to utter OM and reach the source by hearing the utterance.

Those who wish to learn Brahma Vidya, they should pray to Saraswati first. Brahma Vidya is nothing but to realize the presence of God everywhere. So Sutha prays to Bharati (Saraswati) before beginning the discourse on Bhagavatam.

We should also pray to Saraswati, Nara & Narayana, Suka and Veda Vyasa before reading Bhagavatam. If their presence is stabilized in us, then Bhagavatam reveals itself to us.

We will continue in the next class.

-Swasthi