

tava kathāmrtaṁ tapta-jīvanam

Sri Krishna Kathamrita

bhāgavata-māhimā

No. 11

The Glories of Śrīmad Bhāgavatam



Sri Krishna Kathamrita

Śrī Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅga Rādhā-Gopīnātha Jayati

The Glories of Srimad Bhagavatam

Sastra and our Acaṛyas

- 4 • **Hearing Srimad Bhagavatam**
Srila A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada
- 6 **No Other Book Like the Bhagavata**
Prabhupada Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati
- 7 **Bhagavatam and Bhaktivinode**
Srila Thakur Bhaktivinode
- 10 **The Dangers of Reading Srimad Bhagavatam**
- 14 **Prayers to the Bhagavatam**
Srila Sanatan Goswami
- 15 **The Dwarka Queens Hear Bhagavatam**
Skanda Purāna
- 20 **The Glories of Srimad Bhagavatam**
Skanda Purāna
- 41 **Rasikananda Prabhu and the Srimad Bhagavatam**
Sri Gopijanavallabha Das



Features

- 3 Letters
- 4 From the Editor
- 12 Sanatan Goswami's Love for the Bhagavatam
- 22 Sukadev Spoke the Entire Bhagavatam
Srila Viswanath Chakravarti Thakur
- 24 Manifestations of Srimad Bhagavatam
- 25 The Bull and the Bhagavata
- 26 The Benediction in Kali-yuga
Sri Srimad Gour Govinda Swami Maharaja
- 36 Sri Radha Vinode
Srila Narahari Chakravarti
- 48 The Sacred Forest of Naimisharanya
- 61 The Meeting of Madhva and Vyasa



*His Divine Grace A.C.
Bhaktivedanta Swami
Prabhupada Founder-Acharya of
the International Society for
Krishna Consciousness*

Statement of Purpose

Srila Prabhupada states in the introduction to his Krishna Book:

It is essential for persons who are actually liberated to hear about the pastimes of Krishna. That is the supreme relishable subject matter for one in the liberated state. Also, if persons who are trying to be liberated hear such narrations... then their path of liberation becomes very clear. ...Lord Chaitanya has therefore advised his followers that their business is to propagate *kṛṣṇa-kathā*.

In keeping with this desire of Srila Prabhupada, the purpose of this magazine is simply to propagate *kṛṣṇa-kathā*. For that end we intend to research the history and literature of the Gaudiya Vaishnava tradition, particularly in Orissa. Through the medium of this journal we want to help establish how everything is in Srila Prabhupada's books, and we will consider our efforts successful if this publication is a source of inspiration for the preachers of Krishna consciousness to continue their efforts to push on Lord Chaitanya's movement.

Sri Krishna Kathamrita

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We would also like to express our bereavement over the recent departure of two great well-wishers of this project: Our beloved mother, Janice E. Miller, who over the years offered unlimited encouragement and support, and Sri Srimad Bhaktisvarup Damodar Maharaja, our beloved GBC. Maharaja supported *Krishna Kathamrita* Magazine in many ways. This world won't be the same for us without their loving association and guidance. We pray for their continued blessings.

Letters

I read the Putana magazine from cover to cover and am still trying to absorb all the crucial messages and instructions contained within. It is an exceptional presentation, both because of the vital subject matter that it addresses as well as the way such a sensitive and controversial issue has been dealt with.

— Praghosa Das, Ireland

I quite relished the Putana issue. I even used it in a class that I weekly give to the teens in the gurukula.

— Madhavendra Puri Das, Vrindavan

Front cover: "Mahaprabhu and his associates hear the *Bhāgavatam* at Narendra Sarovar in Puri." This famous sixteenth century painting, commissioned by Maharaja Prataparudra, is by Murari Das, a disciple of Vakreswar Pandit. In the front is Prataparudra Maharaja offering obeisances. Left to right are Raghunath Das Goswami, Govinda Das, Ramananda Ray, Gadadhar Pandit reading *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, Nityananda Prabhu, Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Adwaita Acharya, Srivas Pandit, Swarup Damodar Goswami and Haridas Thakur hanging his cloth to dry. (There are some differences of opinion about the identities of the three devotees on the left.) The painting is now in Kanji-ghata, near Berhampur, West Bengal.

Back cover: Verse translation by Sri Matsya Avatar Das. Painting by the late Dampati Kishore Goswami. Found in the Ramji Vai Satsang Bhavan, Vrindavan. Photo by Bhakta Charles.

From the Editor

GLORIFYING THE INCONCEIVABLE

Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu told Devananda Pandit, *mahācintya bhāgavata sarva-śāstre gāya* — “All *śāstras* say that the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* is most inconceivable.” (*Cb. madhya* 21.23) This issue of *Sri Krishna Kathamrita* presents a bit of a problem for us: How do you adequately glorify something that is by nature beyond conception?

When the Lord repeats something, we can understand it must be important. On two occasions (in *Cb. madhya* 21.24 and *antya* 3.514), Mahaprabhu gave the exact same instruction to Devananda Pandit:

*'bhāgavata bujhi' hena yāra ache jñāna
sei nā jānaye bhāgavatera pramāṇa*

One who thinks, “I understand *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*,” does not know the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*.

Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu told Sanatan Goswami:

*kṛṣṇa-tulya bhāgavata—vibhu, sarvāśraya
prati-sloke prati-akṣare nānā artha kaya*

Śrīmad Bhāgavatam is identical with Krishna, the Supreme Lord and shelter of everything. In each and every

verse of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, and in each and every syllable, there are unlimited meanings. (*Cc. madhya* 24.318)

The only way one can understand Krishna, or his form as a book, *grantha-bhāgavata*, is to approach him through his form as a devotee, the *bhakta-bhāgavata*. Srila Swarup Damodar Goswami has stated:

*yāha, bhāgavata paḍa vaiṣṇavera sthāne
ekānta āśraya kara caitanya-carāṇe*

If you want to understand *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* you must approach a self-realized *vaiṣṇava* and study it under his guidance, while at the same time taking exclusive shelter of the lotus feet of Lord Chaitanya. (*Cc. antya* 5.131)

The purpose of this issue of *Sri Krishna Kathamrita* is to offer a drop from the remnants of realizations about the glories of the *Bhāgavatam* presented by our previous *ācāryas*. Although it is certainly inadequate glorification of the inconceivable, we pray that it may bring some inspiration to the soldiers in Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's *saṅkīrtana* movement.

— *śrī guru vaiṣṇava kṛpā prārthī*,
Madhavananda Das

(Letters, continued)

Thanks very much for your new magazine. It looks very well done as usual. Please keep up this magnificent preaching work; you're inspiring a lot of devotees with Krishna consciousness, giving them a sublime taste.

— Ekanatha Das, North Carolina

In issue #10, I particularly took notice of the article “Two Considerations” by Gour Govinda Maharaja. He hit the name on the head! Right on! I also appreciated the concluding words in your article, “False Guru's Institutions and the Holy Name”: “Ultimately, the false guru is oneself, for in spiritual life no one else can cheat us.”

— Jaya Vijay Das, Vrindavan

You are doing wonderful service. You are enthusiastically carrying out the order of your Guru Maharaja and pleasing him, and as result I hope that you are getting his *kṛpā* profusely. May your example inspire others.

— Subhag Swami

Your letters are welcome. Write to :

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Please include your name and address.
Published letters may be edited for clarity and length.

May you be blessed with continued inspiration for your wonderful service and soooo attractive magazines!

— Rasajna Devi Dasi, Austin Texas

It is my great happiness to see that instead of joining the revolting political debates and fights continuously taking place amongst the *vaiṣṇavas* of different groups, the *śiṣyas* of Gour Govinda Maharaja are peacefully engaged in distributing pure, universal *hari-kathā* without propagating any institution in a sectarian way. You are doing a wonderful job for the pleasure of Sri Guru and Gauranga. I wish you all success in your service.

— Peter Erdody

I very much appreciated your perspective on Srila Bhaktisiddhanta's Putana/institution article. Superexcellent.

— Jayadvaita Swami

Thank you very much for the new issue of Krishna Kathamrita. I just finished it and thought it was great. I couldn't judge which article I liked best — Guruseva, Putana Vadha, or False Gurus. I like how you ended it, giving hope, and then pointing it toward oneself.

— Purnacandra Das

Thank you for your consistent standard of excellent production, which is an ongoing positive contribution to the Gaudiya world.

— Bhakti Vikasa Swami

Hearing Srimad Bhagavatam

His Divine Grace A.C.
Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

In this article we pose certain commonly asked questions about Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, with answers from the teachings of Srila A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada.

Who is qualified to speak on Śrīmad Bhāgavatam?

Sri Vyasadev is the original spiritual preceptor for all men. And all other preceptors are considered to be his representatives. A representative is one who can exactly present the viewpoint of Sri Vyasadev. Sri Vyasadev impregnated the message of *Bhāgavatam* unto Srila Sukadev Goswami, and Sri Suta Goswami heard it from him (Sri Sukadev Goswami). All bona fide representatives of Sri Vyasadev in the chain of disciplic succession are to be understood to be *gōsvāmīs*. These *gōsvāmīs* restrain all their senses, and they stick to the path made by the previous *ācāryas*. The *gōsvāmīs* do not deliver lectures on the *Bhāgavatam* capriciously. Rather, they execute their services most carefully, following their predecessors who delivered the spiritual message unbroken to them. (*Bhāg.* 1.1.5, purport)

A *gōsvāmī*, or the bona fide representative of Sri Vyasadev, must be free from all kinds of vices. The four major vices of Kali-yuga are (1) illicit connection with

women, (2) animal slaughter, (3) intoxication, (4) speculative gambling of all sorts. A *gōsvāmī* must be free from all these vices before he can dare sit on the *vyāsāsana*. No one should be allowed to sit on the *vyāsāsana* who is not spotless in character and who is not freed from the above-mentioned vices. He not only should be freed from all such vices, but must also be well versed in all revealed scriptures or in the Vedas. The *Purāṇas* are also parts of the Vedas. And histories like the *Mahābhārata* or *Rāmāyaṇa* are also parts of the Vedas. The *ācārya* or the *gōsvāmī* must be well acquainted with all these literatures. To hear and explain them is more important than reading them. One can assimilate the knowledge of the revealed scriptures only by hearing and explaining. Hearing is called *śravaṇa*, and explaining is called *kīrtana*. The two processes of *śravaṇa* and *kīrtana* are of primary importance to progressive spiritual life. Only one who has properly grasped the transcendental knowledge from the right source by submissive hearing can properly explain the subject. (*Bhāg.* 1.1.6, purport)

According to the Vedic injunctions, *yasya deve parā bhaktiḥ*. The *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* can be recited only by one who has unflinching faith in the lotus feet of Krishna and his devotee, the spiritual master. (*Cc. madhya* 22.131, purport)

What is the process to understand Śrīmad Bhāgavatam?

One should try to understand Śrīmad Bhāgavatam from the spiritual master. The Vedic injunction states, *bhaktiā bhāgavatam grāhyaṁ na buddhyā na ca ũikayā*. One has to understand Śrīmad Bhāgavatam through the process of devotional service and by hearing the recitation of a pure devotee. These are the injunctions of the Vedic literature — *śruti* and *smṛti*. Those who are not in the disciplic succession and who are not pure devotees cannot understand the real mysterious objective of Śrīmad Bhāgavatam and Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā. (Cc. madhya 22.131, purport)

What is the proper mood for one to hear the Bhāgavatam?

Those who listen to the Bhāgavatam may put questions to the speaker in order to elicit the clear meaning, but this should not be done in a challenging spirit. One must submit questions with a great regard for the speaker and the subject matter. This is also the way recommended in Bhagavad-gītā. One must learn the transcendental subject by submissive aural reception from the right sources. Therefore these sages addressed the speaker Suta Goswami with great respect. (Bhāg. 1.1.5, purport)

Can one understand Bhāgavatam just by reading?

Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's secretary, Swarup Damodar, recommended, *yāha, bhāgavata paḍa vaiṣṇavera sthāne* — "If you want to read Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, you must approach a person who is living Bhāgavata (Cc. antya 5.131)." Otherwise, there is no question of Bhāgavata realization.

... There are many religious scriptures, especially the Vedas. Śruti means Veda. Śruti is learned by hearing, not by reading. You can understand Vedic principles even though you are illiterate, provided you give aural reception. God has given you the ear. And if you try to hear submissively, to receive something, then it will be fruitful. ... One has to give up this illegitimate attempt to understand the absolute truth by personal knowledge. That is not possible. Krishna is not such a cheap thing that by exercising your brain you can manufacture a way to understand Krishna. (Lecture in Rome, 27 May 1974)

... if one wants to learn the meaning of Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, one must take lessons from a realized soul. One should not proudly think that one can understand the transcendental loving service of the Lord simply by reading books. One must become a servant of a vaiṣṇava. As Narottam Das Thakur has confirmed, *chāḍiyā vaiṣṇava-sevā nistāra peyeche kebā*: one cannot be in a transcendental position unless one very faithfully serves a pure vaiṣṇava. One must accept a vaiṣṇava guru (*āḍau gurv-āśraya*), and

then by questions and answers one should gradually learn what pure devotional service to Krishna is. That is called the *paramparā* system. (Cc. antya 7.53, purport)

What about reading your books and purports. Is that enough?

Indian lady: How does one contact the spiritual master? Through a book can you contact the spiritual master?

Prabhupada: No, you have to associate.

Syamasundar: "Can you associate through a book?" she asked.

Prabhupada: Yes, through books, and also personal. Because when you make a spiritual master you have got personal touch. Not that in the air you make a spiritual master. You make a spiritual master concrete. So as soon as you make a spiritual master, you should be inquisitive.

... if you simply try to understand what is God by reading scriptures, you cannot achieve. You must approach a guru. Just like a medical book. It can be available in the market. If you purchase one medical book and study and you become doctor, that is not possible. You must hear the medical book from a medical man in the college, medical college. Then you will be qualified. And if you say, "Sir, I have read all the medical books. Recognize me as a medical practitioner," no, that will not be. (Lecture on the appearance day of Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur, 23 Sept 1969, London)

Madhudvisha: One cannot become a medical practitioner by simply reading the books. He must study under a medical practitioner. So in the case of your books, is it possible to become a devotee without actually having personal association with you? Just by reading your books?


Prabhupada: No, it is not that you have to associate with the author. But one who knows, if you cannot understand you have to take lesson from him. Not necessarily that you have to contact with the author always.

Devotee: Just like the textbooks are not written by the teachers, they're written by other professors.

Devotee: Usually you don't even meet the author.

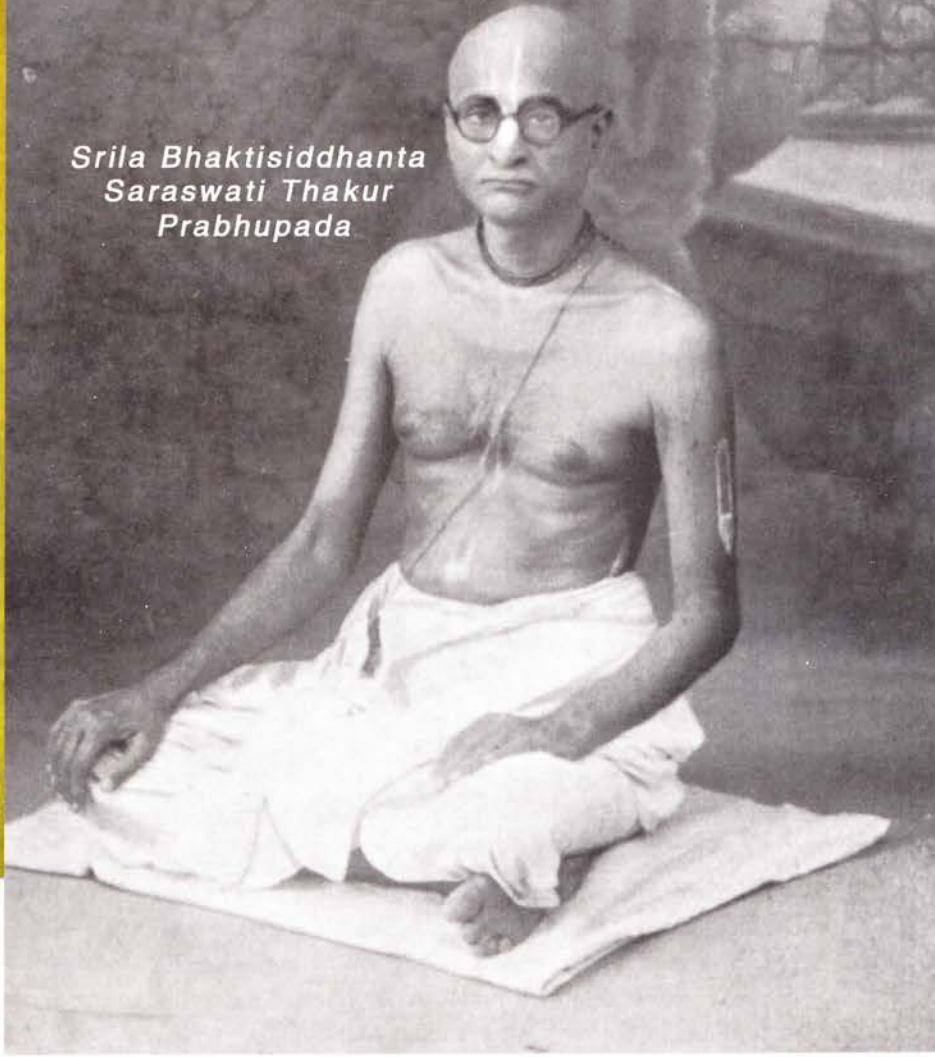
Prabhupada: Simply one who knows the subject matter, he can explain.

Madhudvisha: But can your purports serve as explanation besides...

Prabhupada: No, no. Anyone who knows the subject matter will be able to explain. It is not necessary that the author be required to be present there. [break] ...to study from a medical man, I never said you have to study from the author. Or one who understood the author's purpose. Just like we are explaining Bhagavad-gītā as it is. Not that one has to learn directly from Krishna. One who has understood Krishna, from him. That is the *paramparā* system. (Morning walk in Melbourne, 21 May 1975) 

NO OTHER BOOK LIKE THE BHĀGAVAT

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta
Saraswati Thakur
Prabhupada



One will not attain salvation by studying Vedanta for many crores of years. No good will come out of squeezing the nose (for yoga practice) for eternity, even if one acquires thereby the power to rise into the sky to a height of ten or twenty cubits. True well being will be available to the people of the world only if they listen to the discourse on *Bhāgavata* from one who is himself a *bhāgavata*, leading the practical life of a true devotee without maintaining the slightest attachment for the life of a *karmī* or the life of a monistic *jñānī*. Even if all of the books of the world were to be burned, there would be no harm provided one treatise was left — the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. Even if thousands of learning centers were to be abolished, there would be no feeling of inconvenience provided the reading and teaching of the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* continued. But what a wonder! What irony! This book of books has been converted into a commodity for trafficking! The course the world is

taking is just the opposite of the teaching Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu gave.

There is no other book in the world like the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. This is not mere tittle-tattle or an exaggerated homage. If one reflects on it as a truly impartial judge, one will realize that there has not been, nor will there ever be, a book like the *Bhāgavatam*. This book presents a gradual evolution of conceptions of the absolute, from better to better, of non-existent, denied, attributeless, neuter, masculine, couple, consort by marriage, and lastly paramour. Sri Krishna's sports are described in the tenth canto. What then is the necessity of the preceding nine cantos? In them has been shown the deliberation of these conceptions to prepare the ground for introducing the main subject — the description of Krishna's transcendental sportive dalliances with the *gopīs* of Vraja, in the *Gopī-gītā*, etc., of the tenth canto. There were many who had read the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* before Chaitanya Mahaprabhu came into this world. However, the real purport and actual object of the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* is only comprehensible to those who have read it after reading the *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* was written by Sri Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami, one of the chief followers of the line of Sri Rupa Goswami. These

persons have read the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* inside of the *Caritāmṛta*. The unrefined ease-loving people who pretend to be *vaiṣṇavas* may read the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, and the mercenary discourses may explain it — but according to the *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* they only misconstrue and cover the true meaning. Their elucidation may please the mind of their readers, but they only make the way to hell easier to access for themselves and their admirers.

As defined in its third *śloka*, *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* is the succulent fruit of the *kalpataru*, desire-yielding tree, of the Vedas. Non-devotees crave for *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma* and *mokṣa*. The mental determination of those whose desires for enjoyment or emancipation have been set at rest and who have passed beyond the realm of mental speculation is not after such insipid or unsavory things. Enjoyment-hunters and those who perform rituals for worldly well being are after deteriorated


unsavory tastes, while monists of the non-distinct conception aspire after insipid, tasteless realization. The *Bhāgavatam* does not produce fruits of bad taste, nor does it produce tasteless ones. It can be fully traced in the *Bhāgavatam* how the distinction between the inner thoughts of the *viṣaya*, the recipient of service, and the *āśraya*, the giver of service, undergoes gradual development as the *āśraya*'s consciousness evolves through the various stages of being covered, shrunken, budding, slightly blossoming, and fully blossoming. Those who have fully surpassed the various levels of material consciousness and have reached the stage of transcendental excellence wherein their hearts have been illuminated with the mode of goodness are competent to taste this ripened fruit, the *Bhāgavatam*. Only they are fit to receive the sweet mellow of divine love, and only they are permanently possessed of the purest ecstatic mood. This fruit is succulent — it has nothing solid in it such as skin, stone, fibers and other parts that are fit to be abandoned. The books on topics of material enjoyment such as hunting, karma, *jñāna*, yoga, or devotion mixed with these things are full of useless elements. However, in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* there are no such despicable elements. Its sweet succulent mellow is always relishable, even after liberation. And the truly liberated souls are those who always relish the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*.

There are those who, instead of listening to the *Bhāgavata* discourses of liberated *paramahansa vaiṣṇavas*, make a fuss of listening to the lectures on *Bhāgavatam* given by professional persons and others that are full of tendencies that are harmful to the culture of true well being in order to gain some sensuous gratification through the poetic, literary, grammatical, and other such kinds of false appreciations expressed by these speakers. They are debarred from tasting the pure juicy sweetness of the *Bhāgavatam*, and are deluded to think that the bad or indifferent taste is the *Bhāgavatam*'s true taste. When persons, like Parikshit, who are sure of the temporariness of human life, listen to the *Bhāgavatam* discourse from liberated *paramahansa vaiṣṇavas* like Sri Sukadeva, they become eternal tasters of *bhāgavata-rasa*, absolved from all worldly attachment. The process of *jñāna*, the process of *vairāgya*, and the process of *bhakti* are convergent. They all culminate in *naiṣkarma* (freedom from karma), instead of gratification of the senses.

Weal and woe are two different things. If you roam about for your welfare or happiness, woe is your due. Likewise, it is not proper to hope for the tasty fruit of

pleasure. The karmic rituals laid down in the scriptures are not to be performed by those who are liberated. The fruit of karma is sometimes pleasurable and other times it is bad and painful. The *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* does not inculcate the teaching of karma. The *Bhāgavatam* speaks about the supersoul, God, so that the *jīvas* may achieve the highest good. In it are described *naiṣkarma* and the character of a *paramahansa*, the absolutely selfless devotee of God. The *Bhāgavatam* is to be listened to, to be read well, and to be understood with deep deliberation.¹

We should compare and contrast what the *Bhāgavatam* teaches with what is said in other treatises. If you absorb yourself in books other than the *Bhāgavatam* you will come under the influence of the processes of *karma* and *jñāna*, pleasure and pain, birth and death. Thereby you may get *dharma* (auspiciousness), *artha* (wealth), and *kāma* (fulfillment of desire). One desirous of emancipation may renounce worldly life, but this is not service to God. It is only the devotees that do so. God is not served even by the practice of *aṣṭāṅga-yoga*, which gives various perfections and opulences such as the mystic powers *animā* (the power to become infinitesimal), *laghimā* (the power to become as light as hydrogen), etc. What to speak of the salvationists, who want to get rid of the weal and woe of worldly life and be the recipient of enjoyment in the negative form?

The *Bhāgavatam* speaks of those who have adopted the paths of *karma*, *jñāna* or *yoga* as having taken up the wrong course. Liberation is easily accessible to one who adopts *bhakti*. True well being may not be available when you are the gainer of what is pleasing, because true well being consists in giving pleasure to God. A devotee says, "I must do service to God. He may accept it or reject it." This is true *bhakti*. 

— From *Sri Chaitanya's Teachings*. Edited by Sri Bhakti Vilas Tirtha Goswami Maharaja. Sree Gaudiya Math. Madras. Page 238-241

¹ Footnote in the original:

*śrīmad-bhāgavatam purāṇam amalāṁ yad vaiṣṇavānām priya
yasmīn pāramahāṁsyam ekam amalāṁ jñānaṁ paraṁ gīyate
tatra jñāna-virāga-bhakti-sahitam naiṣkarmyam āviṣkṛtam
tac chṛṇvan su-paṭhan vicāraṇa-paro bhaktyā vimucyen narah*

Śrīmad Bhāgavatam is the spotless *Purāṇa*. It is most dear to the *vaiṣṇavas* because it describes the pure and supreme knowledge of the *paramahāṁsas*. This *Bhāgavatam* reveals the means for becoming free from all material work, together with the processes of transcendental knowledge, renunciation and devotion. Anyone who seriously tries to understand *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, who properly hears and chants it with devotion, becomes completely liberated. — *Bhāg.* 12.13.18.



Bhaktivinoda-vāṇī-vaibhava is a collection of the teachings of Srila Thakur Bhaktivinode compiled by Sri Sundarananda Vidyavinode, a prominent disciple of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur, and published in 1938. The book is in the form of a series of questions composed by the compiler, with answers extracted from Thakur Bhaktivinode's teachings. The following are some extracts from chapter 38.

What is the true statement and commentary on Vedānta?

Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, composed by Vyasadeva, is the only commentary on Vedānta-sūtra. All the conclusions of Śrīmad Bhāgavatam are the true conclusions of Vedānta. Sriman Mahaprabhu said that when the author himself writes the commentary, the true meaning is derived. Therefore everyone should accept the commentary Śrīmad Bhāgavatam to be the statements of Vedānta. (Sajjana-toṣaṇī 2.6)

What is the beauty of Śrīmad Bhāgavatam?

The Bhāgavata does not allow its followers to ask anything from God except eternal love for Him. (The Bhāgavata: Its Philosophy, Its Ethics & Its Theology)

By whose character is the identification of Śrīmad Bhāgavatam illustrated?

When we were in the college, reading philosophical works of the West and exchanging thoughts with the thinkers of the day, we had a real hatred toward the Bhāgavata. The great work looked like a collection of wicked and stupid ideas,

scarcely adapted to the nineteenth century, and we hated to hear any arguments in its favor. To us, then, the volumes of Channing, Parker, Emerson, and Newman had more weight than all the vaiṣṇava books. Greedily we poured over the various commentaries of the Bible and of the labors of the Tattva Bodhini Sabha, which contained extracts from the Upaniṣads and the Vedānta. But no work of the vaiṣṇavas had any favor with us.

When we advanced in age and our religious sentiment developed, we turned to our own belief and prayed, as Jesus prayed in the garden. Accidentally we came across a book about the great Chaitanya, and on reading it with some attention in order to settle the historical position of that mighty genius of Nadia, we had the opportunity of gathering his explanation of the *Bhāgavata* given to the wrangling Vedantists of the Benares school. This accidental study created within us a love for all the works that we find about our Eastern Savior. With difficulty, we gathered the famous *kaḍacas*, diaries, in Sanskrit written by the disciples of Chaitanya. The explanations of the *Bhāgavata* that we got from these sources were of such a charming character that we secured a copy of the complete *Bhāgavata*. We studied its texts (difficult of course for those not trained in philosophical thoughts) with the assistance of the famous commentaries of Sridhar Swami. From such study we have gathered the real doctrines of the *vaiṣṇavas*. Oh! What a trouble to get rid of prejudices gathered in unripe years! (*The Bhāgavata: Its Philosophy, Its Ethics & Its Theology*)

Is Śrīmad Bhāgavatam a man-written, modern book?

Śrīmad Bhāgavatam is not a recent book. It is eternal and ancient like the *Vedas*. Respected Sridhar Swami has confirmed the eternality of the *Bhāgavatam* by using the words *tārāṅkuraḥ sajjaniḥ*. *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* has been accepted as the supreme fruit of the Vedic desire tree:

*nigama-kalpa-taror galitaṁ phalaṁ
śuka-mukhād amṛta-drava-saṁyutam
pibata bhāgavataṁ rasam ālayaṁ
muhur aho rasikā bhuvī bhāvukāḥ*

O expert and thoughtful men, relish *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, the mature fruit of the desire tree of Vedic literatures. It emanated from the lips of Sri Sukadev Goswami. Therefore this fruit has become even more tasteful, although its nectarean juice was already relishable for all, including liberated souls. (*Bhāg*. 1.1.3)

From *praṇava* (*om*) came *Gāyatrī*, from *Gāyatrī* came the *Vedas*, from the *Vedas* came the *Brahma-sūtra*, and from the *Brahma-sūtra* came *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, which is known as *Paramahansa-saṁhitā*. *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, which has brightly risen like a *sac-cid-ānanda* sun after being reflected through the *samādhi* of the author, consists of inconceivable topics related to the Supreme Truth. Those who have eyes should see, those who have ears

should hear, and those who have minds should meditate on the topics of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. People infected by the blindness of prejudice are deprived of the sweet taste of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. (*Śrī Kṛṣṇa-saṁhitā*, introduction)

Why are the identity and glories of Śrīmad Bhāgavatam hidden from the materialists and the foreigners?

“What sort of thing is the *Bhāgavata*?” asks a European gentleman newly arrived in India.


With a serene look, his companion tells him, “The *Bhāgavata* is a book that an Oriya-bearer reads daily in the evening to a number of hearers. It contains jargon of unintelligible and savage writing of those men who paint their noses with some sort of clay or sandalwood, and wear beads all over their bodies to secure salvation for themselves.”

Another of his companions, who has traveled a little in the interior, would immediately contradict him and say, “The *Bhāgavata* is a Sanskrit work claimed by a sect of men, the Goswamis, who give mantras to the common people, like the popes of Italy, and pardon their sins on payment of enough gold to pay their social expenses.”

A third gentleman will give a third explanation. A young Bengali, chained up in English thoughts and ideas and wholly ignorant of the pre-Mohammedan history of his own country, will add one more explanation. He will say, “The *Bhāgavata* is a book containing an account of the life of Krishna, who was an ambitious and immoral man!” This is all that he could gather from his grandmother before he went to school.

Thus, the great *Bhāgavata* remains unknown to the foreigners, like the elephant of the six blind men who caught hold of different parts of the body of the beast! But truth is eternal and is never injured but for awhile by ignorance. (*The Bhāgavata: Its Philosophy, Its Ethics & Its Theology*)

What did Sri Bhaktivinode say regarding the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam being the only book that is beneficial for all?

We can say that if all the religious scriptures of the Hindus are thrown into the ocean and only the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* is kept aside, there will be no harm for the *āryans* or the ordinary living entities. (*Sajjana-toṣaṇī* 8.12) 

— *Bhaktivinode-vāṇī-vaibhava*. English Translation by Bhumipati Das. Touchstone Media. Vrindavan. 2002.

THE DANGERS OF READING SRIMAD BHAGAVATAM

While instructing Srila Sanatan Goswami on the sixty-four kinds of devotional activity Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu emphasized five items:

*sādhū-saṅga, nāma-kīrtana, bhāgavata-śravaṇa
mathurā-vāsa, śrī-mūrtira śraddhāya sevana*

One should associate with devotees, chant the holy name of the Lord, hear Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, reside at Mathura, and worship the deity with faith and veneration. (Cc. madhya 22.128)

*sakala-sādhana-śreṣṭha ei pañca aṅga
kṛṣṇa-prema janmāya ei pāncera alpā saṅga*

These five limbs of devotional service are the best of all. Even a slight performance of these five awakens love for Krishna. (Cc. madhya 22.129)

In his purport to this verse, Srila A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada quotes Srila Rupa Goswami from *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, (1.2.93):

*aṅgānām pañcakasyāsya pūrva-vilikhitasya ca
nikhīla-śraīṣṭhya-bodhāya punar apy atra śamsanam*

The glorification of these five items [association with devotees, chanting the holy name, and so on] is to make known the complete superiority of these five practices of devotional service.

Later in the same section of *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* quoted above by Srila Prabhupada, Srila Rupa Goswami discusses more about the *Bhāgavatam* and the other four items mentioned above.

*durūhādbhuta-vīrye 'smin śraddhā dūre 'stu pañcaka
yatra svalpo 'pi sambandhaḥ sad-dhiyām bhāva-janmane*

These last five practices have such extraordinary and incomprehensible power that what to speak of having absolute faith in them, even a little practice of them can grant love for Krishna (*bhāva*) in the pure heart of a devotee. (1.2.238)

*smerām bhaṅgī-traya-paricitām sāci-vistīrṇa-dṛṣṭīm
vaṁśī-nyastādharā-kīśalayām ujvalām candrakena
govindākhyām hari-tanum itaḥ keśi-tīrthopakāṅṭhe
mā prekṣiṣṭhās tava yadi sakhe bandhu-sange 'sti raṅgaḥ*

My dear friend, if you are indeed attached to your worldly friends, do not look at the smiling face of Lord Govinda as he stands on the bank of the Yamuna at Keshighat. Casting sidelong glances, he places his flute to his lips, which seem like newly blossomed twigs. His transcendental body, bending in three places, appears very bright in the moonlight. (1.2.239)

*śaṅke nītāḥ sapadi daśama-skandha-padyāvalinām
varṇāḥ karṇādhvani paṭhi katāmānuṣurvyād bhavadbhiḥ
harīho dimbhāḥ parama-śubhadān hanta dharmārtha-kāmān
yad garhantaḥ sukhamayam amī mokṣam apy akṣipanti*

You foolish children! It seems that you have let the syllables of the tenth canto's verses enter the pathways of your ears. Why else would you show such profound aversion for those most auspicious goals of religiosity, economic development, and sense gratification and also deride that supremely blissful state of liberation? (1.2.240)

The following are commentaries by some of our ācāryas on these last two verses from Śrī Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu:

Srila Jiva Goswami:

When one uses words of criticism to in fact highly praise something it is called “*vyāja-stuti*” — literally, “glorification in disguise”. This is a literary embellishment called *aprastuta-praśamsā-alāṅkāra*, indirect expression.

Verse 239 instructs that if one wants to enjoy mundane relationships in this world they should not see Lord Govinda on the banks of the Yamuna at Keshighat. The real intention of the verse is not to dissuade one from seeing Krishna; its purpose is to glorify Krishna's form and the far greater happiness obtained by seeing it. In a similar way, verse 240 describes the first three goals of life as “most auspicious” and liberation as “supremely blissful”, while it addresses one who reads or listens to the tenth canto as being “a child” or “unintelligent”. However, the real point is to indicate the supreme importance of reading or listening to the tenth canto of the *Bhāgavatam*. Thus, in both of these verses the seeming criticisms actually constitute the greatest praise.

Srila Mukunda Das Goswami
(disciple of Srila Krishnadas
Kaviraj Goswami):

In verse 240, the word “*ḍimbhā*”, “child” or “infant”, indicates that hearing the *Bhāgavatam* can be effective even for one who has no preliminary faith. While the words “*karnādhvani pathikatām*”, “travelers on the pathway of your ears”, indicate that the hearing can be effective even if not done with concentrated attention and even if done inadvertently or superficially.

Since the hearer is said to have denounced *mokṣa*, this indicates the awakening of *bhāva*.

Srila Viswanatha Chakravarti:

The phrase “*varṇā eva karnādhvani pathikatām*” means that the sounds alone entered their ears, but not necessarily an understanding of the meaning of those sounds. If merely listening to the words of the *Bhāgavatam* is so significant, then what to speak of knowing their meaning? Such are the glories of the *Bhāgavatam*! Even the uneducated who cannot understand the meaning of the words are so much influenced by the statements of the tenth canto that simply by listening alone they begin to criticize the fruits of *dharma*, *artha* and *kāma* and deny to accept even the *brahmānanda* of *mokṣa*!

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Sukadev Goswami speaking Śrīmad Bhāgavatam to Maharaja Parikshit

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Sanatan Goswami's Love For the Bhagavatam

*praṇaṇaḥ premāṇaṁ prabhavati sadā bhāgavata-bhāk
parācīno janmāvadhi-bhava-rasād bhakti-madhurāḥ
ciraṁ ko 'pi śrīmān jayati viditaḥ sākaratayā
dhurīṇo dhīrāṇām adhi-dharaṇi vaiyāsakir iva*

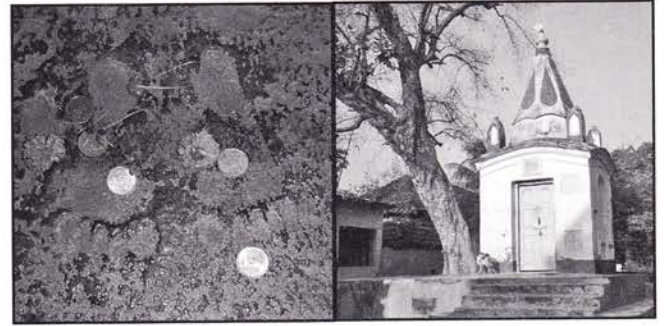
Glories forever more to the great soul known as *sākara* (Sanatan Goswami), who is filled with purest love for the Lord, who is learned in *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, who from his very birth was indifferent to the pleasures of this material world, who tastes the sweetness of devotional service, who is the leader of the devotees, and who is like Sukadev Goswami present here on earth!

Srila Sanatan Goswami had a special relationship with the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* that extended throughout his entire life. This is illustrated from the above verse of *Hamsadūta* (text 141), a book that was written by Srila Rupa Goswami before Sanatan and he had ever met Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.

During this earlier period, the two brothers were known as Sri Amara Dev (Sanatan) and Sri Santosh Dev (Rupa). They were ministers in the government of the Muslim ruler of Bengal, the Nawab Hussain Shah. As chief minister under the nawab, Sanatan Goswami held the title of *sākara mallika*, and as private secretary, Rupa Goswami held the title of *dabhir khāsa*.¹

Sri Amar Dev, Sri Santosh Dev, and their younger brother Vallabha (later known as Anupama) were staying at Ramakeli, which at the time was the capital of Gaudadesha. "Rāmakeli" means "the pastimes of Lord Rama". It is an ancient holy place where it is said that Lord Rama performed pastimes in *Tretā-yuga*. Vallabha's son, who became known as Srila Jiva Goswami, was born in Ramakeli.

Absorbed in thought of Krishna's pastimes from his early childhood, Sanatan constructed a replica of Vrindavan in Ramakeli. He established the deity of Sri Madan Mohan and had a number of tanks dug that he named after some of the principal sacred ponds in Vrindavan, such as Radha Kund, Shyama Kund, Lalita Kund, Vishakha Kund, and others. Around these lakes he planted trees that were native to Vrindavan, such as Keli-kadamba and Tamal. In *Bhakti-ratnākara* (1.604-605), Srila Narahari Chakravarti describes how after constructing his miniature Vrindavan, Sanatan would sit under a Kadamba tree on the bank of Shyama Kund and chant and cry.



Local tradition describes that it was in the autumn of 1514 when Lord Chaitanya visited Ramakeli and gave his mercy to Rupa and Sanatan Goswamis. When he was starting to leave, the brothers asked him, "How will we live after you go?" Mahaprabhu then put his feet on a stone and left his footprints. Those footprints are seen above on the left. On the right is a small temple built over them by Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur.



Left: Deities of Nityananda, Mahaprabhu and Adwaita established by Rupa and Sanatan in Ramakeli. **Right:** A small shrine marking the place where Lord Nityananda sat during his visit to Ramakeli.

Bhakti-ratnākara (1.531-535) relates an event from the early life of Srila Sanatan Goswami:

*śrī sanātanera ati adbhuta carita
śrīmad-bhāgavate yāṇra atisāya prīta*

Sri Sanatan was a wonderful personality who had great love for the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*.

*prathama bayase svapne eka vipravara
śrīmad bhāgavata dei ānanda antara*

When he was young, a *brahmāṇa* appeared to him in a dream and blissfully gave him a *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*.

*svapnabhāṅge sanātana vyākula ha-ilā
prāte sei vipra śrīmad-bhāgavata dilā*

When he woke from the dream he was quite perturbed. Then later that morning the same *brahmāṇa* came and gave him the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*.



*pāiyā śrī bhāgavata mahā-harṣa-cite
magna hailā prabhu premāmṛta-samudrete*

When he obtained the *Bhāgavatam*, Sanatan became ecstatic and merged into the ocean of *prema*.

*śrīmad bhāgavata-artha yaiche āsvādila
tāhā śrī-vaiṣṇava-toṣanīte prakāśila*

The meanings he relished from the *Bhāgavatam* he revealed in his commentary called *Śrī Vaiṣṇava-toṣanī*.

After this incident took place, Sanatan is said to have begun reading *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* daily. Later, while in Kashi, Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu gave personal instructions to Sanatan about the essence of the *Bhāgavatam*. Based on these teachings, Sanatan later composed *Dig-darśanī-ṭīpikā*, a commentary on *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*, a commentary on the tenth canto of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* known as *Vaiṣṇava-toṣanī*, and *Bṛhād-bhāgavatāmṛta*.

Notes

¹ In *The Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana*, Sri O. B. L. Kapoor has written: “*dabhir khāsa*” is derived from the Persian word “*dabir-i-khāsa*”, meaning “private secretary”. “*Malik*” is an Arabic word meaning “king”, and “*sākara*” is derived from the Arabic “*sāgira*”, which means “sub” or “under” — that is, next to the king. Sometimes there is confusion as to who had which title. However, from the following references it is clear that Rupa had the title *dabhir khāsa* and Sanatan had the title *sākara mallika*: Cc. *madhya* 1.175, Cb. *antya* 9.237, and Cb. *antya* 9.239.

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All pictures are in Ramakeli. Above left: Radha Kund established by Sanatan Goswami. Above right: Ruins of the sabha of Nawab Hussain Shah. Middle left: Prison where Sanatan Goswami was kept by the Nawab. Middle right: Deity of Lord Chaitanya established by Jiva Goswami. Bottom right: Sri Madan Mohan established by Sanatan Goswami.

PRAYERS TO THE BHAGAVATAM

BY SRILA SANATAN GOSWAMI

Śrī Kṛṣṇa-līlā-stava, texts 412-416

In his purport to Cc. antya 4.222, Srila Prabhupada mentions *Kṛṣṇa-līlā-stava*:

The Bhakti-ratnākara refers to the following books by Srila Sanatan Goswami: (1) the *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta*, (2) the *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* and his commentary known as *Dig-darsinī*, (3) the [*Kṛṣṇa*] *Līlā-stava* and (4) the commentary on the tenth canto of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* known as *Vaiṣṇava-toṣaṇī*. Sanatan Goswami compiled many, many books, all with the aim of describing how to serve the principal deities of Vrindavan, Govinda and Madana-gopal.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa-līlā-stava is a long prayer written by Srila Sanatan Goswami describing Krishna. It consists of 108 obeisances to different forms of Krishna.

For many years this book was lost to the world, but it was rediscovered by Sri Haridas Das of Nabadwip (1898-1957). Following the order of his guru, Haridas Das was engaged in finding and publishing old books of the Goswamis. It is said that although he tried his best to find a copy of Srila Sanatan Goswami's *Śrī Kṛṣṇa-līlā-stava*, he was unable to do so. This caused him unbearable grief, and he gave up sleep and cried day and night. One day he sat by the bank of the Yamuna in Vrindavan and began crying, "Ha prabhu Sanatan! Ha prabhu Sanatan!" Suddenly he saw a bundle floating by in the river. Curious, he waded out and picked it up. Upon opening the bundle he saw amidst many other papers an original copy of *Śrī Kṛṣṇa-līlā-stava* in Sanatan Goswami's personal handwriting. Haridas Das happily printed the book. The original copy of that book in Sanatan Goswami's writing is still present today at the Haribol Kutir in Nabadwip.

The following is the section of *Kṛṣṇa-līlā-stava* that describes the glories of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*:

*sarva-sāstrābdhi-pīyūṣa sarva-vedaika-sat-phala
sarva-siddhānta-ratnāḍhya sarva-lokaika-dṛk-prada*

*sarva-bhāgavata-prāṇa śrīmad-bhāgavata prabho
kali-dhvāntoditāditya śrī-kṛṣṇa-parivartita*

O *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*! O nectar churned from the ocean of all the Vedic scriptures! You are the most prominent transcendental fruit of the Vedas and are enriched with the jewels of all philosophical conclusions. You grant spiritual vision to all people of the world and are the very life-breath of the *vaiṣṇava* devotees. O Lord,

you are the sun which has risen to dispel the darkness of *kali-yuga*. Actually, you are Lord Krishna, who has returned among us.

*paramānanda-pāṭhāya prema-varṣy-akṣarāya te
sarvadā sarva-sevyāya śrī-kṛṣṇāya namo 'stu me*

O *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*! I offer respectful obeisances unto you. By your recitation one attains transcendental bliss, because your syllables shower down pure love of God. You are to be served by everyone, always, for you are an incarnation of Lord Krishna.

*mad-eka-bandho mat-saṅgin mad-guro man-mahā-dhana
man-niṣṭāraka mad-bhāgya mad-ānanda namo 'stu te*

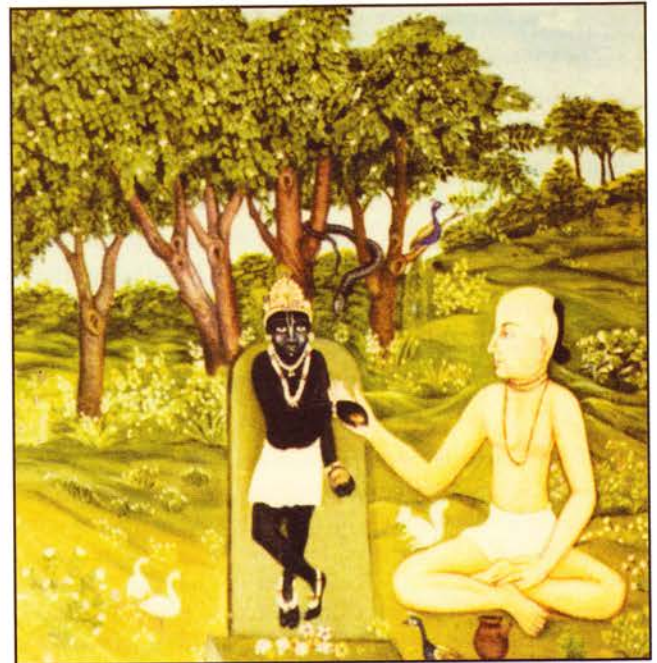
O *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*! O my only friend, my companion, and my teacher! O my great wealth and deliverer! O my good fortune and bliss! I offer respectful obeisances unto you.

*asādhu-sādhutā-dāyinn ati-nīccatā-kara
hā na muñca kadācin mām premnā hṛt-kaṅṭhayoḥ sphura*

O *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, O bestower of saintliness to the unsaintly! O lifter of the most fallen! Please never leave me! Accompanied by pure love of Krishna, please manifest yourself in my heart and throat. 🍌

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Srila Sanatan Goswami and Madan Mohan

THE DWARKA QUEENS HEAR BHAGAVATAM

ADAPTED FROM THE VAIṢṆAVA-KHAṆḌA OF SKANDA PURĀṆA CHAPTERS ONE AND THREE

After Krishna's disappearance from this world, his queens came to Vraja where Vajranabh, Krishna's great-grandson, was protecting them. One day, while being tormented by the pain of separation from Krishna, they noticed that their co-wife Kalindi was happy. Without succumbing to jealousy, they inquired from her, "You are a wife of Krishna just like the rest of us. We, however, are distressed by the misery of separation while you are not. Please explain this."

UDDHAVA'S REMEDY

Kalindi smiled and told them, "Sri Radhika is the very self of self-satisfied Krishna. It is on the strength of being situated in her service that the pain of separation does not affect us. All of Krishna's consorts are her partial expansions. His eternal pleasures go on by virtue of her being present. He is she, and she is he. His flute is the very form of their love. [I served Radha Krishna in Vrindavan as the Yamuna river and] eager to continue serving the two of them, I

have assumed a different form and have joined you. Thus you see me here. Actually, you are never separated from Krishna. Unaware of this you are experiencing distress. Previously the *gopīs* also felt the pain of separation when Akrura came here. [I experienced how] Uddhava spoke to the *gopīs* and remedied that pain. If you good women were to meet the same Uddhava then you could surely achieve eternal enjoyment with your beloved."

Very eager to regain the association of their dearest, Krishna's wives further inquired from the placid Kalindi, "O friend, you are most fortunate to not be feeling deprived of your beloved. Because your life is so successful we want to be your maidservants. If we could only find Uddhava, everything we desire would be achieved. So please tell us, dear Kalindi, how can we meet him?"

Kalindi said, "As he was departing this world, Krishna instructed Uddhava to stay at Badari in the Himalayas. There, Uddhava is present in his manifest form, teaching spiritual wisdom to the world. But earlier Krishna granted him Vraja-bhumi with all its secrets as the land of his perfection. Even now at the *gopīs*' place near Govardhan Hill, Uddhava is present in an unseen way in the form of sprouting plants and creepers, eager to obtain dust touched by the *gopīs*."



Kusam Sarovar

KIRTAN AT GOVARDHAN

In the company of Maharaja Parikshit and Vajranabh, the queens set out to find Uddhava. In the Vrindavan forest, not far from Govardhan, by the lake known as Kusum Sarovar, they began a great festival of *kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtana*. That *kīrtana* was tumultuous. Feeling great separation from Krishna, everyone emotionally sang poems and devotional songs and played on *vīṇās*, flutes and *mṛdaṅgas*. The *kīrtana* was so splendid that



Deity of Uddhava at Kusum Sarovar, said to have been established about 5,000 years ago by Vrajanabh, Krishna's great-grandson

the pastimes of Krishna, the beloved of Vrishabhanu's daughter, seemed to become manifest. Suddenly, as everyone watched, Uddhava came out of a grove of bushes and creepers. He wore a flower garland, had a dark-blue complexion, and wore a yellow garment. Wearing a necklace of *guñjā* berries, he was constantly singing about the darling of the cowherd girls. With his arrival, the *saṅkīrtana* festival reached a peak of splendor. He glowed like a jewel embedded in a crystal tower caught in the rays of the moon. Seeing him, they all became submerged in an ocean of joy and forgot everything else. After a moment they regained their external awareness. Observing that Uddhava's appearance was exactly like Sri Krishna's, they worshiped him. They thought that now their cherished desire was fulfilled.

Finding all of them absorbed in *kṛṣṇa-kīrtana*, Uddhava offered his respects. He then embraced Maharaja Parikshit and addressed him. Uddhava said, "O king, you are most fortunate. You are always full in exclusive



Photo by Bhaktisiddhanta Swami

Temple at Surabhi Van by Govinda Kund at Govardhan Hill

devotion to Krishna. Indeed, your mind is merged completely in the festival of *kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtana*. By the favor of fortune you have inspired pure love in Krishna's wives and in Vajranabh. Among all the inhabitants of Dwarka, these queens are without a doubt the most fortunate. The Lord ordered Arjuna to settle them in Vraja. Under the influence of Krishna's *yogamāyā* potency these queens have forgotten themselves and are suffering anxiety caused by separation from Krishna. Unless Krishna becomes visible to them, none of them will regain their proper consciousness. But Krishna has wound up his pastimes and is no longer externally manifest in this world. That time is finished, and now we have entered a different age. However, listen and I will tell you another way. He can be visible through the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*.



Uddhava Kund (above) and Kusum Sarovar are part of the same area where Uddhava is said to have spoken Bhāgavatam to the queens

THE GLORIOUS BHAGAVATAM

*śrīmad-bhāgavatam śāstram yatra bhāgavatāir yadā
kīrtiyate śrūyate cāpi śrī-kṛṣṇas tatra niścitam*

Wherever and whenever devotees of Bhagavan recite and listen to the scripture *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, there for certain Sri Krishna is present. (3.12)

*śrīmad-bhāgavatam yatra ślokaṁ ślokārdham eva ca
tatrāpi bhagavān kṛṣṇo ballavibhir virājate*

Wherever a single verse or even half a verse of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* is heard, the Personality of Godhead Krishna shines forth along with the *gopīs*. (3.13)

*bhārate mānavam janma prāpya bhāgavatam na yaiḥ
śrutaṁ pāpa-parādhīnair ātma-ghātas tu taiḥ kṛtaḥ*

Those who have taken a human birth in the land of Bharat but have not heard the *Bhāgavatam* are slaves of sin and commit spiritual suicide. (3.14)

*śrīmad-bhāgavatam śāstram nityam yaiḥ parisevitam
pitur mātuś ca bhāryāyāḥ kula-panktiḥ su-tārītā*

The fathers, mothers, wives and whole family lines of those who regularly serve the scripture *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* are all easily delivered from material existence. (3.15)

*vidyā-prakāśo viprāṇām rājñām śatru-jayo viśām
dhanam svāsthyam ca śūdrāṇām śrīmad-bhāgavatād bhavet*

On the strength of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, *brāhmaṇas* develop wisdom, kings conquer their enemies, *vaiśyas* gain wealth, and *śūdras* become prosperous. (3.16)

*yoṣitām apareṣām ca sarva-vāñchita-pūraṇam
ato bhāgavatam nityam ko na seveta bhāgyavān*

Women and others obtain everything they desire. Thus, what fortunate person would fail to regularly serve the *Bhāgavatam*? (3.17)

*aneka-janma-saṁsiddheḥ śrīmad-bhāgavatam labhet
prakāśo bhagavad-bhakter udbhavas tatra jāyate*

As the perfection of many lifetimes one may obtain *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. In it the revelation of devotion to the Supreme Lord is born. (3.18)

BRAHMA, VISHNU AND SHIVA

Uddhava continued, “In the past, Brihaspati received *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* by the grace of Sankhyayan, and Brihaspati gave it to me. Because of this I have become dear to Krishna. Now, O Vishnurata, [A name for Maharaja Parikshit meaning “one who is always protected by Vishnu”.] hear from me a narration I heard from Brihaspati. From this account you can understand the disciplic succession of this Vedic text, the *Bhāgavatam*.

“Sri Brihaspati said, ‘When Krishna, assuming the form of the Lord of *māyā*, the *puruṣa*, glanced at her, Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva appeared along with the modes of passion, goodness and ignorance. These three persons rose up and the Lord assigned them their responsibilities to work for generation, protection and destruction. Brahma then took another birth from the lotus growing from the Lord’s navel and inquired from the Lord.

“Sri Brahma said, ‘O Narayan, original person, supreme soul! My obeisances unto you. You have engaged



Sri Sri Radha Uddhava Bihari, at Uddhava Kund. These deities are said to have been established about 5,000 years ago by Vrajanabh, Krishna’s great-grandson



The gopīs in separation from Krishna

me in creating. By remembrance of you and by your mercy, O master, may the sinful mode of passion not obstruct me.”

“Sri Brihaspati said, ‘When at that time, long ago, the Personality of Godhead taught him *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, he told him, ‘Dear Brahma, serve this scripture to achieve your perfection.’ Most pleased, Brahma took the *Bhāgavatam* and instituted the constant performance of the seven-day recital for achieving Krishna and destroying the seven coverings of material existence. Attaining all his desires by observing the seven-day recital of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, Brahma expands the creation regularly, week after week, again and again.

“Vishnu also prayed to the Supreme Person for achieving his personal goal, since the Lord had appointed him to maintain those who are born into the universe. Sri Vishnu said, ‘O Lord, as is fit, I am going to protect the universe’s progeny by the paths of fruitive work and renunciation motivated by the goals of good karma and knowledge. Whenever, in the course of time, the principles of religion will decline, I will re-establish

dharma by various incarnations. I will bestow the sure fruits of sacrifices and other works to those who hanker for sense gratification, and the five kinds of liberation to the renunciants who desire them. But how can I maintain those who do not want even liberation? How will I maintain goddess Sri and myself? Please tell me.”

“That original person then taught Vishnu the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. He told him, ‘Study this scripture to achieve all your goals.’ Hearing that, Vishnu felt satisfied in his heart and became competent to maintain the living beings for their ultimate success. In the company of goddess Sri he remembered the *Bhāgavatam* month after month. When Vishnu himself is the speaker and Lakshmi is intent on listening, the hearing of the *Bhāgavatam* is completed in one month. When Lakshmi herself is the speaker and Vishnu is eager to hear, the relishing of the book takes two months. Then it is especially wonderful. When Vishnu can properly assume his responsibilities, Lakshmi’s mind becomes free from worry. Thus she is seen constantly relishing the *Bhāgavatam*.

“Then Rudra, appointed to the task of destruc-

श्री कृष्णकथामृत

tion, also prayed to the Supreme Lord to increase his ability to do his duty. Sri Rudra said, “O Lord of lords, my master, I possess the powers for constant and occasional destruction. I lack the power, however, for ultimate destruction. This causes me great distress, and so I am praying to you.”

“Sri Brihaspati said, ‘Lord Narayan also gave Rudra the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. By serving it, he conquered the mode of ignorance. Lord Sadashiva observed the recitation of the *Bhāgavatam* in the course of one year, and then he obtained the power for ultimate destruction.’”

SPEAKING TO THE GOPIS

Uddhava said, “Hearing this narration from my guru in glorification of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, and obtaining the *Bhāgavatam* from him, I became joyful and bowed down to him. Thereafter I accepted the vaiṣṇava custom of relishing *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* in one month, and I observed the custom correctly. In the course of that one month I became a dear friend of Krishna. Krishna engaged me in visiting his beloved girlfriends in Vraja. He who is always enjoying with the *gopīs* personally sent them the message of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* through my mouth. Receiving this message according to their own understanding, the *gopīs* became freed from the pain of separation. I could not understand the mystery of this, but I saw the surprise they exhibited. After Brahma and the other demigods prayed to Krishna that he return to his residence in the spiritual sky, and after they departed, Krishna personally bestowed this mystery on me through the medium of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. He perfectly imparted this knowledge to me while sitting at the base of a banyan tree. Thus I now dwell among the creepers of Vraja even after having gone to Badari. Therefore, by my desire, I always live here at Narada Kund [near to Kusum Sarovar at Govardhan Hill]. Krishna reveals himself to his devotees through *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. So to achieve the purposes of these devotees I am going to speak *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. You should help me.”

Hearing this, Vishnurata bowed down to Uddhava and said, “O Haridas, please recite *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. I am ready to carry out your order in whatever you need me for. I am ready to help you.”

SUBDUING KALI

Uddhava felt pleased, and said, “Now that Sri Krishna has abandoned the earth, Kali will become a strong force on its surface. He will create great disturbances as unwanted population increases. Therefore, please go conquer all the directions and subdue Kali. Meanwhile I will observe this one-month *vaiṣṇava* custom. With your

assistance I will thus disseminate the relishing of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. Thereby I will help these devotees attain the eternal abode of the enemy of Madhu.”

Hearing these words, the king became happy and also anxious. He revealed his mind to Uddhava, “Obeying your command, I will certainly subdue Kali. But how will I obtain *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*? You should be merciful to me because I have taken shelter at your feet.”

Uddhava said, “O king, you should not worry for any reason. You are the most qualified person to hear the *Bhāgavatam*. Time has so advanced that now most humans, addicted to material work, have not even heard of the *Bhāgavatam* śruti. By your grace many humans in this land of Bharat will obtain *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* and thus achieve perpetual happiness. The great, powerful sage Sri Suka is the very image of the son of Nanda. There is no doubt that he will recite *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* for you. By this, O king, you will attain the eternal abode of the Lord of Vraja. And thenceforth *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* will be transmitted throughout the world. So please go, ruler of kings, and subdue Kali.” King Parikshit circumambulated Uddhava and went off to conquer the directions.

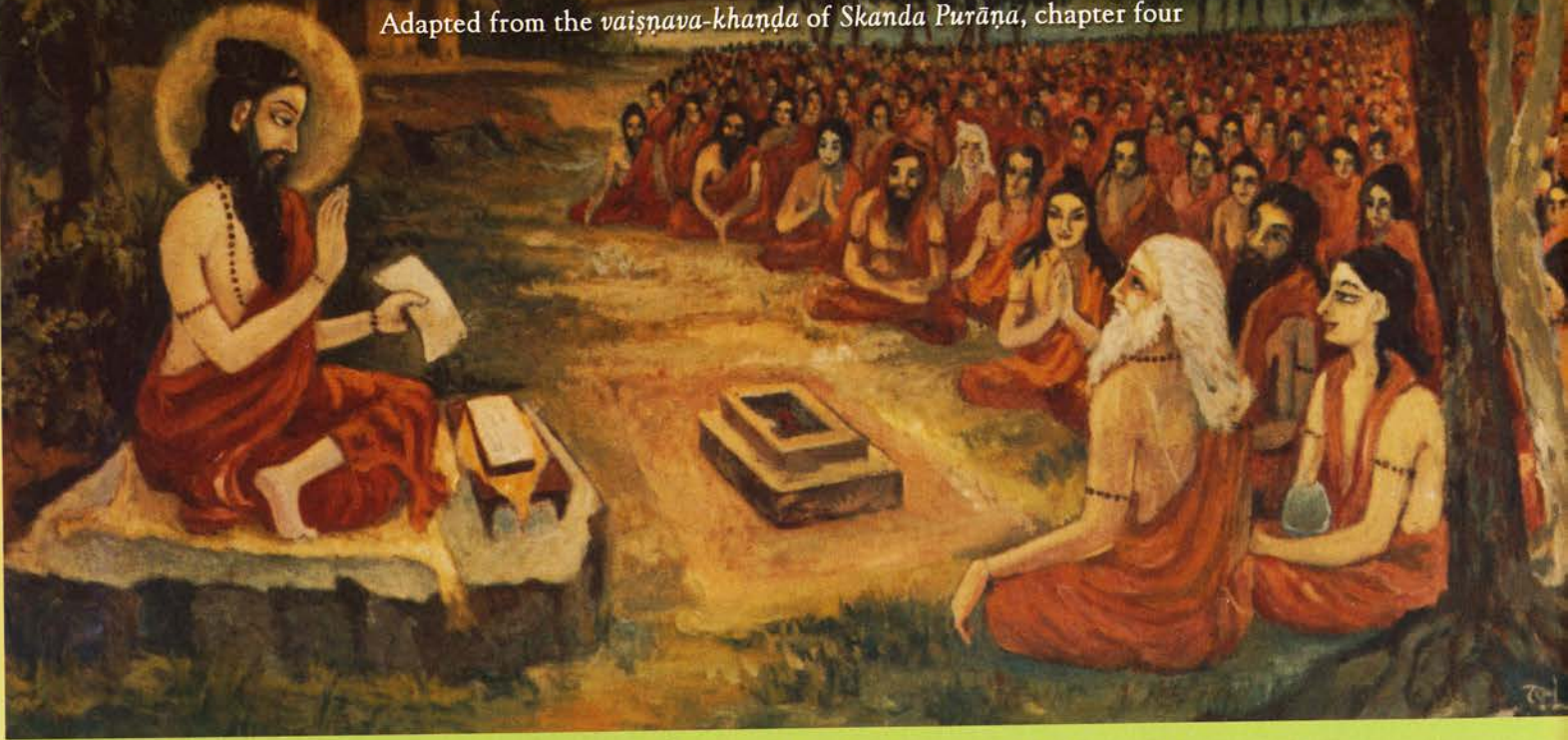
UDDHAVA SPEAKS BHAGAVATAM

Vajranabh, meanwhile, designated his son Pratibahu to rule the kingdom. He then remained in that place with his mothers, desiring to hear the *Bhāgavatam*. Thus Uddhava conducted the relishing of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* for one month in the Vrindavan forest near Govardhan. As this relishing went on, the pastimes of Hari revealed themselves all around in their transcendental form of eternity, knowledge and bliss. Krishna also revealed himself. Everyone then saw themselves situated within him, and Vajra saw himself at the right side of Krishna’s lotus feet. As Vajra became free from the bereavement of separation from Krishna, he and his mothers appeared splendid in that holy land, which exhibits for Krishna the nighttime of his *rāsa-līlā*. They saw themselves as rays of the moon’s effulgence and were astonished. Cured of the disease of separation from their beloved, they returned to their eternal abode. They and all the others there who belonged to Krishna’s eternal pastimes suddenly disappeared from the sight of ordinary people. In the groves around Govardhan, among the cows in Vrindavan and other forests, they enjoy eternally with Krishna. Those who are fully dedicated to loving Krishna can see them. Anyone who hears or chants about how these devotees attained the Personality of Godhead will also attain him and be relieved of all distress. 🍌

— Translation by Gopiparanadhana Das © 2002 Bhaktivedanta Book Trust

The Glories of Srimad Bhagavatam

Adapted from the *vaiṣṇava-khaṇḍa* of *Skanda Purāṇa*, chapter four



The sages at Naimisharanya inquire from Srila Suta Goswami

The sages at Naimisharanya said, “Suta! May you live long, and may you long instruct us. These glories of Śrīmad Bhāgavatam we have heard from your mouth are unique. Please tell us just what the Bhāgavatam is, what its extent is, and what is the method for studying it. Also describe to us, Suta, the qualifications of its speaker and listener.”

Suta Goswami replied as follows:

*śrīmad-bhāgavatasyātha śrīmad-bhagavataḥ sadā
svarūpam ekam evāsti sac-cid-ānanda-lakṣaṇam*

The identities of Śrīmad Bhāgavatam and Sri Bhagavan are always one and the same. They can be described as eternal knowledge and bliss. (4.3)

*śrī-kṛṣṇāsakta-bhaktānām tan-mādhurya-prakāśakam
samujjīrmbhati yad vākyaṁ viddhi bhāgavatam hi tat*

Know the Bhāgavatam to be a text full of revelations of Sri Krishna’s sweetness for the benefit of the devotees who have attachment to him. (4.4)

*jñāna-vijñāna-bhakti-aṅga-catustaya-param vacaḥ
māyā-mardana-dakṣam ca viddhi bhāgavatam ca tat*

Its words aim at describing the four topics of knowledge, realization, devotion and the limbs of devotional practice. It very expertly subdues illusion. Know this to be the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam. (4.5)

*pramāṇam tasya ko veda hy anantasyākṣarātmanah
brahmaṇe hariṇā tad-dik catuḥ-ślokyā pradarśitā*

Who knows its extent? Indeed, its text goes on without limit. Lord Hari showed a small sample of it to Brahma in four verses. (4.6)

*tad-ānanyāvagāhena svepsitāvahana-kṣamāḥ
ta eva santi bho viprā brahma-viṣṇu-śivādayaḥ*

By diving into its infinity, dear brāhmaṇas, Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva become competent to fulfill their ambitions. (4.7)

*mita-buddhy-ādi-vṛttinām manuṣyāṅām hitāya ca
parikṣic-chuka-saṁvādo yo ’sau vyāsena kīrtitaḥ*

For human beings whose intelligence and other faculties are limited, Vyasa has recited the famous conversation between Parikshit and Sukadev. (4.8)

*grantho ’ṣṭādaśa-sāhasro yo ’sau bhāgavatābhīdhaḥ
kali-grāha-gṛhitānām sa eva paramāśrayaḥ*

This is the book of eighteen thousand verses known as the Bhāgavatam. It is the ultimate shelter for those who are in the grasp of the shark Kali. (4.9)

THE QUALIFIED LISTENERS

*śrotāro ’tha nirūpyante śrīmad-viṣṇu-kathāśrayaḥ
pravaraḥ avarāś ceti śrotāro dvi-vidhā matāḥ*

Now I will describe its hearers. Dedicated to the narrations of Sri Vishnu's glories, these listeners are considered to be of two kinds, superior and inferior. (4.10)

*pravaraś cātako haṁsaḥ śuko mīnādayas tathā
avarā vṛka-bhūruṇḍa-vṛṣoṣṭrādyāḥ prakīrtitāḥ*

The superior hearers are the sparrow, swan, parrot, fish and others. The inferior hearers are called the wolf, *bhūruṇḍa* bird, bull, camel and others. (4.11)

*akhilopekṣayā yas tu kṛṣṇa-śāstra-śrutau vrati
sa cātako yathāmbhoda-mukte pāthasi cātakaḥ*

One who ignores everything else and is only intent on listening to Krishna's scripture is a sparrow, like the sparrow intent on the water released from a cloud. (4.12)

*haṁsaḥ syāt saram ādatte yaḥ śrotā vividhāc chrutāt
dugdhenaikeyam gatāt toyād yathā haṁso 'malam payaḥ*

The swan is he who takes the essence from various scriptures, as a swan extracts pure milk from water mixed with milk. (4.13)

*śukaḥ suṣṭhu mitam vakti vyāsam śrotīmś ca harṣayan
su-pāṭhinaḥ śuko yadvac chikṣakam pārśva-gān api*

By speaking little, only what is appropriate, the parrot pleases Vyasadev, the listeners, the instructor, and the audience who are well engaged in reciting the scripture, just like an ordinary parrot. (4.14)

*śabdaṁ nānimiṣo jātu karoty āsvādayan rasam
śrotā snigdho bhaven mīno mīnaḥ kṣīra-nidhau yathā*

The eager hearer, who while relishing the nectar does not speak for even a moment, is like a fish in the ocean of milk. (4.15)

*yas tudan rasikāñ cchrotīñ virauty aṅṅo vṛko hi saḥ
veṇu-svana-rasāsaktān vṛko 'raṇye mṛgān yathā*

A fool who makes rude comments and gives trouble to the expert hearers is a wolf, just like the wolf in the forest who disturbs the deer engrossed in the beauty of a flute's song. (4.16)

*bhūruṇḍaḥ śikṣayed anyāñ chrutvā na svayam ācaret
yathā himavataḥ śṛṅge bhūruṇḍākhyo vihaṅgamaḥ*

A *bhūruṇḍa* teaches others without himself having actually heard and practiced, like the *bhūruṇḍa* bird on the peaks of the Himalayas. (4.17)

*sarvaṁ śrutam upādatte sārāsārāndha-dhīr vṛṣaḥ
svādu-drākṣām khalim cāpi nirviṣeṣam yathā vṛṣaḥ*

One who accepts everything he hears, blind to what is important or not important, is a bull, like a bull who sees no difference between tasty grapes and dry oil cakes. (4.18)

*sa uṣṭro madhuraṁ muñcan viparite rameta yaḥ
yathā nimbaṁ caraty uṣṭro hitvāmram api tad-yutam*

He who rejects what is sweet and instead takes pleasure in the opposite is like a camel who leaves aside sweet mangos and feeds himself with lemons. (4.19)

*anye 'pi bahavo bheda dvayor bhṛṅga-kharādayaḥ
vijñeyās tat-tad-ācārais tat-tat-prakṛti-sambhavaiḥ*

There are many other varieties of the two kinds of hearers, like the bee and the donkey. They can be understood by their different behaviors, born out of their different characters. (4.20)

*yaḥ sthitvābhikumhaṁ praṇamya vidhivat tyaktānya-vādo harer
lilāḥ śrotum abhīpsate 'ti-niṣuṇo namro 'tha klptāñjaliḥ
śiṣyo viśvasito 'nucintana-paraḥ praśne 'nuraktaḥ śucir
nityaṁ kṛṣṇa-jana-priyo nigaditaḥ śrotā sa vai vaktṛbhiḥ*

One who presents himself before the speaker with folded palms as a trusting disciple, who bows down as enjoined, avoids other talks, and is humble, very expert, and eager to hear, who is serious to give careful thought to what he hears, who likes to ask questions, and is pure and always affectionate to Krishna's devotees, is called by the speakers a proper hearer. (4.21)

THE QUALIFIED SPEAKER

*bhagavan-matir anapekṣaḥ
suhṛdo dīneṣu sānukampo yaḥ
bahudhā-bodhana-caturo
vaktā sammānito munibhiḥ*

One who thinks about the Supreme Lord, who doesn't have material concerns, who is a compassionate friend to the wretched, and is expert in explaining things in various ways, is honored by sages as a suitable speaker. (4.22)

SERVING THE BHAGAVATAM

Now hear, dear *brāhmaṇas*, of the rules for serving *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* in the land of Bharat. By following these rules one will enjoy continuous happiness.

*rājasam sātvikam cāpi tāmasam nirguṇam tathā
catur-vidham tu vijñeyam śrī-bhāgavata-sevanam*

There are four ways to serve *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. These should be understood as service in the modes of passion, goodness and ignorance, and transcendental service. (4.24)

*saptāham yajña-vad yat tu sa-śramam satvaram mudā
sevitam rājasam tat tu bahu-pūjādi-śobhanam*

When a busy endeavor like a Vedic sacrifice is made with fanfare for seven days, with pomp and opulent

worship, then the *Bhāgavatam* is being served in the mode of passion. (4.25)

*māsena ṛtunā vāpi śravaṇam svāda-saṁyutam
sāttvikam yad anāyāsam samastānanda-varadhanam*

Hearing for a month or a whole season with tasteful relishing and not too much endeavor is in the mode of goodness. It promotes all varieties of ecstasy. (4.26)

*tāmasam yat tu varṣeṇa sālasam śraddhayāyutam
viṣṁṛti-smṛti-saṁyuktam sevnam tac ca saukhya-dam*

Service is done in the mode of ignorance when hearing is done over the course of a year, lazily, and without much faith, sometimes remembering what is heard and sometimes forgetting. But even this creates happiness. (4.27)

*varṣa-māsa-dinānām tu vimucya niyamāgraham
sarvadā prema-bhaktyaiva sevnam nirguṇam matam*

When, for a year, a month, or some days, one serves the *Bhāgavatam* constantly with pure loving devotion, neither neglecting the scriptural injunctions nor maintaining excessive attachment for them, that is considered transcendental. (4.28) It is said that in the discussion between Parikshit and Sukadev the *Bhāgavatam* was served transcendently. It is referred to as a seven-day recital only because that was how many days remained in Parikshit's life. But whatever the situation, according to one's liking and to the best of their ability, one should by all means serve the *Bhāgavatam śruti* in one of the three modes or in the transcendental mode. (4.29-30)

*ye śrī-kṛṣṇa-vihāraika-bhajanāsvāda-lolupāḥ
muktāv api nirākāṅkṣās teṣām bhāgavatam dhanam*

The *Bhāgavatam* is the wealth of those who hanker only to taste the pleasure of worshiping Sri Krishna's pastimes and who have no aspiration even for liberation. (4.31)

MEDICINE FOR THE MATERIALISTS

*ye 'pi sāmsāra-santāpa-nirviṇṇā mokṣa-kāṅkṣiṇāḥ
teṣām bhavausadham caitat kalau sevyaṁ prayatnataḥ*

But also for those who are tired of being tormented in material life and desire liberation, this scripture is the medicine for the disease of birth and death. In this Kali age it should be served with all care. (4.32)

*ye cāpi viṣayārāmāḥ sāmsārika-sukha-sṛḥhāḥ
teṣām tu karma-mārgeṇa yā siddhiḥ sādhanā kalau*

Even for those who are attached to gratification of their senses and have hopes to enjoy material life, this is the best means in Kali-yuga to achieve success in the path of fruitive work.

Sukadev Spoke the Entire Bhagavatam

Srila Vishwanath Chakravarti's
commentary on *Bhāg.* 2.1.9-10

*"janmādy asya" ity ārabhya "viṣṇu-rātam
amūmucat" ity antaḥ sarvam eva śrī-bhāgavatam
śrāvayām āseti jñeyam. ata eva prathamā-
dvādaśayor api śuka-proktatve "ambariṣa śuka-
proktam nityam bhāgavatam śṅṇu" itī vacanam
samyag upapadyate.*

It should be known that he (Sukadev Goswami) narrated the entire *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* beginning from "janmādy asya" (*Bhāg.* 1.1.1) and ending with the verse "viṣṇu-rātam amūmucat" (*Bhāg.* 12.13.21). Given this fact — that both the first and twelfth cantos were also spoken by Sukadev — the statement [found in *Padma Purāṇa*] "ambariṣa śuka-proktam nityam bhāgavatam śṅṇu" — O Ambarish! Hear the *Bhāgavatam*, which is eternal and which was spoken by Sukadeva! — is perfectly valid.

Note: It would seem that the edition of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* used by Vishwanath Chakravarti didn't include *Bhāg.* 12.13.22-23, since he writes above that the twelfth canto ends with 12.13.21.

- Translated by Sri Matsya Avatar Das from the *Bhāgavata* edited by Krishna Shankara Shastri with multiple commentaries. Published by Sri Bhagavata-vidyapithah. Dwarka. 1984. Sanskrit.

*sāmarthya-dhana-vijñānā-bhāvād atyanta-durlabhā
tasmāt tair api saṁsevya śrīmad-bhāgavatī kathā*

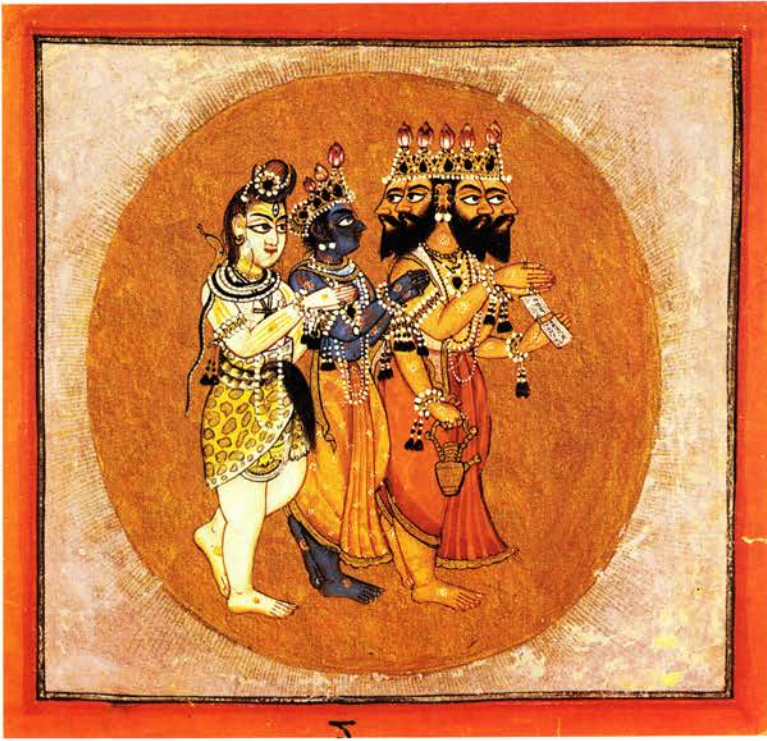
Fruitive success is very hard to achieve because of lack of capability, wealth, and practical knowledge. Therefore persons having such desires should also honor the narration of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. (4.34)

*dhanam putrāms tathā dārān vāhanādi yaśo grhān
asāpatnyam ca rājyam ca dadyād bhāgavatī kathā*

Narration of the *Bhāgavatam* bestows wealth, a wife, sons, vehicles and other property, fame, residences and unrivaled sovereignty. (4.35)

*iha loke varān bhuktvā bhogān vai manasepsitām
śrī-bhāgavata-saṅgena yānty ante śrī-hareḥ padam*

By the association of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* these persons can enjoy benefits in this world, whatever



Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva heard Bhāgavatam from Krishna

their hearts desire, and in the end go to the abode of Sri Hari. (4.36)

*yatra bhāgavatī vārtā ye ca tac-chravaṇe ratāḥ
teṣāṃ saṁsevanam kuryād dehena ca dhanena ca*

Wherever anyone is serious about hearing the message of the *Bhāgavatam*, those hearers should be served nicely with one's bodily faculties and one's wealth. (4.37)

*tad-anugrahato 'syāpi śrī-bhāgavata-sevanam
śrī-kṣṇa-vyatiriktaṃ yat tat sarvaṃ dhana-saṃjñitam*

By the favor of those hearers, the person who serves them will also be able to begin serving Śrīmad *Bhāgavatam*. What we call "wealth" is anything separate from Sri Krishna. (4.38)

*kṣṇārthīti dhanārthīti śrotā vaktā dvidhā mataḥ
yathā vaktā tathā śrotā tatra saukhyaṃ vivardhate*

There are two kinds of speakers and hearers — those who want Krishna and those who want wealth. When the speaker is compatible with the hearer, then their happiness increases. (4.39)

*ubhayor vaiṣṭyā tu rasābhāse phala-cyutiḥ
kintu kṣṇārthīnāṃ siddhir vilambenāpi jāyate*

However, if the two are of opposite natures there will be an inappropriate mixture of tastes and the endeavor will prove fruitless. But even in such a case,

one who actually wants to attain Krishna will succeed eventually. (4.40)

*dhanārthīna tu samsiddhir viddhi sampūrṇatā-vaśāt
kṣṇārthīno 'guṇasyāpi premaiva vidhir uttamāḥ*

If this process of hearing *Bhāgavatam* is completed, he who desires wealth will gain all success. But for the transcendently situated person who desires Krishna, attainment of pure love is the highest accomplishment. (4.41)

PROCEDURES

*ā-samāpti sa-kāmena kartavyo hi vidhiḥ svayam
snāto nitya-kriyāṃ kṛtvā prāśya pādodakam hareḥ*

One who has material desires is enjoined to execute the process to its completion. He should take bath, perform his daily rituals and offer water at the feet of Lord Hari. (4.42)

*pustakam ca guruṃ caiva pūjayitvopacārataḥ
brūyād vā śṛṇuyād vāpi śrīmad-bhāgavatam mudā*

He should worship the book and his spiritual master with regular offerings. Then, with pleasure, he should speak or hear *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. (4.43)

He should observe silence and take milk or plain *kicharī* for his meals. He should maintain celibacy, sleep on the floor, and avoid anger, greed and so on. Every day the recital should finish with *kīrtana*, and at the end one should remain awake through the night. One should feed the *brāhmaṇas* and satisfy them with gifts of honor. The spiritual master should be offered cloth, ornaments, and other items, including a cow. Having executed this prescribed procedure, one will achieve the desired result. He will gain a wife, a kingdom, money, or whatever he wants. But this hearing with material desires is not preferable. It is actually a pretentious show.

FINAL FRUIT

*kṣṇa-prāpti-karam śaśvat-premānanda-phala-pradam
śrīmad-bhāgavatam śāstram kalau kīreṇa bhāṣitam*

In Kali-yuga, the scripture *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* spoken by the parrot Sukadev is the means of obtaining Krishna. It bestows the fruit of eternal bliss in pure love. (4.48) 🍌

— Adapted from a translation by Gopiparanadhana Das, © 2002 Bhaktivedanta Book Trust.

Manifestations of Śrīmad Bhāgavatam

Śrīmad Bhāgavatam has manifested in different forms at different times. Commenting on *Bhāgavatam* 3.8.9, Srila A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada has described that the *Bhāgavatam* existed even before the time of Vyasa:

As the great speaker of the *Purāṇas*, Parasar first of all spoke on the *Śrīmad Bhāgavata Purāṇa* because it is the foremost of all the *Purāṇas*. Maitreya Muni desired to narrate the same *Bhāgavatam* he had heard from Parasar, and Vidura was qualified to hear it because of his faithfulness and his following the instructions received from superiors. So *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* was being narrated from time immemorial by the disciplic succession, even before the time of Vyasadev.

In *Bhāgavatam* 1.7.8, Srila Suta Goswami alludes to Veda-vyas' composing two editions of *Bhāgavat*:

*sa saṁhitāṁ Bhāgavatīm kṛtvānukramya cātma-jam
śukam adhyāpāyām āsa nivr̥tti-nīratam munīḥ*

The great sage Vyasadev, after compiling *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* and revising it, taught it to his son, Sri Sukadev Goswami, who was already absorbed in self-realization.

Srila Viswanath Chakravarti Thakur comments on this verse: *atas tadaiva pūrva-nirmitasyaiva śrī-bhāgavata-syānukramaṇam* — “In this text the word *anukramaṇam* means that the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* already existed and Srila Vyasadev compiled a new edition of it.”

In *Caitanya-Bhāgavata*, antya 3.510, Srila Vrindavan Das Thakur has described the *Bhāgavatam* as follows:

*yena rūpa matsya-kurma-ādi avatāra
āvīrbhāva-tirobhāva āpaneī haya*

In the same way that the *avatāras* of Krishna beginning with Matsya and Kurma appear and disappear transcendently, the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* is not of mundane origin. It appears and disappears of its own accord.

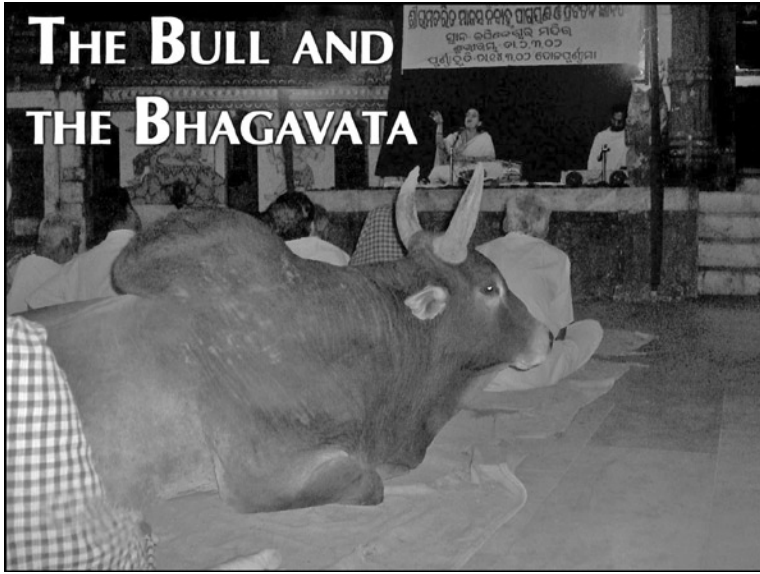
This is because the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* is a manifestation of Krishna. Thakur Vrindavan Das writes in *Caitanya-Bhāgavata* (antya 3.516): *premāmaya Bhāgavata kṣṇera śrī aṅga* — “*Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* is full of *kṣṇa-prema*. It is a part of Krishna himself.” Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur has written in his commentary to *Caitanya-Bhāgavata antya 3.512*: “*Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* is an eternal literature. Even when it is lost in the course of time, by the Lord's mercy it again appears on the tongue and from the writing of Sri Vyasa.”

The following is a list of some of the more famous occasions on which *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* was spoken:

- Krishna to Vishnu (*Skanda Purāṇa*)
- Vishnu to Lakshmi (and sometimes Lakshmi speaks *Bhāgavatam* for two months while Vishnu listens) (*Skanda Purāṇa*)
- Narayan to Shiva (*Skanda Purāṇa*)
- Narayan to Brahma (*Bhāg.* 3.4.13, 12.13.10 and the *catur-slokī* verses 2.9.33-36)
- Brahma to Narada (*Bhāg.* 2.7.51)
- Narada to Vyasa (*Bhāg.* 2.9.45)
- Compiled by Vyasa (*Bhāg.* 1.3.40)
- Vyasa to Sukadev (*Bhāg.* 1.7.8 and 2.1.8)
- Uddhava to the queens of Dwarka (*Skanda Purāṇa*)
- Parasar to Maitreya (*Bhāg.* 3.8.9)
- Maitreya to Vidura (*Bhāg.* 3.8.2)
- Shiva to Parvati/Sukadev (the local tradition in Bhubaneswar and Amarnath)
- Sukadev to Parikshit (*Bhāg.* 1.3.42)
- Suta to the sages at Naimisha (*Bhāg.* 1.18.15, 12.4.43)
- Parikshit to Uttara (*Bṛhad-Bhāg.* 1.1.18)
- Sankhyayan to Parasar and Brihaspati (*Bhāg.* 3.8.8 and *Skanda Purāṇa*)
- Brihaspati to Uddhava (*Skanda Purāṇa*)
- Lord Sankarshan to the four Kumaras (*Bhāg.* 3.8.7)
- The four Kumaras to Sankhyayana Muni (*Bhāg.* 3.8.7)

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There is a humorous saying in Oriya, *ṣandha śuṇuchi Bhāgavata* — “A bull hearing the *Bhāgavatam*,” that indicates something useless. If you recite *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* before a bull, what will he understand or appreciate? However, in Bhubaneswar, Orissa recently, this phrase took on a new meaning.

In March 2004, many people had gathered at the ancient Shiva temple known as Kapileshwar Mahadeva in the Old Town area of Bhubaneswar to observe the 22-year-old tradition of hearing a nine-day recitation of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. Just as the recitation was about to begin, a large bull entered the compound and sat down next to the devotees. Some devotees tried to chase him away, but he was a bit, well, bullish, and patiently ignored their protests. Everyone was surprised to see that as soon as the talk was finished, the bull got up to leave. However, they were even more surprised when he showed up on time the next day, listened, and again left when it was over. This went on for the duration of the event.

By the following year, most everyone had forgotten about the episode. That is, until the first day of the recitation, when the same bull showed up, right on time, and again took his seat to hear the *Bhāgavatam*. Again, this went on every day for the duration of the program. This year, in 2006, everyone was wondering if he would come again. Sure enough, on the first day, our stubborn bovine friend came sauntering through the gate and quietly took his place next to the devotees. Whatever it may mean, this bull hearing the *Bhāgavata* has become the biggest attraction of the festival.

The *Bhāgavata-māhātmya* of *Padma Purāṇa* recounts the *Bhāgavata-saptāha* conducted by the devotee Gokarna. It is said there that due to his reciting the *Bhāgavatam*, his brother Dhundhukari was delivered from his form of a

ghost and attained the spiritual world. The *Padma Purāṇa* says that although many others were listening to that recitation, no one else achieved liberation because, unlike Dhundhukari, they were not listening attentively. Gokarna later spoke the *Bhāgavatam* again. This time everyone in the village attended and listened attentively, including even the animals. Chapter 197 of the *uttara-khaṇḍa* of *Padma Purāṇa* describes the results:

*tad-grāme ye sthitā jīvā
āśva-cāṇḍāla-jātayaḥ
vimāne sthāpitāste ‘pi
gokarṇa kṛpayā tadā*

By the mercy of Gokarna, all the living entities in that village, including even the dogs and dog-eaters, ascended into a transcendental airship [and attained the abode of the Lord]. 🍃

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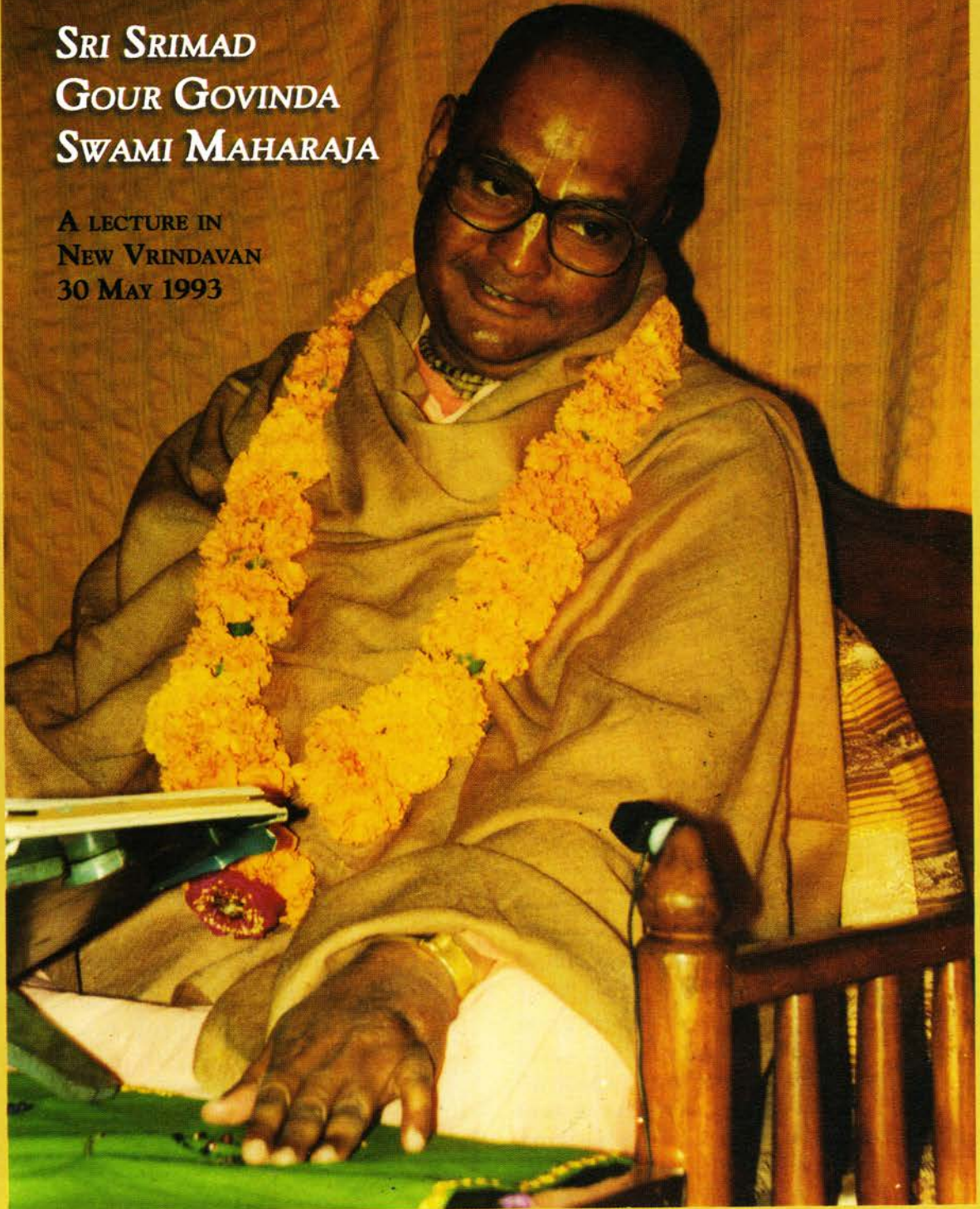


Story in the Oriya newspaper

THE BENEDICTION IN KALI-YUGA

SRI SRIMAD
GOUR GOVINDA
SWAMI MAHARAJA

A LECTURE IN
NEW VRINDAVAN
30 MAY 1993



Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 1.3 43

*kṛṣṇe sva-dhāmopagate dharmā-jñānādibhiḥ saha
kalau naṣṭa-dṛṣām eṣa purāṇārko 'dhuṇoditaḥ*

This *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* is as brilliant as the sun, and it has arisen just after the departure of Lord Krishna to his own abode, accompanied by religion, knowledge, etc. Persons who have lost their vision due to the dense darkness of ignorance in the age of Kali shall get light from this *Purāṇa*.

PURPORT

Lord Sri Krishna has his eternal *dhāma*, abode, where he eternally enjoys himself with his eternal associates and paraphernalia. And his eternal abode is a manifestation of his internal energy, whereas the material world is a manifestation of his external energy. When he descends to the material world, he displays himself with all paraphernalia in his internal potency, which is called *ātma-māyā*. In the *Bhagavad-gītā* the Lord says that he descends by his own potency (*ātma-māyā*). His form, name, fame, paraphernalia, abode are not, therefore, creations of matter. He descends to reclaim the fallen souls and to reestablish codes of religion, which are directly enacted by him. Except for God, no one can establish the principles of religion. Either he or a suitable person empowered by him can dictate the codes of religion. Real religion means to know God, our relation with him, our duties in relation with him, and to know ultimately our destination after leaving this material body. The conditioned souls, who are entrapped by the material energy, hardly know all these principles of life. Most of them are like animals engaged in eating, sleeping, fearing, and mating. They are mostly engaged in sense enjoyment under the pretension of religiosity, knowledge or salvation. They are still more blind in the present age of quarrel, *Kali-yuga*.

In the *Kali-yuga* the population is just a royal edition of the animals. They have nothing to do with spiritual knowledge or godly religious life. They are so blind that they cannot see anything beyond the jurisdiction of the subtle mind, intelligence or ego, but they are very much proud of their advancement in knowledge, science and material prosperity. They can risk their lives to become a dog or hog just after leaving the present body, for they have completely lost sight of the ultimate aim of life. The Personality of Godhead Sri Krishna appeared before us just a little prior to the beginning of *Kali-yuga*, and he returned to his eternal home practically at the commencement of *Kali-yuga*. While he was present he exhibited everything by his different activities. He spoke the *Bhagavad-gītā* and eradicated all pretentious principles of religiosity. And prior

to his departure from this material world he empowered Sri Vyasadeva through Narada to compile the messages of the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. Thus both the *Bhagavad-gītā* and the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* are like torchbearers for the blind people of this age. In other words, if men in this age of Kali want to see the real light of life they must take to these two books only and their aim of life will be fulfilled.

Bhagavad-gītā is the preliminary study of the *Bhāgavatam*. And *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* is the summum bonum of life, Lord Sri Krishna personified. We must therefore accept *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* as the direct representation of Lord Krishna. One who can see *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* can see also Lord Sri Krishna in person. They are identical. (Translation and purport by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada)

* * *

Śrīmad Bhāgavatam is as good as Krishna. They are identical. It is the incarnation of his *vāṇī*. *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *madhya* 24.318, states:

*kṛṣṇa-tulya bhāgavata — vibhu, sarvāśraya
prati-śloke prati-akṣare nānā artha kaya*

As Krishna is the Supreme Lord, *vibhu*, *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* is also. Just as we take shelter of Krishna, we should take shelter of *Bhāgavatam*. Krishna is unlimited, and so is *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. *prati-śloke prati-akṣare nānā artha kaya* — In every verse, word, and even every letter there are many meanings. If you wanted to explain one verse of the *Bhāgavatam* clearly, it would take days and days together. It cannot be discussed thoroughly in one or two hours, what to speak of half an hour!

Caitanya-bhāgavata, *madhya* 21.81, describes:

*bhāgavata, tulasi gaṅgāya, bhakta-jane
caturdhā vīgraha kṛṣṇa ei cāri sane*

In the material world there are four manifestations of Krishna — *Bhāgavata*, *tulāsī*, the Ganga, and the *bhakta*. A pure devotee is *bhakta-bhāgavata*, the embodiment of *Bhāgavata*.

CHEATING RELIGION

Pure *dharma* is discussed:

*dharmah projjhita-kaitavo 'tra paramo nirmatsarāṇām satām
vedyam vāstavam atra vastu-śivadam tāpa-trayonmūlanam
śrīmad-bhāgavate mahā-muni-kṛte kim vā parair īśvaraḥ
sadyo hṛdy avarudhyate 'tra kṛtibhiḥ śuśrūṣubhis tat-kṣaṇāt¹*

Projjhita-kaitavaḥ — *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* condemns and defeats *kaitava-dharma*, cheating religion. Prabhupada says that all are engaged in this pretentious religion. What is pretentious, cheating religion? There are four types — *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma*, and *mokṣa*.

Srila Prabhupada says in his purport,² “Real religion means to know God, our relation with him, our duties in relation with him, and to know ultimately our destination after leaving this material body.” Krishna is the only object of love, and our destination is his lotus feet. Krishna elaborates in *Bhagavad-gītā* (10.8):

*aham sarvasya prabhavo mattaḥ sarvaṁ pravartate
iti matvā bhajante mām budhā bhāva-samanvitāḥ*

“I am the source of everything. Everything emanates from me. Knowing this, those who are *budhā*, learned, engage themselves in my *bhajana* with that mood.” What mood? A loving mood, *prīti*. They engage themselves in *bhajana* with this loving mood because as spirit souls they have a perfect, eternal, loving relationship with Krishna. It is not sectarian; it is the *dharma* of the soul, *ātma-dharma*.

It is not Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Buddhist, or Jain *dharma*. Nor is it black, white, Eastern, or Western. It is *jaiva-dharma*, the universal *dharma* of all *jīvas*. This *prema-dharma* is for one and all.

It has been directly framed by God. Srila Prabhupada says, “He descends... to reestablish codes of religion, which are directly enacted by him. Except for God, no one can establish the principles of religion.” *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* (6.3.19) says:

*dharmam tu sākṣād bhagavat-praṇītam
na vai vidur ṛṣayo nāpi devāḥ
na siddha-mukhyā asurā manuṣyāḥ
kuto nu vidyādharas-cāraṇādayaḥ*

Real religious principles are enacted by the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Although fully situated in the mode of goodness, even the great *ṛṣis* who occupy the topmost planets cannot ascertain the real religious principles, nor can the demigods or the leaders of *siddhas*, to say nothing of the *asuras*, the ordinary human beings, the *vidyādharas* and the *cāraṇas*.

This point is brought up again and again in *śāstra*. *dharmamūlaṁ hi bhagavān sarva-vedamayo hariḥ* — “The Lord is the source of *sanātana-dharma*, *vaiṣṇava-dharma*.”³ *Dharma* originates from *sarva-vedamayaḥ hariḥ*, not anywhere else.

Krishna says: *sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekam śaraṇam vraja* — “Give up all pretentious, self-made *dharmas* and just surrender unto me.”⁴ This is *dharmam tu sākṣād bhagavat-praṇītam*. Prior to his departure from this world, the Lord empowered Vyāsadev, through Narada, to compile *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*.

*kṛṣṇe sva-dhāmopagate dharmajñānādibhiḥ saha
kalau naṣṭa-dṛṣām eṣa purāṇārko dhunoditaḥ*⁵

When Krishna wound up his *līlā* at the beginning of *Kali-yuga*, he took *dharma* and *jñāna* with him. So where

are these to be found now? *Purāṇārko* — in the *Bhāgavata-mahāpurāṇa*, which is as brilliant as the risen sun. *Dharma, jñāna* — everything is there. If you want to develop real vision, take shelter of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. In his purport⁶ Srila Prabhupada says, “It is the direct representation of Lord Krishna — *kṛṣṇa-tulya-bhāgavata*. One who can see *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* can also see Krishna in person — *śrutekṣita-patham*.”

DAILY ACTIVITY

One must hear *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* from the right source, the *bhakta-bhāgavata*. *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (*antya* 5.131) instructs:

*yāha, bhāgavata paḍa vaiṣṇavera sthāne
ekānta āśraya kara caitanya-carāṇe*

Go and hear *Bhāgavata* from a dear devotee of Krishna and Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Study under his guidance because he is a bona fide speaker.

Hear daily, *nityam bhāgavata-sevayā*. You have your daily activities, *nitya-karmas*, including eating, sleeping, bathing, and praying. This hearing should also be one of them. Can you survive without your daily activities? No. But how many people are neglecting *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*? Are they surviving? Actually, they are not. Although living, they are dead, *jīvan-mṛtya*. Their breathing is only like that of the blacksmith’s bellows.

If you hear *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* regularly you will develop the vision to see Lord Krishna. *kalau naṣṭa-dṛṣām* — You are enveloped by and groping about in the dense darkness of *Kali-yuga*. You have no enlightenment. If there was some light then you could say, “Oh, yes. Here is Mr. Chavet. Here is this, here is that.” In *Kali-yuga*, those who are blind, devoid of pure transcendental knowledge, can get light from this *Bhāgavata-mahāpurāṇa*. By hearing *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* their eyes can open, *śrutekṣita*. Their *bhakti-caḅṣu*, devotional eye, and *jñāna-caḅṣu*, eye of knowledge or intuition, can open. Only then is it possible for them to see Krishna, *ikṣita*. If you do not hear, how can you see?

ESSENCE OF THE VEDAS

Authorities describe *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* as the essence of all the *Vedas*, *Vedanta*, and *Upaniṣads*.

*sarva-vedānta-sāraṁ hi śrī-bhāgavatam iṣyate
tad-rasāmṛta-tṛptasya nānyatra syād ratiḥ kvacit*⁷

This text is the last literary contribution of Srila Vyāsadev. He compiled it under the instruction of his revered spiritual master, Narada Muni. In *Kali-yuga* you need only take help of these two *śāstras* — *Gītā* and *Bhāgavatam*. Srila Prabhupada says,⁸ “Thus



Sri Prabhupada speaks on Śrīmad Bhāgavatam in ISKCON Mayapur, 1974

both the *Bhagavad-gītā* and the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* are like torchbearers for the blind people of this age.”

*kāla-vyāla-mukhālīḍha-jagat-trāṇa-vidhāyakam
śrīmad-bhāgavatam śāstram kalau kireṇa bhāṣitam
e tasmād āparam kiñcin manah-suddhi-karam na hi
janmāntara-kṛtaiḥ punyaiḥ labhyate sādhubhis tu tat*

Sri Sukadev Goswami recited *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* in *Kali-yuga* to deliver the living entities that are being devoured by the snake of death. Nothing else purifies the mind like *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. However, *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* is only attained by saintly persons through pious activities performed over many lifetimes.⁹

This verse from *Padma Purāṇa* has a similar meaning to the original verse being discussed.¹⁰ This *Bhāgavata-mahāpurāṇa*, which is as brilliant as the sun, has arisen here in *Kali-yuga*. *Kali-yuga* is a most degraded, sinful age. The people are just engaged in fulfilling the demands of their bodies — eating, sleeping, mating, and defending. They do not know the real goal of life. Therefore, *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* appeared through Sukadev Goswami. Vyasadev compiled it, but Sukadev Goswami expressed it.

The *Bhāgavatam* (1.2.17) says:

Sri Krishna-kathamrita

*śṛṇvatām sva-kathāḥ kṛṣṇaḥ puṇya-śravaṇa-kīrtanaḥ
hṛdy antaḥ-stho hy abhadraṇi vidhunoti suhṛt satām*

If you hear *kṛṣṇa-kathā* daily from a bona fide source, a dear devotee who is the embodiment of *Bhāgavata*, your heart will be cleansed of all material dirt. Can a doctor clean your heart? He does not know how. His own heart is filled with a mountain's worth of contamination, so it is impossible for him to help you.

Śrīmad Bhāgavatam is non-different from Krishna. There is no *sādhana* in the world to purify the heart, mind and consciousness like hearing from this book. If someone has acquired some *sukṛti* in previous births and he is very fortunate, then he comes to hear *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. Otherwise, he cannot relish that nectar.

DRINK, DANCE, AND DINE

This *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* is *bhāgavata-kathā*, *kṛṣṇa-kathā*. It is pure, nectarean, and so sweet.

*nigama-kalpa-taror galitam phalam
śuka-mukhād amṛta-drava-saṁyutam
pibata bhāgavatam rasam ālayam
muhur aho rasikā bhuvi bhāvukāḥ*



Sri Vyasa

O expert and thoughtful men, relish *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, the mature fruit of the desire tree of Vedic literatures. It emanated from the lips of Sri Sukadev Goswami. Therefore this fruit has become even more tasteful, although its nectarean juice was already relishable for all, including liberated souls. ¹¹

What is *Bhāgavata*? *nigama-kalpa-taror galitam phala* — It is the sweetest, most ripened fruit of the Vedic tree. It has come from the lips of Sukadev Goswami. *Śuka* means parrot. Generally, a parrot will only put its beak into a fruit that is very ripened and sweet. And after being touched by a parrot, fruit becomes even sweeter. Similarly, the nectarean fruit of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* became even sweeter after being touched by the lips of Sukadev Goswami. This fruit has no skin

on it and no seeds inside. You may taste it wherever you like – in the beginning, middle, or end. Through and through, it is only sweet, juicy mellow.

Again and again we are calling, “O devotees who have developed a taste for this nectarean, sweet mellow emanating from *bhāgavata-kathāṃṛta*. Come and taste! Come and taste! Drink this nectar. Why are you going to the liquor shop to drink alcohol? There they have put up a big sign, “Open twenty-four hours! Cold wine! Liquor!” We should also put up a sign, “Come! Drink, dance and dine with us!” Many are going to the liquor shop, but very few are coming here. Even though we are inviting them free of cost, they are not coming because they have not developed a taste. Instead they have a taste for liquor, like hogs have a taste for stool. Only one who is very fortunate and has achieved piety from previous births comes for this *bhāgavata-kathāṃṛta*.

When Sukadev Goswami spoke *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* on the bank of the Ganges, Parikshit Maharaja had just seven days to live. The *brāhmaṇa* boy, Sringi, had cursed the king to die by the bite of a poisonous snakebird. When Maharaja Parikshit understood his fate, he wondered, “What shall I do now? How can I achieve the supreme perfection of life in such a short time?” He went to the Ganga where many saints and sages were assembled. Various *rājaṛṣis*, *brahmarṣis*, *maharṣis*, Vyasa, and Narada were all there. He asked his questions, but they could not give him a satisfactory answer.

OFFERING A TRADE

After a while, Sukadev Goswami arrived. He was very young. The questions were put to him. He said, “Hear *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*.” Everyone exclaimed, “*Sādhu, sādhu*. Yes, this is the real answer. There is no other means to attain the lotus feet of Krishna, the supreme destination.”

While Sukadev Goswami was speaking *Bhāgavatam*, the demigods arrived with a jug of nectar, *amṛta*, from the heavenly planets. They drink *soma-rasa*, an intoxicating nectar that increases their lifespan. As such, they have such a long life; it is as though they are without death, *amara*. They live for one *kalpa*, a day of Brahma.

The demigods are very expert in fulfilling their desires. Upon arriving, they offered obeisances to Sukadev Goswami, and said, “Please take this jug of nectar and drink from it. Then have Parikshit Maharaja drink some. By doing so he will not die. In exchange



Srila Prabhupada speaks on Śrīmad Bhāgavatam at ISKCON Bhubaneswar, February 1977

for this nectar, we would like the *bhāgavata-kathāmṛta*, the nectarean juice emanating from *bhāgavata-kathā*.”

Sukadev Goswami laughed at them, “What are you saying? A broken piece of glass and a precious *hīra*, diamond, may look alike, but are they the same? There is a heaven and hell difference between them. Do you really think that this nectar of yours and *bhāgavata-kathāmṛta* are the same? You are foolish! You do not deserve it and cannot have it. There is such an abundance of enjoyment in the heavenly planets, so you take this intoxicant. How can you think it is the same as *bhāgavata-kathāmṛta* and that your proposal is a fair exchange? Get out!”

This can give you some understanding of how nectarean *Bhāgavata* really is. It is difficult for the demigods to understand, what to speak of human beings. But Sukadev Goswami is such a merciful *vaiṣṇava* that he brought it to the material world for you.

Parikshit Maharaja heard *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* continuously for seven days and nights without sleeping, eating, or drinking. He gave up everything and only drank the nectar of *kṛṣṇa-kathā*. Then he went back home, back to Godhead.

Brahma saw this and said, “Amazing! He was dying, but he did not die. He went back to the lotus feet of Krishna.” In his abode, Satyalok, Brahma got a scale. On one side he placed all of the *sādhana*s that grant *mokṣa*, liberation. On the other side he put the *Bhāgavatam*. The *Bhāgavatam* was heavier.

Sri Krishna-kathamrita

DREADFUL AGE OF KALI

The *Padma Purāṇa* recounts a conversation between Suta Goswami and the sages of Naimisharanya:

Once the Four Kumaras met Devarsi Narada at Badarikashram. The sage did not look like his jolly self. They asked, “O Naradji, you seem to be in some anxiety. Where are you coming from and where are you going? You look as though you have lost something. You are such a great devotee and are not entrapped by *māyā*. Please tell us what has happened.”

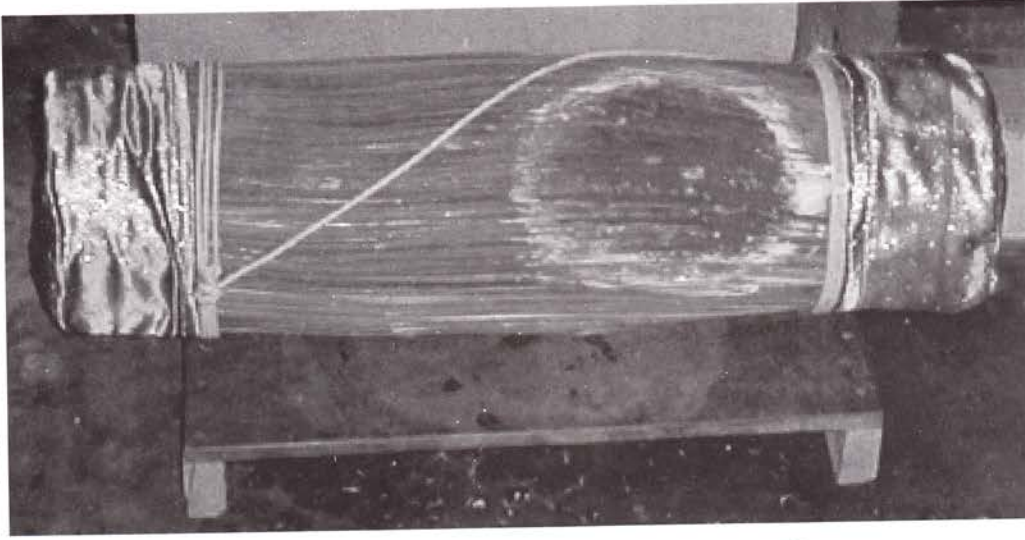
Narada said, “I have traveled throughout the world, but because it is dreadful *Kali-yuga* I cannot experience real happiness anywhere. Quarrelling, hypocrisy, jealousy, enviousness, and enmity are rampant.”

*kalinādharmā-mitreṇa dhareyaṁ bādhitādhunā
satyaṁ nāsti tapaḥ śaucaṁ dayā dānaṁ na vidyate
udaraṁ-bharayo jīvā vārakāḥ kūṭa-bhāṣiṇaḥ
mandāḥ sumanda-matayo manda-bhāgyā hy upadrutāḥ
pāṣaṇḍa-niratāḥ santo viraktāḥ sa-parigrhāḥ*

At present, the earth is totally harassed by Kali, the friend of irreligion. Truthfulness, austerity, cleanliness, mercy, and charity are nowhere to be seen. The fallen living entities take pleasure in telling lies and are simply engaged in filling their bellies. They are lazy, less intelligent, unfortunate, and always disturbed. Those who are called saintly are actually pretenders. Though they appear renounced, they accumulate wealth, women, and paraphernalia for sense pleasure.¹²







The original palm leaf Bhāgavatam of Srila Ramananda Ray, preserved at his ancestral home in Bentapur, Orissa, near Jagannath Puri

In Kali-yuga there is no truthfulness, noble conduct, proper dealings, mercy, or kindness. Human beings are only engaged in eating, sleeping, defending, and mating. They always think of money. For them, it has become brighter than sunshine, sweeter than honey. Most of them are completely foolish and devoid of knowledge. Their fortune is bad and their intelligence is bad. They are constantly afflicted by disease. Even those who go by the name of *sādhu* are engaged in sinful activities. They do not follow the instructions of the Vedas. They are just hypocrites who run after women and money, *kāmiṇī* and *kāñcana*.

*taruṇī-prabhuṭā gehe śyālako buddhi-dāyakaḥ
kanyā-vikrayiṇo lobhād dāmpatīnā ca kalkanam*

*āśramā yavanai ruddhās tīrthāni saritas tathā
devatāyatanānyatra duṣṭhair naṣṭāni bhūriśaḥ*¹³

In every home, women dominate men. The wife's brother is the minister, and he gives counseling. Men have developed so much greed that they sell their own daughters. Every house is filled with quarrelling. *Āśrama-dharma* — *brahmacarya*, *gṛhastha*, *vānaprastha*, *sannyāsa* — has been completely destroyed. *Yavanas* and *mlecchas* are demolishing the temples of Lord Rama and Krishna. *Kali-yuga* is a *dāvānala*, forest fire. All *sādhanas* are burnt to ashes in it.

*aṭṭaśūlā janapadāḥ śivaśūlā dvijātayaḥ
kāminyāḥ keśaśūlīnyā sambhavanti kalāvīha*¹⁴

In *Kali-yuga* all the human beings are devoid of pure knowledge, covered over by ignorance. Consciousness has become so degraded that cooked

food is sold in the market. So-called *brāhmaṇas* use the Vedas as a mercantile commodity. Many women become prostitutes, selling sex. All of this is only to earn money.

BHAKTI-DEVI AND HER SONS

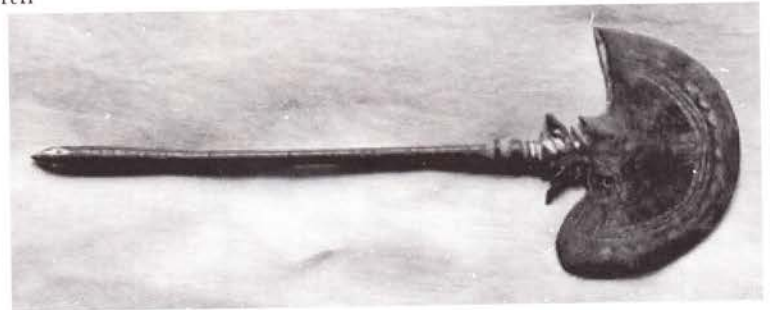
Narada described that at last he came to Vrindavan. At the bank of the Yamuna sat a young woman. She looked very pale and full of anxiety, and sometimes she was crying.

Two old men were lying at her left side, breathing very heavily. She was trying to console them. Many other women were also there. They said, "O Devi, have patience. Lord Krishna is sure to shower his mercy upon you."

When sage Narada arrived on the scene, the young woman addressed him, "O great *sādhu*, please stay here for some time and give me some of your valuable instructions. By hearing from you, I think my distress will be over." When someone's good fortune, *saubhāgya*, arises, one meets a *sādhu*. Otherwise, such a *darśana* is not possible.

Then Narada asked, "O goddess, who are you? Who are the two old men lying to your left and these other women? What is the cause of your distress?"

She replied, "I am *Bhakti-devi*, and these are my two sons, *jñāna* and *vairāgya*. In *Kali-yuga*, this is their condition. They have become extremely old and invalid. They cannot even get up by themselves. These ladies are all personified *tīrthas*, holy places, headed by *Ganga-devi*.



Srila Ray Ramananda's personal lekhaṇā, the traditional pen used to write on palm leaves, preserved at his home in Bentapur, Orissa

They are here to serve me. Despite their presence, I am not happy. Please listen to my story.

“My birthplace is Dravidadesh, South India. I was nourished in Karnataka. I stayed in Maharashtra and then went to Gujarat. *Kali-yuga* is prevailing there very strongly. While I was there, *pāṣaṇḍas*, miscreants, hit my soft body. My sons and I became very old. When we reached Vrindavan, though, I regained my youth, but my two sons have not gotten back theirs. I have decided to leave here and go to foreign countries. The problem is that I cannot move my sons in their present condition. I am a young mother, but my sons are old. Why has this happened?”

Then Narada said, “O Goddess Bhakti, do not be distressed. *Kali-yuga* has caused all of you to age. Although you regained your youth upon reaching Vrindavan, your sons could not because there are no customers for *jñāna* and *vairāgya* here. With my eye of knowledge I can see that Lord Hari will benedict you with his mercy very soon. Then your troubles will be over.”

*santo hy asmin su-duḥkhārtā asanto hr̥ṣṭa-mānasāḥ
dṛśyate dhīra-cittas tu paṇḍito 'pi na ko 'pi ca*

In *Kali-yuga* the saintly suffer terrible distress and the demoniac rejoice. But nobody, including the *paṇḍita*, is seen to have a peaceful mind.¹⁵

WHY WASN'T KALI KILLED?

Bhakti-devi asked, “Why did Parikshit Maharaja not kill Kali when he had the opportunity? Instead, the king excused him and gave him places to stay.”

Narada replied:

*dṛṣṭo dig-vijaye rājñā dīna-vac charaṇam gataḥ
na mayā māraṇīyo 'yaṁ sāraṅga iva sāra-bhuk
yat phalaṁ nāsti tapasā na yogena samādhinā
tat phalam labhate samyak kalau keśava-kīrtanāt*¹⁶

“When Maharaja Parikshit was out conquering in all directions, he saw Kali. Just as the king was about to kill him, Kali surrendered. It is the duty of a *kṣatriya* that if someone surrenders they must be given shelter. Maharaja Parikshit was a *sāra-grāhi*, one who accepted the good and rejected the bad, like a bee who sucks honey from a flower. *kīrtanād eva kṛsnasya mukta-saṅga paraṁ vrajet* — He saw one good characteristic about *Kali-yuga*. If someone does *hari-kīrtana*, the chief result is *kṛṣṇa-prema* and he very easily attains *mukti*, liberation. The same opportunity is not available in other *yugas*. It cannot be achieved by *tapasya*, *samādhī*, or *jñāna*. It is only possible by *hari-kīrtana*. If Kali were killed, people would not have that same chance.”

Sri Krishna-kathamrita



Painting by B. K. Mitra

Narada Muni

*kaler doṣa-nidhe rājann asti hy eko mahān guṇaḥ
kīrtanād eva kṛṣṇasya mukta-saṅgaḥ paraṁ vrajet*

In *Kali-yuga*, people are always engaged in abominable activities. They are surrounded by the enemies *kāma*, *krodha*, *lobha*, *moha*, *mātsarya* — lust, anger, greed, delusion, and enviousness. The essence of everything has become lust. Even so-called pandits sell the *Bhāgavata*. Day and night, they think only of money and woman. They are expert at producing children and nothing else. They go to every home selling *Bhāgavata* as a mercantile commodity. Some pandits are paid thousands of dollars to speak. There was a man from Gujarat invited to speak *Bhāgavata* in the West. In one night he collected 8,000 dollars. How can *Bhāgavatam* be effective that way? The *sāra*, the essence, becomes lost. A pure *vaiṣṇava-sampradāya* is not there.

THE GLORIES OF BHAKTI

Bhakti-devi said, “O Devarsi Narada, all glories unto you! I am very fortunate to have met such a *sādhu* as you.” Narada replied to her:



“Once you went to the Supreme, Lord Krishna, with folded hands and asked, ‘O my Lord, what shall I do? What is my duty and work?’

“Krishna then told you, *mad bhaktān pošayeti ca* — ‘You should maintain my devotees.’ Immediately you accepted that order. Being very pleased, Lord Hari gave you *mukti* as a maidservant and *jñāna* and *vairāgya* as your two sons.”

The sage then promised the goddess:

*anya-dharmāṁs tīras-kṛtya puras-kṛtya mahotsavān
tadā nāhaṁ harer dāso loke tvāṁ na pravartaye*

“Hear my vow! If I do not preach your message, subdue all other religions, and make devotional festivals predominant, then I shall not be considered the servant of Lord Hari.”¹⁷

*nṛṇāṁ janma-sahasreṇa bhaktiḥ su-kṛtinām bhavet
kalau bhaktiḥ kalau bhaktir bhaktyā kṛṣṇaḥ puraḥ-sthitah*

On the strength of pious activities performed for hundreds of lifetimes, one becomes attracted to *bhakti*. *Bhakti* is everything in *Kali-yuga*. Attracted by *bhakti*, Lord Krishna personally manifests himself before the devotee.¹⁸

*harer nāma harer nāma harer nāmaiva kevalam
kalau nāsty eva nāsty eva nāsty eva gatir anyathā*

In this age of quarrel and hypocrisy the only means of deliverance is the chanting of the holy names of the Lord. There is no other way. There is no other way. There is no other way.¹⁹

The name of Krishna is not different from Krishna. This is most important, because, *bhaktyāham ekayā grāhyaḥ*²⁰ — how can you approach Krishna? Only by *bhakti*. Not by *jñāna*, *vairāgya*, karma, or yoga. Krishna says, *ahaṁ bhakta-parādhīno*²¹ — “Although I am supremely independent, I am dependent on my dear devotee.” He only becomes captured by *bhakti*.

Narada then tried hard to wake up *Bhakti-devi*’s two sons, *jñāna* and *vairāgya*, but he could not. He spoke loudly into their ears to no effect. He recited the *Upaniṣads* and *Vedas*, which only revived them for a minute. Narada became very morose and thought of Lord Govinda. Suddenly, a voice came from the sky, “O Devarsi Narada! Do not be distressed, as your effort will be crowned with success. You should seek the instructions of *sādhus* on how to perform *sat-karma*, some virtuous deed. Once you act according to their advice, *jñāna* and *vairāgya* will wake up and *Bhakti-devi* will be pleased. Then you will be able to establish her supremacy amongst *dharmas*.”

Sri Radha Vinode

On the opposite page, with Srimati Radharani, is Sri Radhavinode (literally, “he who sports with Radha”), the beloved deity of Srila Lokanath Goswami. They are currently being worshiped in Jaipur, Rajasthan.

Narahari Chakravarti describes in Bhakti-ratnākara 1.325-338 how Radhavinode came to Lokanath:

While moving about in various places in *Vraja*, Srila Lokanath Goswami came to *Kishori-kund*, which is situated in *Khadirvan* at the village *Umrao*. Lokanath decided to live there in seclusion, cherishing the hope that he could one day serve the deity of Krishna. Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu understood Lokanath’s desire and appeared before him disguised and carrying a deity of Krishna. He put the deity named *Radhavinode* in Lokanath’s hands and immediately disappeared. Lokanath could not understand who had given him such a beautiful deity or where that personality had gone.

Seeing Lokanath’s bewildered state, *Sri Radhavinode* smiled and explained: “I have been staying in a forest near here. I could understand that you were not satisfied, so I came to you on my own without taking anyone’s help. Now, please feed me.” Lokanath became stunned and stood there with tears flowing from his eyes. Then he hurriedly cooked some food and offered it to *Radhavinode*. He made a bed of flowers and requested the deity to lie down. Lokanath fanned him with a leaf and then massaged his legs. He made a small cloth bag as a temple for the deity. That bag glowed with a divine light. Lokanath hung it around his neck and carried *Radhavinode* with him wherever he went.

— Adapted from the translation by Sri Kusakratha Das. The Krishna Institute. Culver City, California.



*Lokanath Goswami
and Krishnadas
Kaviraj Goswami*

Painting by Bhakta Charles



The Four Kumaras

Śrī Caitanya *Bhāgavata* (madhya 21.15-16) describes:

sabe puruṣārtha 'bhakti' bhāgavate haya
'premarūpa bhāgavata' cāri vede kaya
cāri veda — 'dadhi', bhāgavata — 'navanīta'
mathilena śuke, khāilena parikṣita

'Premarūpa bhāgavata' cāri veda kaya—The four Vedas say that *Bhāgavata* is the embodiment of *kṛṣṇa-prema*. The supreme perfection can only be attained by hearing *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* from the right source. The four Vedas are like yogurt. If you churn yogurt, butter will come out. Sukadev Goswami churned them, the butter of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* was produced, and Parikshit Maharaja ate it. Another example given is that of ghee in milk. If you drink milk, can you taste the ghee in it? No. But if ghee comes out separately by churning butter then you can taste it. Similarly, sugar is there throughout sugarcane. Can you taste the sugar? No. First the sugarcane juice must be boiled and condensed, and then the sweetness of sugar will come out.

JNANA AND VAIRAGYA REVIVED

In pursuit of *sādhus* to instruct him, Narada arrived at Badarikashram. After hearing of the preceding events, the four Kumaras explained:

Where there is *bhāgavata-kathā*, *bhakti*, *jñāna*, and *vairāgya* appear automatically. The Kumaras assured

Narada that hearing this *mahā-purāṇa* would revive the youth of *Bhakti-devi*'s sons.

The *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* has unlimited glories.

yasyām vai śrūyamāṇyām kṛṣṇe parama-pūruṣe
bhaktir utpadyate pumsaḥ śoka-moha-bhayāpahā

Simply by giving aural reception to this Vedic literature, the feeling for loving devotional service to Lord Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, sprouts up at once to extinguish the fire of lamentation, illusion, and fearfulness.²²

By hearing with full faith and rapt attention from the right source — the lips of a pure devotee — one can develop *prema-bhakti* very easily. No other *sādhana* is required; one need only come daily and hear.

yāha, bhāgavata paḍa vaiṣṇavera sthāne
ekānta āśraya kara caitanya-carane

Just go to a *bhakta-bhāgavata-vaiṣṇava*, a dear devotee of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, hear and study *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* from him. In this way, you will easily develop *kṛṣṇa-bhakti*.²³

kathā bhāgavatasyāpi nityam bhavati yad grhe
tad grham tīrtha-rūpaṁ hi vasatām pāpa-nāśanam
aśvamedha sahasrāṇi vājapeya-satāni ca
śuka-śāstra-kathāyāś ca kalām nārhanī ṣoḍaśim

Any place where *bhāgavata-kathā* is recited daily becomes a holy place. All of the *tīrthas* go there. The residents of that place become very fortunate. All of their sinful reactions are completely destroyed. One may perform one thousand horse sacrifices, but its results cannot be compared to one-sixteenth the benefit of hearing *Bhāgavatam*.²⁴

tāvat pāpāni dehe 'smin nivasanti tapodhanāḥ
yāvan na śrūyate samyak śrīmad-bhāgavatam naraiḥ

O sages whose wealth is austerity, sins reside in a person's body only until he properly hears *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*.²⁵

This text discusses the need to realize what has been heard. One must hear with rapt attention and understand the purport completely. It must be realized. If one hears in a superfluous way their sinful reactions will never leave them.

ślokārdham śloka-pādam vā nityam bhāgavatodbhavam
paṭhasva sva-mukhenaiva yadicchasi parām gatim²⁶

If you really want to achieve the supreme perfection, you should utter at least one *Bhāgavatam* verse daily. If you cannot utter one verse, recite at least half a verse. That is why you are asked to repeat the verse in *Bhāgavatam* class. By this, all of your sinful reactions are destroyed and you will develop pure *bhakti*.

There is no doubt, *na saṁśaya*, that where *Bhāgavata-pāṭha-pravacana*, the class on the *Bhāgavatam* goes on, the



মূল-শ্রীমদ্ভাগবতের শ্লোক-শ্রীশ্রীনিত্যানন্দ প্রভুর শ্রীহস্তাক্ষর।
টিপ্পনী-শ্রীল বীরভদ্র প্রভুর শ্রীহস্তাক্ষর।

A page from the original palm leaf Bhāgavatam of Lord Nityananda Prabhu, kept at the Granthagarika, Sanskrit Sahitya Parishad, Kolkata.

The main verses (written in Bengali script) are said to be Lord Nityananda's personal handwriting. The notes on the edge are said to be from Virabhadra Prabhu, the son of Lord Nityananda.

pāpa, sinful activities, accumulated for millions of lives will be destroyed. In all our ISKCON temples, the founder ācārya, my revered spiritual master Sri Srimad Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada Maharaja, introduced this daily program. One and all must attend. It is most important.

anta-kāle tu yenaiva śrūyate śuka-śāstra-vāk
prītyā tasyaiva vaikunṭham govindo 'pi prayacchati

If someone hears Bhāgavatam at the time of death, Lord Govinda becomes very pleased and takes that person to Vaikuntha.²⁷

In India, often when someone is dying the Bhāgavatam is read aloud. By that sound vibration touching his ear he will go to Vaikuntha. That is Vedic civilization.

A person who never drinks the nectar emanating from Śrīmad Bhāgavatam is greatly sinful. He is a great burden for Mother Earth. He is like a beast. Therefore those who are intelligent will come and hear Bhāgavatam, even at the cost of their lives. You may live hundreds of miles away, but you should still come. Even if it is a matter of great inconvenience and money, come and hear. You go hundreds and thousands of miles for material accomplishments, why not do this? By doing so you will be able to attain the supreme perfection of life. Only a foolish person cannot relish bhāgavata-kathāṁṛta. But even if you cannot, just by sitting and hearing you will still receive benefit.

When the four Kumaras were glorifying Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, Bhakti-devi and her two sons, jñāna and vairāgya, suddenly

appeared. Bhakti-devi was a young maiden and her two sons were children. They were uttering the names:

śrī kṛṣṇa govinda hare murāre
he nātha nārāyana vāsudeva
hare kṛṣṇa hare kṛṣṇa
kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa hare hare
hare rama hare rama
rama rama hare hare

The munis and sages present there were stunned to see that jñāna and vairāgya had regained their youth.. The Kumaras explained, "This is the result of hearing bhāgavata-kathā from the right source. Then Bhakti-devi said to Sanat Kumar, "I was very much affected by Kali. My whole body became very hot. But upon hearing

your kathā I have become completely nourished. My two sons and I have regained our youth and are very blissful. Please tell me, where should I stay now?" The Kumaras replied, "If someone can develop bhakti, they will attain Govinda. You give kṛṣṇa-prema. Therefore you should always reside in the hearts of vaiṣṇavas."

tomāra hṛdoye sadā govinda-viśrām
govinda kohena — mora vaiṣṇava parāṇ

Narottam Das Thakur describes, O vaiṣṇava-
thākura, Govinda is in your heart.²⁸

It is our prayer that everyone understand Bhāgavata-pāṭha pravacana, reciting which both the speaker and listener attain kṛṣṇa-prema bhakti. Why are you here in the material world? Go back home, back to Godhead! What other dharma is there? Hearing and speaking Bhāgavata is the only dharma, the only sādhana. Hearing and chanting the Bhāgavatam grants one the highest goal of life, kṛṣṇa-prema.



শ্রীল বৃন্দাবন দাস ঠাকুর শ্রীশ্রীনিত্যানন্দ প্রভুর নিকট এই শ্রীমদ্ভাগবত পাঠ করিয়াছিলেন।
প্রেমক-শ্রীপঞ্চানন মহান্ত, শ্রীপাট দেনুড়া।

Srila Vrindavan Das Thakur studied this Śrīmad Bhāgavatam from Nityananda Prabhu. Preserved at Sripat Denura, West Bengal.

Then the Kumaras said,

ye mānavāḥ pāpa-kṛtas tu sarvadā
sadā durācāra-ratā vimārga-gāḥ
krodhāgni-dagdhāḥ kuṭilās ca kāmīnaḥ
saptāha-yajñena kalau punanti te²⁹

In Kali-yuga everyone is always engaged in sinful activities. Never treading the path of *bhakti*, they are very angry, crooked persons. They are always engaged in illicit sex. This *bhāgavata-kathā-pāṭha* is a great boon for them. We should make arrangements for them to come and hear and thereby they will become free from their sinful reactions. Such a boon has come to us by the mercy of Sukadev Goswami and Parikshit Maharaja.

QUESTIONS

Devotee: What is the difference between hearing from a *sādhu* and reading their books?

Gour Govinda Swami: Hearing directly is very effective. By doing so you can really receive the mercy of the *sādhu-vaiṣṇava*. The *tattva* he speaks travels out from the core of his heart through his lips like a volcanic eruption. Govinda and *prema-bhakti* reside within his heart. Directly hearing allows you to experience that eruption. And if you cannot understand something, questions can be asked. You cannot do that by reading or hearing a tape. If such facility is not available, hear from the text and recordings. If you really cry, arrangements will be made and you will receive mercy.

Sri Prabhupada said that the *Bhāgavata* is not like *Mahābhārata* and other scriptures. They cannot be compared to it. Continue on, with time the consciousness and heart will be purified and you will develop a taste for it. Rupa Goswami says in his *Upadeśamṛta*, *Nectar of Instruction* (Text 7):

syāt kṛṣṇa-nāma-caritādi-sitāpy avidyā-
pittopatapta-rasanasya na rocikā nu
kintv ādarād anudīnaṁ khalu saiva juṣṭā
svādvī kramād bhavati tad-gada-mūla-hantrī

The holy name, character, pastimes and activities of Krishna are all transcendently sweet like sugar candy. Although the tongue of one afflicted by the jaundice of *avidyā*, ignorance, cannot taste anything sweet, it is wonderful that simply by carefully chanting these sweet names every day, a natural relish awakens within his tongue, and his disease is gradually destroyed at the root.

If you give a jaundiced patient sugar-candy, it will taste bitter to him. But if you give him neem leaves, he will find them sweet. If he is conscious of his diseased



Sri Srimad Gour Govinda Swami Maharaja

state then there is hope. He must approach a doctor. The doctor understands the disease and prescribes medicine with sugar candy. If faith is put in the words of the doctor, gradually the disease will be cured. What was once bitter will return to tasting sweet. Thank you.

bhāgavata-kathā ki jaya!
bhāgavata-kathāmṛta ki jaya!
grantha-rāja śrīmad bhāgavatam ki jaya!
prabhupādaji mahārāja ki jaya!
samaveta-bhakta-vṛnda ki jaya!
gaura-premānande hari haribol! 🙏

Endnotes

- ¹ Bhāg. 1.1.2.
- ² See beginning of this article.
- ³ Bhāg. 7.11.7.
- ⁴ Bg. 18.66.
- ⁵ Bhāg. 1.3.43.
- ⁶ See beginning of this article.
- ⁷ Bhāg. 12.13.15.
- ⁸ See beginning of this article.
- ⁹ Padma Purāṇa 6.193.13-14.
- ¹⁰ See beginning of this article.
- ¹¹ Bhāg. 1.1.3.
- ¹² Padma Purāṇa 6.193.31-32.
- ¹³ Ibid. 6.193.33-34.
- ¹⁴ Ibid. 6.193.36.
- ¹⁵ Ibid. 6.193.61.
- ¹⁶ Ibid. 6.193.70-71.
- ¹⁷ Ibid. 6.194.15.
- ¹⁸ Ibid. 6.194.20.
- ¹⁹ Byhan-nārāḍīya Purāṇa, quoted in Cc. ādi 17.21.
- ²⁰ Bhāg. 11.14.21.
- ²¹ Bhāg. 9.4.63.
- ²² Bhāg. 1.7.7.
- ²³ Cc antya 5.131.
- ²⁴ Padma Purāṇa 6.195.29-30.
- ²⁵ Ibid. 6.195.31.
- ²⁶ Ibid. 6.195.32.
- ²⁷ Ibid. 6.195.42.
- ²⁸ Line 5 of Thakur Narottam Das' song *Vaiṣṇave Vijñapti* from *Prārthanā*.
- ²⁹ Padma Purāṇa 6.196.12.

Rasikananda Prabhu and The Śrīmad Bhāgavatam

Rasikananda Prabhu appeared in this world in the year 1590. The devotees in the line of Shyamananda Prabhu consider Rasikananda to be an incarnation of Aniruddha, the expansion of Lord Vishnu. His mother's name was Bhavani. His father was Sri Achyuta Dev, the king of Rohini. The village of Rohini or Royni was situated within the country known as Mallabhumi, on the bank of the Suvarnarekha River in Northern Orissa. Achyuta's son was known as "Rasik", "Rasikananda" and also as "Murari". The following stories adapted from the Bengali book Rasika-maṅgala written by Sri Gopijanavallabha Das, a prominent disciple of Srila Rasikananda Prabhu, illustrate the divine attachment Rasikananda had for Śrīmad Bhāgavatam.

GRAIN CEREMONY

When Rasikananda was a small child, the time came for his *anna-prāśana*, "first grains" ceremony. His father Achyuta began to arrange for it. He invited learned *brāhmaṇas* and all his friends and relatives and requested their permission, saying, "If you all permit me then I shall offer rice to the mouth of my son." Permission was gladly given and Achyuta ordered the decoration of his house. The women drew an auspicious mandala on the floor and placed a *camara* and a silver conch along with rice and cow dung in the middle of it. They also arranged for a table on which they put a pen, a palm leaf, and the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam. After performing the scheduled rituals, they decorated Rasik with many ornaments and smeared his body with perfume and sandalwood. Faint lines of cow urine on his forehead made him look very charming, and he shone with a beauty like the moon. Rasik's father, surrounded by his friends, sat with his son on his lap while the *brāhmaṇas* recited Vedic hymns and poured oblations into the sacred fire. Musical instruments were played and the ladies made auspicious sounds.

Varieties of foodstuffs were arranged on a dish and after putting Rasik in front of the dish the women told him, "O dear Rasik! Bring the thing that you like the most." Hearing their words, the baby looked at the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam with tears in his eyes. He eagerly took hold of the book and embraced it tightly to his chest. He began



Srila Rasikananda Prabhu

to cry, and ecstatic symptoms appeared in his body. All the spectators were astonished to see this and one remarked, "This boy is not an ordinary person. He must be a dear devotee of Krishna." Someone else said, "He will rescue all beings." Another said, "He has incarnated to protect religion." Yet another said, "Achyuta is a most fortunate father." At the completion of the rice-giving ceremony, they bade farewell to the *brāhmaṇas* and Achyuta distributed many varieties of palatable foodstuffs to his friends and relatives. At the same time, Rasik's mother Bhavani, with utmost care, fed the ladies and offered them sandalwood pulp, kumkum, betel leaves, and camphor. All of the ladies took turns holding the child on their lap and glorifying the good fortune of Bhavani.¹

CHILDHOOD ATTACHMENT

Rasik passed his childhood performing all the pastimes of Krishna as described in Śrīmad Bhāgavatam. Day and night he became so absorbed in this play with his friends that he neglected eating and sleeping. This became a cause

of concern to his father, and one day Achyuta took his child in his arms and told him, "This playing with your friends is stopping you from eating. So from tomorrow I want you to remain in the house and play instead of going out." After hearing his father, the boy spoke humble and sweet words:

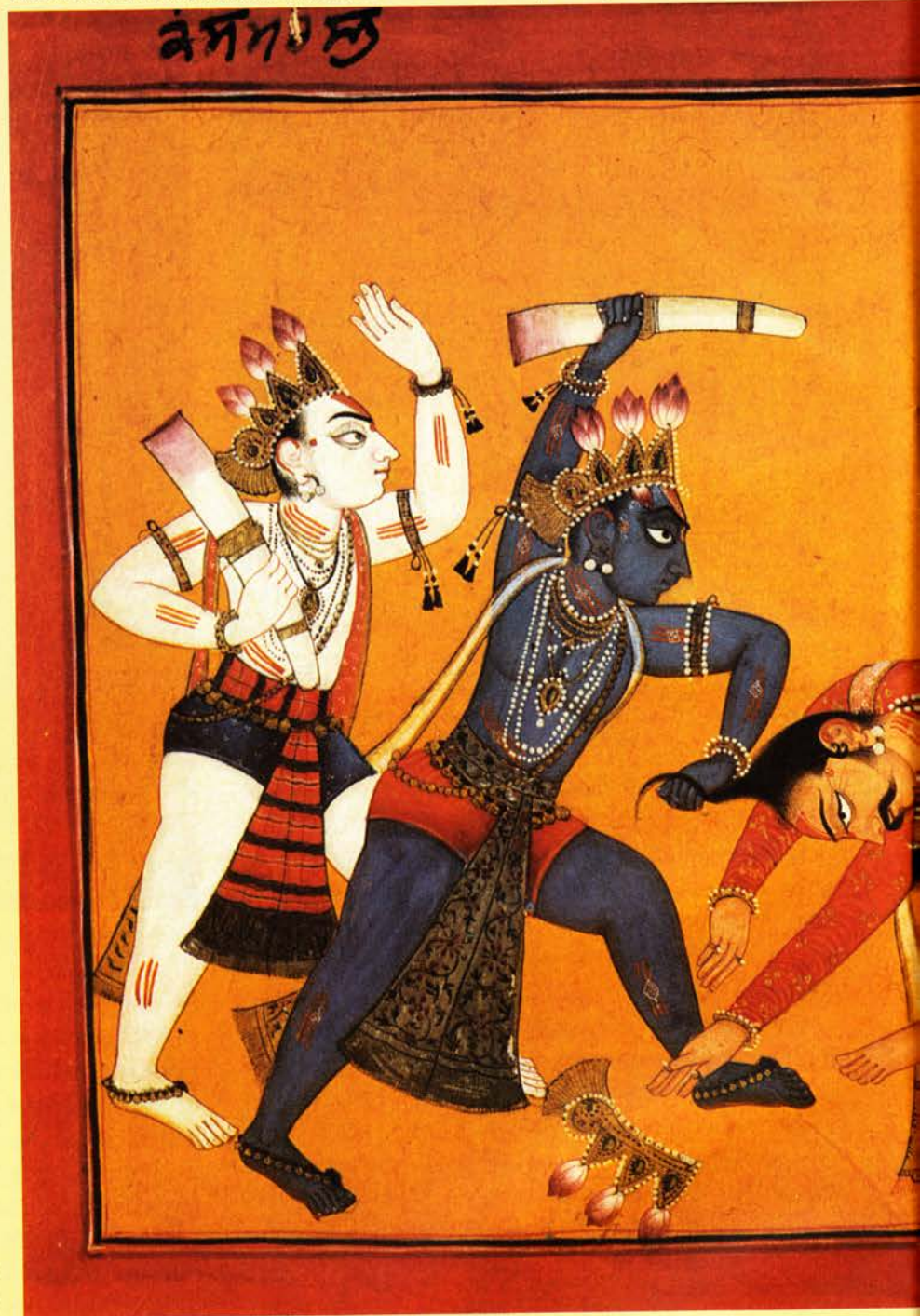
*tabe āmi nā khelaba nagare nagare
bhāgavata śuna yadi kariyā sādare*

From now on I will not go wandering about playing so long as I am allowed to listen to the *Bhāgavata*.²

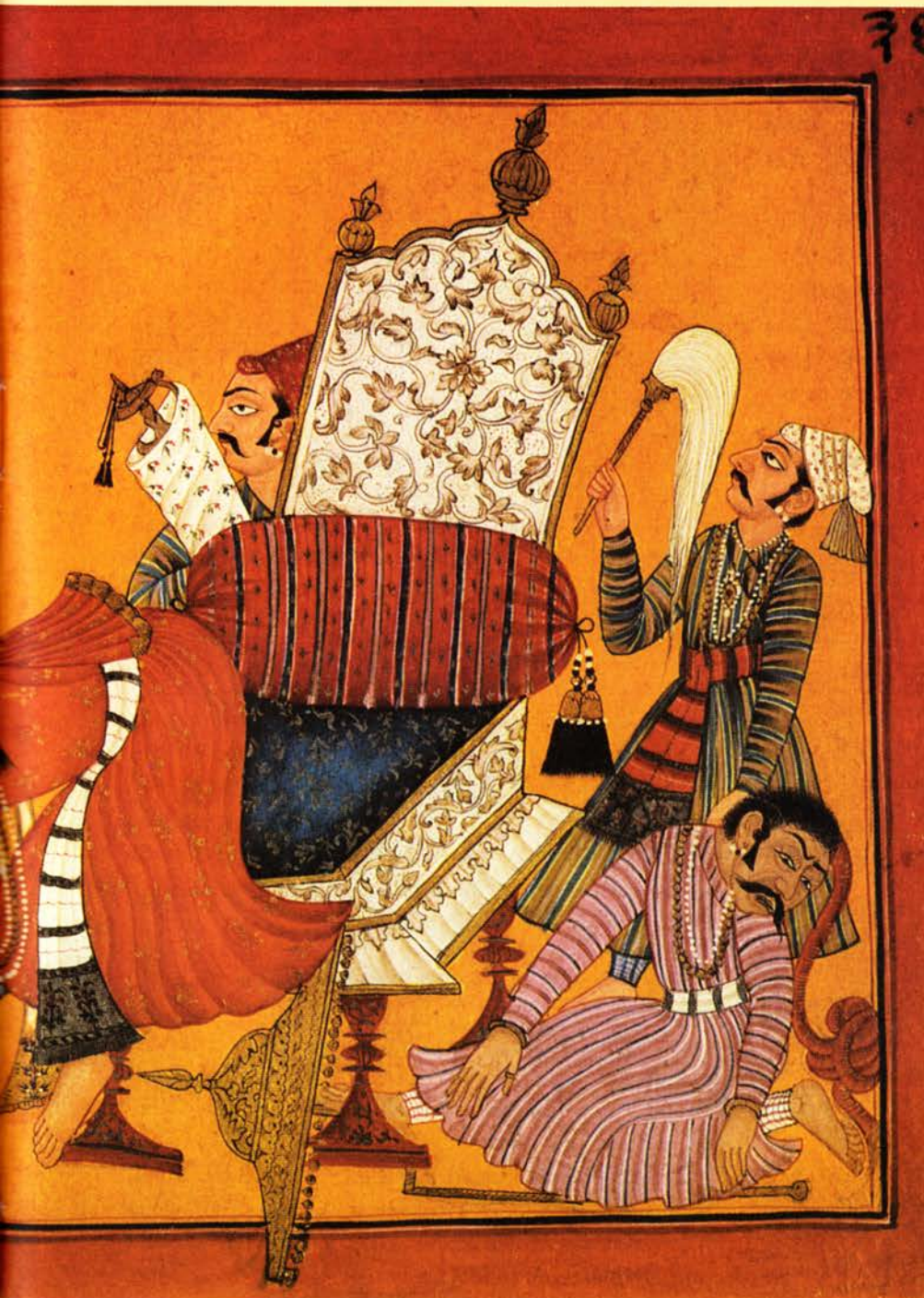
This reply made his father very happy and he immediately called for some *brāhmaṇas*. He told them of the desire of his son and asked that they come to recite the *Bhāgavatam* daily. They began to recite, and Rasik would sit on the lap of his father and listen to all the pastimes of the Lord. He listened to the killing of Kamsa and the re-establishment of Ugrasena on the throne of Mathura. He heard how Krishna studied in *gurukula*, about the visit of Uddhava to Vraja, and about the lamentation of the *gopīs* in their separation from Krishna. Hearing these descriptions, Rasik rolled down from his father's lap unconscious. Seeing the emotion in the body of his son, Achyuta recited the names of the Lord and prayed for the child's protection. Listening to the *Bhāgavata* became the regular habit of Rasik. Sometimes he heard about Krishna's visit to the houses of Kubja and Akrura. Then he heard of Akrura going to Hastinapur and the complaining of Kamsa's two wives

Asti and Prapti to their father Jarasandha. He heard about the valor of Jarasandha, the King of Magdha, in his fighting Lord Krishna seventeen times. He heard how Krishna left Mathura and established his kingdom at Dwarka. He heard of Muchukunda burning Kalayavan to ashes and of the apparent fleeing of Krishna and

Balaram from Jarasandha, Krishna's fight with the kings for the hand of Rukmini, the kidnapping of Pradyumna and the killing of Samvara in order to rescue Pradyumna, the episode of the Syamantaka jewel, Krishna's fight with Jambavan, his marriage with Jambavati Thakurani, his marriage with Satyabhama, and the killing of



Rasikananda was hearing various pastimes from the Bhāgavatam, such as the killing of Kamsa.



Satadhanu by Krishna at Samagrama. These were all narrated to him. He also listened to the account of Krishna's visit to Indraprastha to see the Pandavas, his marriage with Kalindi, the daughter of Maharaja Nagnajit, the imprisonment of Saptasanda, the killing of Narakasura and the freeing of the sixteen thousand one hundred princesses held in prison, and the capturing of a *pārijāta* tree by defeating the king of heaven. He listened to the household affairs of Krishna and Rukmini,

the names of the sons of each of his eight wives, the marriages of Aniruddha and Pradyumna, the fight with the king of Kalinga, the release of the Nriga Raja, Lord Balaram's visit to Vraja to meet his friends, his dragging of the Yamuna by his plough, the killing of Paundraka, Sudarshan's burning of Varanasi, and the imprisonment of Krishna's son in Hastinapur and Balaram's visit to release him. He heard of Narada's visit to Dwarka to see Krishna's activities in each of his palaces. He also heard of Jarasandha's imprisonment of ninety-six thousand kings and their prayers to Krishna for release, Narada's return to Dwarka, the visit to Hastinapur of Krishna and Uddhava, the killing of Jarasandha and the release of the imprisoned kings, the *rājasūya-yajña*, the killing of Sisupal, the killing of Salya and Dantavakra, Lord Balaram's pilgrimage, including his visit to Naimisaranya where he killed Suta Pauranika, the visit of Sudama to Dwarka and his release from poverty, the kings of the Yadus going to Kurukshetra, and Krishna's meeting with Nanda Maharaja and the inhabitants of Vrindavan at Kurukshetra, Draupadi's talks with the eight wives of Krishna, the kidnapping of Subhadra, Krishna's visit to Videha, the visit of Bhṛigu Muni to Dwarka, and Krishna's acceptance of the mark of Srivatsa.

Then he heard Arjuna's promise to

the *brāhmaṇa* who lost his children as well as descriptions of the family members of Krishna and his sons.

In this way Rasik loved to absorb himself in hearing the *Bhāgavata*. After hearing all twelve cantos he then heard the *Purāṇas* that depicted the glory of Krishna, and while listening he would shed tears. One of Rasik's favorite pastimes was to gather soil and with his own hands mold it into the form of Sri Krishna. He would then decorate the form in various ways and offer many items in worship

while his young friends would sing and dance. Childishly, Rasik would imagine himself to be a *sannyāsī* and go off for pilgrimage, absorbed in love for the Lord. But after going some distance his friends would bring him back. He knew nothing but the pastimes of the Lord and always floated in pools of tears remembering him.

Observing the behavior of the child, the inhabitants of the town were astonished and discussed with one another, "This child has an effulgence like Krishna's and he has induced his father to listen to the *Bhāgavata*. Indeed, the child will hear nothing else. He must be an associate of Krishna." They would bless him, "O Lord Krishna! Protect this boy always because one day he will surely deliver all beings." Just by looking at Rasik's moonlike face one would forget one's own identity. His mild and sweet smile charmed everyone.³

STUDYING THE BHAGAVATA

As the Zamindar of Mallabhumi, Rasikananda's father Achyuta often visited many countries and would take his favorite child with him on tour. Rasik would meet and study under the professors of these places and he soon became a scholar in six scriptures. While remaining absorbed in love for Krishna, he obtained a grasp of many philosophies, including *tarka*, *sāṅkhya*, *sāṅkhyāyana*, *mīmāṃsā*, the theories of Patanjali and others, and soon mastered them all. He was as brilliant as Brihaspati and his presence gratified the earth. After completing his education in these scriptures, he took up studying *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* under a fortunate professor named Jagannath Mishra who had composed a poetic rendition of the *Bhāgavata*. The son of Achyuta analyzed each and every verse and began to create his own comments. His devotion in analyzing the *ślokas* was like that of Sukadev Goswami, while his efforts could be compared to those of Srila Vyasa. His explanation of the verses could melt dry wood and they brought great pleasure to his teacher, who would affectionately embrace him. Mishra would often remark, "Glory to Rasik's mother and father, who are so fortunate to have a son like Suka and Vyasa. His explanations of the *Bhāgavata* have opened my own eyes."

Once after saying this, Mishra took Rasik in his arms and embraced him. At once Mishra fell under the spell of the eight kinds of emotion and began to cry. He thought, "His touch has awakened love and devotion in me. He must be a favorite devotee of Krishna and can enable me to attain Krishna. Simply by observing him, all my sins will be removed." Everyone who heard this began to sing the glories of Rasik. They said, "His words give pleasure to the ears. We had studied *Bhāgavata* for a long time but failed to understand the essence of the theories in this book. This boy has opened our eyes.

In order to teach the world the inner meanings of *Bhāgavata* a servant of Krishna has taken birth as the son of Achyuta." In this way everyone blessed Rasik.

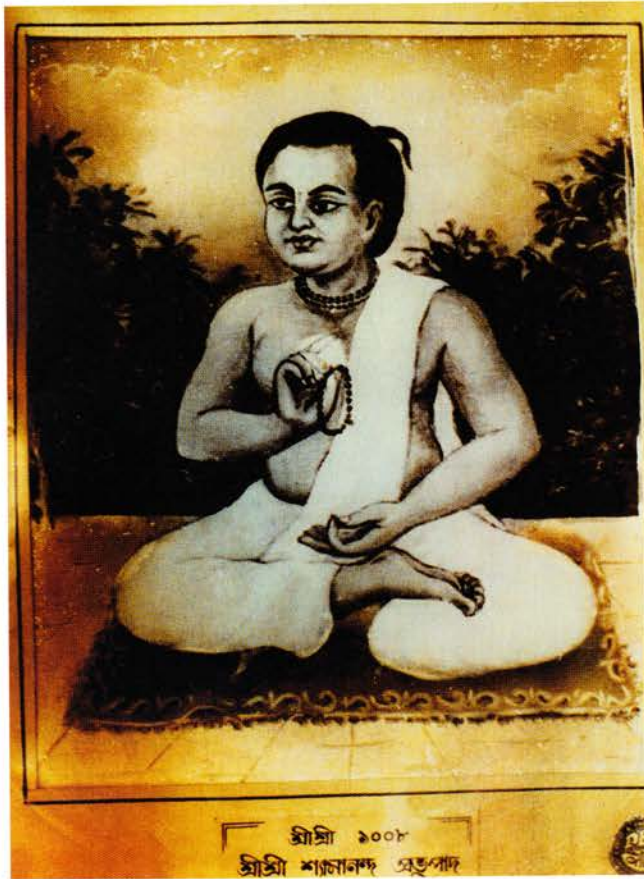
After completing his studies under Mishra, Rasik studied under Hari Dube, who was a fortunate devotee of Sri Krishna. He observed the love and devotion that Rasik had for Lord Krishna and the two became absorbed together in scriptures. Rasik was happy to have such a teacher and both of them forgot about eating and sleeping, being so absorbed in their study. When Dube would hear Rasik's comments on the *Bhāgavatam* he would become emotional and shed tears. He would take him in his arms and exclaim, "Glory to the parents! Glory to this land! A child such as Brihaspati, Vyasa, Suka or Narada has now taken birth. We have never seen such an intelligent child. In the sphere of knowledge he can be compared to Brihaspati or Suka. He is a scholar of all six philosophical systems as well as Vedanta, the eighteen *Purāṇas*, and *Bhagavad-gītā*. He is an ocean of love of Krishna, and when he explains something it is as if Krishna himself is speaking through him. He can refute the interpretations of other scholars and establish his own explanations in accordance with those of Narada, Suka and Vyasa. We are indeed fortunate to have this boy among us. In the future he will deliver all beings." Dube was a great soul who could tell past, present and future, so he blessed Rasik in this way and also informed all others about the child's power.⁴

ECSTATIC READING

One day Rasik was reading the tenth canto of the *Bhāgavata* with Dube. When they came to the chapter describing Krishna's going to Mathura and the feelings of separation felt by the *gopīs*, Rasik fainted and fell to the ground. As he thought how the *gopīs* could not bear to live without Krishna, the eight kinds of emotions broke out in his body. He cried out again and again, "Where has Krishna, the lord of my life, gone?" Hearing his weeping, others came to see what was wrong. They said, "This boy's father is the king of Mallabhumi and he has no want for anything. Why is he crying? He must have been disturbed by some rogue." No one could understand why the child gave up bathing, eating, and studying, and kept crying all the time. Everyone was sympathetic towards him, but they were unable to comfort him. He could not stay at home but would wander about like someone insane.⁵

BHAGAVATAM AND MARRIED LIFE

After his marriage, Rasik Murari settled down and passed his time discussing *Bhāgavatam* and topics concerning Lord Krishna. Absorbed in chanting *hari-nāma*, his eyes



Srila Shyamananda Prabhu

shed a constant flow of tears and he would roll on the ground, his body manifesting the eight-fold symptoms of ecstasy. He would cry out, “Krishna is my wealth! He is my mother, my Lord, my guardian, my son, my friend and my protector. Without Krishna I have no one. I have dedicated myself to him.” Rasik’s only concern was the pastimes of Krishna, and he neglected even eating and sleeping. He was unable to stay at home, but loved to wander through the forests where he would sit alone until his relatives found him and brought him back. There was nothing but Krishna in his mind, and he grew more and more apathetic to household affairs. Understanding the thinking of his son, Achyuta told Rasik, “Listen, my dear Rasik. Remain at home. I shall provide you with whatever you need.”

*śuni pitā-vākya, kahena rasika
śunaha tāta vacana
saṁsāra vaibhava, mithyā dekhi saba
satya kṛṣṇe paramāṇa*

*satya kṛṣṇa-dhana, satya kṛṣṇa-jana
satya se kṛṣṇera līlā
satya vṛndāvana, satya gopī-gaṇa
satya se nandera bālā*

*satya saṅkīrtana, satya kṛṣṇa-nāma
satya guru kṛṣṇa-bhakti
śuna tāta mora, ei vedasāra
kṛṣṇe deha sabe mati*

*kṛṣṇa bhaja tāta, śāstra abhimata
kṛṣṇa se sabāra prāṇa
brahmādi nārada, śiva śuka indra
kṛṣṇa vine nāhi jāna⁶*

Hearing his father’s words, Rasika said, “O father, please hear me! You should understand that material existence is all false. Truth can only be found in Krishna — in his opulences, his associates, his pastimes, Vrindaban, the *gopīs*, and the son of Nanda Maharaja. Listen, my father, this is the essence of the Vedas. Give your mind to Krishna. Worship Krishna, O father. That is the verdict of *śāstra*. Krishna is the life of everything. Brahma, Narada, Shiva, Sukadev Goswami, Indra and others know only Krishna and nothing else.”⁷

HEAR WITH ATTENTION

One day while Rasikananda and his guru Shyamananda were sitting in the court of the king listening to the recitation of the *Bhāgavata*, Rasik turned his face to the rear. Noticing his inattention to the *Bhāgavatam*, Shyamananda, became furious and kicked Rasik twice. Rasik then fell on the ground and lay at the feet of Shyamananda. With tears in his eyes, he said, “Today the result of all my sins have been rectified by the two kicks of Shyamananda Ray. Today I have been freed from the bondage of the material world and attained shelter at the feet of my master.”⁸

RESCUING THE BHAGAVATAM

With many great devotees in his company, Rasik would tour from place to place chanting the name of Hari. To add to the sweetness of the *kīrtana*, some played musical instruments. Crowds of people came running just to observe the beauty of Rasik and to allow his sweet words to soothe their ears. Hypnotized by his merciful looks, they would surround him and not want to leave. After meeting Rasik, everyone became a devotee of Krishna and many became his disciples. Rasik went to Dhamnagar, and from there to Sukapala, and then to Jajpur, where he took bath at Asvamedha Ghat on the banks of the Vaitarini River. He then had *darśana* of Lord Varaha. The day was spent absorbed

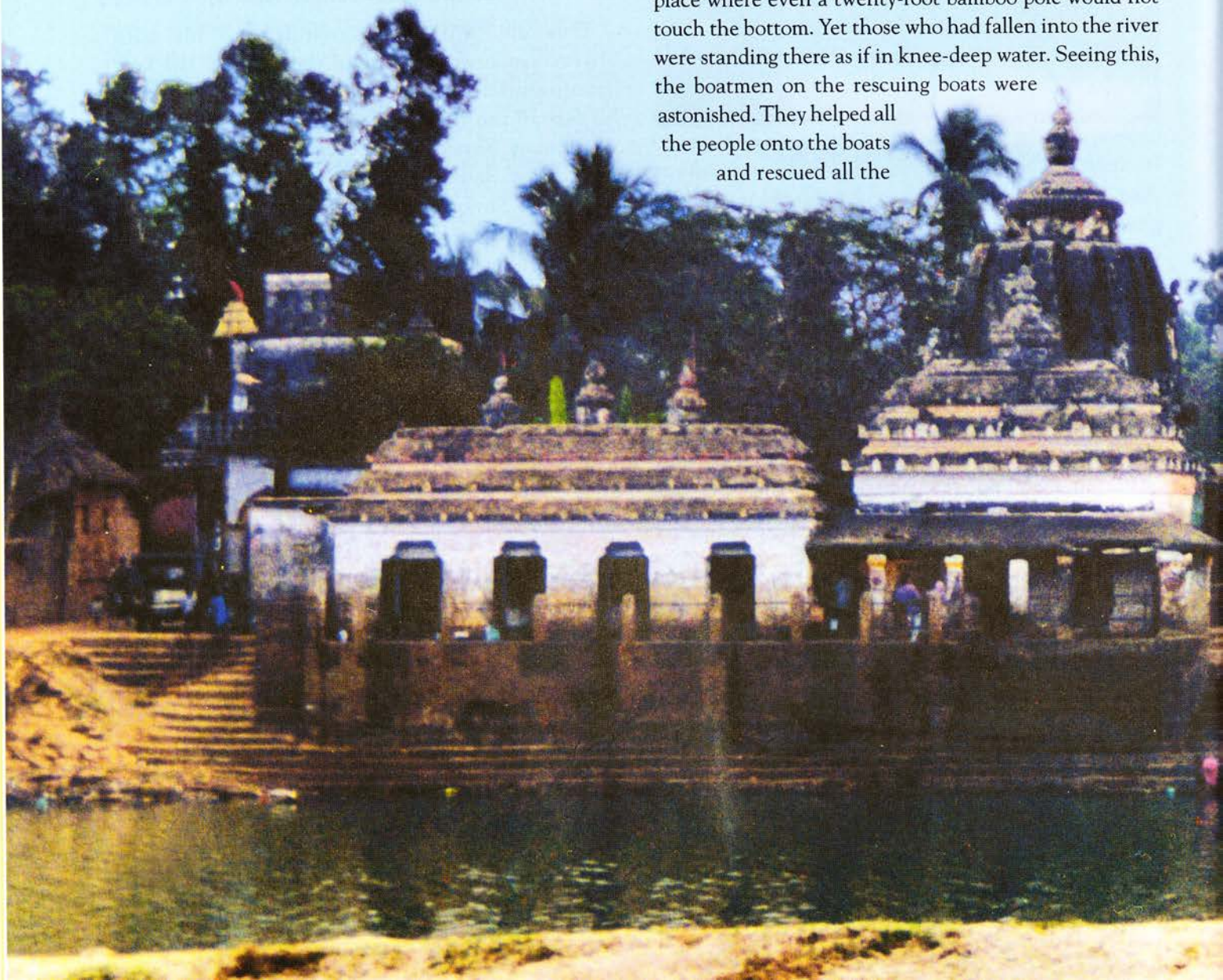
Next page: The Vaitarani river in Jajpur, Orissa

in *kīrtana*, and as he chanted and danced, streams of tears rolled down from his eyes. Rasik offered many gifts to the *brāhmaṇas*.


He went to the banks of the Vaitarani River, which was then very high due to flooding. A boat was there to take them to the other side of the river, but seeing the waves, the people trembled in fear. Chanting the holy name of Krishna, Rasik and his followers boarded the boat. As the craft began moving, it rocked from side to side in the fierce wind. By the time the vessel reached the middle of the river, the waves became furious and the boat went out of control. The boatman prayed to Rasik to save the situation and Rasik advised everyone not to be afraid, but to think of Krishna. Just as he said this, the boat toppled over, and Rasik and his companions fell into the bottomless water. Although the Vaitarani River at this place is famous as being bottomless, the river suddenly appeared only knee deep and everyone was able to stand up.

Singing the glory of Rasik, they said, "Prabhu is an ocean of mercy. We fell into the bottomless depth of the river and he saved us from drowning. Rasik has appeared in this world just to save us from the clutches of Kali. Oh Prabhu! You are the friend of the helpless and an ocean of mercy." People standing on the banks of the river began to cry when they saw the boat capsize, for they thought that not a single person would survive. At that time they prayed to Narayan to save them. One person said, "Rasik is with them, so by his grace no one will die. By remembering his name at the time of danger one can avoid all kinds of misfortune and even pass safely through wild animals. He is with them so there is no need for fear. Rasik's power is such that he can destroy the sinners and deliver the fallen."

As sage-like persons eulogized Rasik, a few boats were sent to rescue the drowning people. Although the boat had capsized in the middle of the river, it was found that everyone was saved. Rasik was standing in the river at a place where even a twenty-foot bamboo pole would not touch the bottom. Yet those who had fallen into the river were standing there as if in knee-deep water. Seeing this, the boatmen on the rescuing boats were astonished. They helped all the people onto the boats and rescued all the



luggage. But Rasikananda's copy of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* was missing. Rasik was pained by this, and he requested everyone to look for the book. Dvija Radhamadan dove into the water and swam some distance against the tremendous current until an iron casket touched his hands. He brought the casket ashore, but unfortunately, although none of the books contained therein had been damaged by water, the *Bhāgavata* was not there. In his anxiety, Rasikananda Prabhu wanted to enter into the river himself. Sensing this, some of his companions jumped into the water to join the search. Rasik instructed Radhamadan, "You had better bring a boat, because although I can find the manuscript, I am unable to swim." A boat was brought and the *Bhāgavatam* was located. However, ten to twenty of Rasik's companions were unable to lift it out of the water. Then, using all their might, everyone in the boat tried to lift it, but they could not succeed and the manuscript floated away. In amazement, they told Rasik, "Although there are so many of us, we were unable to lift the book out of the water, and because of the tremendous current we are unable to move it." Rasik

then had the boatman take him as near as possible to the manuscript. Rasik stretched out his hand, caught hold of the book, and quickly lifted it from the water as if it were a flower.⁹ 

Endnotes

¹ From the 6th wave of the eastern division.

² 1.8.10.

³ From the 8th wave of the eastern division.

⁴ From the 9th wave of the eastern division.

⁵ From the 10th wave of the eastern division.

⁶ 1.13.16-19.

⁷ From the 13th wave of the eastern division.

⁸ From the 1st wave of the southern division.

⁹ From the 9th wave of the northern division.

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The Sacred Forest of Naimisharanya

Three places in this world are famous as locations where the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* was spoken. The first is Badarikashram where Srila Vyasadev spoke to his son Sukadev Goswami. The second is Sukatala where Sukadev spoke to Maharaja Pariksit. The third revelation of the *Bhāgavatam* took place in the sacred forest known as Naimisharanya, where Suta Goswami spoke the *Bhāgavatam* to a group of rishis. Also known today as Nimsar or Nimkharavan, Naimisharanya is situated on the bank of the sacred Gomati River, about 30 km from Sitapur and 72 km northwest of Lucknow in the Sitapur District of modern Uttar Pradesh.

Śrīmad Bhāgavatam (1.1.4) states:

*naimiṣe 'nimiṣa-kṣetre ṛṣayah saunakādayaḥ
satraṁ svargāya lokāya sahasra-samam āsata*

Once, in a holy place in the forest of Naimisharanya, great sages headed by Saunaka Rishi assembled to perform a great thousand-year sacrifice for the satisfaction of the Lord and his devotees.

His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada comments on this verse:

Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, after its first recitation by Srila Sukadev Goswami, was repeated for the second time at Naimisharanya.

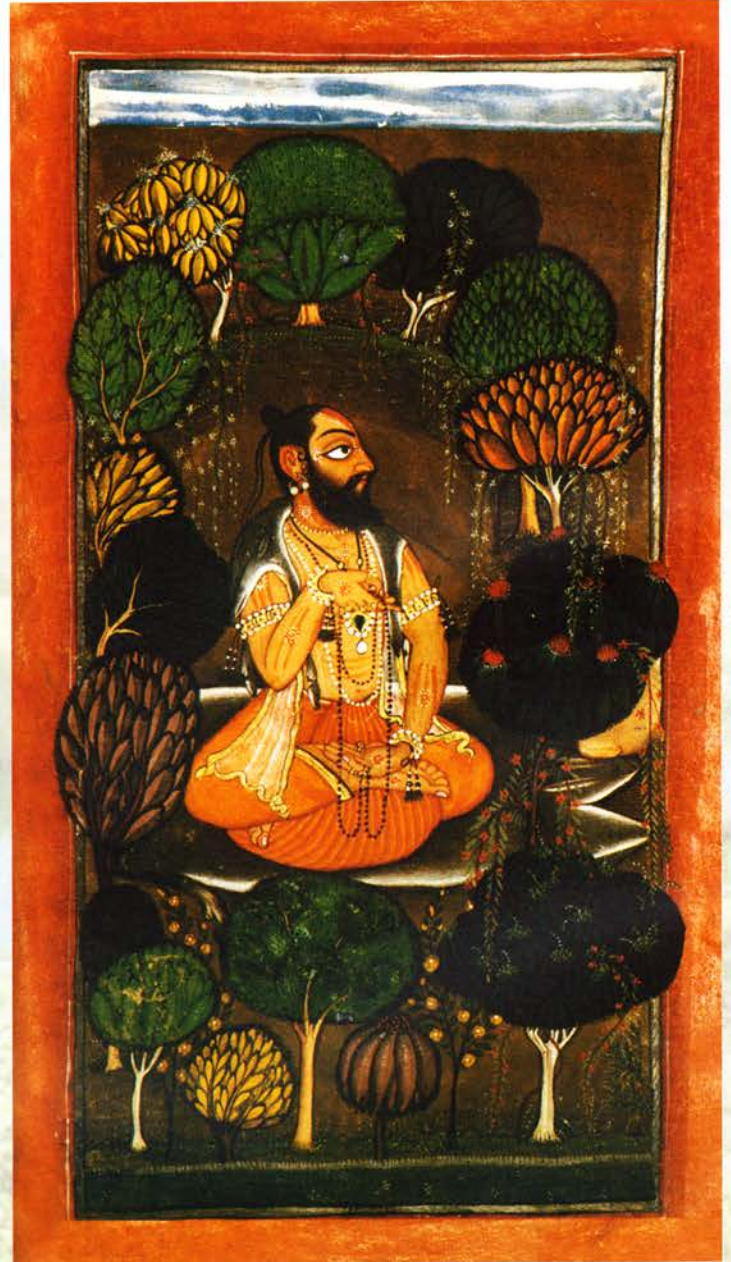
In the *Vāyavīya Tantra* it is said that Brahma, the engineer of this particular universe, contemplated a great wheel that could enclose the universe. The hub of this wheel was fixed at Naimisharanya. Similarly, there is another reference to the forest of Naimisharanya in the *Vārāha Purāna*, where it is stated that by performance of sacrifice here the strength of demoniac people is curtailed. Thus, *brāhmaṇas* prefer Naimisharanya for such sacrificial performances.

STORY OF GAURAMUKH RISHI

There are two histories that tell how Naimisharanya got its name. One is given in the eleventh chapter of the *Vārāha Purāna* where the history of a sage named Gauramukh is described:

There was a righteous king in *Satya-yuga* named Supratika. By the blessings of Atreya Muni, Supratika got a powerful son named Durjaya who conquered the entire earth and later defeated Indra and all of the demigods. Once, while wandering about in the forest driving away wild animals, the king came across the hermitage of the great sage and devotee Gauramukh. Maharaja Durjaya arrived at the sage's ashram with an army consisting of over 300,000 horses, 100,000 elephants, 100,000 chariots and 500,000 foot soldiers.¹

Seeing his unexpected visitors, Gauramukh Rishi wanted to properly receive them, but was unhappy that



Gauramukh Rishi

he could not accommodate so many. In anxiety, he began to offer prayers to Lord Vishnu. Pleased with his devotion, Vishnu appeared before him. Wearing brilliant yellow silken garments, carrying a conch and a club in his hands, and seated upon his winged carrier Garuda, Lord Vishnu shone with a luster greater than thousands of suns. Vishnu asked the sage what boon he wanted. The rishi requested the ability to be able to nicely receive the king and his entourage. Lord Vishnu gave Gauramukh a special jewel that had the ability to fulfill all of one's desires.

By the power of the jewel, Gauramukh created hundreds of thousands of mansions, each complete with opulent furniture, beautiful gardens full of cuckoos, and other charming song birds. The gardens contained many auspicious trees such as *campaka*, *aśoka*, *punnāga*, *nāga* and *kesara*. Stalls for elephants and stables for horses appeared complete with food for the animals. In the mansions, opulent feasts served from golden utensils were provided for the king's associates, consisting of the four types of foodstuffs.

Seeing all of them in the mansions, Gauramukh, standing with the divine jewel in his hand given to him by Lord Vishnu, spoke. "O king, when you are ready to bathe and have your meal, I shall send charming ladies and obedient servants to wait on you. After saying that, the powerful devotee *brāhmaṇa* then carefully placed the divine jewel in a safe place while the king watched him. As soon as the sage put the jewel away, immediately thousands of celestial ladies appeared there. Decorated with cosmetics and valuable ornaments, the ladies attracted everyone with their beauty and charm. The ladies and many servants then followed the king and his men to their bath. While the king was bathing, many ladies sang, played musical instruments, and danced — just as when the king of heaven takes his bath. After they finished bathing, Gauramukh also provided the king and his men with precious jewels and the finest silk clothing. The great sage then showed fine hospitality to the king's servants.

Seeing all of this, the king was struck with wonder, and thought, "How is he providing all of these things? Is it by the power of his penances or by the effulgent jewel he was carrying?"

That night, the king and his men slept comfortably in opulent surroundings like those in the heavenly planets. Rising in the morning, the king was surprised to find that all of the mansions, furniture, and beautiful women had disappeared. Feeling unhappy, the king thought, "The rishi's jewel fulfils all the wishes of whoever possesses it. Therefore, I will steal it from him." After Maharaja Durjaya and his entourage left the sage's ashram, the

king told his minister to return to the rishi and ask him to donate the jewel to the king.

The minister told the *sādhu*, "The king deserves to keep all valuable jewels. Thus you should give this one to him."

Hearing his words, the saint became very angry and replied, "Śāstra says that the *brāhmaṇas* are qualified to accept donations, while the duty of the kings is to give them charity. Being a king, how is he making a request like a poor man? What you are telling me means that King Durjaya is a person of bad conduct. Go back to your ill-behaved king."

DESTROYED IN A MOMENT

The minister returned to the king and repeated everything said by the *brāhmaṇa*. Hearing the words of Gauramukh Rishi, the king became angry and called for his chieftain named Nila. King Durjaya told him, "Immediately go to the house of that *brāhmaṇa*, snatch the jewel away from him, and return here.

Receiving the king's order, Nila went to the sages ashram accompanied by a huge army. Upon his arrival, Nila saw that the jewel was being kept in Gauramukh's *agni-hotraśālā*, the place where he worshiped the sacred fire. When the cruel Nila got down from his chariot to take the gem, suddenly innumerable powerful soldiers holding weapons, along with chariots and horses, came out of the divine jewel. They began to fight with Nila and his army. In that tumultuous battle, Nila and his army were completely destroyed.

When Durjaya Maharaja heard the news, he became even more angry and rushed to the ashram of the rishi with a huge army. Hearing that Durjaya was going to battle, fifteen of his neighboring kings and friends arrived with their vast armies to help him. They began to engage in a terrible fight with the jewel-born soldiers. The sage Gauramukh stood near the gate of his ashram in deep thought, watching that wonderful and horrible battle. Seeing that his jewel was the cause of that horrible conflict, Gauramukh began to meditate on Lord Vishnu.

Suddenly, Vishnu appeared there before him and asked what he wanted. With folded hands, the sage replied, "Please kill this sinful Durjaya and his army."

Vishnu then threw his *sudarśana-cakra* at the king and his army, and in one moment the king and all his forces were reduced to ashes.

*uvāca nimīṣeḍaṁ nihataṁ dānavāṁ kulam
araṇye 'smiṁs tatas tv evaṁ naimiṣāraṇya sañjñitam
bhaviṣyati yathārtho vai brāhmaṇānām niveśanam
ahaṁ ca yajñe puruṣa e tasmīn vanagocare*



Unknown artist. Basohli, Pahari style, mid 18th century.

Rishis

Lord Vishnu then told the sage Gauramukh. "Since this race of demons was killed within a moment (*nimiṣa*), this forest (*aranya*) shall be known as *naimiṣāranya*. This will be an abode of *brāhmaṇas*. In this forest I will be known as *yajña-puruṣa*, the lord of sacrifice. Sacrifices should be offered here always."²

Srila Viswanath Chakravarti Thakur quotes the above verses in his purport to *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* 1.1.4, and then comments: "Another meaning [of *naimiṣa*] implied in these verses is that one should only reside in that place where one is able to instantly kill the enemies of lust and so on."

LORD BRAHMA'S WHEEL

A number of *Purāṇas*, including the *Vāyu Purāṇa* (1.2.8), the *Śiva Purāṇa* (7.3.53-57) and the *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* (1.1.2.1-8), describe another story behind the meaning of "*naimiṣaranya*". Some sages once approached Lord Brahma and asked him, "Where is the best place in the world to perform penance?" Lord Brahma created a wheel weapon in his mind. This *cakra* was as bright as the sun. Brahma threw it and told the great sages that wherever it landed would be the best place for them to perform penances. The *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* (1.1.2.8) states:

*bhramato dharmā-cakrasya
yatra nemi aśīryata
karmaṇā tena vikhyātaṁ
naimiṣam muni-pūjitam*

The place where the rim of the whirling *dharmacakra* (wheel of righteousness) fell off became well known as *naimiṣa* on account of that event. It is a place worshiped by the sages.

The word *nemi* means the rim or a section of the rim of a wheel supported by spokes. Hence as described in the above verse, another meaning of the name *Naimisharanya* is the forest where the rim of the wheel fell off.

In his article "*Naimiṣāranya, The Hub of The Universe*",³ Sri Bhakti Vikash Swami describes the local tradition spoken in *Naimisharanya* about this story:

At the juncture of the previous age, *Dvāpara-yuga*, and the present one, *Kali*, eighty thousand sages headed by Saunaka Rishi wanted to perform a sacrifice to hold off the effects of the oncoming evil age. They went to Lord Brahma, who lives on the highest planet

in the universe. "Where can we perform a sacrifice that will counteract the influence of *Kali*?" they asked. "Where will our sacrifice have the greatest effect?" Brahma told them, "I'll send a disc. Follow it and perform your sacrifice where it hits the earth."

The disc (*cakra*) went spinning down and down and struck the earth at the place known as *Chakratirtha* in the forest known as *Naimisharanya*. According to tradition, the disc passed through the earth and sped toward the *Garbhodaka* Ocean at the bottom of the universe. When the disc had passed six of the seven planetary systems between the earth and the *Garbhodaka* Ocean, the sages became worried that if it were to strike the water, the splash would drown the earth. So they prayed to goddess *Durga*, the controller of the material energy, and she stopped the disc from going any further.

This history explains why the lake at *Chakratirtha* is said to be bottomless. In the nineteenth century, to try to discredit this claim, the British sent a chain down into the lake to find the bottom. After reaching one and a half miles, we're told, they gave up.

GLORIFIED IN THE PURANAS

The following are just a few of the many glorifications of *Naimisharanya* found in the *Purāṇas* and other Vedic literatures:

tataś ca naimiṣaṁ gacchet puṇyam dvija-niṣevitam
 tatra nityaṁ nivasati brahmā deva-gaṇaiḥ saha
 naimiṣaṁ prārthayānasya pāpasyārddham praṇaśyati
 praviṣṭa mānas tu naraḥ sarva pāpāt pramucyate
 tatra māsaṁ vased dhīrau naimiṣe tīrtha tat-paraḥ
 pṛthivyām yāni tīrthāni naimiṣe tāni bhārata
 abhiṣekaṁ tatra kṛtvā niyato niyatāśanaḥ
 rājasuyasya yajñasya phalaṁ prāpnoti mānavaḥ
 punāty āsaptamaṁ caiva kulaṁ bhārata sattama
 yas tyajen naimiṣe prāṇān upavāsa-parāyaṇaḥ

samodet svarga-loka-stha evam āhur manīṣiṇaḥ
 nityaṁ medhyaṁ ca puṇyam ca naimiṣaṁ nr̥pa-sattama

[Narada Muni to Yudhisthir Maharaja:] One should go to Naimisha, the auspicious place resorted to by brāhmaṇas. Lord Brahma always resides there with hosts of gods. Half the sin of one who merely desires to go to Naimisha perishes. Upon entering there, one is freed from all sin. A wise man intent on visiting holy places should stay at Naimisha for one month. O descendent of Bharat, whatever holy places are on this earth, all of them are present in Naimisharanya.



Unknown artist. Pahari style, c. 1675 - 1700. Government Museum and Art Gallery, Chandigarh

The sapta, or seven principle rishis



Pilgrims take bath in Chakratirtha Kund

One who controls his diet and senses and takes bath there obtains the fruit of a Rajasuya sacrifice and purifies up to seven generations of his family members. The wise say that he who is wholly devoted to fasting and gives up his life at Naimisha will stay in the heavenly planets and rejoice there. O best of kings, Naimisha is always pure and holy. (*Padma Purāna* 3.32.24-39)

*naiṣaṁ prārthayānasya pāpasyārdham praṇasyati
praviṣṭamātras tu narah sarvapāpaiḥ pramucyate
tatra māsaṁ vased dhīro naimiṣe tirtha tatparaḥ
pṛthivyām yāni tīrthāni naimiṣe tāni bhārata*

[Pulastya Muni to Bhishmadev:] If one only desires to go to Naimisharanya, half of one's sins are destroyed. As soon as a person enters Naimisharanya, they are cleansed of all their sins. O descendant of Bharata, a pilgrim should live in Naimisha for one month, for all tīrthas are present there. (*Mahābhārata* 3.82.54-55)

tretāyām naimiṣaṁ smṛtam

[Brahma to Lord Shiva:] Naimisharanya is the tīrtha for Treta-yuga. (*Padma Purāna* 1.34.225)

tīrthe tu naimiṣaṁ nāma sarva tīrtha phala pradam

[Pulastya Muni to Grandfather Bhishmadev:] The sacred place known as Naimisharanya grants the fruits of all sacred places. (*Padma Purāna* 1.11.6)

yaḥ prayāti sapūtātāmā nārāyaṇa puram vrajet

[Pulastya Muni to Grandfather Bhishmadev:] One who goes (to Naimisharanya) with a purified soul goes to the abode of Lord Narayan. (*Padma Purāna* 1.11.9)

*kurukṣetraṁ kṛte tīrtham tretāyām puṣkaraṁ smṛtam
dvāpare naimisāraṇyam nava-khaṇḍam kalau kila*

In Satya-yuga, Kurukshetra is the most important holy place, in Tretā-yuga, Lake Pushkar is the most important holy place, in Dvāpara-yuga, Naimisharanya is the most important holy place, and in Kali-yuga, Nabadwip is the most important holy place. (*Mukti-sāṅkalinī Tantra*)⁴

THE LORD'S FORM AS A FOREST

The members of the Sri (Ramanuja) Sampradaya also worship Naimisharanya. They consider it to be one of the 108 *divya-deśams*, principal sacred places in this material world. According to their tradition,⁵ Lord Vishnu once manifested before Lord Brahma and informed him that he would appear in a deity form known as Ranganath in Sri Rangan and in seven other places: Sri Mushnam,⁶ Venkatadri,⁷ Saligram,⁸ Thotadri,⁹ Pushkar,¹⁰ Badri,¹¹ and Naimisharanya. According to this account of the Sri Vaishnava tradition, the Lord manifested himself as the forest in Naimisharanya and is hence known as *āraṇya-svarūpa*, the form of the Lord as a forest.

LALITA DEVI

The local tradition in Naimisharanya is that this is one of the *śakti-pīthas*, sacred places in connection with Sati, Lord Shiva's wife. After Sati committed suicide at the *yajña* of her father Daksha,¹² Lord Shiva angrily picked up her body and began his universal dance of destruction. Seeing the danger, Lord Vishnu cut Sati's body to pieces, the parts of which fell in various places all over India. The places where they landed are considered to be *śakti-pīthas*. In Naimisharanya it is said that part of her body fell there¹³ and is worshiped as Lalita Devi along with an ancient *śiva-liṅga*.

It is said that after stopping the Lord's *sudarśana cakra* before it struck the Garbhodaka ocean, Durga appeared in Naimisharanya as Lalita. She is considered to be the presiding female deity of Naimisharanya. She is very popular and is said to grant whatever one desires.

SHATARUPA & SWAYAMBHUVA MANU

The third canto, chapter twelve of the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* tells how once a male and female came out of the body of Lord Brahma. They became known as Swayambhuva Manu and Shatarupa. Swayambhuva Manu and Shatarupa married and begot Devahuti, who was given in marriage to Kardama Muni and became the mother of Lord Kapiladev. Both the local tradition in Naimisharanya and the *vaiṣṇava* poet Tulsidas in his *Rāma-carita-mānasa*,¹⁴ describe that after ruling over the earth for many years, Swayambhuva Manu decided to retire and devote himself to spiritual practices. He and Shatarupa then went to Naimisharanya where they were joyfully greeted by the sages and were given a tour of the various holy places there.

The two of them began eating a simple diet of local fruits, vegetables and roots. Daily they were hearing recitation of the *Purāṇas* in the association of the saints in that sacred place. With great devotion they began regular recitation of the *mantra*, *om namo bhagavate vāsudevāya*. With a burning desire to see the Lord of their hearts, they passed 6,000 years living only on water, then for 10,000 years they refused to even take air, while each of them remained standing on one leg. Seeing their penance, Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva came to them many times offering them boons. Each time Shatarupa and Swayambhuva refused and continued with their austerities. Their bodies became reduced to skeletons, but still their strong desire to see the particular form of the Lord they cherished did not diminish. Finally the Lord appeared before them in his human-like form of Sri Ramachandra.

Seeing the beauty of the Lord, Shatarupa and Swayambhuva Manu were entranced. When he offered them a blessing, they replied that there was nothing that they wanted, only they would like to have a son exactly like the Lord. Lord Rama replied that since there was no one in all of the three worlds like him, then he himself would become their son. Thus Shatarupa and Swayambhuva Manu became Kausalya and Maharaja Dasarath in their next births.

The place where Shatarupa and Swayambhuva Manu had their ashram in Naimisharanya is next to Vyasa-gadi. There is a small temple there dedicated to them.

PRAHLAD MAHARAJA

The *Vāmana Purāṇa*, chapter eight¹⁵ says that once on the suggestion of Chyavan Muni, Prahlad Maharaja went to Naimisharanya. While roaming about, Prahlad came across a tree that had been pierced by many arrows. Nearby he saw two unusual ascetics doing meditation with bows and arrows by their sides. As a Vedic king, it was Prahlad's duty to preserve the proper system of social and religious behavior known as *varnāśrama-dharma*. He therefore asked them, "You are performing penance and are dressed as rishis. Why, then, are you carrying weapons? You should either be *sādhus* or warriors. I cannot allow you to do both. If you do not agree with my instruction then you must fight with me. Hearing his words, the unusual rishis agreed to do battle with him. One stood up with his bow and began to shower arrows upon Prahlad. Prahlad checked every one of them. The mysterious sage then began to fight more fiercely, but Prahlad withstood it and replied in a similar manner. Finally, the second rishi pushed the first one aside and began to fight with Prahlad. Prahlad



Lord Ramachandra visited Naimisharanya several times

fought with them for 1,000 celestial years. Finally, the second *sādhu* shot an arrow that pierced Prahlad's breast. Wondering who they were, Prahlad entered into a trance of meditation. He saw the rishi in his vision, and much to his surprise he saw that the sage was wearing the same garland he had offered that morning to his deity of Nrisimhadev. He then realized that the person whom he had been fighting with was his worshipable Lord in the form of Nara and Narayan rishis. Prahlad then dropped his weapons and began to offer prayers to the Lord. Pleased with his devotion, Lord Narayan declared, "I am always defeated by you."

DADHICHI MUNI

Six miles from Naimisharanya is the village of Misrit. "Misrita" means mixed. Because so many different sacred waters have mixed at this place it is known as Misrit. This is the place of Dadhichi Kund, where Dadhichi Muni had his ashram. The sixth canto, chapter nine of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* describes that it was here, on the advice of Lord

Vishnu, that the demigods once approached Dadhichi Muni and asked him to give them his bones so that they could make a weapon to kill the demon Vritrasura. According to the local tradition, the *devatās* collected water from 350 million *tīrthas* and used them to bathe Dadhichi. Then they covered his body with salt and yoghurt. Indra's *surabhi* cows came and licked it away, leaving only Dadhichi's bones.

LORD RAMACHANDRA

Also at Misrit is the place known as Hatyahanana Tirtha. It is said that the Lord, while performing his human-like pastimes as Bhagavan Ramachandra, took bath here to purify himself of the sin of killing Ravan, who although a demon was considered a *brāhmaṇa* because of his birth as the son of the rishi Vishravas.

According to traditional accounts, Lord Ramachandra performed a sacrifice in Naimisharanya to kill Ravan. There is also an 18-foot-high deity of Hanuman in Naimisharanya who is said to have self-manifested. The local tradition, citing different versions



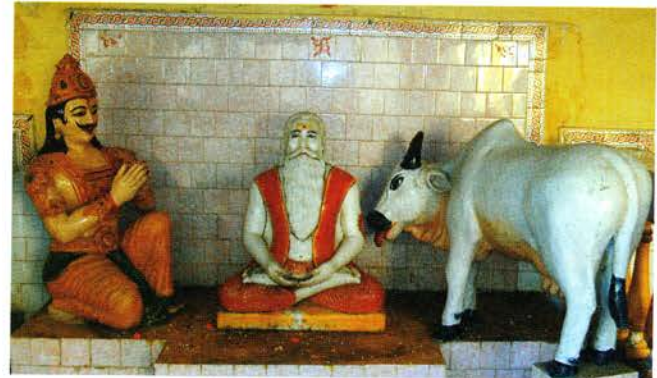
Dadhichi Kund near Naimisharanya

of the *Rāmāyaṇa*,¹⁶ says that on one occasion Mahiravana, one of the brothers of Ravana, kidnapped Rama and Lakshman and took them to Patalaloka at the bottom of the universe. Hanuman rescued them and when he returned to the earth he arrived at this place in Naimisharanya. This deity has Lord Ramachandra on one shoulder and Lakshman on the other.

The *Vālmiki-Rāmāyaṇa* (7.91.15) says that Naimisharanya is the place where Lord Rama heard the *Rāmāyaṇa* spoken by his sons Lav and Kush, and where Sita left this world by entering the earth. According to *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* (9.11.18), after Sita's disappearance Lord Rama performed a sacrifice there for 13,000 years.



This 18-foot-high deity of Hanuman in Naimisharanya is said to have self manifested.



Deities of Indra, Dadhichi Muni, and Surabhi in Misrit near Naimisharanya

OTHER HISTORIES

Many great devotees and incarnations of the Lord have come to visit Naimisharanya. *Mahābhārata* (1.13.6) says that Srila Vyasadev once recited the *Mahābhārata* to the sages at Naimisharanya. The *ādi parva*, chapters one and four of the *Mahābhārata* says that aside from speaking *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* to the sages at Naimisharanya, Suta Goswami also spoke to them the entire *Mahābhārata* and all of the eighteen major *Purāṇas*. Aside from Suta Goswami and the sages who heard from him, over the ages many other great personalities have also visited Naimisharanya. These include Lord Balaram, whose visit to Naimisharanya is described in a number of literatures, including *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* (tenth canto, chapter 78), *Mahābhārata*

(ninth canto, chapter 36) and *Garga-saṁhitā* (eighth canto, chapter 57). *Garga-saṁhitā* refers to Lord Balaram as *naiṁiṣāranya-yātrārthī* — “a pilgrim at Naimisharanya”.

Chapter 189 of the *ādi parva* of *Mahābhārata* and chapter 45 of the *Brahma Purāṇa* tell a story about a sacrifice performed in Naimisharanya by the *devatas*, including Yamaraja, the lord of death. During the sacrifice, Yamaraja was so busy that he was unable to attend to his normal duties, hence during that time there was no death in the material world.

The *Vāyu Purāṇa*,¹⁷ *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa*,¹⁸ and *Mahābhārata*¹⁹ describe how Visvakarma once came to Naimisharanya and made an altar out of solid gold for the sages there. Later, the emperor Pururava arrived there on a hunting trip. Seeing the golden altar he became overwhelmed with greed and tried to steal it. Due to the king's impudence, the sages became furious and, urged by the devas, they empowered a blade of kusa grass with the potency of a thunderbolt and killed the king. Using the sacrificial wood known as *araṇi*, the ṛṣis then created Ayus, who became known as the son of Pururava and acceded to the throne of his father.

The second chapter of *Vāyu Purāṇa* says that it was in Naimisharanya where Shakti, the eldest son of the sage Vasishtha,²⁰ was born, and where Vasistha's wife Arundhati gave birth to one hundred sons. It was in Naimisharanya where King Kalmasapad was cursed by Shakti,²¹ where the famous enmity arose between Viswamitra and Vasishtha,²² and where the great sage Parasara Muni was born.

The *Mahābhārata* (3.93.1-3) says that while visiting here during their *tīrtha-yātrā*, the Pandavas took bath in the Gomati River, performed sacrifices, and gave away cows and wealth in charity. *Mahābhārata* (1.217.6-8) says that Arjuna also came on his own to Naimisharanya during his year long *tīrtha-yātrā*. The Panch Pandava temple in present day Naimisharanya is dedicated to the Pandavas. According to the local tradition, the Pandavas performed penances in Naimisharanya for twelve years, waiting to take bath on the *somavati amāvasyā* (dark moon day in the month of *Mārgaśīrṣa*, November-December).²³ It is said that during those twelve years no *somavati amāvasyā* took place. Finally, the Pandavas became annoyed that they had to wait so long and declared that in *Kali-yuga*, *somavati amāvasyā* would take place once every year.

Srila Lochan Das Thakur in *Caitanya-maṅgala, sutra khandā*, chapter two, speaks about Narada Muni's meeting with Uddhava in Naimisharanya. When Narada

Muni arrived in Naimisha he found Uddhava lamenting about the situation of the conditioned souls in *Kali-yuga*. Uddhava told Narada, “Long ago here in Naimisharanya, Srila Vyasadev compiled the Vedas. Still he was unable to satisfy his heart. Then, hearing your confidential instructions, he became pacified and wrote the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* to deliver the people in general.

“Narada, you know the absolute truth, you understand the mind of Krishna and are aware of the future. *Kali-yuga* is the darkest age. How can the people in that age be delivered?” Narada smiled hearing Uddhava's question, and then told him about the glories of chanting the holy names in *Kali-yuga* and of the future confidential advent of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.

Sankaracharya and Ramanujacharya also visited Naimisharanya. Srila Vrindavan Das Thakur in his *Caitanya Bhāgavata* (*ādi* 9.121, 127) mentions that Lord Nityananda came to Naimisharanya and took bath in the Gomati river during his travels to the holy places in India. Surdas, 1478 – 1581, the famous medieval *vaiṣṇava* poet-singer of Vraja, also came to Naimisharanya. In the second wave of the eastern part of his *Rasika-maṅgala*, Sri Gopijanavallabha Das describes that Shyamananda Prabhu came to Naimisharanya and the Gomati River during his travels to various holy places. In more recent times, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur established the Paramahansa Gaudiya Math in Naimisharanya in 1926.

NABADWIP

In chapter nine of the *parikramā-khaṇḍa* of *Navadvīpa-dhāma-māhātmya*, Srila Thakur Bhaktivinode describes that Naimisharanya is also present in Nabadwip Dham in the island known as Madhyadwip. In Madhyadwip, he says, Suta Goswami spoke about the pastimes of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.²⁴ Then, in chapter three of the *pramāṇa-khaṇḍa*, Bhaktivinode cites the following four verses from *Garga Saṁhitā* and says that they are referring to the Naimisharanya in Uttar Pradesh as well as the one in Madhyadwip:

*gomatī-tīrajāṁ puṇyāṁ rajo yo dhārayen naraḥ
śata-janma-kyāt pāpān mucyate nātra saṁśayaḥ*

A person who touches the sacred dust from the bank of the Gomati's shore becomes free from the sins committed in a hundred lifetimes. Of this there is no doubt.

*makara-sṭhe ravau māghe prayāge snānam ācaret
śatāśvamedha-jāṁ puṇyāṁ samprāpnoti videha-rāṭ*

O king of Videha, a person who bathes at Prayaga in the month of *Māgha* (January-February) when the



The Gomati River in Naimisharanya

sun is in Capricorn gains the pious result of performing a hundred *āsvamedha-yajñas*.

*tat-sahasra-guṇam puṇyam gomatyām makare ravau
gomatyās caiva mātmyam vaktum nālam catur-mukhaḥ*

But a person who bathes in the Gomati in the month of *Māgha* when the sun is in Capricorn, gets a thousand times more benefit. Even Lord Brahma is unable to properly describe the glories of the sacred Gomati river.

*cakra-cihne cakra-tīrthe dvādaśyām snānam ācaret
cakrapāṇi-padam yāti pāpānām bhājano 'pi hi*

Whoever takes bath in Chakra Tirtha on the twelfth lunar day attains the abode of Vishnu, even if he has committed the worst sins.²⁵

GLORIES OF THE GOMATI

Also known as the Gumti, Gamut, and Gomti, the Gomati River is a tributary of the Ganga. Originating in the Himalaya Mountains in Nepal, she makes her way down to the state of Uttar Pradesh and runs alongside Naimisharanya before eventually entering into the Ganga.

The seventh canto, chapters four and five of the *Skanda Purāṇa*²⁶ tell how Lord Brahma once requested Ganga Devi to go to the earth for the sake of Krishna, where he said she would be known as Gomati. Brahma asked her to follow Vashistha Muni, one of Lord Brahma's mind-born sons. Because Ganga arrived on the earth by following Vashistha from the heavenly planets, she became known as his daughter.

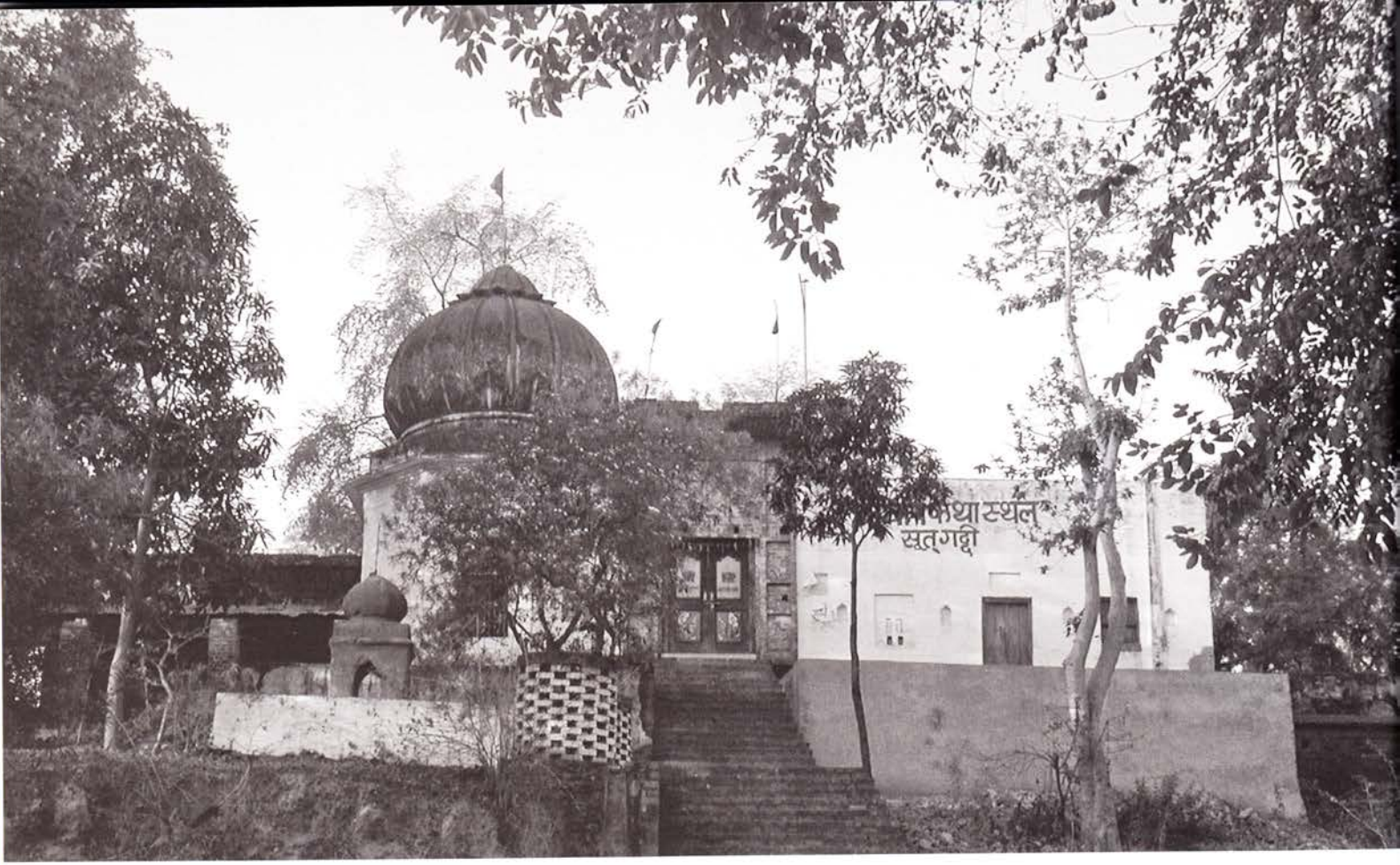
Bathing in her waters is said to free one from all sin. *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* (10.79.11-15) describes that Lord Balaram took bath in the Gomati during his *tīrtha-yātrā*. In the *vanaparva* of *Mahābhārata* (209.19)²⁷ Markandeya Rishi says that Sarvabhuk, the son of Brihaspati and the personified fire of digestion, was the husband of the Gomati River.

The *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* (5.19.17-18) includes the Gomati in a list of the most prominent of all sacred rivers. It is said there, "People become purified simply by remembering these rivers. Sometimes they chant the names of these rivers as mantras, and sometimes they go directly to the rivers to touch them and bathe in them."

THE SARASWATI RIVER

One of the most sacred rivers of India, the Saraswati, is also arguably the most mysterious. Although modern scientists say the Saraswati River disappeared over 4,000 years ago, in the Vedic tradition she is considered to still exist, albeit in a hidden form. Chapters 36 and 37 of the *Śalya parva* of the *Mahābhārata* relate an interesting history about the Saraswati River in connection with Naimisharanya. While the battle of Kurukshetra was going on, Lord Balaram came to Naimisharanya on *tīrtha-yātrā*. He was astonished to see that the Saraswati River was present in Naimisharanya and was flowing east. This was mysterious because the Saraswati River flows west and is hundreds of miles away from Naimisharanya. The *Mahābhārata* explains that once while performing a sacrifice, the sages at Naimisharanya thought of the Saraswati River, desiring that she would appear there. Understanding their wish, the Saraswati manifested in Naimisharanya to help those rishis, and was known as the Kanchanakshi River. According to the *Mahābhārata* (9.37.3-4), the Kanchanakshi is one of seven different forms in which the Saraswati has manifested herself in response to the calls of various sages.²⁸

Many sages came to Naimisharanya to engage in sacrifice. These sages constructed ashrams on the banks of the Kanchanakshi Saraswati. So many rishis were there that the various *tīrthas* in the area looked like towns



Suta Gadi where Suta Goswami is said to have spoken Śrīmad Bhāgavatam

and cities. The sages measured their small plots of land with their sacred threads and were all engaged in fire sacrifices and other rites. Finally, unable to find accommodation on the banks of the Saraswati, many rishis moved eastwards. Seeing their unhappiness and wanting to serve them, the Saraswati turned her course and moved eastward so that more ashrams could be built on her banks. Today, the Kanchanakshi River is not visible to the mundane eye.

CHAKRATIRTHA KUND

Chakratirtha Kund is a large sweet water spring that is said to be the center of the universe. According to the local tradition in Naimisharanya, anyone who takes bath here becomes free of all their troubles, and after leaving their body goes to the heavenly planets. It has become a tradition for pilgrims to circumambulate the pond while in the water. However, according to local priests, this ritual is a recent speculation with no description in *śāstra*.

On the eastern side of Chakratirtha is the *samādhi* of Rishyasringa Rishi. *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* (8.13.15-16) says that during the eighth *manvantara*, Rishyasringa will become one of the seven principal rishis.

Rishyasringa's story is described in the *Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa*, *bāla kāṇḍa*, chapters ten and eleven, as well as *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, canto nine, chapter twenty-three. Maharaja Dasarath, the father of Lord Ramachandra, had a daughter named Santa. Seeing that his friend, the neighboring king Romapad, did not have any children, Maharaja Dasarath gave him Santa. Later, when Romapad Maharaja's kingdom faced a great drought, the *brāhmaṇas* suggested to him that they bring the sage Rishyasringa from the forest. As soon as saintly Rishyasringa arrived, the bad fortune of Romapad's kingdom immediately changed and the drought ended. Romapad gave his adopted daughter Santa to the rishi in marriage. Later on, Rishyasringa performed a *yajña* for his father-in-law Maharaja Dasarath, the fruit of which granted Dasarath his sons, Rama, Lakshman, Bharat and Satrugna.

Near Sringa Rishi's *samādhi* there is a pipal (fig) tree. There, Dadhici Muni's wife left her newborn baby when she did *satī*, entering the sacred funeral pyre to rejoin her husband. The baby grew up eating the fruits of that pipal tree, and therefore became known as Pipalada Muni. That small tree is said to still be there today.

VIYASA GADI

On the top of a hill overlooking the Gomati River is the place known as Vyasa Gadi where Srila Vyasadev is said to have written the *Purāṇas* and divided the Vedas into four parts. There is a deity in this temple of Srila Vyasadev, and also a bronze one of Sukadev Goswami with a parrot-like nose.

SUTA GADI

Suta Gadi is the place where it is said that 5,000 years ago Srila Suta Goswami sat and spoke *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* and the other *Purāṇas* to the assembled sages at Naimisharanya. The temple today has more than 50 *śalagram-sīlas*.

Endnotes

¹ Chapter 11, text six of *Vārāha Purāṇa* says that King Durjaya came with five *akṣauhiṇīs*. *Mahābhārata* (Bhandarkar edition) 1.2.15-23 describes that one *akṣauhiṇī* consists of 21,870 chariots, 21,870 elephants, 109,350 infantry soldiers, and 65,610 horses.

² *Vārāha Purāṇa* 11.10.111.

³ Published in *Back to Godhead Magazine* #27-02, 1993.

⁴ Quoted by Srila Thakur Bhaktivinode in his *Navadvīpa-dhāma-māhātmya, pramāṇa-khaṇḍa* (4.2.7).

⁵ From the *Śrī-raṅga Māhātmya*, an old Sanskrit tradition describing Sri Rāgam.

⁶ In Tamil Nadu, South India, situated near Chidambaram and Vridhachalam. The Lord manifested himself here in the form of the deity of Varaha.

⁷ Also known as Tirumala, situated near the town of Tirupati about 150 kilometers north-west of Chennai. The Lord manifested here as the deity of Balaji.

⁸ The name of the special stones that the Lord manifested himself in, at the Gandaki River in Nepal.

⁹ This town is also known as Nanguneri and Nanguneri. It is in Tamil Nadu, about 28 kilometers south of Tirunelveli. The Lord manifested himself here as the deity, Totadrinathan.

¹⁰ At this famous *tīrtha* in the state of Rajasthan, Lord Vishnu manifested himself in the form of the lake Pushkar.

¹¹ Also known as Badrinath, Badrivan, and Badarik Ashram, it is situated in the state of Uttaranchal about 292 kilometers north-west of Hrishikesh. The Lord manifested himself here in the form of the deity Badrinarayan.

¹² See *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, canto 4, chapter 4.

¹³ This conception doesn't seem to extend outside of Naimisharanya. Traditionally there are 51 primary places where it is said that pieces of Sati's body landed. There are various opinions about the location of these places; however, we have not yet come across any that include Naimisharanya.

¹⁴ *Bāla-khaṇḍa*, sections 13-23.

¹⁵ Also cited in Srila Sanatan Goswami's *Bṛhād-Bhāgavatam* 1.4.11, verse and purport.

¹⁶ This pastime is told in the Bengali *Kṛttivāsa Rāmāyāna (lankā-khaṇḍa*, 82-86) and is also alluded to by Srila A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada on a morning walk discussion on 16 May 1975.

¹⁷ 2.2.17-21.

¹⁸ 1.1.2.17-23.

¹⁹ 1.70.18-20.

²⁰ Shakti was the father of Parasara Muni and grandfather of Vyasa. He is mentioned in Srila A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada's purport to *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* 1.19.9-10.

²¹ The story of Kalmasapad is also described in *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, canto nine, chapter nine. Again, the *Bhāgavatam* gives a slightly different version. Instead of Shakti, it describes that he was cursed by Vasishtha.

²² See Srila Prabhupada's purport to *Bhāg.* 1.9.6-7.

²³ The *somavati amāvasyā* is considered an auspicious day to take bath in the Ganga.

²⁴ For more on this topic, see *Krishna Kathamrita Magazine*, No. 7, page 36.

²⁵ There are two famous sacred places known as Chakra Tirtha on the bank of the Gomati River, one in Naimisharanya and another on the bank of a separate river in Dwarka also known as the Gomati. These verses from *Garga-saṁhitā* (6.10.8, 10, 11, and 13) appear in the *Dvārakā-khaṇḍa*, the section describing the holy places in Dwarka.

²⁶ These chapters are part of the *Prabhāsa-kṣetra-māhātmya*, the section describing the holy places near to Dwarka.

²⁷ Chapter 219 in the Gita Press edition.

²⁸ These seven forms are the Suprabha, Kanchanakshi, Vishala, Manasahrada, Oghavati, Surenu and Vimalodaka. She has a form known as Suprabha in Pushkar, where she appeared on the desire of Lord Brahma. In Gaya, where she was summoned during the great sacrifice performed by King Gaya, she has the form known as Vishala. In the kingdom of Koshal, where she was summoned by the king Ouddalaka prior to his sacrifice, her form is known as Manasahrada. In Kurukshetra, on the summons of the great sage Vashistha who was assisting King Kuru in a sacrifice, Saraswati appeared as the Oghavati River. When Daksha performed a sacrifice at the source of the Ganga she appeared there under the name of Surenu. Once, Lord Brahma performed a sacrifice at Mount Himavat, and at that time Saraswati appeared there on his request and is known as Vimalodaka.

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*Banyan tree at Vyasa Gadi, the place where
Srila Vyasa-dev is said to have written the Purāṇas*

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THE MEETING OF MADHVA AND VYASA



The following story is adapted from the biography of Srila Madhvacharya known as Śrī Madhva-vijaya. In his purport to Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, madhya 9.245, His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada mentions this book:

A great personality named Trivikramacharya, who was a resident of Vishnumangal, became Madhvacharya's disciple, and his son later became Narayanacharya, the composer of Śrī Madhva-vijaya.

In his purport to the subsequent verse of Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Srila Prabhupada mentions a meeting that took place between Madhvacharya and Srila Vyasadev:

Accompanied by [his disciple] Satya Tirtha, Madhvacharya went to Badarikashram. It was there that he met Vyasadev and explained his commentary on the Bhagavad-gītā before him. Thus he became a great scholar by studying before Vyasadev.

After he compiled his commentary on Bhagavad-gītā known as Gītā-tātparya-nirṇaya, Srila Madhvacharya approached his sannyāsa guru, Sri Achyutapreksha, and requested his permission to go to Badrinath to have darśana of Srila Vyasadev. Achyutapreksha gave his permission, and Madhva headed north with his Gītā commentary.

Badrinath is one of the four principal holy places in India.¹ It is said to be the gateway to Vaikuntha, and as such it is also known as Bhu-vaikuntha, the Vaikuntha



Saraswati River near Badrinath

Photo by Jaya Vijaya Das



Photo by Jaya Vijaya Das.

Badrinatha temple

on earth. The Badrinath temple is situated about 10,000 feet above sea level on the western bank of the Ganga (Alakananda). Arriving at Badrinath, Srila Madhvacharya sent everyone away so he would be undisturbed. He then sat down at the lotus feet of the deities of Sri Nara and Narayan and absorbed himself for forty-eight days in unbroken meditation on the Lord.

Madhva had not come to see Badrinath. He was aspiring to reach the mystical realm known as Uttara Badri, or Shamyapras, the eternal abode of Srila Vyasadev. Shamyapras is not listed in any guidebooks, nor is it found on any maps. It is said to exist on the transcendental plane and is only accessible for liberated souls. Srila A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada described it in a lecture in Durban:²

There is a place, Shamyapras, above Haridwar. There, Vyasadev's ashram is situated on the river Brahmanadi, Saraswati, on the western side. There, all the great sages and saintly persons used to perform sacrifice.

In a lecture given on 15 August 1935, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur said:

The first conference on *Śrīmad Bhāgavata* was held in the Shamyapras ashram of Vyasadev, and Sri Sukadev discussed *Śrīmad Bhāgavata* there. From those days onwards the word "Bhāgavata" is used.

For the pleasure of the Lord, Madhva then began to recite his commentary on the *Gītā*. *Madhva-vijaya* (6.41) says that Madhvacharya's disciples who were nearby in their beds were listening attentively. While the recitation was going on they could hear the deity of Lord

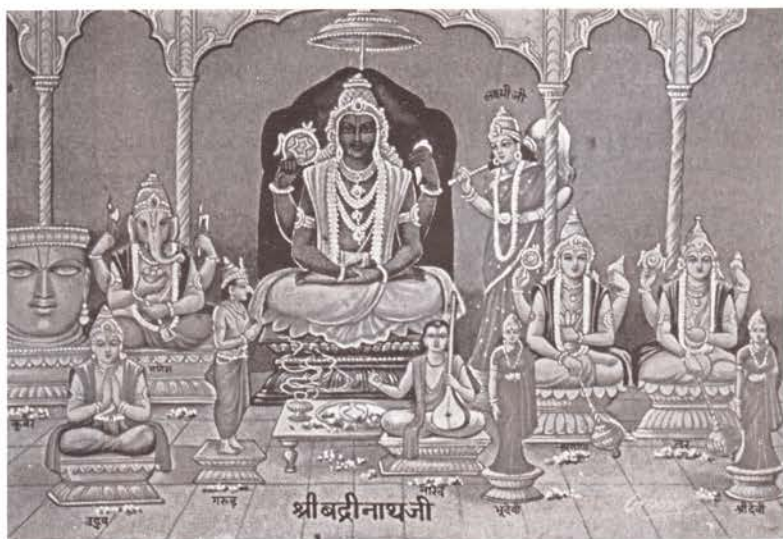
Narayan delightedly striking the ground and saying again and again, "Let it be said! Let it be said!"

During the 48 days Srila Madhvacharya stayed at Badrinath, it is said that he neither ate, nor slept, nor spoke other than while reciting his *Gītā* commentary. One night, an effulgent personality came to him and instructed him that he should come alone to Shamyapras, the ashram of Srila Vyasadev. Rising early the next morning, Madhva immediately left for Shamyapras, Uttara Badri.

Madhvacharya is said to be a manifestation of Vayu, the extremely powerful *devatā* in charge of the wind.³ Eager to meet with Srila Vyasadev, he quickly moved through the mountainous paths, not stopping for food or rest. Easily crossing glaciers and deep ravines,

he bounded from peak to peak like Hanuman.

Meditating on the Lord of Laksmi Devi, who lies down on Ananta Sesh and who is the supersoul in the hearts of all living entities, Madhva suddenly found himself in another world — the paradise known as Shamyapras. Although it was far above the tree line, there was no unpleasant cold, rain, or snow, and the sun was warm and comfortable. Madhva saw innumerable ponds there filled with full-blown lotus flowers, whose aromatic pollen was being carried by the wind. Many sages and rishis were collecting those flowers and making garlands for the Lord. Around the lakes were forests of trees that constantly bore sweet fruits and flowers and were very pleasing to the eye. In the trees, innumerable beautiful birds nested and sung.



Deity of Lord Badrinath

In the distance, Madhva saw the effulgent ashram of Vyasa-dev, surrounded by huge trees whose branches seemed to reach the sky. Sitting in the shade of those trees were many exalted *brāhmaṇas* in trance, meditating on the lotus feet of the Lord. Amongst the many personalities there, Madhva recognized many famous *vaiṣṇavas*. Madhva offered his prostrated obeisances to Srila Vyasa-dev, touched his feet, and placed the sacred dust on his head. Vyasa strongly embraced Madhva, picking him up off the ground as one would lovingly embrace one's small son. Madhva began offering prayers to Srila Vyasa-dev, and then again offered his obeisances to him.

All the sages in that assembly honored Madhva, and Srila Vyasa-dev gave him a special seat next to himself. Vyasa and Madhva then discussed many Vedic literatures, the *Vedas*, *Mahābhārata*, *Purāṇas*, *Rāmāyaṇa*, etc. Then Madhva presented his *Gītā* commentary to Vyasa. The members of the Madhva Sampradaya cite the following verse that they say is from the *Vāyu Purāṇa*:

*gītā-bhāṣyaṃ vidhāyātau dṛṣṭvā ca badarī-taṭe
veda-vyāsasya cādeśāt sutra-bhāṣyam athākarot*

To systemize his teachings, Madhva composed a commentary on *Bhagavad-gītā*. He personally presented it to Lord Vedavyasa in the holy place Badarī in the Himalayas. Then, on the order of Vyasa, Madhva also composed a commentary on *Vedānta-sūtra*.


Vyasa is said to have been so pleased to hear Madhva's commentary on the *Bhagavad-gītā* that he wanted to give him something. Having nothing else, he reached down with his hand and took some dirt from the ground. Within that earth were eight *śālagrāma-silās* that are today known as *vyāsa-muṣṭi*,⁴ meaning, "Vyasa's handful" or "Vyasa's fist".⁵ Vyasa also gave Madhva a Narasingha *śālagrāma-silā*. This deity is said to be so powerful that if it were to be uncovered then all the three worlds would be engulfed in flames.⁶

When Madhva returned, everyone was very happy and a huge feast was prepared by five or six *brāhmaṇas* to celebrate. However, Madhva personally ate most of the



Deity of Vyasa-dev near Badrinath

Photo by Jaya Vijaya Das.

feast that had been prepared for him and his followers. It was not extraordinary for Madhvacharya to finish a feast that had been cooked for a few hungry men. Being the incarnation of the voracious eater Bhimasen, Madhva could eat huge quantities of food. 

Notes

¹ The others being Dwarka, Jagannath Puri, and Rameshwaram.

² On 14 October 1975.

³ His prior two incarnations are said to be Hanuman and Bhimasen.

⁴ Described by Srila A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada as "aṣṭamūrti", in his purport to *Cc. madhya* 9.245.

⁵ According to Sri Jaya Tirtha Charan Das, six of these *śālagrāmas* are presently being worshipped in Badrinath, while the other

two are in Sode Math and Uttaradi Math, both in south Karnataka. There is some controversy whether the eighth is in the Uttaradi Math, Vyasaraya Math or the Raghavendra Math (all also in south Karnataka).

⁶ Jaya Tirtha Charan Das describes that this Narasingha *śālagrāma* is kept at the Subrahmanya Math in the Mangalore District of south Karnataka. This deity of Samputa Narasingha was so dear to Madhvacharya that Sri Vadiraj Swami, a prominent *ācārya* in the line of Madhva, has referred to the deity as "the heart of Madhva". He is worshiped daily, but is never removed from the box except for bathing, and only then by the *sannyāsī* who is the head of the Subrahmanya Math. No one else is allowed to see this deity.

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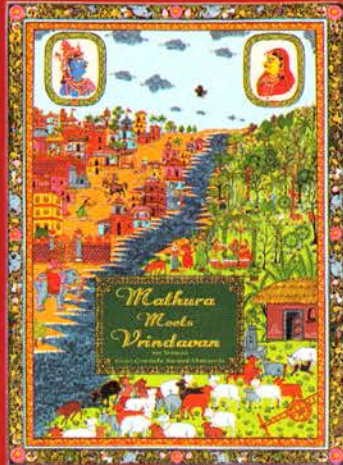
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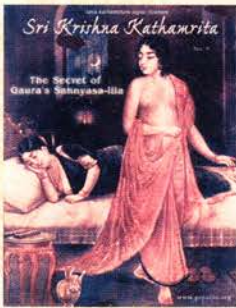


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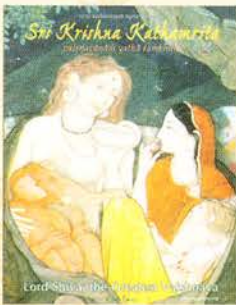


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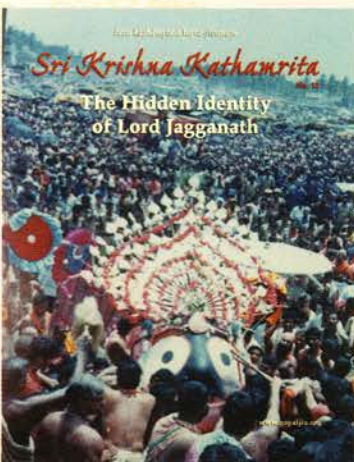
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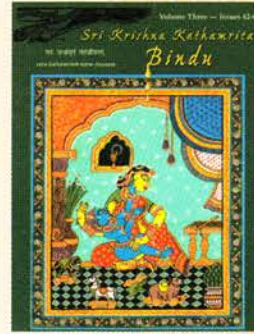
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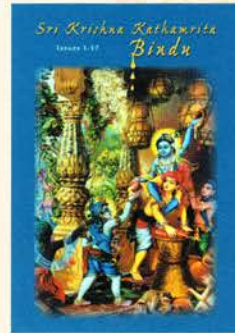
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*tam ādi-devaṁ karuṇā-nidhānaṁ
tamāla-varṇaṁ suhitāvatāraṁ
apāra-saṁsāra-samudra-setuṁ
bhajāmahe bhāgavata-svarūpaṁ*

We worship the original Lord, the ocean of mercy, whose bodily complexion is just like a *tamāla* tree. He appears in this world for the welfare of all, he is the bridge for crossing the unfathomable ocean of material existence, and his body is *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

— *Padma Purāṇa*