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According to all the revealed scriptures, the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* is inconceivable, beyond mundane understanding. Its meaning cannot be understood either by scholarship or penance. One who is not a devotee of Krishna, no matter how a great scholar he may be, will never understand *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*.

– Caitanya-bhāgavata, Madhya-khaṇḍa 22.13-14



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**ŚRĪMAD-BHĀGAVATAM IS THE SOLUTION FOR ALL
THE PROBLEMS OF HUMAN SOCIETY**

His Divine Grace

A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

The sage Maitreya proposed to speak on *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* because it was especially compiled, and traditionally comes down in the disciplic succession, for the solution of all the problems of human society. Only one who is fortunate can have the opportunity to hear *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* in the association of pure devotees of the Lord. Under the spell of material energy, the living entities are entrapped in the bondage of many difficulties simply for the sake of a little bit of material happiness. They engage in fruitive activities, not knowing the implications. Under the false impression that the body is the self, the living entities foolishly relate to so many false attachments. They think that they can engage with materialistic paraphernalia forever. This gross misconception of life is so strong that a person suffers continually, life after life, under the external energy of the Lord. If one comes in contact with the book *Bhāgavatam* as well as with the devotee *bhāgavata*, who knows what the *Bhāgavatam* is, then such a fortunate man gets out of the material entanglement. Therefore Sri Maitreya Muni, out of compassion

nityaṁ bhāgavata-sevayā

for the suffering men in the world, proposes to speak on the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* first and last.

—*Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* 3.8.3 Purport ❀

**ADI SHANKARACHARYA AND SRIMAD
BHĀGAVATAM**

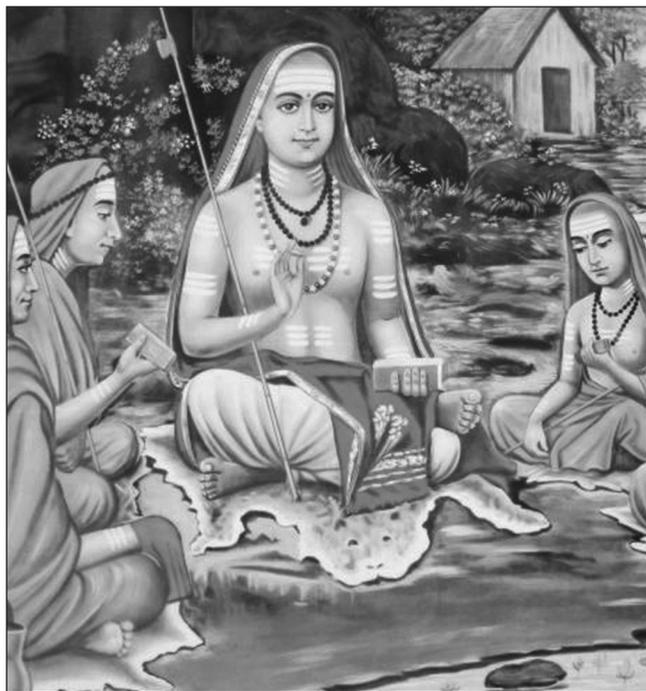
Adikesava Dasa

Srila Jiva Goswami proves the importance and authority of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* by pointing to its great popularity and referring to some of the excellent commentaries on it by the ancient and modern scholars, such as *Hanumat-bhāṣya*, *Vasṇā-bhāṣya*, *Sambandhokti*, *Vṛhat-kāmadhenu*, *Tattva-dīpikā*, *Bhāvārtha-dīpikā*, *Paramahansa-priya* and *Śuka-hṛdaya*. He also refers to *Tantra-Bhāgavata*, which is mentioned as a commentary on *Śrīmad Bhāgavata* in *Hayaśiṅṣā-pancarātra* and mentions several other works on the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*.

The question is sometimes asked why Sripad Shankaracharya did not accept *Bhāgavatam* as Vyasadeva's own commentary on *Brahma-sūtra*. In reply to this *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* quotes a shloka from the *Padma Purāṇa*, according to which Sripad Shankaracharya was an incarnation of Lord Shiva, the prince of devotees, who himself devotionally inclined at heart, but whose special mission in coming down to this world in the role of an *ācārya* was to misguide the people at the behest of God by wrongly interpreting *śāstras* with the help of *lakṣaṇā-vṛtti* of words (*Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Madhya-līlā* 6.13) He did not explicitly accept *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, because he knew it contained teachings which were decidedly above his own, and he did not want to misinterpret it as he did in the case of the other *śāstras* because he considered it to be the most sacred to God. But his real love for *Bhāgavatam* is evinced by his occasional references to the pastimes of Krishna in his *Govindāṣṭaka* and other similar works, as also by some of his hymns which echo the ideas contained in the *Bhāgavata*.

The fact that the *Bhāgavata* was recognized as Sri Vyasadeva's own commentary on *Brahma-sūtra* is the reason why Sri Chaitanya or any of the six Goswamis did not, like the other Acaryas, try to base their philosophy on an original commentary on *Brahma-sūtra*.

Śrīmad Bhāgavatam is thus the foundation stone of the philosophy of Sri Chaitanya. He clearly states this while reprimanding Devananda, a scholar of Nadiya, for his careless study of the *Bhāgavatam*. The writings of Sri Rupa, Sanatana,



Sripad Adi Shankaracharya

Jiva, Vrindavana Dasa and Kaviraj Goswami are also characterized by a faithful dependence on this great *Purāṇa* and are replete with references from it. Some of these such as the *bhāgavatāmṛta* of Sanatana and *Samikṣepa-bhāgavatāmṛta* of Rupa are apparently works on *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* itself. The *sandarbhās* of Jiva Goswami were designed to be a commentary on selected portions of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, as the name *Bhāgavata sandarbha*, originally given to them by the author, indicates. Sri Jiva also wrote a running commentary on the *Bhāgavatam* which was called *Krama-sandarbha*.

The contents of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* are classified by Sri Chaitanya under three heads: *sambandha*, *abhidheya* and *prayojana*. *Sambandha*, which means relation, treats of the relationship between *Jiva*, world and *Īśvara*. But since *Jiva* and the world are the manifestations of the *cit* and *acit* potencies of *Īśvara*, *sambandha-jñāna* primarily means knowledge of the complete personality of *Īśvara*, and *sambandha-prāpti* the realization of our true relationship with Him. *Abhidheya* means the way that leads to attainment of this relationship and *prayojana* the purpose for which the relationship is sought. *Īśvara*, conceived in all His perfection, is *sambandha*; Bhakti is *abhidheya*; and Prema is *prayojana*. This classification is extended by Sri Chaitanya to the other scriptures as well.

— From the book "The Philosophy & religion of Lord Sri Chaitanya" by Adikesava Dasa ❀

HOW ARE THE CONFIDENTIAL MYSTERIES OF ŚRĪMAD BHĀGAVATAM REVEALED

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur
Prabhupada

According to the statements of the sages headed by Saunaka, Sri Suta Goswami has been established as sinless. It is understood that he was not born in a sinful or outcaste family. But the fruitive workers who follow an incomplete portion of a branch of Vedic literature consider him a non-brahmana outcaste and devoid of any *saṁskāras*. Thus they neglect the spiritual master and commit offence. That is why Sri Vyasadeva has recorded the word *anagha*, or sinless, spoken by the sages while describing Sri Suta Goswami in order to set an example for his successor *ācāryas*. Sri Suta Goswami gave up his identification with a lower family and took shelter of Sri Sukadeva Goswami. Because of accepting subordination to the spiritual master he became qualified to hear *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*(10.14.3):

*jñāne prayāsam udapāsya namanta eva
jīvanti san-mukharitām bhavadīya-vārtām
sthāne shītāḥ śruti-gatām tanu-vān-manobhir
ye prāyaśo 'jita jito 'py asi tais tri-lokyaṁ*

“Those who, even while remaining situated in their established social positions, throw away the process of speculative knowledge and with their body, words and mind offer all respects to descriptions of Your personality and activities, dedicating their lives to these narrations, which are vibrated by You personally and by Your pure devotees, certainly conquer Your Lordship, although You are otherwise unconquerable by anyone within the three worlds.”

After hearing this shloka from Sri Sukadeva, Sri Suta Goswami Maharaja, though born in a low class family, heard *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* with his body, mind, and speech from *paramahansa* Sri Sukadeva, the king of the Vaishnavas. Thus he underwent all types of *saṁskāras* and ultimately accepted the external dress meant for *paramahansas* and approved by *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. Unable to find any symptoms in his external dress that he had undergone any *saṁskāras*, the sages, who were mental speculators and controlled by the illusory energy, through their worldly godless vision simply understood him as a non-brahmana, professional outcaste saint. But

Sarasvati Devi inspired them to address him as sinless and professor of the *Dharma-sāstras*. Since foolishness is an impediment on the path of good fortune to the world, it is not encouraged by Krishna, who is beyond the jurisdiction of sense perception, because a gentle favored disciple receives all confidential mysteries from his spiritual master.

—From the book "Brāhmaṇa & Vaiṣṇava" by Srīla Bhakti Siddhānta Sarasvatī Thakur

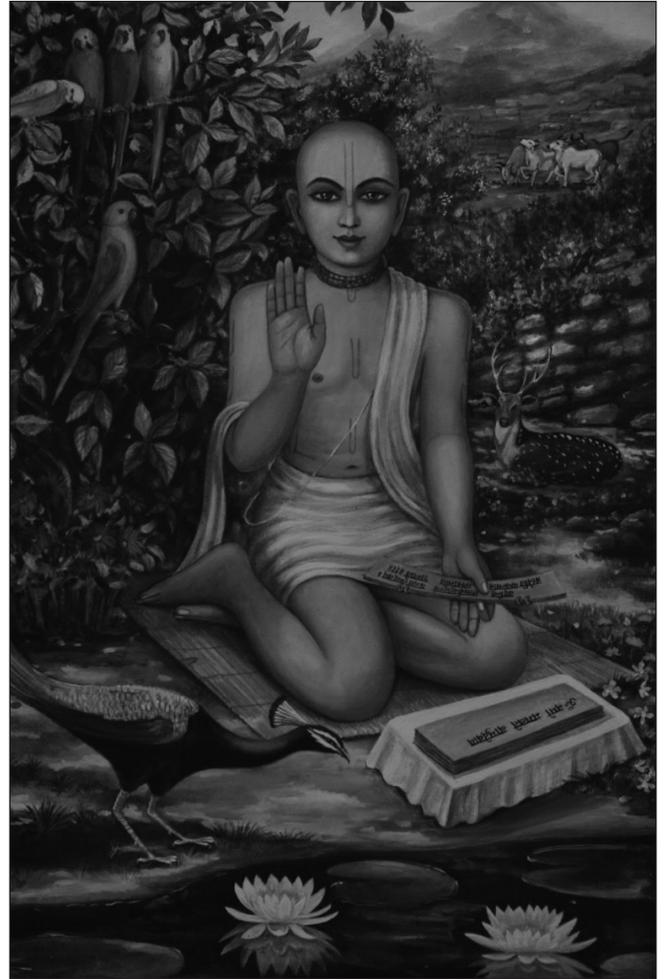
BHĀGAVATA PURĀNA UPROOTS THE DEMONIC INFLUENCE IN SOCIETY

Srīla Jīva Goswami

Vedic tradition recognizes three ways of teaching—like a ruler, like a friend, and like a lover. The Vedas speak in an imperative voice, like an overlord: *satyaṁ vada dharmam cara*. "Speak the truth and be religious" (*Taittirīya Upaniṣad 1.1.1*). The Vedas do not need to offer logical reasons for following their instructions. One is expected to obey without question. The *Purāṇas* instruct like a friend, narrating stories with moral conclusions and providing reasoned explanations when required. *Kāvya*, or poetic literature, gives counsel like a beloved lady, speaking sweetly but indirectly. Instructions are expressed in an aesthetically pleasing way to attract the reader or hearer. *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* uses all three of these methods to convey its teachings.

Just as a phrase or song becomes more significant when an eminent personality quotes or sings it, so the *Bhāgavatam* has increased in significance because the eminent Sukadeva Goswami recited it. He narrated the *Bhāgavatam* in such a marvelous way that both his guru, Srīla Vyāsadeva, and his param guru, Sri Narada Muni, were amazed. They felt as if they had never heard it before.

The customary etiquette is that a disciple should neither take a higher seat than his teachers nor speak as an authority in their presence. Sukadeva Goswami's speaking *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* in the presence of his gurus is one of the rare exceptions. Because his gurus consented to it, however, Sri Suka is faultless, as Srīla Vishvanatha Cakravartī Thakura points out in his commentary on *Bhāgavatam 1.17.29*, which describes Sukas accepting the speaker's seat. From the narrations of the *Mahābhārata* we learn that



Srīla Jīva Goswami

Narada and Vyasa were often called upon to address various audiences on the subjects of karma, yoga, and jñāna. They rarely had an opportunity to hear such an extraordinarily pure *Bhāgavata* discourse. So they were moved to great ecstasy when the nectar like juice of topics concerning the Supreme Personality of Godhead issued from the lips of Sri Suka their qualified disciple.

Śrīmad Bhāgavatam's special greatness is thus due to its unparalleled author, its eminent speaker, and its elevated audience. No other scripture in recorded history has ever had such an audience, except perhaps when Grandfather Bhīma, after the Kuruksetra War, instructed King Yudhisthira from his bed of arrows. Bhīma's main purpose, however, was to convince Yudhisthira to begin managing his kingdom. By contrast, *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* was spoken in just the opposite context: King Parikshit, having renounced his kingdom, simply wanted to hear Krishna katha and in this way discharge the only duty of a dying man. Sri Sukadeva thus had no need to dilute his narration with talk of lower religious principles. Therefore *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* is the most

perfect and complete transcendental scripture. It does not even depend on the support of the Vedas.

Indeed, the sunlike *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* is the very representation of Lord Krishna. The Lord possesses all good qualities, as Srīla Rupa Goswami explains in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* (2.1.17):

*nāyakānām śīro-ratnam
Krishnas tu bhagavān svayam
yatra nityatayā sarve
virājante mahā-guṇāḥ*

Lord Sri Krishna, the original Personality of Godhead, is the crest jewel of all heroes. All wonderful qualities are eternally present in Him.

Since *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* is nondifferent from Krishna, it is also a reservoir of all good qualities. When Lord Krishna appeared, He destroyed many demons and protected His saintly devotees. In the same way, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* uproots the demoniac influence in society and protects saintly persons with its ambrosial narrations. Other scriptures speak about fruitive activities, impersonal Brahman, or yoga, and they may or may not say something about the transcendental path of love of Godhead. But the *Bhāgavatam* kicks out all types of inferior, cheating religion like refuse. Only explanations of the absolute reality find a place in its pages the crest jewel of all heroes. All wonderful qualities are eternally present in Him.

—*Anuccheda* 26.3, *Śrī-Tattva Sandarbha* of Srīla Jiva Goswami
translation by Satya Narayan Das, Printed at ISKCON Vrindavan,
1995 ❀

UNCOMMON MERCY

The story of Rasikamanda

Syamananda ordered Rasika to deliver all people, including kings and their subjects, throughout Utkala to preach the essence of loving devotion of the Lord. Following this order, Rasika went to Rajagada. The king there was known as Vaidyanatha Bhanja. He had two brothers, namely Chota Raya Sena and Rautra. These three brothers belonged to the Surya dynasty and were greatly powerful. They kept many scholars in their court, who they engaged in regularly reciting the Vedas and the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. The three royal brothers listened to Rasika as he continued explaining the transcendental knowledge to the King's family and

the illustrious Bhattacharyas. Listening attentively they began to shed tears. They then gave up all their speculative habits and took refuge in Krishna.

One day Rasika was speaking in King Vaidyanath's court. As the king and his two brothers sat listening to the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, the manager of the king's estates came down there and stood before the king. The manager, whose name was Rama-Krishna, was a disciple of Rasika and a staunch devotee. When he saw the attention of the king wander from *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, he said, "O King, you an ignorant fellow. You will give up hearing the nectarean topics of Lord Krishna just to hear from your manager."

Saying this, Rama-Krishna slapped the face of the king and the king immediately fainted. Everyone in the assembly was really sorry to see this, and the king's ministers were about to kill Rama-Krishna for his impudence. Anticipating the situation, the king quickly recovered and fell at the feet of Rama-Krishna. With folded hands he announced to everyone, "I have committed a sin and for that I was punished. Rasika Prabhu was discussing topics of Lord Krishna, but I allowed my attention to wander elsewhere. It is the verdict of all scriptures that any topics other than those concerning Lord Krishna are like poison. That person who allows his attention to wander away from the topics of Krishna is a great sinner and is like a dog or a pig that likes to eat rotten things. I have been rightly served by my brother Rama-Krishna. He has saved me and shown proof of his affection for me. The king then embraced Rama-Krishna around his neck and to the astonishment of everyone he began to weep. Then the king took Rama-Krishna's hand and said, "Your hand must hurt after slapping my hard body." The king had Rama-Krishna sit by his side, and they continued to hear about Lord Krishna.

—From the book "The Story of Rasikānanda" by Srīla Bhakti
Vikāsa Swami. ❀



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