

POTANAS'S Sri Maha

Bhagavatam

శ్రీమదభిభాగవతం



Abridged version with Modern interpretation

Free Verse Poetry

Dr. Lanka Sivaramaprasad

Prologue by - Prof. Kovela Suprasannacharya



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Dr. LANKA SIVA RAMA PRASAD



“idam bhagavatam nama puranam
brahma-sammitam uttama-sloka-caritam
cakara bhagavan rsihnihsreyasya
lokasyadhyanam svasty-ayanam mahat”

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Dr. LANKA SIVA RAMA PRASAD

March 2013

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Prologue

- Prof. Kovala Suprasannacharya

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The poetic nectar rain showered on Telugu country in the fifteenth century as Bamma Pothana transcreated Bhagavatam in Telugu Kavya style in Telangana and Tallapaka Annamacharya sung thousands of sankeethanas in the divine temple of Tirupathi. Both were poets lived like saints, rejected invitations of royal courts and their gifts.

Only after the advent of 20th Century the lyrics of Tallapaka poet came in to light. But Pothana's Bhagavata was the most popular classic in Telugu literature, recited, sung, and chanted at rituals, particularly at Janmastami. Even today Pothana's verses are favoured lyrics of unlettered people also. They are also sung in folkplays, Harikathas and other folk forms.

Bhagavata was composed by Veda Vyasa after completion of his literary mission, by composing Mahabharatha, Maha puranas and other religious works. But he was not satisfied by his larger contribution to Indian culture, literature, thought and mythology. Most of these works are reflections of three gunas i.e. Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. In these works he did not totally surrender to the Lord and made himself a humble devotee. Narada the Devarshi taught him the Bhakti Yoga, the Yoga of surrender in negating the individual self in his inner world. By attempting Bhagavata he takes on himself to the world three ways. One: Conquering the fear of death in the story of King Parikshith. Second: Challenging the authority of Rajas and Tamas and vanquishing the most powerful authority in the world in the story of Prahlada. Third, to humble the human ego in the stories of Bali, Gajendra and Rukmini - Bhagavata stresses the importance of descent of the Lord - Avatara as explained in Bhagavadgita.

Bhakti, Jnana and Karma are not separate entities. They are just aspects of the one way referred to variously in different

languages. Bhakti means love. The love we have for someone makes us act for the good of that person. When a mother looks after her child and breast-feeds the baby, she is performing Karma Yoga. Behind it is devotion and love. Just by listening to the silent crying of her child the mother is able to discern whether the crying is due to hunger or stomach-pain or some other hurt: well, this is the bondage through Jnana. Hence the basis of all paths is Bhakti, Love. Whatever the *Purva Mimamsa*, the *Upanishads* and ever so many sastras say, ultimately the Yoga of Divine Love imaged in the *Bhagavata* comes to the fore. The Krishna *tattva* is to show us the vision of an avatar of such Supreme Love.

ఏష నారాయణ శ్రీమాన్ క్షీరార్ణవ నికేతనః
నాగపర్యంకముత్సృజ్య హ్యోగతో మధురాంపురీం

He is Narayana himself who dwells in milky ocean, left the bed of serpent has come down to Madhura (on to the earth)

Bhagavata text in the Beginning was itself described the 21 Avatars of Sri Narayana. The text has the main essence of making the earth divine, the purpose of Bhakthi movement as sung in the V part of Tirumohi of Namma Alwar.

Upanishads, Brahma sutras explain Lord as approachable with the help of Jnana, karma and Yoga paths. But Bhagavata made the lord to come down to earth and to transform the world as the Vaikuntha or Goloka.

The concept of Avatara – has brought easiness to approach the Lord (soulabhya) dominated Bhagavata specially in Telugu Bhagavatam. In Pothana's text every devotee reaches him with his possible sadhana or surrender.

The Bhagavata divides all beings clearly between Daityas and devotees. The Daityas fear death and does tapasya and gets boons with an attempt to make their body permanent. But the original fear made them die. Their aim of tapasya is against the cosmic law, thus they perish.

But devotees are not bothered about their body. They seek only the Lord's nearness, Salokya, Samipya, Sarupya and Sayujya Mukthi. They never wish to be separated from Lord at any stage. Physical death a temporal change, a transfer of body. Their devotional soul, negating their ego, surrendering all states of their existence does not end. This is Kaivalya as mentioned by the poet in his first verse. This state of salvation keeps only soul experiencing the Lord only.

Guru Shishya tradition in Bhagavata is the play of Lord. Narada visits Vyasa to initiate him into Saranagati dharma; essence of devotion and attitude of crying without inhibition for the lord. He also visited Indra while he is abducting pregnant Lilavati from Hiranyakasipu's residence while he was doing Tapasya at a far away place. He made Indra to leave Lilavati in his ashram thus saving Indra on one side and transforming the child who is going to take birth as a devotee before his birth. How Narayana came down to earth to save the elephant king from Sri Vaikuntha is a description unparalleled in Indian literature. The grace of lord described in this part is the essence of Maha Bhagavata. To Dhruva Narada shows the child the method of sadhana. The Agnidyyotana named by Pothana as messenger of Rukmini convinces lord Krishna and made him travel from Dwaraka to Vidarbha. These are numberless incidents in this Mahapurana that exemplify the concern of the Lord for his devotees, and prove the divine messenger Narada as Acharya, Agnidyyotana his another form tells us the importance of Acharya and his compassion towards his disciples.

Prahlada raises a question about the education in seventh book: He contends his teacher that what he teaches is useless. Because of his wrong perception he tells us about Anarathas, Temporal, ever changing, ever decaying and ultimately dying things as real, eternal and meaningful. Thus Prahlada made his fellow students to revolt against their teacher Chandamarka. This is a clear conflict between materialistic and spiritual systems of Education as perceived by Pothana.

This spirit of revolution is clearly visible as a more distinguishing conflict between materialistic establishment and a revolutionary thought in the final encounter between Hiranya Kasipu and Prahlada to make his devotee victorious Srimannarayana hide himself in every cell of this cosmos in Man-lion shape.

హరి సర్వావృతులం గలండనుచు ప్రహ్లాదుండు భాషింప శ్రీ
హరి తానెందుకు లేడు లేడనుచు దైత్యేంద్రుడు తర్జింప శ్రీ
నరసింహాకృతి పూని యుండె హరి నానాజంగమ స్థావరో
త్కర గర్భంబులనన్నిదేశముల నుద్దండ ప్రభారంబునన్

'Srihari dwells in every manifested thing' Says Prahlada and the Lord of daityas threatens saying Srihari is no where in reality.

Thus the Lord assuming the shape of Nara-Simha (man-lion) stayed in the womb of every moving and unmoving object with his immense power, to establish his devotee's word true.

This is a commentary on the upanishadic statement అస్తర్భహిశ్చ తత్సర్వం వ్యాప్య నారాయణ స్థితః (Narayana dwells in everything and envelops every thing) The individual soul does not recognize this fact. Further it is poetically visualized in the story of Vamana – who becomes Trivikrama as he grows from the earth up to Satyaloka above all Brahmandas. This story is also interpreted a pratyak-atma evolving into Parama-atma by yoga raising from Mulaadhara to Sahasrara. Narrating this incident Pothana excelled many poets of the world.

In toto, transformed into a giant, growing from time to time Inundating the sky, increasing yet in size and shape intruding clouds, inumbrating the moon, incurring the bright light Invigilating Dhruva, the pole star, reached beyond Satya Loka.

For Him the rising sun first became an Umbrella later an ornament in his hair, next an ear ring

a Jewel in the necklace, an ornament on the shoulder wing
an adoring amulet, a beautiful cloth on His pelvis,
a golden anklet and last a pedestal, to the all pervading one.

Pothana Bhagavata is the first adaption into any Indian literature. The 15th Century was a troubled time in South India. Islam came down from North destroying the basic symbols of Hindus cruelly converting people into its fold and temples, libraries and Agraharas, the places of education were destroyed. Potana took the responsibility on himself to unite the society in the name of God raising above the differences of caste, belief and sex, propagating Bhagavata theme - ఇందుగలదండు లేదని సందేహము వలదు చక్రి సర్వోపగతుండు (He is here, He is there. You need not doubt, He is pervading every thing) to resist the aggressive forces.

Pothana's text became most popular because it tried to integrate Marga and Desi streams, Saiva and Vaishnava paths, recital and lyrical methods (Pathya and Geya). His poems are recited by every body in the society. Some of his poems of prose-gadyas like Nrisimha Avatara in seventh book, Svarga Varnana in eight are comparable to any great literary achievement of any where in the world. These descriptions are photographic with minute details.

Some parts of this great literary classic were authored by his diciples and followers. It is very difficult to comprehend the reason. If these parts also were written by Pothana what would have been the pleasure of the readers?

My revered friend a doctor, a social worker, a poet, a story teller, a translator and a multi faceted personality Dr. Lanka Siva Rama Prasad is a rare personality. The gift of his friendship in my life is a glittering experience. He translated many works from Telugu into English among them is my epic poem work 'Samparayam' is one.

I hope his present adaption of Pothana's Bhagavatam will be a great gift of Telugu people to world literature. Though I am not competent to to Judge his translation, I feel it is lucid, lyrical and rhythmical.

A translation of a poem of epic scale like Telugu Bhagavatam is an adventure. Normally poetry cherished mostly by its style, vocabulary and music. To translate this into English is really an almost impossible task. But Dr. Prasad has done it easily, to bridge the people of different languages, cultures and continents. Dr. Prasad has appended modern scientific knowledge to explain and to clarify the Purana Vignana. I congratulate him for his commendable move.

I feel proud my friend Dr. Prasad for asking me to write a few lines as introduction to this beautiful work.



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Bhagavatham & science

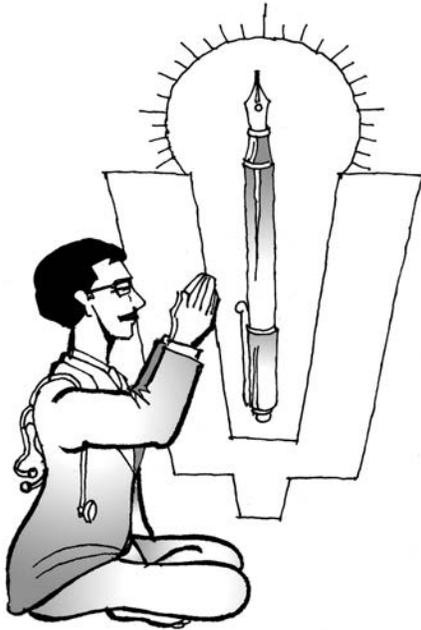
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PRAYER

Shrieking in shrilled silence I reflect to reach His residence,
The protector, the destroyer and the sustenance;
The decimator of demonic intentions and desire hordes;
The Child of bliss, the Supreme Soul and the LORD of Lords.

The primordial mother, the base for the three goddesses,
The ancient one, the **ma**, mater, matron and the matrix
The nourisher and the nurse, the divine mammas' mind shine
The celestial muse, grant me the riches of thine lyrical shrine

The one who fails to worship Siva the primeval supreme sense
The one who falls short in lauding the Sri Hari's radiance
The one who disregards truth and benevolence
His birth is a crumb and a woe to his mother's womb, a nuisance.

Dedicating this book to the mortal kings to receive titles, cars
And cardinal gifts, and suffer here and in afterlife with scars
I prefer to offer this epic damsel to the lotus feet of Sri Hari,
The darkness destroyer, said **Potana** the natural poet with rever

Finding himself under the rays of a king in disguise
The poet made a covenant with Him, still in surprise
The king none other than the great one **Ramabhadr**
Ordered the poet to translate Sri MahaBhagavatam, the epic
In to telugu, the magic language that oozes honey and milk

I enlighten the story of the auspicious and apt one
He is the one Ramabhadr, the real narrator and the inspiration
These mystic words remove the sin and lighten the terrain
Then so why should anyone search for any other salvation!

End of Preview.

Rest of the book can be read @
[http://kinige.com/book/Potanas+](http://kinige.com/book/Potanas+Sri+Mahabhagavatam)
[Sri+Mahabhagavatam](http://kinige.com/book/Potanas+Sri+Mahabhagavatam)

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