



Received: 19-08-2023
Accepted: 29-09-2023

International Journal of Advanced Multidisciplinary Research and Studies

ISSN: 2583-049X

An Overview of the First Three Verses of the Bhagavata

Mukta Sathisha

School of Life Sciences, Division of Languages, JSS Academy of Higher Education and Research, Mysuru, Karnataka, India

Corresponding Author: Mukta Sathisha

Abstract

Since ancient times, Srimad Bhagavata occupies a central place in the spiritual horizon of India. Through the Bhagavata, Sage Vyasa has brought together all the great Brahma Sutras, the Mahabharata, the seventeen Puranas, and his other works. The great proclamation made in the Bhagavata is that the non-dual reality. Brahman, which is attributeless, formless and transcendent to mind and speech, assumes a divine form with attributes and incarnates in this world in every age. This incarnation blesses the world and

the devotees with ultimate wellbeing and joy. In the words of Sri Ramakrishna, Bhagavata is that extremely delicious sweet which has been fried in the clarified butter of knowledge and steeped in the honey of love. This paper attempts to expound the first three verses of the Bhagavata, where Sage Vyasa has wonderfully presented the harmony of the spiritual paths of knowledge, action, devotion and yoga.

Keywords: Maya, Supreme Truth, Knowledge, Devotion

Introduction

There are four Vedas in the Hindu scriptures: Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, Atharva Veda, Sam Veda. (Pranay, 2021) [3]. Vedas are divided into four sections: Samhita, Brahmana, Aranyaka and Upanishad. Broadly speaking, the first two parts deal with rituals or actions (karma), and the latter two deal with philosophy and metaphysics. (jnana) (Gitananda & Vyasa, 2014) [2].

In the Vedic age, in the Samhita portion of the Vedas, hymns were sung in praise of Gods like Indra, Mitra, Varuna and others. Next, the Brahmana portion stipulated the performance of ritualistic actions, like sacrificial rites (Gitananda & Vyasa, 2014) [2]. The major contents of the third portion of the Vedas, the Aranyaka are theosophy (*brahmavidya*), meditation, and knowledge of breath, (*pranavidya*). The term Aranya is derived from the Sanskrit word forest. The major difference between the Brahmanas and the Aranyakas is that the Brahmanas were meant to be read in the village and the Aranyakas were meant to be read in the forest. (*Aranyakas / Vedic Heritage Portal*)

The science of self-knowledge or Jnana marga is given in the fourth portion of the Vedas, the Upanishads. Jnana marga cannot be fully understood by everyone, therefore scholars and saints who studied the Vedas advocated bhakti marga or the path of devotion which can be understood by the common people who do not speak Sanskrit as their native language and are also more attached to sensory enjoyments due to the power of *maya* in the Kaliyuga.

Incidents Leading to the Writing of the Bhagavata

It is generally observed that some sad incident is usually the cause of composition of a scripture. The unfortunate and unintentional killing of two playmate cranes pained Sage Valmiki, after which he started composing Ramayana after he was visited by Sage Narada and Brahma. In the Kurukshetra, Arjuna was pained having to kill his friends, teachers and cousins. Arjuna's sorrow was the seed for the Bhagavad Geeta (Chidbhavananda, 2018) [1]. King Suratha's own ministers dethroned him in a coup and drove him away to the forest. A businessman named Samadhi too had come to the forest, being driven out by his wife and children. The two, Suratha and Samadhi went to Sage Medhasa and spoke to him; this was the origin of Chandi or Durga Saptashati.

In a similar way, even after having organized the Vedas, and having composed many scriptures, Vyasa did not have any peace of mind. Vyasa was worried that the span of human life in the age of Kali is very small, and the time needed to become adept in ritualistic sacrifices, eight limbed yoga, Sankhya and other disciplines is very long. Composition of so many scriptures did not bring any good to the human beings. It was then that Vyasa decided to compose the Bhagavata so that it could be

accessible to all ordinary mortals who were too busy in their worldly matters or did not have the interest or the inclination to study the scriptures.

Division of Chapters of the Bhagavata

The Bhagavat Purana is one of 18 Mahapuranas. It has a total 335 chapters, and 18000 verses divided into 12 Cantos. The first canto has 19 chapters, the second canto has 10 chapters, the third Canto has 33 chapters, the fourth Canto has 31 chapters, the 5th Canto has 26 chapters, the 6th Canto has 19 chapters, the 7th Canto has 15 chapters, the 8th Canto has 24 chapters, the 9th Canto has 24 chapters, 10th Canto has 90 chapters, 11th Canto has 31 chapters and the 12th Canto has 13 chapters (*Srimad Bhagavatam (Bhagavata Purana) - Complete (Concatenated Version)*).

Main Principles of the Bhagavata

Living being want to be liberated from the clutches of birth and death and this liberation is the most important promise of all the scriptures. But the place of devotion one must have in the human life is also important and this is what has been said in the Bhagavata

*Salokya – sarsti samipyā – sarupya – aikātvam api uta,
Diyamanam na grhṇanti vīna matsevanam janah-
(Gitananda & Vyasa, 2014) [2]*

To live in the same world with God, (salokya) to have equal prowess as he has, to live with him, to have the same form as God, and to be one with him even though one or all of these are bestowed upon true devotees, they will not accept them; they only want to serve God. This wonderful principle of devotion is what has been discussed in detail in the Bhagavata.

An Elucidation of the First Three Verses of the Bhagavata

The first verse of the Bhagavatam is as follows:

*Janmadyasya yato 'nvayaditaratascarthesvabhijnah
svarat
Tene brahma hrda ya adikavaye muhyanti yatsurayah;
Tejovairimrdam yatha vinimayo yatra trisargo' mrsa
Dhamna svena sada nirastakuhakam satyam param
dhimahi – 1.1.1 (Gitananda & Vyasa, 2014) [2]*

The meaning of this verse is: ' We meditate on the Supreme Being, the Truth and the dispeller of the veil of *Maya*; from whom the creation, preservation and destruction of this universe is going on; whose very existence makes everything appear to be existing, who is all knowing, who is beyond the comprehension of even the Gods, who has instilled the Vedas in the heart of Brahma; who is the support of this false superimposition called creation, but due to whom (due to the presence of *Maya*) creation appears to be true like water in a mirage.' Thus, in this one verse Vyasa has expressed the meaning of the Upanishads in a gist. According to the Vedanta Society of Southern California, *Maya* is the illusion which covers our real nature and the real nature of the world around us. But this *Maya* ceases to exist at the dawn of knowledge, that knowledge of our own divine nature (*The Concept of Maya | Vedanta Society of Southern California*). It is possible to stop the existence of *Maya* by constantly remembering God through Jnana

(knowledge) and bhakti (devotion).

The second verse is as follows:

*Dharmah projjhita kaitavo' tra paramo nirmatsaranam
satm
Vedyam vastavamatra vastu sivadam
tapatrayonmulanam;
Srimad – bhagavata maha – muni – krte kim va
parairisvarah
Sadyo hrdayavaruddhyate'tra krtibhih susrusubhih tat-
ksanat – 1.1.2 (Gitananda & Vyasa, 2014) [2]*

In this verse, the topic discussed is the Dharma (law of life) of holy ones, who are free from the passions of the heart (like lust, anger, jealousy and the like), and who have abandoned all the false values of the world. The teaching it imparts is concerned with the Supreme truth that brings about the good of all and removes the threefold suffering of man. This threefold suffering of man is first due to his past actions (adhyatmika), second cause is abhibhautika that is caused by other such as animals, enemies so on and the three cause is adhidaivika, that is that which is caused due to natural factors like earthquake, floods, etc. All these three sufferings may be removed if a person listens to the Bhagavata and places God in his heart the moment he listens to its recitation.

By reading or listening to Bhagavata, the individual will be capable of developing love for God by becoming free from desires; and he can realise that the worship and adoration of God alone brings about the supreme good. The best means of removing desires, acquiring purity of mind, attaining love of God, and making one's life fully God-oriented is to enjoy the sweetness of God's divine sports (*lila*), and it is in Bhagavata that the perfect description of God's sports is found.

Without uprooting desires, hatred and evils from the mind and worshipping God with one pointed devotion, peace can never come into our hearts. Bhagavata has revealed that by worshipping Sri Krishna's lotus feet, one attains his grace and through it the threefold misery is eliminated and the soul attains everlasting bliss. The individual forgets himself in God's *maya* and comes again and again to this world, only to suffer. Again, by God's grace he finds refuge at his feet and is freed from the delusion of *maya*.

Due to the above reasons Bhagavata is greater than other scriptures. The main thing is, by listening to or reading the Bhagavata, desires leave the mind, we develop unconditional love for God, the terrible fire of worldliness will be quenched and soon God enters our hearts. These four ends are achieved.

The third verse is as follows:

*Nigama- kalpataror – galitam phalam suka –
mukhadamrta – drava – samyutam
Pibata bhagavatam rasam – alayam muhuraho rasika
bhuvi bhavukah – 1.1.3 (Gitananda & Vyasa, 2014) [2]*

If the second verse expounds that Bhagavata is greater than all the scriptures, the third verse describes that the Bhagavata has been formed from the essence of all the Vedas. So Bhagavata is the embodiment of the Vedas, is full of supreme bliss and is full of ultimate sweetness. Just as the parrot does not eat anything but sweet fruit, so also the best among the liberated souls, Shukadeva would not partake of

any sweetness, but that of the Bhagavata. When a spiritual aspirant attains illumination, it is observed that he does not develop interest in anything else.

Conclusion

The first verse of the Bhagavata says that if someone develops the wish to listen to, or read the Bhagavata, which chiefly deals with the glories of God's name and sports God himself instantly comes to such devotees and enters their hearts. Within seven days of listening to the Bhagavata, King Parikshit had become filled with God consciousness and attained to a state where everything was God for him. The second verse states that if someone develops the wish to listen to, or read the Bhagavata, which chiefly deals with the glories of God's name and sports God himself instantly comes to such devotees and enters their hearts. The third verse explains that sages like Narada, who were eternally liberated and self-content, would be ever keen on listening to the sweet sport of the divine. They would be ever immersed in glorifying God's name. In this way, in the first three verses of Bhagavata, the auspicious invocation has been done and the glory of the text has been shown.

References

1. Chidbhavananda S. The Bhagavad Gita. Tapovanam Printing School, 2018. https://www.amazon.in/Bhagavad-Gita-Swami-Chidbhavanda-Maharaj/dp/8180852334/ref=sr_1_2?crid=8TQDQ9SKS2Q2&keywords=the+bhagavad+gita+by+swami+chidbhavananda&qid=1677585188&srefix=the+bhagavad+gita+by+swami+chidbhavananda+%2Caps%2C227&sr=8-2
2. Gitananda, translated by S., & Vyasa, attributed to. Srimad Bhagavata: The Book of Divine Love (First edition). Advaita Ashrama, 2014.
3. Pranay. Vedas & Upanishads: Greatest Spiritual Wisdom for Tough Times. Fingerprint! Publishing, 2021.
4. Srimad Bhagavatam (Bhagavata Purana)-Complete (Concatenated version), n.d. Retrieved February 20, 2023, from: <https://bhagavata.org/downloads/bhagavata-compl.html>
5. The Concept of Maya | Vedanta Society of Southern California, n.d. Retrieved February 20, 2023, from <https://vedanta.org/what-is-vedanta/the-concept-of-maya/>