#### International Society for KrishnaConsciousness Founder-Acarya His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada



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# 1) Srimad Bhagavatam is the topmost of all puranas

Om namo bhagavate Vasudevaya, Om namo bhagavate Vasudevaya, Om namo bhagavate Vasudevaya

The idea of having this kind of program at least once a week is so that I can give a class via the internet for the devotees all over the world to listen. We will try to make it every week because sometimes my travel schedule may not allow me to do the class every Saturday anyway we will see how it goes. And what I thought is I will start from the chapter one of the first Canto and every week we will discuss one chapter. So naturally we are going to begin from the beginning i.e. Srimad Bhagavatam, First Canto. First Chapter. This first chapter is actually the introduction to Srimad Bhagavatam. This chapter is an introduction to the Bhagavatam. The sages assembled in Naimisharanya and how they started to ask the questions to Suta Goswami. And in the beginning of this chapter it describes what Srimad Bhagavatam is? Actually Srimad Bhagavatam is the

essence of entire Vedic wisdom. If you take the vedic wisdom then the cream of the vedic system is Srimad Bhagavatam. The essence of the vedic wisdom is Srimad Bhagavatam. And this Bhagavatam, was first received by Lord Brahma. Krishna gave this Bhagavatam to Brahma in a chaturshloki. Krishna just gave him four verses and through these four verses Brahma got the perfect understanding. And that understanding was the understanding of Supreme Personality of Godhead. So that is what Srimad Bhagavatam actually is; the knowledge about the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Later on Vyasadeva saw that the age of Kali is such a degraded age and people will not have any understanding. Then he was assigned with the responsibility to systematically analyze the Vedas. Systematically divide the Vedas for the understanding of the less intelligent people or the general public. So; he did that. He divided the Vedas into four branches: Rig, Sama, Yajur, and Atharva. And then he gave the vadangas, different limbs of the Vedas. The puranas, itihash, Mahabharata and then finally he gave the sutra. The essence of the Vedas, the Vedic wisdom, the crux of the Vedic wisdom in the symbolic form which is known as the Sutras. He thought that his business has been completed. He simplified the Vedas and gave itahash and Mahabharata, which was meant for the people who were not intellectually that advanced stri, vaishya, tatha sudras. So for women, Vaishya and was given in a story form through the description of the Pandavas, Pandava dynasty, Kuru

dynasty leading to battle of Kurkshetra. And then for the most intelligent class of people, he gave the Vedanta sutra - the end of Vedas, concluding in the Veda form. But still he felt that his heart was not satisfied so he felt some despondency, dissatisfaction in his heart. And at that time Narada Muni came to him and reminded him of the purpose of his discontentment, why his heart was not fully satisfied because the glorification of the Supreme Personality of Godhead was not there in the direct way in his presentation. This was the inspiration that Vyasdeva received from Narada Muni or instruction that he received from Narada Muni, to write Srimad Bhagavatam. So, this Bhagavatam falls in the category of Purana. Generally, the Vedic wisdom branches off into two main branches - Upanishads and Puranas. In the Purana section; Puran means description of activity regarding the Lord and his devotees. So that is the Puranas. Itihash means history, the chronological description of the dynasties, the rulers of this planet that is *itihash* and Purana is actually the description of the activities of the Lord and his devotees.

Image: Image

So, there are eighteen Puranas and out of them Srimad Bhagavatam is considered to be the topmost. Of those Puranas, six are in dealing with mode of ignorance, six are in dealing with mode of passion and the other six are in dealing with mode of goodness. But Bhagavatam is actually transcendental to the modes of material nature therefore Bhagavatam is considered to be amala Purana, mala means impurities, and amala means free from impurities. Srimad Bhagavatam is free from all impurities and that's why Srimad Bhagavatam is considered to be topmost or because Srimad Bhagavatam is free from all impurities Srimad Bhagavatam is the topmost Purana. And in the beginning of Srimad Bhagavatam these points have been very clearly mentioned. The frst verse is actually taking one aphorism of the sutra, the Vedanta sutra - janmadyasya yatah. Janma means birth, adi means etc. and jataha means whatever it is. So whatever there is from birth or creation all over, they all are coming from the Supreme Personality of Godhead. janmädy asva vato 'nvaväd itarataç cärtheñv abhijïaù svaräö. So the person from whom all the creation etc. is manifested is completely independent and he is aware of everything. He is cognizant of everything. Abhijiaù and svaräö - he is completely independent. Completely independent means there is no one superior to Him. He is the Supreme. Like that is the identity of Supreme Personality of Godhead. He is

all cognizant, He knows everything and He is completely independent. And He is the Supreme.

#### ↓ tene brahma hådä

And tene brahma hådä ya ädi-kavaye muhyanti yat sürayaù. He imparted this knowledge in the heart of Brahma. ädi-kavaye, adi kavi is Brahma. This transcendental knowledge He imparted in the heart of Brahma. So from this we can understand one thing, that this knowledge is not the knowledge that is received in the head, by intellect. This is the knowledge that is revealed in the heart. brahma hådä. divya jiän håde prokäcito. The transcendental knowledge is revealed in the heart. So it is not the intellectually acquired knowledge. Material knowledge is received in the head through intellect but this is the matter of devotion. Devotion means surrender to the devotee of the Lord and the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Surrender to the Supreme Personality of Godhead through the agency of His devotee and the personality, bona fide spiritual master by the grace of Supreme Personality of Godhead imparts the knowledge into the hearts of the devotees. So that is the simple process or that is the process. tad viddhi praëipätena, paripraçnena sevayä, upadekñyanti te jiänaà, upadekñyanti, upadekñyanti – he imparts the knowledge. The Guru imparts the knowledge. divya jiän håde prokäçito. Transcendental knowledge is revealed in the heart. So that is how Brahma received this knowledge and Brahma gave this knowledge to his son Narada. Why Brahma gave this knowledge to Narada? Because Narada is free from all material desires. So in Bhagavatam in beginning also that has been pointed out that the qualification of a devotee to receive this knowledge. dharmaù projjhita-kaitavo 'tra paramo nirmatsaräëäà satäà. When all the tendencies of dharma is completely rejected, completely eliminated. Then only one becomes qualified to receive this knowledge. When one becomes free from all material desires, all the tendencies to enjoy this material world, then only he becomes *nirmatsar* or completely free from envy and then only he becomes qualified to receive this knowledge. And Prabhupada is pointing out dharma in this respect as the religious activities that are motivated by material desires. That is what dharma is. Dharma, artha, kama, moksha. But this topic of Srimad Bhagavatam is beyond dharma, artha, kama, moksha. Dharma - religious activities for the benefit of sense gratification, for the sake of sense gratification. Artha - economic development, kama fulfillment of desire and finally liberation. But beyond liberation there is the spiritual situation. So when one becomes spiritually situated then only one becomes gualified to vedyaà västavam atra vastu

*çivadaà täpa-trayonmülanam, vedyaà* – he can understand. *västavam atra vastu* – this transcendental reality. And sivadam – that actually gives total freedom from all kinds of anxieties and distress. Complete tranquility of peace of mind. And *täpa-trayonmülanam* – three fold miseries of the material nature are completely uprooted. *Adiatmika, adidaivika and adibhautika*. So these three fold miseries are completely uprooted.

Srimad Bhagavatam is the topmost of all puranas

So this Srimad Bhagavatam is the topmost of all puranas. Bhagavatam is actually the final word of Vedic wisdom, the final conclusion of the Vedic wisdom. Srila Sanatana Goswami very wonderfully describes the purpose of Srimad Bhagavatam, or the teachings of Srimad Bhagavatam, the objective of Srimad Bhagavatam through his Brihad Bhagavatamrita. It takes us not only the platform of devotion, establishing the platform of devotion, it takes us from higher and higher stages of devotion. Ultimately going to Vrindavan and in Vrindavan, the devotion of the Gopis and among the Gopis, the devotion of Srimati Radharani. That is the highest spiritual understanding. That is the goal of Srimad Bhagavatam. This Srimad Bhagavatam in this way is giving us the most elevated and the most perfect spiritual understanding. Therefore civadaà täpatrayonmülanam and çrémad-bhägavate mahä-munikåte. This Bhagavatam is given by great sage Vyasdeva. kià vä parair éçvaraù. There are different other spiritual knowledge but when one receives the knowledge of Srimad Bhagavatam then there is no need for any other aspects of Vedic wisdom - karma kanda, jnana kanda. These are all becomes totally redundant, totally unnecessary. As the matter of fact Caitanya Caritamrita describes that this Karma kanda and jnana kanda aspect of the Vedas are actually two pots of poison. Karma kanda jnana kanda, je to boli visher bhanda. Visha means poison, bhanda means pots. These are two pots of poison. Nänä yoni bhraman kare, kadarya bhakñaëa *kare* So one who becomes attached to jnana kanda and karma kanda section of the Vedas, they simply travel in different species of life. Nänä yoni bhraman kare. In the material nature they keep on transmigrating from one body to another, according to his karma. And kadarya bhakñaëa kare - he eats all kinds of abominable stuff. And Tära janma, adho päte yäya – his birth is totally wasted. So in this way we can see that Srimad Bhagavatam is the ultimate wisdom, ultimate spiritual wisdom. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu also pointed out that, Caitanya Mahaprabhu's teaching is, Caitanya Mahaprabhu's conclusion is that that the Supreme Personality of Godhead Sri Krishna is the ultimate worshipable Lord. Aradhya bhaqavam - aradhya means worshipable. So this aradhya bahgavan or Supreme worshipable Lord is the son of Nanada Maharaja, Krishna. Tad dhama Vrindavan. And His abode -Vrindavan – is also worshipable. And Ramyä käcid upäsanä vrajavadhü vargeëa kalpitä - the way cowherd damsels of Vrindavan worshipped Him, that is the highest form of worship. vrajavadhü vargeëa kalpitä. And Crémad-bhägavataà puräëam amalaà – the spotless Purana Srimad Bhagavatam is the truth. So this way we can see that the Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu established these teachings through the authority of Srimad Bhagavatam and why Srimad Bhagavatam? Because Srimad Bhagavatam is the ultimate scripture. So Crémad-bhägavataà puräëam amalaà - Srimad Bhagavatam is establishing these teachings and goal of life is to achieve loving devotional service to Krishna. premä pumartho mahän. cré-caitanya-mahäprabhor matam idam - so this is the conclusion of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. This is the teaching of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. So just accept it and there is no need to accept anything else. Similarly in the beginning of Srimad Bhagavatam also the same kind of point is established. kià vä parair éçvaraù. What's the need of anything else? Once you get the highest then where is the need for anything else?

Bhagvatam has also been described as the Maha-Purana

Bhagvatam has also been described as the Maha-Purana. There are many Puranas but there is only one Maha Purana - Srimad Bhagavatam. And this Maha Purana has ten symptoms. ten symptoms of Maha Purana. Other Puranas are there, some are dealing with five, some with seven, etc. but Bhagavatam is dealing with all ten. What are those symptoms of Maha Purana? atra sargo visargaç ca, sthänaà poñaëam ütayaù, manvantareçänukathä, nirodho muktir äçrayaù Sargo - principle creation. Creation that was conducted by Vishnu. That is sarga, primary creation, initial creation. Maha Vishnu. What is the understanding of creation? Our understanding of creation is very scientific. Or scientific in sense, our understanding of creation is actually real creation. So that creation is that Supreme Personality of Godhead expands Himself as Maha Vishnu and He lies in the causal ocean and as He breaths, through His breathing the bubbles that are generated. These bubbles are the universes. So these are yasyaika-niçvasita-kälam athävalambya, jévanti loma-vila-jä jagad-aëòanäthäù, viñëur mahän sa iha yasya kalä-viçeño. So this visnur mahan - Maha Vishnu lies in the causal ocean and when He breaths each duration of His

breathing is the duration of the Universe. He breaths out the universes, the bubbles that are generated, they are created, the universes are created. And as He breaths in, they go. So, actually one breath of Vishnu is the cause of appearance and the annihilation of the universes. And this Maha Vishnu is kala vishesho. Maha Vishnu is the expansion of the expansion of the expansion of Krishna, gopi bhartur. So, anyway that is the primary creation. Vishnu breaths and the material universes become active. Then Vishnu again enters into each universe as Garbhodakasayi Vishnu. Then from Him comes out the lotus and Brahma is situated in this lotus. So that is the beginning of the creation. And then creation from Brahma onwards is Visarga secondary creation or sub creation. Then sthanam description of the planetary systems. How the different planets are situated? There are fourteen planetary systems in each universe; seven higher planetary systems and seven lower planetary systems. Then poshanam - how this material universe is maintained? Who is maintaining everything? The Supreme Personality of Godhead is maintaining everything. So in this way Bhagavatam gives very distinct, very clear understanding of these aspects. Sthanam, poshanam, utayah - the tendency to expand. Tendency to procreate. Then Manavantara - how in a day of Brahma there are fourteen Manus. And the Manus come with the full entourage. Just like in a factory there is a shift. One shift goes, another shift comes. So when a new shift comes, it has the same structure. You can say in the machine there are different machines, there are different operators of the machine. Then there is a foreman, who is the in-charge of the shift, or etc. similarly there are different sets of demigods and in are the incarnations of the Lord in different Manavantara. So they come one after another. There are fourteen Manus, they come in a day of Brahma. Ishanu katha - the description of the activities of the Supreme Personality of Godhead as His incarnations. Ishanukatha. Then nirodha cessation of material activities that leads to mukti, liberation for material bondage. Now generally people think that mukti or liberation is the ultimate goal but Bhagavatam is giving us the understanding that is even beyond Mukti. What is after that? One becomes liberated, but what after liberation? That ashraya literally means shelter. Even after liberation there is need of the shelter. Like a person has become free from the prison. Now, for a criminal it may be the goal of life to get out of the prison but when he goes out of the prison then what he is going to do? If he doesn't have a job, if he doesn't have any income he is going to starve. So this liberation from prison, freedom from prison is not the goal. The question is what is he going to do after he

is liberated? And after liberation comes the supreme shelter. And who is that supreme shelter. The supreme shelter is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Just as one can consider, okay the prisoner has come out of the prison but when he comes out of the prison the arrangement is made that he will go to the palace of the King. Now what a good fortune – from prison to the palace of the King. So that is what happens to a person who surrenders to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Not only he becomes free from prison or imprisonment, but he is elevated to the palace to the abode of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is the Supreme proprietor, who is the Supreme controller and who is the Supreme enjoyer. So that is the ultimate. And this understanding has been perfectly presented in Srimad Bhagavatam. That's why Srimad Bhagavatam is so special.

Srimad Bhagavatam is the ultimate spiritual wisdom

Srimad Bhagavatam is the ultimate spiritual wisdom. So the sages in Naimisharanya, the sages assembled in Naimisharanya when the age of Kali began. Because they knew that the condition of the age of Kali is going to be very very difficult. This is the age where people will become extremely sinful. Knowing that very very difficult situation of the age of Kali, these exalted personalities assembled in Naimisharanaya. naimiñe 'nimiña-kñetre.'nimiñakñetre naimiser is the forest. Naimisharanya. But 'nimiña-kñetre 'nimiña means blink, or closing of the eyes. This is the place where the Lord is always awake. He doesn't close His eyes. So that's why Naimisharanya is so special. So they are all assembled in Naimisharanya and they performed a thousand years long sacrifice. sahasra-samam äsata and one morning, after performing there morning sacrifice, they offered the Vyasa-asana to Suta Goswami and requested him to tell them what is the ultimate goal of life. And here they are describing the qualification of Suta Goswami. tvavä khalu puräëäni setihäsäni cänagha äkhyätäny apy adhétäni dharma-çästräëi yäny uta You very well know, very nicely, very perfectly know... tvayä khalu puräëäni You know all the Puranas. Setihäsäni along with the history. And you know the purpose of all the dharma-shashtra, the shashtras that are describing the purpose of different religious activities. And on top of that canagha you are sinless. So this is the qualification of the speaker of Srimad Bhagavatam. He has perfect understanding of all the other scriptures and he is sinless. And on the top of it, he had received the special mercy of his spiritual masters. And in this way they started to request Suta Goswami, "Please tell us, now that

Kali-yuga has began, what should be done? This is a very very difficult age. In this age people will completely forget the Supreme Personality of Godhead and.. so this difficult situation, what should people do? O learned one .. " this is the tenth verse of the first chapter of the first canto. O learned one, in this iron age of Kali men almost always have but short lives. They are guarrelsome, lazy, misguided, unlucky and, above all, always disturbed. präyeeälpäyuñaù sabhya kaläv asmin yuge janäù mandäù sumanda-matayo manda-bhägyä hy upadrutäù. So this is the condition of the people of the age of Kali. They have very short span of life. They are quarrelsome, they are lazy, they are misguided, they are unfortunate and above all they are always disturbed by all kinds of material calamities. They say to Suta Goswami:"O Suta Gosvami, we are eager to learn about the Personality of Godhead and His incarnations. Please explain to us those teachings imparted by previous masters [acaryas], for one is uplifted both by speaking them and by hearing them. The words, the wisdom which have been given by our previous chariots elevate us to the spiritual platform and can benefit us spiritually even by hearing. Not only by speaking we make advancement, by hearing alone one can make spiritual advancement. They actually asked: Lord Sri Krsna the Personality of Godhead, along with Balarama, played like a human being, and so masked He performed many superhuman acts. This is how Srimad Bhagavatam is going to describe the pastimes of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. And we can see that the Goswami did not directly go straight into the pastimes of the Lord. He went gradually, starting from creation, set creation and planetary systems and how, gradually is elevating us to the platform of Krishna consciousness so that you can have a clear understanding how to become qualified. By hearing, by going through the process step-by-step we become gualified. Just like a person who wants to study, he is not taken straight to the college or university. He goes through the preparatory stages of the school. Kinder garden, primary school, secondary school and high school, college, university. This is how in this case also one has to go step-by-step, stage by stage to the point when one becomes eligible to understand the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Thank you all very much. All glories to Srila Prabhupada!

## 2. Questions and Answers

Gurumaharaja can you please give more information about the ten symptoms of the Puranas?

In Srimad Bhagavatam itself it has been mentioned: these are the ten sentences from the first Canto

↓ You explained very expertly how we have to go step-by-step but Caitanya Mahaprabhu gave us the non centred process which is like an elevator.

Elevator means when you're on the ground floor you have to step into the elevator on the ground floor and then the elevator will take you up to the top, second floor, third floor etc. You are not making any endeavor to climb the stairs but the elevator is going through these stages and it is taking you to the topmost stage. And when you go through the topmost stage, then you see what is there, the purpose of the elevator is being serviced. So that is the mercy of Caitanya Mahaprabhu. The floors are there, it is not that the floors disappear but he elevator is taking you to the top stage.

I So many people I meet are saying that the srutis are the topmost platform and the Puranas are Smritis are not so highly situated. Can you explain the difference between srutis and the smritis? And why is there a difference between two of them?

The word sruti means what has been heard. Hearing is the most important thing. Sruti means hearing and Smriti means remembering. You hear and then you assimilate and that is *smriti*. First you hear and then you assimilate. How can you say that one is more important than the other? Can you remember without hearing? And what is use of hearing when you cannot remember? So both are equally important. If some say that one is more important than the other, then people don't know themselves. And besides that why are you entering into that Tattva Sandharba? What is your understanding of that Tattva Sandarbha? When you did not even read Srimad Bhagavatam. Go step-by-step, don't jump. What did you understand by reading that Tattva Sandarbha? I will even say, before you start reading Srimad Bhagavatam, you read and properly understand Bhagavad-Gita. That is the initial study.

↓ Can a devotee desire for liberation?

Initially a devotee may desire for liberation, but at an advanced stage he does not care for liberation. Because by becoming a devotee he already passed stages of liberation. For example: release from the prison house and staying in the palace with the King. Those who are in the prison they need to become free from the prison, right? But those who are already staying with the King in the palace, do they care for being free from the imprisonment? Therefore a devotee does not have to separately aspire for liberation.

Gurumaharaja, you mentioned that the Srimad Bhagavatam is the knowledge revealed in the heart. When we read how do we actually acquire knowledge when we are trying to understand with our materially contaminated intelligence?

The first acceptance when we read is through the mind, right? But the ultimate realization will be of value realization in the heart. So we go through the process yes knowledge cultivation is important, we have to know the Supreme Personality of Godhead and His pastimes and His abode and His associates and His qualities. These are the things that we acquire, that we assimilate by hearing. But the ultimate recognition is to see the Lord, you see the difference? Understanding about Him is one thing but seeing Him face to face is another thing.

# 3. Srila Prabhupada appreciation

Srila Prabhupad aso mercifully gave it to us. We can see what an amazing sacrifice Srila Prabhupada made. He was seventy years old, sixty nine years old at that time and he was wonderfully situated in Vrindavan, he was staying next to Śrīla Rupa Goswami's samadhi. What can be better fortune than that, in one of the most prominent temples in Vrindavan. Such a nice situation he had. But Srila Prabhupada left that wonderfully exalted spiritual situation and he decided to go to America in a cargo ship, a ship that carries goods, it is not meant for passengers. Did you ever consider traveling in a goods train? It moves so slow, no seat, no arrangements or riding properly. Being in a cargo ship was something like that. But Srila Prabhupada not only accepted that opportunity, he begged Sumati Murarii for that opportunity. Sumati Murarii was extremely reluctant to let Prabhupada go to America in that condition. She tried to persuade Srila Prabhupada: "Swamiji, place don't make such a request, what will you do in America? Who will listen to you?" That is exactly what she told Srila Prabhupada. We had the good fortune of meeting her. And she was telling us how she tried to persuade Srila Prabhupada not to go. She even told: "Swamiji, what will you eat there? They don't eat anything but meat, what will you eat there? You won't get any vegetarian food, what to speak of Krsna prasadam. But Srila Prabhupada appealed to her, practically begged her. "This is the last opportunity that I will ever have. My Guru Maharaja asked me to go to the West and spread Krsna

consciousness there. I tried for the forty four years but I never succeeded. At this very end of my life maybe I get a chance, just let me try so please allow me to go". Finally Sumati Murarji agreed to let him go. She also made arrangements, that whenever you want you can come back. All you have to do is just go to the office in New York and you can tell them that you want to come back. She was guite concerned that Srila Prabhupada won't be able to stay in America for a long time. ButPrabhupada went and Prabhupada himself he wrote that many times he even thought of going back but then each time at the last moment he changed his mind. In this way there was an intense struggle for one year. No money, no support, no success, no preaching apparently. But then the amazing things started to happen. Prabhupada goes to the Lower East Side. Some young boys and girls came forward to help him. They got him a place and especially Mukunda Maharaja, Michael Grant, he played a very, very significant role in the early days. And Prabhupada started to preach in 26th Second Avenue and then things started to happen. And when it was established in New York then Prabhupada decided to go to San Francisco where the real thing happened. The youth of America was just rushing in towards San Francisco, the Golden Gate park, Height Ashbury, the centre of the counter culture. Srila Prabhupada goes there and amazing things started to happen. Wonderful devotees came forward, joined the movement and assisted Srila Prabhupada in such wonderful ways.

(Excerpt from a lecture given by HH Bhakti Charu Swami Maharaja on 7 July 2013 at London Ratha Yatra)

## 4. Guru Maharaja's Instructions:

- ↓ When one receives the knowledge of Srimad Bhagavatam then there is no need for any other aspects of Vedic wisdom – karma kanda, jnana kanda;
- ↓ The spotless Purana Srimad Bhagavatam is the truth;
- Çrémad-bhägavataà puräëam amalaà Srimad Bhagavatam is establishing these teachings and goal of life is to achieve loving devotional service to Krsna;
- ↓ This is the teaching of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. So just accept it and there is no need to accept anything else;
- ↓ The supreme shelter is the Supreme Personality of Godhead; and

➡ By hearing, by going through the process step-by-step we become qualified.

(The content of this E-magazine was based on a Lecture given by His Holiness Bhakti Charu Swami on 21 July 2012 in Spain)

(Compilation & editing by Hemavati Radhika dasi)

