

2. God Comes In Human Form To Help Men Change Themselves For The Better

A great deal of information and knowledge are contained in the books. Our heads are, however, filled with dust. Education is being used only for eking out a livelihood. Oh children of Bharath, listen to this truth.

Students:

In our sacred traditions, we have many important and significant stories which are full of meaning. It is our misfortune that the students in this country are not able to see this significance. *Bhagavad Gita* means that it is the song of God. Devotees of God have also been called *Bhagavathas*. Vyasa has divided the story of *Bhagavatha* into twelve parts. Each part is called a *Skanda*. This is a sacred story which has been given to men in order to liberate them from bondage. This story of *Bhagavatha* has been taught by Vyasa to Suka who in turn gave it to the people. Maharishi Suka was the son of Maharishi Vyasa. Suka learnt the *Vedas* thoroughly from his father Vyasa. The *Vedas* and *Vedangas* have been divided into four parts called *Samhitas*. While describing the sacred stories of the contemporaries of Suka, Vyasa was also writing the story of *Bhagavatha*. The Kauravas and Pandavas were living at the same time and the battle between the Kauravas and Pandavas and the moral contained therein were written by him as the *Mahabharatha*. *Mahabharatha* was also described as the fifth *Veda*. He realised that it is difficult for ordinary and unlearned people to understand God. To facilitate realisation of God, by such ordinary people, he also wrote another text called *Brahma Sutra*. He has also established the truth that bliss can

come only in the thought of God and not by any other process. He established that bliss and happiness are simply embodiments of God and that they cannot be found elsewhere. Bliss and happiness can be given only by God, and he who thus secures them is called a devotee. The close relationship that exists between a devotee and God has been described in *Bhagavatha*. It is not an easy matter to understand this. In the context of the difficulty in understanding the *Brahma Sutras*, he also produced the eighteen *Puranas* explaining the nature of divinity. He was feeling sorry that in spite of his best efforts in promoting divinity, there was no easy manner in which the sorrow of the people could be removed. He spent a lot of time in trying to find out ways and means of making ordinary and illiterate people happy. While Vyasa was contemplating on such issues, Narada approached Vyasa and said that the only method by which man can attain happiness is by describing and singing the glory of God. From that day, Vyasa started describing the *leelas* of the Lord.

Year after year, we experience some kind of heat, cold and rain. Because of these seasonal changes, certain changes occur in our ideas and even in our health. It is also known to us that with changing seasons, we listen to cuckoos singing, we see the mangoes ripening and so on. Every year, the seasons come back at about the same time and give us the same kind of experience. Taking this cycle into consideration, the Maharishis tried to explain to us about the *Yugas*. The season that has gone by returns to us twelve months later; the day that has gone by returns to us eight days later and so on. These are common experiences. If today is a Friday, after another week we again get a Friday. If this is the month of May, again after twelve months we get the month of May.

Taking this into account, the Maharishis divided time into four *Yugas* called *Kritha Yuga*, *Dwapara Yuga*, *Thretha Yuga*, and the *Kali Yuga*. These will keep coming back again and again. In these, the word *Kritha* indicates four times, and the word *Thretha* indicates three times. The *Dwapara* signifies two times, and *Kali* gives us an authoritative unit of measurement. According to them, 4,32,000 years is the basic unit and represents the number of years in a *Kali Yuga*. Two times this or 8,64,000 years represents the *Dwapara Yuga*. Three times this basic number of 12,96,000 years is the measure of *Thretha Yuga*. Four times this measure, namely, 17,28,000 years refers to *Kritha Yuga*. By adding all these, we get 43,20,000 years and this refers to a *Maha Yuga*. After a *Maha Yuga*, the *Kritha Yuga* will start again. In this manner and by assigning such measures, they interpreted time.

From time to time, in these *Yugas*, God was appearing as an *Avatar* for the purpose of showing divinity that is contained in human beings, and for setting an exemplary life as an example. It has been said that God takes a human form so that he is accessible to human beings and gives them happiness. The birds and animals are experiencing the limitations which have been laid out for them. A human birth is the most sacred one among the 84 *lakhs* of different *jivas* in this creation. To attain such a sacred birth is a great fortune indeed. Man has a special distinctiveness. We have to see and understand the difference between birds and animals, on the one hand, and man on the other hand. Animals are born with cruelty as a nature and they also spend their lives with cruelty. We may give a lot of training to the animal, but it is impossible to bring about a lasting change in its habits. It may conduct itself according to the training during the period of the training, but it will not give up its cruelty. Man is not like that. Even though he may be born with cruelty, he can get rid of it by an attempt or *Sad-*

hana. It becomes clear that what does not and cannot take refinement is an animal and what can take refinement is man. To facilitate such refinement and transformation in human beings, God takes birth in human form from time to time. This refinement can be brought about by different methods at different periods of time. In *Kritha Yuga*, the method was *Dhyana*. In the *Thretha Yuga*, the method was *Yagna*, in *Dwapara Yuga*, it was *Archana* and in the *Kali Yuga*, prominence is given to *Namasmarana*. These are the royal paths available to human beings for changing themselves. In the *Kritha Yuga*, the Maharishis, through *thapas*, used to attain *moksha* or vision of the Lord. The Maharishis who enjoyed such divine experience used to mix with the people so that their divine experience can be conveyed to the people who lived at that time.

In the *Thretha Yuga*, God appeared as a human being in the form of Rama; and by using his own family as an example, he tried to set up an ideal *dharmic* conduct characteristic of that age. At that time, it was also established that Rama was the embodiment of Love and Lakshmana was the embodiment of compassion and that it was the confluence of *Dharma* and compassion that makes a good human being. This is true *dharmic*. We are believing that rituals constitute *dharmic*. It is not our daily practices or rituals that constitute true *dharmic*. It is the compassion that is generated in a pure heart that constitutes the base of true *dharmic*. This is also the most important basic quality of a human being. One must make an attempt to follow the dictates of one's own conscience. By such conduct and example, Ramachandra corrected the entire humanity. By the time *Dwapara Yuga* came, God in the human form of Krishna set an ideal example of love for the people. This aspect of Krishna attracted all people. These were such that people lost themselves in the happiness and bliss generated by the *Avatar* of Krishna. Krishna was looking after, with tender af-

fection, the needs of the people at that time. The great truth that is contained in the *Avatar* of Krishna has been communicated to us in the *Bhagavatha*. This *Avatar* of Krishna showed that we should never forget God whether we are in sorrow or pleasure, pain or joy, poverty or affluence. Droupadi, who lost all her sons and who was in great difficulties, showed great forbearance and affection when speaking with Aswathama. The *Bhagavatha* teaches us that it is not right for a devotee to think of God only at times of difficulties and completely forget him at times of happiness. In fact, all *Avatars* convey a very significant lesson, and you must make an attempt to understand the inner meaning that is conveyed to us in such lessons.