

Makers of Indian Literature

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Pothana

D. Venkatavadhani



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Pothana, the famous Telugu devotional poet of the 15th century, was born in the village Bammera in the Warangal district. He was born in a Virasaiva family, but he gradually cultivated devotion to Vishnu. The title 'Amatya' suffixed to his name in the colophons of the *Bhagavatha* indicate that he belonged to the Niyogi sect. From his *Veerabhadra-vijayamu* one learns that he learnt Sanskrit and Telugu from his father, later Somasekhara was his religious preceptor. There is a theory that he also learnt accountancy, but later he returned to his village and preferred the life of an ordinary peasant. A contemporary of Chaitanya and Vallabha, he has left many works of lasting poetic value besides the widely known *Bhagavatha*, like *Bhogini Dandaka* and *Narayana Sataka*. His *Bhagavatha* is well known for its sonorous flow, natural descriptions, delineation of Rasa, vivid characterization, originality and imagination. He never dedicated his great work to any human being. He suffered poverty, but was a philosopher-poet of great self-respect. He was a learned scholar, but had boundless humility.

The author D. Venkatavadhani is a distinguished Telugu scholar and critic. He is well-equipped to write on this subject as he is a noted Sanskrit scholar. This monograph is the first one in English on this important poet.

SAHITYA AKADEMI
REVISED PRICE Rs. 15-00

Cover Design : Satyajit Ray
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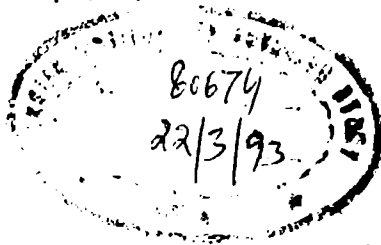
172 Mumbai Marathi Grantha Sangrahalaya Marg, Dadar, Bombay 400014

First Published : 1972

Second Printing : 1983

894.827109 24

P 848 V



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894.82710924 P 848 V



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SAHITYA AKADEMI

Publisher

and printed at Swatantra Bharat Press, Delhi 110006

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CHAPTER ONE

Pothana's Life, Date and Place

THE name of Pothana has long been a household word in Andhra. There is perhaps no literate Andhra who has not heard of his *Andhra Mahabagavatha*. It is a devotional as well as a literary classic. It enunciates the path of devotion which is easy to all in preference to the paths of knowledge and action that are more difficult to follow. It describes beautifully the incarnations of Lord Vishnu, the saviour of his devotees, and the childhood pranks of Sri Krishna, the fondest baby of Yasoda. Its style is extraordinarily mellifluous, though full of Sanskrit words and compounds. Like light and air it has spread even to the remotest corners of the Telugu country and even today it is no exaggeration to say that every educated Andhra knows at least four or five of its verses by heart. It is a repository of the natural sweetness of the Telugu language and a rare and ever-shining ornament to the Telugu Muse.

Srimad Bhagavatha contains twelve 'skandhas' or books. Among them the fifth was written by Bopparaju Gangana, the sixth by Erchuri Singana, the eleventh and twelfth by Veligandala Naraya and the remaining eight by Bammara Pothanamatyā. Though the colophons in the end of the second, third, fourth and the latter half of the tenth skandhas are in the name of Pothana, an impression is prevalent in the country that as some portions of those skandhas were damaged, Naraya filled them out of devotion to his Guru. Accordingly in some palm-leaf manuscripts there is an indication at certain places, "Here begins the poem of Naraya." It was inserted in some printed copies also on the strength of the manuscripts. If this is a fact, we have to conclude that the stories of Banasura, Kuchela and others were written by

Naraya and not by Pothana. But many scholars have not accepted this conclusion as the stamp of Pothana's poetry is clearly seen in those stories. Naraya might have filled in only some words or parts of verses that were damaged for some reason.

There are three different views regarding why the great Purana was written by many. According to the first, Pothana, after completing the twelve skandhas, placed the whole work in the box where the idols of God worshipped by him were kept, enjoined upon his son to protect it very carefully and breathed his last. The son opened the box after some time and found that many portions of it were eaten away by white ants and these portions were afterwards filled in by Gangana and others.

The source for the second view is a verse written by Thimmakavi in his *Sarvalakshanasarasangraha*. It states that when Pothana, after completing the composition, was thinking of dedicating it to Lord Vishnu, Sarvagna Singabhupala asked him to dedicate it to him. And as Pothana did not agree to do so, the king was incensed and had it buried in the earth. In course of time, some portions of the work had been damaged and those portions were afterwards filled in by Naraya and others. This view is widely current in the Andhra country.

According to the third, Pothana, while himself composing the more devotional and philosophic portions, entrusted the writing of the fifth, sixth, eleventh and twelfth skandhas to Naraya and others, who were either his disciples or friends. We know from the authorship of *Bhaskara Ramayana* that such a practice was not unusual in Telugu literature. This view seems more credible. The truth is still shrouded in mystery, but it is an uncontroverted fact that only eight skandhas were written by Pothana and that these skandhas alone contributed to the popularity and pre-eminence that *Bhagavatha* enjoys in the world of Telugu readership.

There is some controversy regarding the birth-place of Pothana. According to one school of thought, he belongs to the village Bammera in the Warangal district and according to another, to Ontimitta in the Cuddapah district. The originator

of the second school is the late Puranam Hayagriva Sastry and it was strongly supported by the late Vavilikolanu Subba Rao, the famous translator of Valmiki's *Ramayana* into Telugu. This is entirely based upon the opinion that the 'Ekasilanagara', mentioned by Pothana in the *Bhagavatha*, is not different from Ontimitta. But many critics have not accepted this view but held that 'Ekasilanagara' is Warangal (Orugallu) and that Pothana belongs to Bammera in the Warangal district. The village Bammera is about 30 miles from Warangal and it is quite common that the name of the village is taken as the surname by many people. Moreover some remnants are still seen in that village which bear testimony to the fact that Pothana lived there.

The Kakatiya Kings ruled over a major part of the Telugu country with Orugallu as the capital and the name Ekasilanagara has been frequently used as a substitute for Orugallu both in History and in the Inscriptions. Koravi Goparaju stated in his well-known poem 'Simhasanadvatimsika' that Orugallu became famous with the name Ekasilanagara and that it was a city where the royal splendour of the Kakatiya kings had flourished. The words *mitta* and *metta* in Telugu mean a high place. *Sila* means a stone. Therefore, the exact synonym for Ekasila is Orugallu (one stone) and not Ontimetta. The poets Gangana, Singana and Naraya who completed the *Bhagavatha* did not only belong to Telangana but also were either disciples or friends of Pothana. They completed those portions as a token of their regard and devotion for Pothana or to please him by carrying out his desire. This fact also supports the view that Pothana belongs to Telangana. The village Palakurithi, the birth-place of the great Saivite poet Palakuriki Somanatha, is about two miles distant from Bammera. It is a noteworthy fact that the two great poets who composed the great works that helped the propagation of Saivism and Vaishnavism hailed from the same region.

Pothana clearly described in the beginning of the *Bhagavatha* the circumstances in which he wrote that great Purana. Though Pothana was born in a Virasaiva family, he gradually cultivated devotion to Vishnu by studying *Srimad Bhagavatha* and other works in Sanskrit. "As a result of the fruition of the penance that he had performed in his previous

births and of the study of the *Srimad Bhagavatha*, he was eager to describe the stories of Lord Narayana, went to the Ganges (Ganga) with the high and sacred waves touching the sky, at the time of the lunar eclipse on the night of a certain full-moon day, bathed in it and sat on the sandy shore with half closed eyes contemplating upon Lord Siva (Mahesvara). At that moment, Sri Ramachandra appeared before him along with Sita, commanded him to translate the *Bhagavatha* into Telugu and disappeared. Then he opened his eyes, thought over the greatness of *Bhagavatha*, came to know that he became blessed by the grace of Lord Vishnu and taking refuge under the Parijata tree of the *Mahabhagavatha*, returned and having come to Ekasilangara after some days began to compose the *Bhagavatha* at the behest of elders and relatives."

From the account given above, it is evident that he returned to Bammera after taking a bath in the river at the time of the eclipse, went to Ekasilanagara after some time and composed the *Bhagavatha* there. The Ganges mentioned by him is the Godavari and not the Bhagirati. Nannaya described the Godavari in his *Bharatha* as the Southern Ganges (Dakshina Ganga). Goparaju used the word Ganga with the adjective "born of the summit of the mountain Tryambaka". Even now the tradition of referring to the Godavari as Ganga is prevalent in parts of Telangana which are on the banks of the river Godavari. Therefore, it is in the river Godavari that Pothana bathed at the time of the eclipse. Some hold that it must be near Bhadrachalam but this is merely a conjecture. This episode also clearly indicates that Pothana might have been born and lived in the village Bammera in the Warangal district.

Though there is some controversy about the time of Pothana also, the different schools agree as far as the century is concerned. Some are of opinion that he lived in the former half of the 15th century while some others hold that he lived in the latter half. Many stories indicating that Pothana was a contemporary of Kavisarvabhauma Srinatha and that they had some family relationship also are prevalent in the country. There are reasons to believe that Pothana might be an younger contemporary of Srinatha but the general belief that they were brothers-in-law requires further proof. The verse of Srinatha

praying to goddess Sarasvati for help before visiting the court of Singabhupala of Rachakonda is well-known. There are three kings bearing the name of Singabhupala in the Recherla dynasty of Rachakonda. Among them the Singabhupala whom Srinatha visited is the same as the Singabhupala connected with Pothana's *Bhogini Dandaka*. He is the son of Pochamamba and King Kumarannapotha, the grandson of the Kind Ravusinga, the brother of Vasanthavaninatha and the holder of the title Sarvagna. He is also called Mummadi Singabhupala who ruled from 1430 to 1475. It can be said that both Srinatha and Pothana lived for some years during that period. As Pothana is younger than Srinatha we can presume that he lived longer in the latter half of the 15th century while Srinatha lived longer in the former half of the century.

The late Chaganti Seshayya held that Pothana might have lived from 1450 to 1510 while others are of opinion that he might have lived from 1400 to 1470. His contemporaneity with Srinatha would not be possible if he did not live for at least some years in the first half of the 15th century. Therefore, it is proper to think that he was born around 1430 and lived till the end of the century.

This can be supported by other sources also. Poets Kesana and Mallana who dedicated their poem 'Dakshayaniparinaya' to Gurizala Chinamallana Somayaji are Pothana's great grandsons. It is known from palm-leaf manuscripts that one Poduri Pedaramamatya prepared a copy of the 'Dakshayaniparinaya' on 18th October 1756 (Monday, the tenth day of Asvayuja of the year Dhata), at the request of Peramantri, the son of Parvatiswara, who is the great grandson of Chinamallana Somayaji, the dedicatee. Peramantri lived five generations after Chinamallana Somayaji, a contemporary of the poets Kesana and Mallana who lived four generations after Pothana. If we count 30 years for a generation, Pothana might have lived $(9 \times 30) 270$ years prior to Peramantri who was living in 1756. This approximates to $(1756 - 270 = 1486)$ the year 1486. We know that Haribhatta, a poet who wrote separately the sixth, eleventh and twelfth skandhas of the *Bhagavatha*, and the twin poets Nandi Mullaya and Ghanta Singana who wrote the sixth skandha with the name Sringara Shashthakamu, lived about 1510 and 1480 respectively. It is beyond dispute to say

that Pothana composed the *Bhagavatha* prior to that time. From this also we can conclude that Pothana lived from about 1430 to 1500.

There are verses describing the lineage of Pothana both in *Veerabhadravijayamu* and the *Bhagavatha*. In the former the names of the two elder brothers and the two younger brothers of Ellana, the grandfather of Pothana, as also of his two paternal uncles are mentioned. The genealogy there begins with Mallaya, the father of Bhimana. The genealogy given in the *Bhagavatha* is more brief, but it does not differ from that found in *Veerabhadravijayamu*. From those we can know that the family of Pothana belongs to Koundinya gotra and Apas-tamba sutra. The word Amatya suffixed to the name of Pothana in the colophons of the *Bhagavatha* indicates that he belongs to the Niyogi sect of Brahmins. Lakkama and Kesana are the parents of Pothana, Thippana his elder brother, Ellana his grandfather and Somana his great grandfather. Gourama and Annaya are the parents of Somana, and Bhimana and Mallaya are his grandfather and great grandfather respectively.

Pothana described his father as one very much yearning to know the Saiva philosophy in *Veerabhadravijayamu* and as one well-versed in the religion according to Saiva sastra in the *Bhagavatha*. His mother Lakkama resembled Arundhati, Ganga, Sachi, Gauri, Bhumi, Bharati, Lakshmi and Kunti in various good qualities. She never set her foot outside the home, never mentioned the qualities of other men, never transgressed the commands of her husband and never lacked in the virtues of kindness and generosity. She was described in the *Bhagavatha* as a woman, who brought succour to the people in distress by giving them presents who was a repository of charity, virtue, intelligence, honour, delicacy and magnanimity and who was comparable to Bhavani in worshipping at the feet of Lord Siva. Pothana stated in the *Bhagavatha* that his elder brother was ever desirous of serving God Iswara and in *Veerabhadravijayamu* he described in detail his good looks, as also the qualities of his head and heart.

It is said that Pothana had a son by name Mallana, but this is not borne out by adequate evidence. Kesana and

Mallana, the authors of 'Dakshayaniparinaya', mentioned that Pothana was their grandfather while praising the older poets. But critics hold that he was their great grandfather. Their father was Proudha Sarasvati. He had two wives, Appamma and Veeramba, and had Kesana through the former and Mallana through the latter. If Proudha Sarasvati was Pothana's grandson, it would have been possible to assume that he was the son of Mallana and gave the name of his father to one of his sons. But that view cannot be entertained as the twin poets definitely stated that Pothana was their grandfather. Ajjarapu Perayalingakavi stated in his *Odayanambivilasa* that he had one son and daughter through Yellama, the daughter of Appama and the poet Kesana who possessed the title Proudha Sarasvati. From this it must be concluded that Kesana himself had the title Proudha Sarasvati. But as the twin poets themselves stated definitely that they were the sons of Proudha Sarasvati through his two wives there is no reason to disbelieve it. From this it is evident that Pothana had a son by name Proudha Sarasvati. It is not certain; but we can say that even after Pothana the current of poetry was flowing in his family uninterruptedly.

Pothana stated that he wrote *Veerabhadra Vijayamu* at the suggestion of his preceptor, Ivaturi Somasekhara. The scholars of the Ivaturi family were very famous among those who propagated the Virasaiva religion belonging to the Vedic and Aradhya tradition. Pothana mentioned that his parents and elder brother were great devotees of God Siva. From this, it can be presumed that Pothana like his parents loved Saivism and was following its practices and tenets in his childhood. As age advanced, he might have understood the truth about God and might have adopted Sivakesava-Advaita. By the time he wrote the *Bhagavatha* he attained a state in which he could treat both Siva and Kesava with equal devotion as he said in an oft-quoted verse that "the person who does not worship Siva and who does not sing the praise of Lord Vishnu whole-heartedly is merely a burden to his mother". It is to be noted here that Sri Ramachandra, the incarnation of Vishnu, appeared before him when he sat on the sandy shore of the River Godavari. The God whom he was contemplating was Siva and the divine form that

appeared before him was Sri Ramachandra. Such was the perfect identity that he maintained between those two divine forms.

In *Veerabhadravijayamu*, Pothana stated about himself that his Aksharabhyasa was performed by his father and he got the gift of poetry by the grace of Lord Veerabhadra and in the *Bhagavatha* he wrote that he was a Sahaja Panditya and that he obtained the rare poetic talent by the kindness of Parame-svara. After having been initiated into study by his father, he might have learnt Sanskrit and Telugu from him alone in his childhood. Ivaturi Somasekhara might have been mainly his religious preceptor. The title, Sahaja Panditya, does not mean that he was a scholar by birth or scholarship came to him of its own accord. He might have studied for some time under the guidance of his father and acquired some scholarship, studying Telugu and Sanskrit works as also philosophical works by himself. He might not have learnt the Sastras sitting at the feet of a master like Srinatha and others. Of all the Puranas in Sanskrit, *Bhagavatha* is the most abstruse and Pothana might have acquired sufficient scholarship to understand it by his own effort and by close contact with great scholars. We cannot say that it was negligible. In Telugu he might have made an exhaustive study of the works written by the Kavitrayment, Nachana Somanatha, Palkuriki Somanatha, Nannechoda, Bhaskara and others and the impact of those works is clearly visible in his *Bhagavatha*. In addition to self-effort, he might have had God's grace in a large measure. He was a devotee from the beginning and he had great faith in the grace of God. That is why he always considered that he was endowed with the talent of writing poetry by the grace of God. In fact originality or *pratibha* is a gift of God and not a thing that can be acquired by effort.

Though Pothana might have lived in the village of Barrera in his boyhood, he had probably gone to the neighbouring cities like Orugallu and Rachakonda prompted by his love for study and poetry where he might have made the acquaintance of the poets and scholars living there. As the late Komarraju Lakshmana Rao Panthulu had pointed out, while Pothana's elder brother might have been doing the duties of Karanam in the village, Pothana, as he was a

scholar and gifted poet, might have gone to those cities to work for the maintenance of the family, or as Sri Arudra indicated, he might have been well versed in accountancy like some of the predecessors of his family and might have gone there to eke out his livelihood as an accountant. After he became more spiritual and devotional he might have become averse to the so-called civilized life of the city, returned to his village and taken to agriculture feeling content with what he got from the land. The story that the great poet Srinatha once visited him and, having satirically asked him "Are the cultivators doing well?" received a good repartee from him, is quite well-known.

After the fall of the Kakatiya empire, the Telugu country came to be divided among the kings of Vijayanagara, Reddis of Kondavidu, Velama Kings of Rachakonda and the Gajapatis of Cuttack. As they were fighting with each other, the Bahmini Sultans took advantage of the situation and occupied large portions of their country without much difficulty. The whole of Telangana was then in a state of chaos on account of the constant battles between the kings of Rachakonda and the Bahmini Sultans. Though the kings of Rachakonda re-occupied the fortresses like Orugallu and Bhuvanagiri with the help of the Gajapatis, they could not keep them under their possession for long. By 1475 the kingdoms of Rachakonda and Devarakonda passed into the hands of Mohammadshah II. The result was that there was neither peace nor safety in Telangana on account of these battles. The late Mallampalli Somasekhara Sarma held the view that this political unrest might have been to some extent responsible for the damage caused to some portions of Pothana's *Bhagavatha*.

The Vijayanagara emperors tried their best to uphold the Vedic Dharma. Sayana wrote an authoritative commentary on the Vedas and helped the propagation of the Vedic religion. But there were some who disliked the Vedic religion and traditions. The Vaishnavites belonging to the Mahanubhava school, the Virasaivas, the Buddhists and the Jains were the most important of them. Pothana might have, after seeing their emotional outbursts and hearing their incoherent prattlings, become distressed and come to the con-

clusion that the Hariharadvaita propounded by Thikkana was the best. It is evident from the Vaishnavite work that Nynacharya, the son of Vedanta Desika, came to Rachakonda, defeated the scholars following other religions and converted Singaya Madhavendra to Vaishnavism. This campaign for Vaishnavism might have been to some extent the cause for Pothana becoming devoted to Lord Vishnu.

Chaitanya and Vallabha, who propagated Vaishnavism, giving special importance to devotion to Krishna in Bengal and North India, were more or less contemporaries and lived in the last quarter of the 15th century. Among them, Vallabha, who initiated Suddhadvaita or Pushtimarga, was a Telugu Brahmin. There are reasons to believe that Sri Chaitanya also visited the Andhra country. As the authoritative scripture for both of them is the *Bhagavatha*, they might have studied or heard about Pothana's inimitable translation. There are some people who say that Pothana was much influenced by them and made the tenth skandha an ocean of Madhura Bhakti.

Pothana's Works

POTHANA was not only devotional by the time he began to write the *Bhagavatha* but also very catholic in his religious outlook. He displayed great devotion and regard for Siva as well as for Vishnu. We cannot say that his attitude was such even from the beginning. As his parents and the preceptor were then following the Virasaiva tradition, he might also have adopted the same religious faith in his youth. When his preceptor, Somasekhara, knew that he studied the Sanskrit and Telugu classics and was successfully practising the art of poetry, he encouraged him to write *Veerabhadravijayamu*, saying, "Do not be afraid that you are young and have not studied many great works. You can compose good poetry with my blessings. Moreover, you have got the grace of God Sri Veerabhadresvara also." Prompted by innate devotion towards Siva and by the command of his preceptor, Pothana composed the poem *Veerabhadravijayamu*.

Some scholars think that *Veerabhadravijayamu* was written after the completion of the *Bhagavatha*. The following verse, which is found in the printed copies and not seen in many of the palm-leaf manuscripts, gives rise to such an opinion: "While composing the *Bhagavatha* very sincerely I gave vent to some undignified ideas in connection with the sacrifice performed by Daksha. To expiate the sin committed in that way, I shall now write *Veerabhadravijayamu*, which can be considered as an Agama of the Saiva religion." From this it becomes evident that Pothana wrote *Veerabhadravijayamu* as an atonement for the sin of censuring Siva through Daksha in the story of the destruction of Daksha's sacrifice in the fourth skandha of the *Bhagavatha*. If this is true, it must be concluded that *Veerabhadravijayamu* was definitely

written after the composition of the *Bhagavatha*. But many critics are of the opinion that the verse cited above is an interpolation. They hold that the censure made by Daksha in the fourth skandha is not merely an abuse but contains *vyajastuti* (indirect praise), that Pothana himself indicated this fact in that context, and that there was no necessity for him to write *Veerabhadravijayamu* as an atonement for any sin.

From this and from the difference in style between the *Bhagavatha* and the *Veerabhadravijayamu*, some opine that *Veerabhadravijayamu* was not written by Pothana at all and some others that it might have been written by another poet belonging to Pothana's family and bearing the same name. But it is proper to think that it is a composition of Pothana himself as it is definitely stated that it had been written at the request of Somasekhara guru, as the genealogy given in it exactly tallies with that given in the *Bhagavatha*, as the style in *Veerabhadravijayamu* bears everywhere the stamp of Pothana, though it is not as ripe and perfect as that in the *Bhagavatha*, and as it is a fact that Pothana followed the Virasaiva religion in his early life.

The preceptor, while encouraging Pothana to write *Veerabhadravijayamu*, clearly said, "Do not be afraid that you are young and that you did not study many great works." The usage of certain words, grammatical errors, peculiar *yatis* and *prasas* and the immature style of *Veerabhadravijayamu* indicate that he was quite young at the time of its composition. Moreover, the impact of the works of the Saivite poets is clearly seen on it. Therefore, we can conclude that it was the first attempt of Pothana in poetical composition. It is indisputable that Pothana was more mature at the time of writing the *Bhagavatha* not only in age, but also in mind.

There are four cantos in *Veerabhadravijayamu*. The late Manavalli Ramakrishna Kavi suspected that as the fourth canto in the printed *Veerabhadravijayamu* is different from that in the palm-leaf manuscript obtained by him, it might not have been the composition of Pothana. But the late Chaganti Seshayya connected the sequences and proved that it is Pothana's composition and that he drew the material from the *Vayu* and *Brahma Purans*. Pothana invoked in the beignn-

ing of the work the deities Siva, Veerabhadra, Ganapati and Sarasvati and praised the Sanskrit poets Vyasa, Valmiki, Kalidasa, Bana, Magha, Sivabhadra, Bharavi and Bhoja and the Telugu poets, Nannaya, Thikkana, Vemulavada Bhimakavi, Ranganatha and others. Among Telugu poets, he mentioned the word Srīngarakavinatha. It is an adjective to Ranganatha and does not refer to Srinatha as some critics have imagined. Though he did not make a special mention of Nannechoda, Errana, Nachana Somana and Bhaskara, there is evidence in his works that he studied their works also very carefully. The verse meaning that I praise "those pious poets who are remote from Somasara (Bhava), who destroyed the bonds of Bhava by worshipping the lotus-feet of Lord Siva and not seeing the non-Saivites, and those who obtained the divine grace, having served Lord Siva," is a clear evidence of his youthful zeal for Virasaiva religion.

Pothana's story is nearer to the story of *Vayu Purana* than to that in *Brahma Purana*. Once when Siva and Parvati were holding court on the Kailasa mountain, Gautama, Kasyapa and other sages came there and were praising Siva. At that time, Daksha also came there and Siva received him as he received the other sages but did not give him any special treatment though he was his father-in-law. Daksha felt it as an insult and after going home, performed a sacrifice and invited all the Gods and the sages except Siva. Narada went to Kailasa and informed Dakshayani (Daksha's daughter) of that sacrifice. She was astonished and prayed her husband to permit her to go and witness that sacrifice. Siva gave his consent. When she went there, Daksha not only did not care to receive her with affection but also abused Siva. She described to him the extraordinary greatness of Siva but as he did not pay heed to her words she died offering her body to Yogagni. Siva came to know of this and took a vow that he would destroy Daksha during the Manvantara of Vaivasvata. Dikshayani took birth as the daughter of Himavan and was wishing to marry Siva. As Siva was performing penance on the mountain Himavan, Himavan asked his daughter Parvati to do service to him. Siva gladly agreed to that proposal.

The gods could not put up with the distress caused by the demon Taraka and prayed to Brahma to protect them. Brahma

told them that only the son that would be born to Siva and Parvati would be able to put an end to him. Then Indira sent Manmatha (Cupid) requesting him to make Siva who was performing penance fall in love with Parvati. Rati the wife of Manmatha, begged him not to go, but Manmatha went and was burnt to ashes by the fire emanating from the third eye of Siva. Akasavani consoled Rati who was in great distress at the death of her husband. Himayan took his daughter home. Siva went there in the form of a fortune-teller and advised Paravati to do penance for obtaining Siva as her Lord. Parvati began to do penance. Siva went to her in the disguise of a Brahmachari and expressed a desire to marry her.

The marriage of Parvati and Siva was celebrated with great pomp. While they were spending time in happiness and enjoyment, Parvati requested Siva to tell her how he became a Garalakantha. Siva narrated to her stories of the churning of the ocean and the swallowing of the poison.

After the advent of the Manvantara of Vajvasvata, Daksha again began to perform a sacrifice without Siva and invited all the gods and the sages. The sage Dadhichi described the greatness of Siva to Daksha and said that a sacrifice without Siva would be useless. Daksha insulted him showering many abuses on him. Dadhichi went to Kailasa and informed Siva of Daksha's sacrifice. Then were born Veerabhadra and Bhadrakali through the anger of Siva and Parvati respectively. Veerabhadra went along with the Pramathas and not only destroyed the sacrifice of Daksha but also cut off his head. Vishnu, the protector of the sacrifice, fought with Veerabhadra. His weapon, the Chakra, was broken to pieces and the other gods received the punishment of losing the nose and the ears. Then Veerabhadra went in triumph to Kailasa along with the gods. Siva honoured Vishnu and restored to the gods their original forms. Even Daksha was treated with kindness. Siva was overwhelmed with joy at the triumph of Veerabhadra.

According to the story of *Veerabhadravijayamu*, given above, Daksha performed the sacrifice twice. The first resulted in the renunciation of the body by Sati and the second in the destruction of Daksha's sacrifice by Veerabhadra. It is the latter incident in the fourth canto that makes the name of

the poem meaningful. There is some relationship between this and the story of the first sacrifice in the first canto. But the story contained in the second and third cantos does not have any close connection with the name *Veerabhadravijayamu*. Pothana might have introduced it in the poem as it was there in *Vayu Purana* and in the *Kumarasambhavam* of Kalidasa. Even the stories of the churning of the ocean and the swallowing of the poison were brought in contextually. According to the story current in the world, the destruction of Daksha's sacrifice occurs before the marriage of Siva and Parvati.

Nannechoda, the first Saivite poet in Telugu, described the story of the destruction of Daksha's sacrifice in his *Kumarasambhava*. He wrote that Daksha performed the sacrifice only once, that Ganadhipati destroyed it to retaliate the insult done to his mother after obtaining his father's permission and that Daksha was imprisoned in that connection. There is no reference to Veerabhadra of the Puranas in his story. The opinion of some critics that Somasekhara guru might have induced his disciple Pothana to describe the victory of Veerabhadra, as told in the Puranas, considering that the story narrated by Nannechoda does not conform to that given in the Puranas and reduces the importance of Veerabhadra by wrongly attributing the destruction of the sacrifice to Ganadhipati, seems to be correct.

There are many verses in *Veerabhadravijayamu*, which Pothana wrote imitating Panditaradhya, Nachana Somana and Srinatha. The conversation that took place between Rati and Manmatha, before Manmatha started to disturb the penance of Siva, resembles in many respects the conversation written by Nannechoda in the same context. The part of *Veerabhadravijayamu*, wherein Sati taunts her father in anger, displays more emotion than propriety. Panditaradhya described in *kanda* metre the Dakshadhvaradhvasa and Ganadambara (destruction of the sacrifice and the fury of the Ganas) in his *Sivatatvasara* and Pothana also wrote *kanda* verses in that context. The verse wherein Pothana describes Manmatha before he discharges the flowery arrows on Siva (*Vilu Choochun Veli Choochu*) resembles the excellent verse of Nachana Somana in the story of the fight between

Satyabhama and Narakasura (*Ari Choochun Hari Choochu*). The *sisa* verse of Srinatha in Kasikhanda where Dadhichi abuses Daksha is seen in *Veerabhadravijayamu* also with slight changes. The writers of palm-leaf manuscripts might have inserted it in the context.

In the third canto is mentioned the Nilakanthastava which was once recited by the Saivites every day. Pothana described very vividly and beautifully the situations where Siva sends the seven rishis as mediators to settle the marriage, where he asks them to give the ring and return after eating the food with milk, where a clock is constructed on the *pial* (Vedika) to settle the Muhurta, where the party of the bridegroom takes presents to the bride while ladies are singing, where a curtain is erected between the couple, where Madhuparkas (new marriage clothes) are given, where the couple mutually pour yellow rice on the heads of each other and where the bride is handed over to the bridegroom. All these are indigenous marriage customs current in the Telugu country.

Though compounds and unnecessary words, found here and there in *Veerabhadravijayamu*, display the immature state of Pothana's poetry, it is highly mellifluous and contains many good characteristics, the seeds of which gradually developed into the future great tree of *Mahabharatha*. Pothana wrote the story of the destruction of the sacrifice of Daksha in the *Bhagavatha* also. It is based on the Sanskrit *Mahabhagavatha* and is definitely more mature and dignified.

BHOGINI DANDAKA

Dandaka is a metre and the poems written in that metre are also called by the same name. Nannaya, the first poet in Telugu, wrote a Dandaka, when Arjuna praised Siva in the story of *Kiratarjuniya*. Errana also wrote one in the fifth canto of *Nrisimhapurana*. There are Dandakas in 'Naishadha' and 'Kasikhanda' of Srinatha. All these Dandakas are parts of those poems and are not independent ones. *Bhogini Dandaka* is the first Dandaka in Telugu literature which contains a story and which is considered as an independent poem and many such Dandakas were written afterwards. No other literature in India contains as many Dandakas as Telugu.

Sarvagna Singabhupala and a courtesan are the hero and the heroine, in *Bhogini Dandaka*. This Singabhupala is the same king who was contemporaneous to Pothana and Srinatha. When once he was taking part in a festival celebrated in honour of God Gopala, a damsel saw him from the upper chamber of her palace, fell in love with him and persuaded her mother to bring him home. The mother told her that he was beyond their reach on account of his high position and advised her to desist from such a desire, but to no purpose. The mother was thus compelled to approach Singabhupala and humbly request him to pay a visit to their house, informing him of the great love that her daughter bore towards him. Singabhupala not only accepted her love, but also gave her the title 'Bhogini'. The theme of the *Dandaka* is this in brief.

There is a verse at the end of the *Dandaka* which says that "Bammera Pothana who deserves the praise of scholars, composed *Bhogini Dandaka* that would last as long the moon, the sun, the kula mountains and the stars shine, in dedication to Ravu Singabhupala who was very charitable and who could dispel the arrogance of the enemy kings". From this, it is clear that the *Dandaka* was written by Pothana and the *Antyanuprasa* in the verse bears testimony to that fact. But some critics doubt the authorship, holding that Pothana who is averse to serving and praising the kings and who is a great devotee of God would never stoop to compose a *Dandaka* that describes the meeting of a king with a courtesan. It is a fact that he became a great devotee by the time he composed the *Bhagavatha* but there is no need to think that he was having the same attitude even from his early life. He might have composed the *Dandaka* wishing to gain the favour of or receive some help from Singabhupala in his youth. Devout as he was Pothana was also human. Due to transformation of tastes and ideals he might have become, in course of time, averse to worldly desires and serving the kings. Moreover, Bhakti and Sringara are not so antagonistic to each other as some people think. There are many instances in the *Bhagavatha* itself to say that Pothana did not completely give up describing Sringara even after he became a devotee. The description of the damsels in the story of Dharmaraja's Rajasuya sacrifice in the

latter part of the tenth skandha can be cited as an example. Therefore, the devotional attitude of Pothana in his later life cannot bar him from being the author of *Bhogini Dandaka*.

The style of *Bhogini Dandaka*, the choice of some words in it, the abundance of Sabdalankaras like Antyanuprasa, Muktapadagrashta, etc. remind us of the style of the *Bhagavatha* in every respect. There is some resemblance between them not only in style but also in ideas. Where Bhogini told her mother that her heart had been attracted by Singabhupala and would not come back on account of the influence of Cupid and that she could not love even Maumatha, Siva, Brahma or anybody, however, great they might be, she used the same similes that Prahlada used in the famous *sisa* verse beginning with "*Mandara makaranda madhuryamuna delu madhupambu royuve madanamulaku*" (Does the bee that sucks the honey of the Mandara flower go to the Datura flowers?). In the same way the following ideas, "Head I been born as a beautiful lotus, I would have been honoured by being taken by the hand of Singabhupala and had I been a garland of gems, I would have decorated the chest of that handsome king. Why was I born like this?" expressed by Bhogini, when she pined on account of the pangs of separation after seeing Singabhupala, are similar to the ideas expressed by the damsels of Mathura, when they saw Sri Krishna. Being an independent Dandaka, instead of forming part of a big poem, and containing a theme and situations full of Sringara Rasa instead of expressing devotional praise, are the special characteristic features of *Bhogini Dandaka*.

The following verse found in the introduction of the printed *Bhogini Dandaka* is said to have been written by Pothana as a piece of friendly advice to Singabhupala when he hesitated to accept the love of Bhogini, thinking it would not be proper for men to yield to women. The meaning of the verse runs as follows: "O Singabhupala, handsome as Cupid, is it proper behaviour (the conduct of a bow) if sometimes a man of taste yields to women. Does not the bow yield to the string (women) with humility?" We cannot say how far this story is true, as we do not have enough proof to show that Pothana had written that verse. If it is

true, it can be cited as another strong proof to say that *Bhogini Dandaka* was written by Pothana.

NARAYANA SATAKA

People say that Pothana composed a devotional Sataka by name *Narayana Sataka*, before he wrote the *Bhagavatha*. The famous verse which begins with *Dhara Simhasanamai* and which boys sing while going with bow and arrows during Dasara days is from this Sataka. Devotional sentiment and sweet words used in the verse of this Sataka lead any one to believe that they were written by Pothana. Some of the independent usages and peculiar compounds found in these verses are there in the *Bhagavatha* also. But the following verse meaning,

I have committed many sins from the time of my birth, believing that you will protect me. You are my sole protector. Save me and do not permit Yama to enter into myself. I deserve your kindness. Oh, Lakshminarayana of Dharmapuri.

mentions the name of Dharmapuri in the end. Therefore, some critics hold that it might have been written by a devotee belonging to Dharmapuri in the Karimnagar district. Moreover, the name of the author (Pothana) given at the end of the Sataka in prose instead of in a verse as in other Satakas gives room for the doubt that somebody might have inserted it there. Therefore it is not possible to determine that *Narayana Sataka* was written by Pothana until more authentic proof is available.

CHAPTER THREE

Srimad Bhagavatha

THE main work that contributed to the glory of Pothana is his well-known *Andhra Maha Bhagavatha*, which is a Telugu translation of the Sanskrit *Bhagavatha* in *champu* form. *Srimad Bhagavath* stands foremost among the eighteen Puranas in respect of mature style and of ability in enunciating the highest spiritual truths. Some critics are of the opinion that the *Bhagavatha* included and reckoned among the famous eighteen Puranas is the *Devi Bhagavatha* and this *Bhagavatha* is the seventeenth among the Upapuranas. There is difference of opinion regarding the authorship of this *Bhagavatha* also. The popular opinion is that it was written by Krishnadvaipayana Vyasa, along with other Puranas. There are some who hold that it was written by one Bopadeva, a great scholar in the court of the king Hemadri, who followed the Gopala religion, and some who think that it was composed by Suka himself, the son of Vyasa and some others who attribute the composition of the *Bhagavatha* to another scholar who also bore the title Vyasa. As all these opinions are based on mere conjecture and do not have any strong evidence, a majority of the critics are still inclined to believe that it was written by Krishnadvaipayana Vyasa.

The circumstances in which Vyasa wrote the *Bhagavatha* are narrated in the beginning of the *Bhagavatha* itself. He first divided the Vedas into four and to do good to the women, Sudras and the Traivarnikas who are not eligible to hear the Vedas, composed the *Mahabharath*. Even then, he was not satisfied with the welfare of the world and was brooding over it, sitting on the banks of the river Sarasvati. At that time, Narada came there and asked him about the

cause of his grief. Vyasa praised the greatness and the all-pervading knowledge of Narada and requested him to explain it himself. Then Narada told him,

You narrated all the Dharmas in the Puranas and never described the stories of Lord Vishnu, who is not satisfied with mere narration of the Dharmas unless his qualities are praised. O venerable sage, the cause of your grief is nothing but this.

and advised him to describe, with devotion, the *lilas* of Lord Vishnu for the emancipation of all worldly bonds. According to his advice, Vyasa composed the *Bhagavatha* and taught it to his son Suka.

King Parikshit heard about the curse given to him by Sringeri, the son of Samika, abandoned all luxuries and enjoyments and entered the divine Ganges to observe Prayopavesa or fast unto death. Having known this, several sages including Visvamitra, Maitreya, Bhrigu and Vasishtha went to see him along with their disciples. Parikshit received them with great regard and requested them to teach him the way of attaining Moksha or absolution. While the sages were thinking of giving a suitable answer to him, Suka, the son of Vyasa, came there. Parikshit paid obeisance to him and prayed to him to let him know the path of attaining Moksha. Then Suka was impressed with his humility, pitied him and began to tell him the story of the *Bhagavatha* as a means of attaining the highest bliss.

'Bhagavatha' means that which is related to Bhagavan or God. As the words Gita, Sahasra Nama and Ramayana, without any prefix, indicate the *Bhagavadgita*, the *Vishnu Sahasranama* and Valmiki's *Ramayana*, the word 'Bhagavatha' indicates *Sri Vishnu Bhagavatha* alone. The *Matsya*, *Garuda* and *Skanda Puranas* describe it as a commentary of the great Gayatri mantra and Hayagriva Brahma Vidya. The name 'Bhagavatha' is given to it, as it describes the incarnations and sports of Bhagavan Narayana. Though all the Puranas enunciate the highest truth, *Bhagavatha* is given a special place in that respect. In *Padma Purana*, Gautama told Ambarisha that anyone wishing freedom from the bonds of Samsara should either read or hear *Srimad Bhagavatha* narrated by Suka. The very fact that King Parikshit could

attain Moksha as a result of hearing the *Bhagavatha* for seven days is a clear proof of its extraordinary greatness.

There is an episode to the effect that while Suka was teaching the *Bhagavatha* to Parikshit, Indra and other gods came there with pots full of real nectar and requested Suka to give the nectar to King Parikshit and distribute the nectar of the stories of the *Bhagavatha* to them in exchange, but Suka did not agree to do so, saying that their devotion did not yet reach such a stage as to deserve it. Another story says that having known that Parikshit attained Moksha by hearing the *Bhagavatha* for seven days, Lord Brahma weighed the greatness of the *Bhagavatha* with suitable media and declared that the greatness of the *Bhagavatha* is heavier than all others.

Though these stories appear to have been concocted, they clearly indicate the glory of the *Bhagavatha*. It is said in the *Padma Purana* that the Bhakti, Jnana and Vairagya that cannot be obtained by the study of the Gita and the Upanishads can easily be obtained by hearing the stories of the *Bhagavatha*. *Bhagavatha* is a work which bestows the bliss of this world as well as that of the other world. With the help of the *Bhagavatha*, all people can, without the distinction of caste, creed, age or sex, attain the divine bliss.

The compound Panchalakshana (having five characteristics) is not only a definition of the Purana, but also its synonym. Sarga (creation), Pratisarga (dissolution), Vamsa (royal families), Manvantaras (periods of Manus), and Vamsanucharita (history of dynasties) are the five main characteristics of a Purana. Scholars have given the definition of Panchalakshana to a Purana, as these five characteristics are generally found in all the Puranas. *Maha Bhagavatha* can be cited as an ideal Purana, having all these Lakshanas. In the second skandha is described the origin of the world, the creation of the Yakshas and other gods in the third skandha, the history of the kings belonging to the solar and lunar dynasties in the ninth skandha, and the nature of the four kinds of *pralayas* in the twelfth skandha. In addition to them the periods or ages of various Manus and the incarnations that God took during those periods are also described in the *Bhagavatha*. Some episodes or tales are narrated topically

here and there to enunciate some Dharma or support some principles. There is close resemblance between the story of the latter part of the tenth skandha and that of the *Uttara Harivamsa*.

The ten Avatars or incarnations of Lord Narayana are well known in the world. Some are of the opinion that the order of these incarnations indicates the evolution of creation. Twenty-one Avatars of Sriman Narayana are described in the *Bhagavatha*. There is some difference between the twenty-one Avatars narrated by Sauthi to the sages in the first skandha and those described by Brahma to Narada in the second skandha not only in names but also in order. Among these Avatars some are Amsavataras (partial) and some are Kalavataras. There is a saying that "others are Amsavataras and Krishna is Bhagavan himself" and taking this as the basis, some hold that the incarnation of Krishna is a complete one. This is perhaps the reason why the birth, sports, exploits and the valour of Krishna are described in detail in the tenth skandha. Other incarnations are described in detail or in brief, according to the actions performed by the Lord in them.

In the second skandha, Suka told Parikshit that the essence of the *Bhagavatha* could be briefly narrated in the form of four slokas and it contained ten characteristics. Some of the characteristics described by Amarasimha are included in these. The ten characteristics described by him are Sarga, Visarga, Sthana, Poshana, Utis, Manvantaras, Isanucharita, Nirodha, Mukti and Asraya. Sarga is to see the Mahat, Ahankara, Panchatanmantras, Pancha Bhutas and the Indriyas in God. The birth of Brahma out of the Supreme Being (Virat Purusha) and the creation by him of the animals and the inanimate world form Visarga. The triumph of the Lord of Vaikuntha who protects the world by destroying the wicked people is Sthana. The act of protecting or saving the devotees by Lord Vishnu is Poshana. The impressions unconsciously left on the mind, of the past actions, good or bad, are Utis. Manvantaras are periods of Manus who are endowed with the authority of ruling over the world by the grace of Narayana. The stories of the incarnations of God are Isanukathas. Nirodha is to narrate the various circum-

stances that happen when the living beings remain actionless while Lord Vishnu is immersed in yogic sleep on the head of the serpent. Mukti is the state when the Jiva becomes Hari with the auspicious divine form and perfume. Asraya is the Brahma or Paramatma, which is the primary cause of the origin, preservation and destruction of the world.

The Lakshanikas (Rhetoricians) prescribe that a poem should begin with blessings, obeisance or suggestion of the theme. The Sanskrit *Bhagavatha* begins with the sloka *Janmadyasya* which contains the verb *Dhimahi*, the same as is found in the Gayatri Mantra and indicates that the *Bhagavatha* is equal to that mantra in every respect. It praises the qualities of the supreme being, who is the cause of the creation, preservation and destruction of the universe. Pothana, no doubt, translated this sloka in the beginning of the story of the *Bhagavatha*, but prior to that he started the poem with his own verse which means.

For attaining the state of absolution, I contemplate over the child of Yasoda, who is mainly engaged in the protection of the worlds, who is found of the art of saving his devotees, who puts an end to the arrogance of the demons and who produces all the worlds with merely a sportive glance.

This contains a prayer to Lord Krishna, who displayed innumerable sports as the child of Yasoda and Nanda. By the compound meaning "the child of Yasoda and Nanda" is indicated the theme of the tenth skandha which is considered the soul of the *Bhagavatha*. In the same way, other adjectives in the verse suggest the theme contained in the other skandhas of the *Bhagavatha*. Lord Narayana is always engaged in the protection of the worlds. The main purpose of his incarnations is to protect the world by killing the cruel demons and to save his devotees from troubles. The story of the *Bhagavatha* tells us that he killed the demons, Hiranyakasipu, Kamsa and others and protected his devotees like Prahlada, Ambarisha, Gajendra, etc. The adjectives—who is fond of the art of saving his devotees and who put an end to the arrogance of the demons—are suggestive of these actions. The fact that he produced the worlds by his sportive glance is corroborated by the *Chandogya Upanishad*. This is an

indication of the origin of the universe described in the second skandha.

In this way, the whole theme of the *Bhagavatha* is unfurled if we expand the adjectives used in the first benedictory verse. Some of the characteristics of the Puranas described by Suka to Parikshit are clearly suggested in this. Pothana did not only suggest the theme of his work in this verse, but also paid homage to his deity. Other poets also bow to their deities in the beginning of their poems, but the first verse of Pothana serves two purposes, viz., bowing to his deity and praising the qualities of the dedicatee of the poem as Lord Krishna happens to be both. The first line of the verse also indicates the inner ambition of Pothana. He worships Lord Narayana not for the attainment of worldly happiness and enjoyments but for being able to reach the highest goal of life—absolution or Kaivalya. This suggests, in a way, the truth that those who worship the Lord and who read the *Bhagavatha* that describes his sports and incarnations shall certainly become eligible for attaining such a state.

CHAPTER FOUR

Pothana's Method of Translation

MANY of the early compositions in Telugu literature are translations from Sanskrit. Attempts to translate works from other languages into Telugu are being continued from then on to the present day, but the number of original compositions has gradually increased. The method of translation followed by the Telugu poets can be classified under three heads, viz., translation of the story, translation of the ideas and translation of the words. Of these the first, translation of the story, seems to be more independent. The translation of Kavitraya belongs to this category. Those three poets were able to make the Telugu *Bharata* appear like an original composition, following the story of the original but omitting the portions deemed to be unnecessary, introducing new portions wherever necessary and modifying the portions considered to be improper. The second is translation of the ideas, and Srinatha's translation of *Naishadha* belongs to this category. It is a fact that he left off some slokas here and there without translating and that he added his own ideas and words in the Telugu verses, where the ideas of the Sanskrit slokas were not sufficient to fill them up. But such instances are very few in his poem. Though he did not translate each and every word he never left out either the story or the important ideas of the original. Some instances are there where he altered the original ideas for the sake of propriety. His composition is neither too independent nor too true to the original. The third is translation of the words. Many modern Telugu translations appear to belong to this category. The writers translate [not only the story and the ideas but also the various words. Their translations follow the originals very closely.

Pothana belongs to the age of Srinatha. He was familiar with the method of translation followed by the Kavitraya, as well as by Srinatha. That is why, perhaps, in his translation of the *Bhagavatha* we find the above two methods. As the Kavitraya tried to abbreviate or delete portions enunciating rules of conduct, philosophy and morals, their translation has been approximately reduced to half the size of the original. The translation of the *Bhagavatha* has, on the contrary, become double the original in size. The causes for this enlargement are : (i) that Pothana emotionally added his own ideas to the ideas of the original while translating portions full of devotion and of descriptions dealing with the greatness and the good qualities of God, (ii) that he followed not only the original, but also the commentary of Sridhara, while expatiating on profound philosophical matters, and (iii) that he introduced portions of *Vishnu Purana*, *Harivamsa* and *Nrisimha Purana* also, while describing stories common to all of them.

I. Portions enlarged by Pothana :

The theme of *Nrisimha Purana* is nothing but the story of Prahlada. Therefore, while describing the story of Prahlada, Pothana has borrowed some ideas from that Purana also. In the same way, while describing the story pertaining to the killing of Narakasura he borrowed some materials from either *Harivamsa* or *Vishnu Purana* and dealt at length with the battle fought by Satyabhama, which is not found in the Sanskrit original. In this context, the impact of Nachana Somana's *Uttara Harivamsa* is quite evident. This is the only portion which Pothana borrowed from other works and introduced in the *Bhagavatha*. In the Sanskrit *Bhagavatha*, it is merely stated that Krishna, after hearing the request of Indra, went to pragjyotisha, ruled by Naraka on Garuda, along with his wife. The episode relating to Satyabhama's fight with Naraka is not mentioned there at all. Pothana described it in great detail. He mentioned that when Krishna was starting to fight with Naraka, Satyabhama implored him to take her along with him, that though Krishna first tried to dissuade her from accompanying him, he ultimately agreed due to her persuasion. In the event she fought bravely with

Naraka. The conversation that took place between Krishna and Narakasura also is not there in the original.

II. Portions enlarged, without borrowing from other works :

1. When Hiranyakasipu took Prahlada on his lap and asked him to let him know what he had learnt from his preceptors, the Sanskrit *Bhagavatha* states that he informed him that he learnt the nine kinds of Bhakti, *sravana* etc. from them. Pothana enlarged both the question and the reply in this connection, to a great extent. The famous-verse, meaning, "Does the bee engrossed in drinking the sweetness of the honey of the Mandara flowers ever go to the Madana flowers?" is found in this context as a reply to the question put by the preceptors of Prahlada whether the peculiar thoughts about Hari were his own or taught by others. It is entirely Pothana's innovation.

2. When Brahma and other gods kept silent even after hearing the prayer of Gajendra, Lord Vishnu thought of protecting his devotee from the crocodile. In this context the Sanskrit *Bhagavatha* says: "Hearing the prayer of Gajendra, Vishnu came to the place where he was seated on Garuda. Gajendra saw him and raising his trunk prayed to him uttering the words 'Salutations to you, Narayana, the protector of all'. Then, while the Gods were seeing the spectacle, Vishnu cut off the neck of the crocodile with his disc and slowly drew Gajendra from the lake with kindness." Here Pothana wrote ten or twelve verses of his own which are sweet and full of devotion. This portion is as elaborate as it is pleasant and indicates the extraordinary devotion of Pothana.

3. The Sanskrit *Bhagavatha* describes Bali's invasion of heaven in 12 slokas. Pothana enlarged this and wrote a long prose piece, full of verbal figures of speech (Sabdalankaras). This is almost his own, as it contains much that is not found in the original. This prose piece has been given a separate heading, 'Svarga Varnana Vachana' (prose describing heaven), in some of the palm-leaf manuscripts.

4. In the story of Vamana, the original says that God Brahma knew that Aditi bore Lord Narayana in her womb and praised him in detail. Pothana here describes the pregnant woman before that praise and this description is very

natural and speaks much of Pothana's skill of description. In the same context, Pothana introduces some verses describing the actions and the words of the delighted Aditi, while the boy Vamana was playing, giving vent to childish utterances. This description also is not found in the original.

5. Pothana described in detail the peculiar actions and the sportive attitude displayed by Vamana, while he was entering the sacrificial hall of Bali and also the manner with which he blessed Bali raising his hand. The reply that Vamana gave to Bali, when he asked him, "O Brahmachari, Who are you? To whom do you belong? And what do you want?" is very interesting and meaningful as it contains an inward meaning, suggestive of the omnipotence of Lord Narayana.

6. In the eighth chapter of the tenth skandha of the original are described the childish sports of Krishna and Balarama and also various pranks played by them, as reported by the Gopikas to Yasoda. Pothana enlarged this portion very much and the beautiful *kanda* verses written by him in this context describing the childish mischief of the infant Krishna are known to every Andhra.

7. In the 30th chapter of the tenth skandha the Gopikas displayed peculiar actions and gestures, while searching for Krishna, overwhelmed by pangs of separation. In this context, Pothana added many of his own ideas to those of the original and made that part of the *Bhagavatha* extremely pleasant and interesting.

8. In the original the story of Rukmini's marriage starts with a description of the desire of all the relations to give her to Krishna while Rukmi, her brother, who hates Krishna, wishes to give her in marriage to Sisupala. In this connection, Pothana wrote four or five verses of his own describing the childhood and the youthful elegance of Rukmini. In the same way, he displayed great propriety by indicating Krishna's love towards Rukmini. The message sent by Rukmini to Krishna contains Pothana's original ideas and is among the highlights of the work. The verses of the Brahmin describing the exquisite beauty of Rukmini before Krishna are also Pothana's own.

In this way there are many portions in the Telugu *Bhagavatha* which Pothana enlarged, though they are very

brief in the original, and where he composed his own verses to make the situation more attractive. The descriptions of Naimisaranya in the beginning and of the descent of the Ganges in the ninth skandha of the *Bhagavatha* are full of long and high-sounding word-compounds and of figures of speech like *slesha* and *virodhabhasa* and speak much of Pothana's skill at description and scholarship.

III. Portions which follow the commentary of Sridhara :

There are many commentaries on the *Bhagavatha* written by scholars following the three important schools of religious thought, viz., Advaita, Dvaita and Visishtadvaita, in conformity with the principles of those religions. Of them *Bhagavatha Bhavartha Dipika*, written by Sridhara, in accordance with the Advaita principles, is more popular than the others. Pothana translated sentences from that commentary also along with the original where the meaning of the original is obscure. This kind of enlargement is mostly seen in portions which deal with philosophy.

1. When Asvatthama was running away, pursued by Arjuna in the first skandha, the Sanskrit *Bhagavatha* says : "Rudra bhayad yatha kah" (like Brahma from fear of Rudra). Sridhara commented upon it in the following way : "*Kah = Brahma, Mrigo bhutva sutham yabdhum udyatah san, Rudrabhayad yatha palayathe sma*" (As Brahma, becoming a deer and eager to sport with his daughter, ran away from fear of Rudra). Pothana translated the commentary completely.

2. Sanskrit *Bhagavatha* mentions the Avaranas, the Bhutas, the Asvayanas, the Gunas, etc. only with the numbers as Saptavaranas, Pancha Bhuttas, etc. Pothana gives a detailed account of them, with the help of the commentary.

3. In the second skandha when Brahma was explaining to Narada the manner of the origin of the world, the Sanskrit *Bhagavatha* says,

*Dravyam karma cha kalascha svabhavo jiva eva cha
Vasudevah paro brahman na tvanyarthoasti tathvatah.*
(2-5-14)

The words *dravya*, *karma*, *kala*, *svabhava*, etc. are ex-

patiated by Pothana according to the commentary (II. 84).

4. In the former half of the tenth skandha the wives of Kaliya praised Krishnain many slokas beginning with :

Namo anantaya sukshmaya kutasthaya vipaschite.

Sridhara gave a detailed commentary for the words *Anantaya*, etc. (*Anantaya* = *Aparichchedat*; *Atah Sukshmaya* = *Adrisyatvat*). Pothana also expanded the meaning of the above slokas with the help of the commentary.

IV. There are certain portions where Pothana himself expanded simple words of the original, suggestive of a wider meaning even without the help of the commentary :

1. The following sloka is found in the praise uttered by Kunti in the first skandha :

*Vishan mahagneh purushad adarsanat
Asatsabhayah vanayasa krichehratah
Mrithe mrithe aneka maharathastrato
Drounyastrata schasma hare abhirakshitah. (1-8-24)*

We have been protected from *visha* (poison), from fire, from the sight of the demons, from the assembly of gamblers, from the trouble of dwelling in the forest, from the missiles of many warriors in various battles and from the Brahmastra of Asvatthama.

Pothana expanded every word of this *sloka* and wrote a *sisu* verse. The line meaning "you have protected me from dying along with my sons in the house built of lac" is the expansion of the word *jutugrihat* (from the house built of lac).

2. In the first skandha, Bhishma praised Krishna in many slokas. The following is one of them :

*Syanigama mapahaya matpratignam
Rita madhikartu mayapluto rathasthah
Dhritarathacharano abhyayachchuladgult
Hari riva hantu mibham gatothariyah. (1-9-37)*

That Mukunda is my support who, having abandoned his vow and wishing to make my vow truthful, jumped from the chariot in which he was sitting with the disc in his hand and attacked me while the earth was shaking and while the upper garment was falling down, like a lion trying to kill the elephant.

Pothana left off some of the words of the *sloka*, added some of his own words and wrote the oft-quoted *sisā* verse, beginning with *Kuppinchi egasina kundalambula kanthi*.

V. There are some portions in the original Bhagavatha which Pothana abbreviated but their number is very small when compared with those enlarged by him :

1. In the story of Vamana, where the demons occupied the capital of the gods, they left it to hide themselves somewhere according to the advice given by their preceptor, Brihaspati. Aditi was then grieving for the plight of her sons. Kasyapa went to see her and enquired after her welfare. In this connection, the original describes at length the reply given by Aditi to her husband. Pothana epitomised the whole matter saying that : "The sons of Diti and their children have, without any kindness or affection, driven out my children and are ruling over Amaravati. What can I tell you ?" and requested him to bless her sons.

2. When Kasyapa advised Aditi to worship God and derive benefit from Him, she requested him to let her know the manner and the *mantras* that should be recited at the time of worship. In this context the original describes the 'Payobhakshana Vrata' and the manner of doing it in about 40 *slokas*. Pothana left all of them and merely wrote that Kasyapa told his wife about the 'Vrata', *mantras*, and the gifts that had to be made in that connection. He might have abbreviated it, because that portion appeared to him to be very dry on account of the details relating to the performance of the 'Vrata'.

3. When Aditi performed the 'Payobhakshana Vrata', Lord Vishnu was pleased with her devotion and appeared before her. She praised him and requested him to remove the sufferings of her sons. Vishnu consoled her, saying that he would be born as her son. The Sanskrit *Bhagavatha* describes

all this in eight slokas. Pothana left off the details and gave only the gist of the slokas in his translation.

VI. Changes introduced by Pothana for the sake of propriety :

1. In the context where Suka tells Parikshit that the path of devotion excels the other two paths, the Sanskrit *Bhagavatha* says that the person who does not touch the dust of the feet of God's devotees is a living corpse and that the person who does not smell the Tulasi placed on the feet of Lord Vishnu is a breathing corpse. As the similes in both happen to be more or less the same, Pothana translated them in the following way removing repetition. "The hands that are not useful for worshipping Lord Vishnu are the hands of a corpse and the nose that does not smell the fragrance of the Tulasi placed on the feet of the Lord is a pig's nose."

2. When Bali was prepared to give three feet of land to Vamana, the original says that Suka told him, "O fool (*mudha*), how do you live if you give away everything to Vishnu?" As the address *mudha* (fool) seemed to be improper, Pothana left it out.

3. When Bali invaded heaven, he got up the chariot given to him by Bhrigu. In this connection, the original compares him with fire shining in the *kunda* (pit where the sacrificial fire is enkindled). Pothana changed it and wrote that the king of the demons shone like the wild fire ascending the summit of the mountain. Perhaps, he might have felt that it is not proper to compare a man on the chariot with fire in the *kunda*. Moreover, his simile indicates the fierceness of his valour in a better way.

VII. When the idea of the Sanskrit sloka is not sufficient to cover the whole Telugu verse, Pothana fills up the remaining portion independently and, in doing so, displays his imagination and sense of propriety. In the portion called the 'Gopika Gitas' the Gopikas state, while enumerating the help rendered by Krishna to them, "We were protected by you on several occasions from the ocean of poisonous water, from demons, from storm, from electric fire and from many other calamities." Pothana translated the above in the following verse meaning, "Having protected us from poisonous

waters, from the demon, from the storm of hail-stones, from fire and from many other dangers, is it proper for you to throw us at the mercy of Cupid, in the end?" As a matter of fact the idea of the original sloka was completely expressed in the first three feet of the Telugu verse, and therefore Pothana added his own idea to fill up the fourth line, which means, "Do you make us die eventually at the hands of Cupid, bearing flowery arrows, having protected us from several fierce calamities?" This idea is not only beautiful but also meaningful and adds grace to the original. In the same way, we come across certain verses in the Telugu *Bhagavatha*, where the last lines or the latter halves are filled up by Pothana with his own ideas, without spoiling the sense of the original.

VIII. Portions where Pothana's translation is true to the original :

We need not assume from the examples given above that Pothana enlarged, abbreviated or modified the original everywhere. There are several portions, where his translation is quite close to the original like that of Srinatha, his elder contemporary. The following can be cited as examples :

1. *Sriyahpathi ryagnapathih prajapathih
Dhiyampathi rlokapathir dharapathih
Pathir gathi schandhakavrishnisatvatam
Prasidatam me bhugavan satam gathih. (2-4-20)*

I worship that skilful God, who is the Lord of Sri (Lakshmi), the Lord of sacrifices, the Lord of the people, the Lord of intellect, the Lord of the worlds, the Lord of the earth, and the Lord of the Yadavas, and also who is my refuge. (2-65.)

2. *Yatha bhramyatyayo brahman
Svaya makarsha sannidhau
Tatha me bhidyate chetah
Chakrapaner yadrichchaya. (7-5-14)*

Oh, best of Brahmins, my mind melts and providentially whirls round Hrishikesa as iron whirls or staggers in the presence of a magnet. (7-141)

Pothana translated the simile of the original with skill and propriety.

IX. Portions which do not conform to the original :

Here and there in the Telugu *Bhagavatha* we find some verses or portions, which Pothana wrote differently from the original, either internationally or by mistake.

1. *Ya ethena puman nityam*
Stuvan stotrena mam bhajeth
Tasyanvahan prasideyam
Sarvakamavaresvarah (3-9-40)

I shall be always pleased with and fulfil all the desires of that person who serves me praising me with this *stotra*.

Sridhara gave the meaning "giving all desires" to the compound *Sarvakamavaresvarah* of the original. Pothana translated this as "having obtained all desires" (*Avapta sakala kamudanaguchun*) and this does not agree with the original.

2. *Vayam vratair yachcharanapavidham*
Asasmahe ajam bhatra bhukta bhogam. (3-14-26)

The compound *Charanapavidham* has been commented upon by Sridhara as "thrown at a distance by the feet as Nirmalya" (remaining of the offerings made to God). Pothana translated this as "having been born of the feet" and this translation does not conform to the original.

3. *Manasas chandrama jato*
Buddhir buddher girampatih
Ahamkaras tvato rudrah
Chittam chaityas tato abhavat. (3-26-63)

Manas has been born of *Hridaya*, *Chandra* and *Buddhi* have been born of *Mayas*. *Girampathi* has been born of *Buddhi*. *Rudra* and *Chitta* have been born of *Ahamkara* and *Kshetragna* of *Chitta*.

According to Pothana's translation, *Brahma* and *Kshetragna* have been born of *Chitta*.

4. *Chalātyasakto api nirasramodake.* (3-30-22)

In this the compound *Nirasramodake* (in which there is no water or resting place) is an adjective to *taptavaluke pathi* (in the way where the sand is hot). Pothana translated this as "swimming and floating in the water which has no support" and this differs from the original.

Some such differences have arisen by mistake or on account of variant readings. If we can set them aside, which are quite negligible in number, Pothana's translation is, on the whole, sweet and pleasant and gives extreme delight to readers both scholarly and otherwise.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Stories and Upakhyanas in the Bhagavatha

AKHYANA and Upakhyana are defined as telling the events of a story seen by oneself and telling a story heard from others respectively. Suta narrated the story of the *Bhagavatha* to the sages as told by Suka to King Parikshit. Neither Suka nor Suta did personally see the events of the story of the *Bhagavatha*. Both of them heard it from others. Therefore the whole of *Bhagavatha* can be considered as an Upakhyana. But the word Upakhyana also means a short story or a sub-story, narrated incidentally in the midst of a main story. From this it can be concluded that the story connected with the various Avatars or incarnations of Lord Vishnu is the main story of the *Bhagavatha* and the stories narrated incidentally and contextually here and there in the middle are Upakhyanas. Lord Vishnu may appear in the Upakhyanas also but that is not the main purpose of his incarnation. In this way, the story of Dhruva, of Gajendra, of Kuchela, etc. are deemed to be Upakhyanas only.

The ultimate purpose of the *Bhagavatha* is to kindle in the minds of the readers a desire to strive for absolution by expatiating upon the importance of Bhakti or devotion through praising the qualities and the divine eminence of God. There is no doubt that God certainly protects those who worship Him with devotion, having absolute faith in Him. That belief will, without fail, be created in the readers of the *Bhagavatha* at least in a small measure. God will take birth on earth to put an end to the demons and wicked people who oppress the world, to give protection to the good and to promote the welfare of the world. The following sloka of the Gita enunciates the same fact :

*Paritrānaya sadhunam vinasaya cha dushkritam
Dharmasamsthāpanarthaya sambhavami yuge yuge.*

Therefore, the incarnations of God are related not only to the establishment of Dharma, but also to the protection of good and devoted people. As God is supernatural, the events connected with Him may have many supernatural incidents and occurrences which may appear unnatural and incoherent from the point of ordinary logic. They are written mainly to impress upon the readers the intention and the ability of God to protect his devotees, and the glory of devotion, and not merely from an artistic point of view. Art subserves religious propaganda or moral preaching in them. But on account of the genius of the poet, the art of story-telling and other characteristics of good poetry will be everywhere evident in them.

The incarnation of Yajnavaraha is one of the twenty-one Avatāras taken by God. He manifested Himself in the form of a Varaha or a boar to lift up the earth immersed in the waters of the ocean. Another great event of this incarnation is the killing of the arrogant Hiranyaksha. Hiranyaksha was in search of a warrior who could fight him with equal valour and went to Varuna, after having wandered over all the worlds. Varuna informed him that the only hero who could withstand him was Mukunda staying at Vaikuntha. When he was going to Vaikuntha, Narada met him and informed him that Mukunda was in Rasatala, having taken the form of a Varaha. Hiranyaksha went to Rasatala and fought with the Varaha. Varaha killed him in the battle, lifted the earth from the waters and saved the world. The story of Hiranyaksha clearly indicates that pride and arrogance lead to fall. The story of Varaha is narrated twice in the third skandha, first briefly and then in detail.

In the seventh skandha is described beautifully the story of the incarnation of the Lord in the form of Nrisimha (half-man and half-lion). He killed Hiranyakasipu who became very proud on account of the boons obtained by him from Brahma. Hiranyakasipu had a grouse against Hari as He killed his brother Hiranyaksha and protected his son Prahlada. This story brings home to the readers that nobody, however

strong and powerful, can harm the devotees of God, that He will be watching his devotees with a thousand eyes, that He will be present everywhere and that the people who always contemplate His lotus-feet do not pay heed to adverse teachings. At the time when Prahlada said that Hari was present in all the shapes and forms of the world and Hiranyakasipu countered his words saying that he was nowhere, the Lord hid himself in all the movable and immovable forms in the shape of Nrisimha and this shows his anxiety to protect His devotees. Prahlada was a born devotee as he received the teachings of Narada, even while he was in the womb of his mother. His fearless declaration before his father enunciating the efficacy of prayer and devotion and the speech he delivered to his classmates explaining the eternal truth are invaluable.

Lord Narayana is always eager to protect the gods. When demons become more powerful and occupy heaven, to the kingdom of gods, He will kill them and restore heaven to the gods again. When Bali occupied heaven, conquering the whole world, the gods could not do anything, left heaven and hid themselves somewhere. Then Aditi, who could not bear to see their sufferings, approached her husband, knew from him the manner of performing the 'Payobhaksha navrata' and when Lord Narayana appeared before her, she obtained a boon from Him that He would be born as a son to her. Afterwards, Narayana was born to her in the form of Vamana, approached Bali when he was performing a sacrifice and in the name of receiving three feet of land from him, as a gift, crushed him down to the *Patala*. Indra could obtain the kingdom of heaven again by His grace. The main purpose of this Avatara is to reinstate Indra on the throne of heaven.

In the ninth skandha is described the story of Rama. There was occasion to narrate it in connection with describing the history of the kings belonging to the solar race. The main purpose of this Avatara is to kill Ravana and other Rakshasas and to protect the gods and the sages. Rama's story is here described very briefly.

The tenth skandha is the soul of the *Bhagavatha* and in it are described in detail how Vishnu was born to Yasoda and Vasudeva as Krishna, how he was brought up in the

Gokula of Nanda and how he put an end to Kamsa and other Rakshasas. Pothana beautifully describes in this skandha the sportive pranks of Krishna in his childhood and the Madhura Bhakti of the cowered women. Another interesting story of this skandha is the marriage of Rukmini who is none other than Lakshmi. The love that she had for Krishna is as genuine as it is sacred. Her story is a good example to illustrate the saying that true love triumphs in the end. Chastising the pride of Banasura and killing Sisupala, Kamsa and Naraka are also great deeds of valour performed by Krishna in this skandha.

The punishment and protection given by Lord Vishnu to wicked and good people respectively in the main incarnations have been described above. In addition to them, there are several other occasions on which he protected His devotees. Those stories and other episodes, which give importance to Dharma and philosophy have been narrated in the form of Upakhyanas. The inner meaning that some of them have will be explained here.

In the fourth skandha is described the destruction of the sacrifice of Daksha in connection with giving an account of his progeny. It was due to arrogance that Daksha could not really understand his position and the pre-eminence of Lord Siva and wanted to insult him by performing a sacrifice. He disregarded his own daughter showing her no affection when she came to witness the sacrifice. The arrogance and haughtiness displayed by him did harm not only to himself but also to the gods that came to help him. When her self-respect was wounded, Sati could not bear it and abandoned her body by means of yogic fire. This story clearly shows that arrogance leads to calamities and people with self-respect prefer to sacrifice their lives to brooking insult at the hands of others.

The story of Dhruva, the young devotee, is also narrated in the fourth skandha. Maitreya narrated this story to Vidura after briefly telling him about Pratisarga. Syayambhuva Manu had two sons, Priyavrata and Uttanapada, through his wife Satarupa. Uttanapada had two wives, Suniti and Suruchi, and Suniti gave birth to Dhruva, who

was full of self-respect. When one day he went to sit on the lap of his father, his stepmother, Suruchi, prevented him, saying, "You are not fortunate enough to sit on the lap of your father as you were born not to me but to some other woman. Go and worship the lotus-feet of Lord Narayana and He will give you the boon of being my son." His father kept quite without taking him near him. Dhruva was severely hurt by the words of his stepmother and became much depressed, when his mother consoled him and advised him to worship the feet of Lord Vishnu. Dhruva at once started to go to the forest for doing penance. Narada met him on the way and first dissuaded him from resorting to penance saying that Lord Narayana could be approached only by yogis and not by boys like him. But on getting to know his strong resolution, he taught him the manner of performing penance. Dhruva followed his advice and did severe penance. Lord Vishnu appeared before him and granted him that everlasting position (*Dhruvapada*), which is the highest and which cannot be secured by others.

Dhruva felt sorry that instead of begging for absolution he craved for *Dhruvapada*, which, though great, is not the final beatitude. This indicates that the highest boon a man should desire to have is absolution or *Mukti* and not the evanescent pleasure, power and positions. This story also tells us that devotion has no relationship whatsoever with age and that even children will be able to please God and earn His favour if they worship Him with devotion and sincerity. It is also evident from this story that insult and ridicule directed against people of self-respect will sometimes prompt them to achieve higher ends and be indirectly helpful to them. Narada first tried to dissuade Dhruva from penance, not to discourage him but really to increase his steadiness and perseverance. It was only God that sent Narada to teach him the way of doing penance. It is quite evident from this that God will Himself show the means of realising Him to the innocent who are really devoted to Him and worship Him with steadiness.

The fourth skandha contains the episode of Puranjana, which was narrated by Narada to Prachinabarhi. While

Prachinabarhi was spending his time engrossed in performing the traditional rites, Narada approached him, to explain that performance of rites cannot lead to the highest good that dispels evil and fulfils the desires. Then Prachinabarhi requested him to show the path of pure knowledge that removes the bonds of action. Narada pointed to him the numerous beasts that were sacrificed by him in the sacrificial rites and told him that they were awaiting his death so that they might torment him with their iron horns as soon as he entered the other world. Afterwards he narrated to him the episode of Puranjana that would emancipate him from that suffering. This is an allegorical story which is full of many spiritual secrets. Puranjana in this story is Purusha and his friend called Avignata is Iswara. The body is the city (*pura*) and the eyes, nose, face, the ears, etc. are the nine gates. The serpent with five faces is *prana* having five conditions or states. Pramadothama is intellect and Chandavega is the year denoting time. The Gandharvas are the days. Yavanesvara is death. The blind men are hands and feet and the harem (*Antahpura*) is the heart. Visuchi is the mind. In this way the whole story is allegorical and states that actions should never be considered as the purpose of life (*Purushartha*) that the real action is that which pleases the Almighty, that the knowledge which turns the mind towards the Almighty is Vidya, that the Almighty Himself is the soul and lord (Iswara) of all living beings and that, therefore, His feet are the safest refuge for all.

In the seventh skandha, Hiranyakasipu narrated the episode of Suyagna or the conversation between Yama and the relatives of the dead man while consoling the mother wives, and children of Hiranyaksha after his death. When Suyagna, the king of the Usinara country, was killed by his enemies in the battle his wives began to weep for him. In the evening, Yama came to the relatives of the dead king in the form of a Brahmin boy and told them, "It is but natural that people take birth and die. Their relatives weep for them as if they do not die. We abandon our parents and dwell in the forest without being harmed by the wild beasts. The power that nourished us when we were in the wombs of our mothers nourished us even in the forest. It is God that is the sole cause of creation,

preservation and destruction. According to the actions done in the previous births, men take the body made of five elements, flourish and die when the time comes. It is only the body that is destroyed and not the soul (*Purusha*). The soul and the body are never identical. Attachment is created by the bonds of actions and disappears when their influence comes to an end. Ignorant people feel happy and unhappy respectively for union and separation. Those who know the truth do not feel sorry or happy about anything. Therefore, there is no use of weeping for the dead king." Then he narrated the story of the hunter and the Kulinga birds.

A hunter went to the forest with all the implements of hunt and saw a couple of Kulinga birds flying before him. He caught the female bird in his net and bagged it. While the male bird was wailing for the separation of his mate and feeling sorry for the young ones, still without wings, the hunter struck it with his arrow and it fell down dead.

After narrating this story the Brahmin boy consoled the relatives of the dead king saying that people, however virtuous and meritorious they may be, cannot escape death when the time approaches and that there is no use weeping for them. The relatives of the dead king heard his words, knew the impermanent nature of the world, performed his obsequies and returned home. The episode of Suyagna clearly indicates that birth and death are natural to living beings and to mourn for the dead is quite useless. It becomes clear from the story of the hunter and the Kulinga birds that nobody knows what happens when, that death is inevitable when the time approaches and it is useless to grieve either for the dead or for the living. Generally, while relatives will be weeping for the dead who are near and dear to them, old people will be consoling them, telling them about the evanescent nature of the world and this kind of consolation will give some relief to them. It may appear strange that in this story Yama came in the form of a Brahmin boy and spoke consoling words expected of aged people. But, as they are highly philosophical and are besitting the context, it is possible for the elders to become calm and pacified thinking that when even a little boy was uttering such consoling words it would be ridiculous if they began to weep for the dead man. The boyish form of Yama is also helpful from its

own example to prove that God alone protects even little boys who live alone in the forest without the help of the parents and that He is the sole cause for the creation, protection and destruction of the world. It is evident from the words spoken here by Hiranyakasipu that he is highly enlightened though he is a Rakshasa, haughty and arrogant.

The story of Gajendra Moksha in the eighth skandha is very well known. This episode occurred during the time of the fourth Manu. Gajendra in his previous birth was Indradymna, the King of Dravila, and was a devout Vishnubhakta. He was born as an elephant due to a curse of Agastya. When the crocodile caught his foot, Gajendra at first used all his might to get out of its grip. The fight went on for a thousand years. Finding that in the process, the strength of the crocodile went on increasing and his own strength decreasing, he started, by virtue of the merit of *punya* he performed in his earlier births and with a rare insight, praising the Lord of the universe in the following words, ".....I do not know anyone other than or greater than yourself. Pardon this downtrodden individual. Oh, giver of the boons, come soon (to protect me)." No wonder Vishnu immediately came and using His Chakra, killed the crocodile and rescued him. Gajendra first fought with manly courage, but it was of no use. Then he began praising the Lord. Even this was of no effect, until he completely surrendered himself before God, when the protection sought for came.

The moral of this story is that whosoever loses his self and surrenders completely to the will of the Lord, Vishnu will always be there to protect him. Devotion to God and that in absolute terms is what is required. Rescuing the Gajendra from the tank and blotting out his tears of exhaustion demonstrate clearly that the Lord is always on the side of His devotees in their difficulties and sorrows. The Lord running to rescue His devotee, without even knowing that a part of the sarree worn by Lakshmi was still hanging on him, goes only to emphasise God's nature to be a source of strength to those who are His devotees. The symbolism of this story can be interpreted thus : Gajendra is the Jiva. The tank is the Samsara. The waters therein are the pleasures, etc. The crocodile represents the triple-tapa (*tapatraya*). When the

Jīva, with the intention of enjoying the pleasures of life, enters Samsara, the triple-*tapa* gets hold of him and inflicts him. If he becomes wise and surrenders before the lotus-feet of the Lord, with unflinching devotion, then the Lord who is the Redeemer, will come and break the chain of the triple-*tapa* binding him and will bestow Moksha on him. The extraordinary delineation of characters, shown by Pothana in his inimitable poetry, and the raising of the virtue of devotion to the highest state, deserve special mention here. Not only human beings but animals too can achieve the grace of the Lord, if they are really devoted to Him.

In the ninth skandha are told the stories of many kings belonging to the solar and the lunar races. Among them the stories of Ambarisha and Rantideva are important. Ambarisha was the son of Nabhaga. He was always engaged in contemplating upon and worshipping Lord Vishnu, who was pleased with his devotion and gave His *chakra* (disc) to him. *Chakra* is a divine weapon and deserves to be in the hand of Lord Narayana alone. The fact that a *chakra* was given away to Ambarisha speaks much of the devotion of Ambarisha, as well as the grace of Lord Vishnu towards his devotees. Ambarisha observed 'Dvadasivrata' for one year and was about to break his fast when Durvasa approached him as a guest. Ambarisha received him with due respect and invited him for dinner. Durvasa went to take his bath and having been engrossed in meditation made inordinate delay. Ambarisha had to break his fast before Ādvadasi passed but as he was afraid that he would commit the sin of neglecting a Brahmin if he did so, he consulted the scholars who told him that he could take water. Ambarisha did so. Durvasa returned from the river after taking bath, became incensed and creating an evil spirit (*kritya*) from his matted hair, directed it against Ambarisha. Lord Vishnu sent his *chakra* to protect him. The *chakra* did away with the *kritya* and chased Durvasa. He first went to Brahma and afterwards to Siva and begged them to protect him. When they expressed their inability to do so, Durvasa went to Vishnu himself for succour. He advised him to go to Ambarisha and please him. Durvasa ran to Ambarisha and fell at his feet. Ambarisha praised the *chakra* which became pacified and went away, leaving Durvasa free.

The inviolable curse of a Brahmin does never become powerless. But it became powerless in the case of Ambarisha, the cause being the unreasonable anger and haughtiness of Durvasa. From this, it is quite evident that anger is an evil that should be avoided and that when it is directed against good people without sufficient cause, it harms the person who directs it. When Durvasa approached Vishnu for protection he told him, "I am increased more in the welfare of my devotees than in that of mine. My devotees are my sole refuge. I shall follow my devotee, wherever he goes, like a calf that follows the cow. My power is diffused among the good people and harms those that cause pain to them like a weapon." Lord Vishnu directed Durvasa to go and pray to Ambarisha for help though he was capable of helping him himself only to display his identity with and the greatness of his devotees. His devotee was able to perform an action that even Brahma and Siva were not able to do. The fact that Ambarisha shed his ego and pacified the *chakra* by praying to it and that he saved his enemy from falling a prey to the *chakra* displays his humility and *sattvic* nature respectively.

The story of Yayati, the son of Nahusha, has been described in detail in *Mahabharatha*. That story differs much from that found in the *Bhagavatha*, which indicates that thirst for enjoyment is endless, that in spite of advanced age the love of life and the desire for enjoyment do not abandon a person and that passion is never satiated, notwithstanding the continuous enjoying of pleasures. Yayati was distressed when he knew that his fall was mainly due to his insatiable desire for enjoyment and narrated to Devayani the episode of the goats, which was exactly parallel to his life.

A goat, while roaming in a forest, saw a female goat which had fallen in a well due to misfortune and falling in love with her, made a side-way out of the well and enabled her to get out of it. Then the female goat wanted the male one to be her mate. This was agreed to and both were living happily in the forest. Later, the male goat fell in love with many other female goats that wanted his company and was enjoying with them. Finding that he was enamoured of some other female goat, which was more charming than

her, the first female goat, which was rescued from the well, felt that her husband was ignoring her and went away leaving him. The male goat followed her and tried his best to win her favour but in vain. The Brahmin, who was his master castrated him so that he might not go after female goats. Then he fell at his feet and prayed to him. The Brahmin, who was well-versed in Yoga was moved and grafted the testicles in their place. The male goat then began to enjoy himself with the female one, but could not get full satisfaction.

In this story the male goat is Yayati and the female goat that had fallen in the well is Devayani. The charming female goat is Sarmishtha and the Brahmin Sukra. Cutting off the testicles by the Brahmin indicates the curse given by Sukra to Yayati that he should become old. Grafting of the testicles by the Brahmin symbolizes the consent of Sukra to the prayer of Yayati that he would accept old age after satisfying his passion for enjoyment.

It is said that among animals goats are highly passionate. That is why the passionate Yayati compared himself to a goat. In Sanskrit the word *Aja* means not only a female goat but also *Avidya* (ignorance). As long as he was under the influence of *Avidya* Yayati was longing for enjoyment. Afterwards, he was disgusted and became spiritual trying to realise the Brahman. Devayani could grasp the inner meaning of the story narrated by her husband, abandoned all worldly attachments and could obtain absolution. This episode clearly states that people make their lives vain, being engrossed in sexual and other enjoyments as long as they are surrounded by *Avidya* and that when the slough of *Avidya* is removed they become averse to *smasara* and resort to spirituality, which leads them to the final beatitude.

The story of Rantideva, though small in size, is great in the awakening it arouses. Rantideva had remained without food or drink for forty days. When he luckily got something to eat and drink, he started taking them when a Brahmin appeared as a guest. Rantideva offered half of what he had. Then a Sudra in dire hunger came and begged for food, when Rantideva gave away half of what he then had. A little later, a pack of dogs appeared on the scene

and he parted with what remained with him. Again all of a sudden, a Chandala came in crying, "Can't anybody quench my thirst and save my life?" Hearing this, Rantideva gave him drinking water, the only thing still left with him. Gods were immensely pleased and appeared in their own forms before Rantideva. They told him that all that happened earlier was only to test him and his capacity to withstand difficulties. Rantideva did not feel tempted to ask them for any boon for himself and, with deep devotion for Naryana ever in his heart, attained salvation. The uncommon sacrifice made by Rantideva indicates his sense of courage and his large-heartedness towards his fellow-beings. That at the time of his dire need, he did not ask for any boon from Brahma and others clearly shows that he performed his duties, without expecting any fruits thereof.

The Kuchelopakhyaṇa occurs in the latter part of the tenth skandha. Kuchela and Krishna were classmates. Both, when young, studied at the feet of their master Sandipani. That Krishna, though the Lord of the Universe Himself, went to a Guru to study indicates the fact that he did so for the benefit of the mankind, as a whole. Kuchela also stated the above truth in so many words when he addressed Krishna. Krishna saw Kuchela approaching Him in His palace and suddenly got up from His bed, ran towards Kuchela and offered him all the honour due to a royal guest. Later, they began reminiscing on the episodes and anecdotes of the days when they both were pupils in Sandipani's school and Pothana depicts these incidents in quite a natural way. When Krishna asked him what he had brought as a gift to his classmate and friend, Kuchela felt a little ashamed to offer the parched rice which he brought in small quantity. With an idea to bestow on Kuchela all the wealth which even Indra and others could not dream of, Krishna started eating a handful of the parched rice, hid in a corner of his soiled cloth, all the time relishing its taste. When he took the second handful, Rukmini obstructed Krishna telling Him that to make Kuchela wealthy, one handful was quite enough. The transparent moral of this story is that God will always be satisfied with any offering, either a leaf, a

flower, a fruit or a little amount of water, if that offering was made in a sincere way and with love.

Similarly, God will never be satisfied even when precious things are offered, if the persons making such offerings are not sincere. Though Kuchela came all the way, at the instance of his wife, to ask Krishna for some money or wealth, he did not talk anything about that at all. But Krishna knew the purpose of Kuchela's visit and gave him all the wealth. This only proves the popular belief that God will look after the welfare of the devotees and one need not ask for it. If some devotee is not blessed with wealth, it may perhaps be due to the possibility of his going astray, becoming blind to his duties as a devotee because of wealth and thus not reaching Him ultimately, and not to the want of bestowing His grace on the deserved. Kuchela was rolling in wealth afterwards; yet he never desired the pleasures for pleasures' sake. His faith in the Lord was steady and unchangeable. Thus meditating on Him, he attained salvation. This story confirms the greatness of Kuchela in all respects. In this story, Kuchela and Krishna are the Jivatma and Paramatma respectively. There is an identity between them. By entering Samsara, Brahman becomes Jiva. Jiva, after entering the 'earthen' body, begins to feel that he knows very little and that he is devoid of Aisvarya. When Jiva becomes a *samsarin*, he identifies himself with intellect and thus forgets his real nature and loses contact with Isvara.

The Upakhyanas mentioned above are from the portions written by Pothana, in the *Bhagavatha*. The important Upakhyanas of Jada Bharata, Markandeya, Ajamila and Chitraketu are found in the portions written by the other poets of *Bhagavatha*. The story of Jada Bharata illustrates that a person takes in the next birth the form which he had always contemplated at the time of his death, that by the worship of the Lord, one can get to know the wisdom and the knowledge of his previous births, and that one must get rid of all his sins before one can attain salvation. 'Even a fallen man or a sinner can wash away all his faults and shortcomings, if he repeats the name of the Lord. Again if one sincerely repeats for his past misdeeds, he will be saved'—these ideas emanate

from the story of Ajamila. The story of Chitraketu demonstrates clearly the nature of births and deaths and the way all living beings behave as previously destined by God, that by learning and seeking advice from the wise one can get at the truth, that there is no difference between Siva and Kesava and finally, that one should not laugh at the way of the holy elders which would surely bring degradation. The Markandeya Upakhyana speaks of the fact that by doing penance one can retain the grace of God, and by such grace one can conquer not only old age, sickness, etc. but even death. On the whole, all the stories and Upakhyanas in *Bhagavatha* deal convincingly with the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth.

CHAPTER SIX

Bhagavatha-Bhakti

FOR the attainment of Moksha, the ultimate goal of human life, our seers had laid down three distinct paths, viz., the path of knowledge, the path of action and the path of devotion. Of these the path of knowledge can be followed only by the Yogins with mature minds. Even the path of action is not quite easy. It is complicated by an endless variety of duties enjoined by the Srutis, Smritis and Puranas, according to caste, age, sex and stage of life. It is not possible for every one to discharge all these duties systematically and selflessly. But the path of Bhakti can easily be followed by men and women alike, young or old, learned or lay. That is why even His Holiness Sankaracharya declared, "Bhakti alone excels all other means of Moksha." Even though the *Bhagavatha* does not decry the Jnana and Karma paths, it gives great importance to the path of Bhakti. The ultimate aim of every story and episode in the *Bhagavatha* is to stress the importance of Bhakti. This is substantiated by the request made to Suta by Saunaka and others at the beginning of the *Bhagavatha* : "There is no other means to cross the ocean of life except the boat of devotion to Lord Vishnu. Therefore, Oh wise Suta, tell us about the glory of Vishnu."

While prompting Vyasa to compose the *Bhagavatha*, Narada told him that Lord Vishnu will be pleased by the glorification of His qualities but not by the enumeration of the rules of conduct, and that the mind, though controlled by Yama Niyama and other means of Yoga, does not attain Peace except by devotion to Vishnu. In the second skandha, while enlightening Parikshit on the path of Mukti, Suka remarks as follows :

To one who is entangled in Life there are many paths of Moksha like Tapas, Yoga, etc. Of them none is easier than Bhakti.....Once Brahma examined the Vedas critically in the light of Dharma and Niti and realising that no other path except that of Bhakti leads to Moksha, contemplated Vishnu with a quiet mind.

In the third skandha, after explaining the various types of Bhakti and the mode of Atyantika Bhakti to Devahuti, Sage Kapila drew her attention to the following words of Vishnu :

If any man foolishly indulges in showy worship of my idols and does not resort to me in sincere devotion, that man surely be one who has incessantly thrown the sacrificial offerings into a pit full of ashes.

On numerous other occasions also the *Bhagavatha* made it amply clear that Bhakti alone is the easiest path of Moksha.

"The highest love for God", "It is of the form of the highest love for Him"—these are the definitions given to Bhakti by Narada and others. These definitions mean that feeling intense love for the Lord is Bhakti. Human hearts have abundant capacity to love. We generally find this capacity being directed towards mundane objects and close relations like wives, children and friends. The reason for this is the involvement of human beings in worldly affairs. If, however, this love is directed towards God, it is called Bhakti. It is only another name for the relation that exists between the Lord and his devotees.

Writers on poetics have expressed diverse opinions on the status of Bhakti. Some hold that Bhakti is only an emotion or feeling incapable of being delineated as Rasa. Others state that it can be included in Santa. Yet others maintain that it can be developed fully into an independent Rasa. In his work entitled *Bhakti Rasayana* Madhusudana Sarasvati has clearly shown the Vibhava, Anubhavas, Sthayibhava and Sancharibhavas of Bhakti and conclusively proved that it can be developed into Rasa. A mental state assuming the form of the Lord is the basic emotion of Bhakti. The Lord is the cause of its arousal. *Tulasi*, sandal paste, etc. are the exciting causes. Movement of the eyes and eyebrows, etc. are the

effects, self-resignation, etc. are the transient emotions. The above mentioned Vibhava, Anubhavas, and Sancharibhavas sustain and nourish the basic emotion which is a mental state assuming the form of the Lord and develop it into the Bhakti Rasa which results in the manifestation of the highest bliss. Madhusudana Sarasvati has defined Bhakti as a state of mind which, on listening to the description of the beauty and qualities of the Supreme Lord, melts and constantly flows towards Him.

In the seventh skandha, Hiranyakasipu fondles his son Prahlada and asks him to tell him what he had learnt from his teachers. Prahlada unhesitatingly tells his father that he had learnt the essence of all learning which according to him is this : the safest thing for any man is to place implicit faith in the Lord and serve Him according to the nine types of Bhakti, viz., befriending Him in thought, word and deed, listening to his glories, serving Him, saluting Him, worshipping Him, loving Him, knowing Him, praising Him and contemplating Him. Prahlada also said that the lives of those who are devoid of devotion to Hari are void and worthless. A scholar who has no devotion to Hari is no scholar but a two-legged animal. Here Pothana seems to be using Prahlada as a mouthpiece to express his own views about the true significance of the *Bhagavatha*.

In their worship of God, the devotees adopt various mental attitudes. Of them the tranquil, the servile, the friendly, the affectionate and the sweet are the most important. Bhakti which follows any of these attitudes is capable of securing Moksha. The Bhakti of Narada, Ambarisha, etc. is of the tranquil type. Narada is a Maharshi, free from all desires. Though Ambarisha was a king he had no attachment to his horses or elephants, riches or pleasure gardens, sons or friends and even his wife. Kubja, Hanuman, etc. are examples of the Bhakti of the servile type. Kubja met Sri Krishna on the streets of Mathura and compelled him to go to her house and accept her services. Krishna was so immensely pleased with her service that he at once transformed the ugly Kubja into a beautiful woman. In devotees like Prahlada and Bhishma we find a blending of the tranquil and the servile types. Arjuna, Kuchela and some others adopted a friendly

attitude towards Lord Krishna and the Lord in turn adopted the same attitude to them and granted their desires.

Bhakti of the affectionate (*vatsalya*) type is found in very rare cases. The supreme Lord was born as a son to Aditi and Kasyapa, to Kausalya and Dasaratha and to Devaki and Vasudeva. Though the Lord was not actually born to Nanda and Yasoda, they brought him up as if He was their own son. In the course of his account of the Krishnavatara, Pothana depicted the affectionate type of Bhakti of Devaki and Vasudeva very impressively. The same type of Bhakti was manifest in the words of Yasoda when she saw the entire universe in the mouth of Krishna and exclaimed: "This one appears to be a child but indeed he is Adi Vishnu." To be able to worship God with parental affection is indeed a rare good fortune. That is why Parikshit who heard this episode questioned Sage Suka in astonishment, as follows: "What acts of merit did Yasoda do to be able to feed the Lord of the Universe with the milk of her breasts? What could Nanda have done to be His father and bring him up as his own son?"

Devotion to God as the Lord of life is called Madhura Bhakti. The sweetness of this type is usually mingled with the erotic sentiment. Hence it is also known as Ujjvala Sringara or the sublime eros. The Bhakti of Chaitanya and others is mingled with sweetness. The Sringara of this type is not the low, earthly, sensual eros but pertains to Moksha. This erotic devotion generally appears to be more pure and pious in men than in women. In women it is sometimes likely to be mistaken as physical lust. In his *Natyasastra*, Bharata mentions four types of Kama: "What is regarded as Kama is the desire of man and woman for physical union. But there are other desires like Artha Kama, Dharma Kama and even Moksha Kama."

Thus Kama is of four types and the fourth and highest is Moksha Kama. It is this Moksha Kama that is at the root of Madhura Bhakti. This Moksha Sringara is as different from the worldly Sringara as the soul is from the body. In the tenth skandha Pothana described the Madhura Bhakti of the Gopis with great interest. In fact, this Madhura Bhakti was as subjective to him as it was to the Gopis. Displaying

occasional touches of subjectivity, this Madhura Bhakti of Pothana lends a lyrical charm to the entire tenth skandha.

In his *Bhakti Rasayana*, Madhusudana Sarasvati has shown eleven levels or stages in the development of Bhakti. This classification of levels is based on the Upayas explained by Narada in the first skandha of the *Bhagavatha*. Serving the great, deserving the kindness of the great, attention to the qualities of the great, listening to the attributes of Hari, germination of the seed of love, contemplating the image of Hari, development of love, manifestation of love, concentration on the qualities of God, cultivating His qualities and the height of love are the eleven stages of Bhakti. These are to be cultivated progressively one after the other. The last of these is the height of love for God. At this level, the devotees cannot bear separation from God even for a moment. Through this sufferance of separation, love in the form of devotion to God reaches the highest peak of brilliance. The Gopis who were possessed of the love of God, passed through the ten stages mentioned above and reached the eleventh stage marked by the height of devotional love. At this stage, it is natural that the pangs of separation from the Lord experienced by them should be intense and intolerable. Their experience of separation should be regarded as the experience of separation of the Jivatma from the Paramatma. That is why out of intense suffering from separation from Krishna, one Gopika wails : "

Minutes become millennia to us as we are not able to see heartily your face adorned with curly locks while you wander in the forest. Why then, O Lord of Lakshmi, did the cruel fate place these lids against our eyes, disabling us from having a full view of the beauty at least during nights ?

The Gopi thus scolds fate for its cruelty having provided her eyes with lids which obstruct her from seeing Sri Krishna to her heart's content. Another Gopi jealously asks Bhudevi what merit she had performed in her former births to have the good fortune of being embraced by the Lord as Varaha, of being measured (served) by Him as Vamana and of being trodden upon now as Krishna. Intending to put an end to Krishna and Balarama, Kamsa sent Akrura, a great devotee

of the Lord, to invite them to Mathura on the pretext of the Dhanuryaga. Krishna and Balarama accept Akrura's invitation and leave for Mathura. At that moment the Gopis wail bitterly, saying :

Bearing the name Akrura this fellow has come here to take our beloved Krishna away from us. What kind of Akrura is this 'Krura' (cruel fellow) ? If indeed he is 'Akrura' (kind-hearted), he should, with clear heart, leave Krishna here and go his way.

After killing Kamsa, Krishna sends Uddhava to Gokula to enquire about the well-being of his parents and the Gopis. The words spoken by the grief-stricken Gopis to Uddhava reveal not only the intensity of their suffering in separation but also the purity of their love for Krishna. The following message, sent by Krishna through Uddhava, also shows the nobility of the love of the Gopis which is of the form of constant contemplation of Krishna who is no other than Sri Hari.

Do not be worried at my separation because I have chosen to be away from you so that you might be constantly thinking of me. Engrossed in incessant contemplation on me you shall certainly join me soon.

While going through the portions of the *Bhagavatha*, which describe the pranks of the Gopis and Krishna, one comes across expressions like suffering from the arrows of Cupid, cohabitation, embracing, kissing and so forth. These expressions create an illusion that the love being described is base, physical lust. Indeed it looks so outwardly. Its purity cannot be realised until one looks deep into it. The feelings with which the Gopis regarded the feet of Krishna described in the following verse reveal the true nature of their love for him :

These are the feet which appear to Sanaka and others during the course of their Yoga. These are the feet which adorn the hair-parting line of the lady called Veda. These are the feet which are the resort of Lakshmi, the daughter of the lord of the ocean of milk. These are the feet which fascinate the mind of the lady called Deliverance. These are the feet whose dust Brahma, Siva and other gods place on their heads. Thus saying, some Gopis see and describe the footprints of Krishna but do not find Him.

Every line in the above verse proclaims that the Gopis regarded the feet of Krishna not with a mundane view but with a highly philosophical view. In mixing the mutually contradictory emotions of devotion and lust so as to evolve a fine blend of sublime love, and in thus transforming the tenth skandha into a veritable stream of Rasa, Pothana displayed brilliant imagination and supreme skill.

At the end of the *Bhagavad Gita*, Krishna taught Arjuna the secret of 'Saranagati', saying "Abandon all Dharmas and surrender thyself to me alone". Offering everything to the Lord and surrendering one's self of him whole-heartedly is called 'Saranagati'. This is offering the self. This philosophy can be seen in a greater or smaller degree in Prahlada, Dhruva, Gajendra, Ambarisha, Akrura and others. That God saves those that adopt self-surrender is beyond doubt. Some might ask why Lord Vishnu did not protect the lord of elephants as soon as he appealed for help, and why Prahlada had to undergo so much suffering in spite of being a great devotee. It is true that Gajendra prayed to Vishnu, but there is a lurking doubt in his mind about the very existence of God as is shown in the following words! "Does he, who is repeatedly stated to exist, really exist or not?" "O ocean of kindness, I doubt the statement that you attend on every being that supplicates you." As long as such doubt exists in the mind of the supplicant, God will not be inclined to protect him. As soon as Gajendra gave up this doubt and with unshakable faith exclaimed, "I know none else but Thee. Kindly pardon this poor creature", the Lord came running and saved him. Therefore, it is to be noted that unshakable faith is the chief characteristic of 'Saranagati'. Prahlada had such faith from the beginning. He firmly believed that Lord Vishnu was all pervading. Yet he was put to innumerable sufferings by his father, because of his own initial sin (Prarabdha Karma). The Lord appeared before him the moment that sin disappeared.

Not only those that contemplated God with feelings like Santa, etc. mentioned above, but also those who constantly thought of Him with antagonistic feelings like fear and hate, have attained Moksha. Narada said to Dharmaja :

The Gopis through lustful yearning, Kamsa through fear, Sisupala and other kings through activity of complete enmity, the Vrishnis through relationship, you (Dharmaja) through love and we through devotion could see Lord Vishnu. O King, some how or other, if one is engrossed in irrepressible thought of God, one can surely win Him.

The true nature of the lustful yearning of the Gopis has already been explained. Tormented with fear, Kamsa always thought of Sri Hari. Prompted by enmity Sisupala and others set their minds constantly on Him. The Vrishnis with a sense of kinship, Dharmaja with a feeling of love and Narada with a spirit of devotion constantly fixed their minds on Krishna and attained emancipation. There is no doubt that Mukti can be attained through whole-hearted contemplation of Sri Hari, whatever the feeling or attitude might be.

Though Hiranyakasipu and others adopted an attitude of enmity towards Vishnu, they were not totally devoid of belief in God. They did severe penance. The sacred books declare that if one has realised the existence of Brahman, then he should be regarded as a virtuous man. About Hiranyakasipu, Lord himself said, "On account of contact with my body today in the battle, this one becomes pure in body, acquires new power and getting rid of all sins, goes to heaven." King Vena, on the other hand, had no faith in the existence of God, and this very atheism brought about his doom.

There is no difference between the Vaishnavism of the *Bhagavatha* and the one preached by Ramanuja. Both were based on the principles of the Pancharatragama. Suka told Parikshit that repeating the name of Hari even for a moment would give Moksha. The story of Ajamila teaches that repetition of Hari's name at the time of death gives immediate Moksha. According to Vaishnavism, the repetition of Hari's name is most essential for securing Moksha. Non-violence, doing one's duty, etc. may be observed as accessories to it. Devotion to Vasudeva produces non-attachment and true knowledge. Prahlada declared that Brahminhood, or godhood or even tranquil nature cannot please Hari as Bhakti can. To have deep devotion towards Vasudeva is the fundamental characteristic of 'Bhagavatha Vaishnavites'. We find two traits, passionate yearning and constant con-

temptation, in Rukmini and the Gopis. They could attain emancipation, by dedicating all their *indriyas* and actions to Vasudeva. Thus, in the various stories in the *Bhagavatha*, the characteristics of Bhagavatha Vaishnavism are clearly expressed. It was these features only that Acharya Ramanuja preached and popularised afterwards.

Sri Krishna was the son of Devaki and Vasudeva. He was the jewel of the Vrishni family. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, He said, "Among the Vrishnis, I am Vasudeva." The term 'Vasudeva' is found not only in the grammar of Panini but also in the *Mahabharatha* and the *Ramayana*. We may, therefore, conclude that the Vasudeva cult is quite an ancient one. The term is derived from the root *vas* meaning to shine and denotes one who shines. One who shines everywhere is 'Vasudeva'. Since the roots *vas* and *div* are synonymous and the latter has multiple meanings like sporting, triumphing, functioning, flowing (melting), praising, exulting, intoxicating, sleeping, dreaming, shining, etc. it is clear that the term 'Vasudeva' denotes the Supreme Being that pervades everything and does everything indicated by the root *div*. Vasudeva and Pancharatragama are closely related. That Agama owes its very origin to the concept of Vasudeva.

Like the Pancharatragama, the *Bhagavatha* also gives importance only to the worship of Vasudeva. It is also stated in the *Bhagavatha* that the state (*pada*) of Vasudeva can only be attained through loving contemplation, that worshipping the divine and glorious form of Vasudeva is higher than Moksha and that the devotees of the Lord do not desire even Moksha as they visualise the divine incarnations of Vasudeva through their mystic powers, praise Him alone and enjoy the sight of His divine and glorious form. Lord Vasudeva, who is capable of creating, sustaining and dissolving the universe, when the will to do these things arises in Him, assumes four different forms by the power of the same will. These forms are called Vyuhas. These fourfold Vyuhas are known as Vasudeva, Sankarshana, Pradyumna and Anirudha. There is some difference between the Vyuhas and Avatars. The voluntary births of the Lord are called Avatars. The Supreme Being takes birth in the form of Matsya, Kurma, etc. only at His sweet will and pleasure. On the other hand, when the

Supreme Being manifests Himself in a particular form that form is called a Vyuhā. The Vyuhās are manifestations of the Supreme Being and represent an orderly evolution from Vasudeva to Aniruddha. Among themselves the Vyuhās differ slightly in quality, form and substance. The origin of these four Vyuhās is Para Vasudeva, called Sukshma. The Pancharatragama says that by worshipping the Avatars known as Vibhavas with devotion and faith the devotee gradually matures in mind and reaches a stage when he can propitiate the Vyuhās through worship and contemplation and finally attain the Sukshma. That Pothana also believed that the Supreme Being is to be worshipped only through this process becomes clear from his statement : "The acts of worship of Hari laid down by the wise Pancharatra."

The term Avatara means coming down or descending. When good suffers defeat and evil triumphs, the Supreme Being comes down to the earth from His glory of eternal bliss in order to remove the burden of the earth and establish Dharma. Removing the burden of the earth means destroying the evil doers and the oppressors of mankind. He does so out of his fondness for the selfless act of kindness. The dull-witted, short-lived, unfortunate, disease-ridden, petty mortals of the Kali Age are incapable of performing any acts of virtue. The Supreme Lord descends from his state of eternal glory to a state of passing glory so that the petty human beings might attain emancipation by adoring Him through listening, salutation, worship, praising, contemplating, self-surrender, etc. This passing glory of the Lord is Avatara. The *Bhagavatha* describes the story of these Avatars. Pothana himself has said that from the *Bhagavatha* "one can know that thing which is and is not everything and which, dispelling all worries, becomes the sole end of life and the source of Supreme happiness". And to know that thing, Bhakti alone is the best means :

O wise man, except by a downpour of the torrential rain of nectar called the story of Lord Govinda, by indulging in what other means can it be possible to extinguish the raging jungle-fire of boundless bundle of fierce sins committed during an endless course of long, irrepressible and intolerable lives.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Pothana's Poetry

GENERALLY, a poet is compared to the creator. This is based on the saying : "In this endless world of poetry, the poet alone is the creator." As the creator creates the world with the help of the five elements, the poet creates the world of poetry with the five elements of description, characterisation, sentiments, ideas and words. The rhetoricians enunciated that originality, scholarship and application are essential for this creation. These three qualities are seen in equal proportion in all the great classical poets and Pothana does not lack them. We cannot say that any great poet can describe any theme magnificently and beautifully. Imagination becomes doubly brilliant when there is harmony between the spirit of the theme and the mind of the poet. Pothana is by nature a great devotee and *Bhagavatha* is a veritable ocean of devotion. This coincidence between the spirit of the theme and the nature of the poet invested the *Bhagavatha* with unparalleled beauty and sweetness. It was indeed the good fortune of the Andhras that the composition of the *Bhagavatha*, a work full of devotion, had been taken up by Pothana, a great devotee.

Pothana composed the poem *Veerabhadravijayamu* and the *Bhogini Dandaka* prior to the composition of *Bhagavatha* and he was adept in writing poetry when he began to write the *Bhagavatha*. He might have read, time and again, the *Bharatha* of Kavitraya, *Nrisimhapurana* of Errana, *Uttara Harivamsa* of Nachana Somana and the works of the Saivite poets. Among the Sanskrit poets, he paid homage to Vyasa and Valmiki, Bhasa and Kalidasa, Bharavi and Magha in the beginning of the *Bhagavatha*. He might have studied with enthusiasm their works also. The impact of the works

of those great poets is seen in his *Bhagavatha* in many places. Besides self-exertion he had complete divine grace. He himself stated that it was Ramabhadra that was making him speak. As a result, the whole of *Bhagavatha* appears to have been written by him under divine inspiration.

When one reads the *Bhagavatha* the first thing that attracts one is the uninterrupted flow in it. It can be compared to the flow of the divine Ganges in sanctity and swiftness. He makes every verse run very fluently. One never comes across limping verses in his work. The reason is that he wrote it with pure inspired devotion and never struggled either for the ideas or for *yatis* and *prasas*. They fit in on their own accord without the least attempt on his part and endow his work with natural splendour. There are many who become poets by studying his *Bhagavatha* alone. Besides devotion, melliflence also is one of the reasons why many people can easily memorize his verses, by rote.

Pothana's descriptions are very pleasant and natural. He is adept in making the object of description appear before the reader by means of his exhaustive description. When one reads the two verses describing the growth of Vamana in the eighth skandha, one feels as though one is seeing the Dwarf Vamana growing gradually and occupying the whole universe. In the story of Rukmini's marriage, the skill with which Pothana described the youth and the youthful movements of Rukmini is praiseworthy. When Lord Vishnu was going to save Gajendra, he described Goddess Lakshmi following him like lightning going after the cloud, as if he was actually seeing her. He described the fight between the elephant and the crocodile vividly and tried to dextrously point out how one wanted to overwhelm the other.

In the first skandha, Bhishma describes Krishna charging at him (Bhishma) unmindful of the shower of arrows discharged by him. The description is so vivid and picturesque that the reader feels the whole sense being enacted before him. In the tenth skandha, while describing the fight between Satyabhama and Narakasura, Pothana excelled himself in depicting the fast-changing moods of Satyabhama and portraying her as the very embodiment of the confluence of Vira and Sringara. While reading the description of the

downpour of rain in the Kuchelopakhyana one feels the sensation of actually being present on the scene. The description of the mischievous deeds of Krishna, reported by the Gopis to Yasoda, is very fascinating. In the same skandha, Pothana gave a charmingly natural description of the artless and hearty life of the Gopis and Gopas in their beautiful pastoral surroundings.

The descriptions of winter and autumn, preceding the Gopikavastrapaharana, and those of the moon-set and sunrise while Krishna and Balarama were on their way to Mathura to put an end to Kamsa, serve as excellent examples of Pothana's keen observation of the phenomena of nature. Though traditional, they are refreshingly realistic and vivid and hence very beautiful. Here and there Pothana wrote descriptive prose passages of considerable length. Among such passages the description of Naimisaranya at the beginning of *Bhagavatha*, the description of Svarga in the Vaman-avata, the description of Gangavatarana in the ninth skandha and the description of Rasakrida in the tenth skandha are noteworthy. In these descriptions, Pothana exhibited not only his knowledge of the world but also his unbounded scholarship. Abounding in *slesha*, *virodhabhasa* and other Alamkaras these passages remind the reader of similar passage in Bana's *Kadambari*. In the second and third skandhas, Pothana followed the original text as well as the commentary of Sridhara in explaining the philosophical concepts in long prose passages.

Pothana is an expert at delineating Rasa. Himself being a great devotee, he becomes highly emotional and eloquent, while delineating the devotional sentiment. Gajendra Moksha, Prahlada Charitra, Rukmini Kalyana, Ambarisha Charitra etc. may be cited as examples. In the *Bhagavatha* the situation in which the devotees praise the glories of the Lord seem to overflow with the sentiment of devotion of the tranquil type. The *stotras* of Bhishma, Kunti and Gajendra serve as examples of this. As a matter of fact most of the situations in *Bhagavatha* are dominated by the devotional sentiment alone. Of course, there are some situations where other sentiments predominate and Pothana does ample justice to them also. The way he managed the simultaneous delineation of

the mutually antagonistic emotions of Bhakti and Sringara in depicting the amorous sports of Krishna and the Gopis, and Vira and Sringara in the situation where Satyabhama fought with Narakasura while Krishna was lying unconscious, is indeed marvellous. The situations in the first skandha, where Arjuna tells Dharmaja of the death of Krishna and where Draupadi addresses the defeated Asvatthama, are replete with Karuna. The situation in which Nrisimha kills Hiranyakasipu is full of Adbhuta and Raudra. Vira and Raudra flood the situations where the Lord fights with Kamsa, Naraka, Bana, Hiranyakasipu, etc. and kills them. Sringara Rasa, coupled with devoted love, is fully developed in the love episodes of Krishna and Rukmini and Usha and Aniruddha. Hasya and Bhibhatsa are found in the incident where Krishna puts Rukmi to defeat and disgrace. In this way, Pothana develops every Rasa through a vivid description of the Vibhavas, Anubhavas and Sancharibhavas, and carries the reader to a state of supreme bliss.

Pothana displays great skill in depicting the various characters also. The characters are drawn in such clear lines that they make a lasting impression on the minds of the readers. He depicts Lord Vishnu in many places as one who is full of kindness and anxiety for saving the devotees. In the tenth skandha, he describes the childish pranks of Krishna with as much interest and attention as he describes his omnipotence. The nobility and motherly affection displayed by Draupadi when Arjuna put Asvatthama to cruel mortification are depicted by Pothana with great skill. In the course of Bhishma's praise of Krishna's glory, Pothana clearly brings out the devotion and wisdom of the great hero. Bhishma, Dhruva, Prahlada, Ambarisha and Gajendra are the very embodiment of devotion to Vishnu. Pothana describes their personality, nature and character very vividly. Pothana spotlights the self-esteem of Dhruva, the gentleness of Prahlada, the self-effacement of Ambarisha and the distress of Gajendra. The way he depicts the Madhura Bhakti of the Gopis is unique. The gentleness and selflessness of Kuchela, the haughtiness of Durvasa, the aggressiveness of Sisupala, the stubbornness of Rukmi, the tender affection of Nanda, Yasoda, Devaki and Vasudeva, the valour and benevolence of Bali, the loyalty of Sukra, the timidity and

cruelty of Kamsa, the maternal love of Aditi, the greed of Satrajit, the unparalleled devotion of Uddhava and Akrura and the sacrificing spirit of Rantideva—all these traits are drawn by Pothana very clearly. Pothana depicts Hiranyakasipu as a person who, while priding himself over the acquisition of divine boons, arrogating to himself the overlordship of the universe and putting his little son to untold miseries, was at the same time tenderly affectionate to his brother and highly philosophical in temperament. Thus, Pothana depicts the characters of the main theme as well as those of the secondary episodes with care and skill.

Being a translation of the Sanskrit *Bhagavatha* Pothana's work is bound to contain a large mass of ideas directly taken from the original. Yet, it is not a blind translation. Pothana displayed remarkable skill in presenting the original material with a touch of added beauty in the translation, in elaborating the germinal ideas of the original and in contributing his own ideas at the proper places. Such original ideas are characterised by nobility, depth, propriety and beauty, and serve as illustrations of his extraordinarily brilliant imagination. The words spoken by Draupadi when she saw Asvatthama brought captive by Arjuna are full of effervescent emotion :

They have not been aggressive; they have not come to the battle-field armed with missiles; they have not been treacherous to you. Yet, alas! how could you raise your hands of terrible strength to massacre in darkness these pretty-looking little ones who are unskilled in the art of fighting and immersed in deep slumber?

In one stroke, this verse brings out the tenderness of Draupadi's maternal love as well as the poignancy of Asvatthama's inhuman cruelty. The *stotras* of Kunti and Bhishma are veritable mines of high philosophy and deep devotion.

With a pure mind I pray to Hari, the divine being, who, in his divine sport, assumes various forms and eternally shines in the lotus-like hearts of the multitude of creatures created by Himself just as the same sun appears as a different sun to different individuals.

This verse of Bhishma suggests the omniscience and all pervasiveness of Vishnu. The verses in which Arjuna reports Krishna's death to Dharmaja are full of Karunarasa and clearly show the intensity of Krishna's kindness and affection towards the Pandavas and particularly towards Arjuna.

O king, when his consorts quarrelled among themselves out of uncontrollable love for Him, Krishna used to depute me to appease their anger and make peace.

This verse not only indicates the familiarity and confidence which Krishna bears towards Arjuna but also suggests their whole-hearted friendship. In the second skandha, requested by Parikshit to describe the nature and qualities of Hari, Suka elaborates not only on the qualities of Hari but also on the efficiency of Bhakti. In the Suyagnopakhyaṇa in the seventh skandha, when the hunter caught the female *kulinga* bird and took it away, the male *kulinga* wails for its mate in the following verse :

These little ones have not developed wings. Having had no food since morning and unable to fly away from the nest they cry for food. Expecting the mother to come from some quarter they lift their heads and with fixed gaze look in all directions with misery. Alas, how can I bear this.

This verse is full of Karuna and forcefully depicts the agony of the male *kulinga* and the misery of its offsprings. There are many verses in the story of Prahlada which are pregnant with emotion. When Prahlada spoke of the glory of Hari, Hiranyakasipu asked him how he could get that knowledge which was not taught by his teachers. Prahlada replied :

Having fallen into darkness, having taken to household life and having been immersed in worldly pleasures, men usually get entangled in the vicious circle of birth, death and re-birth. The knowledge of Hari never dawns on them soon whether taught by others or by their own effort or by tempting rewards or even by going to the forests.

The verse describes the mode of life of ignorant men and suggests that devotion to Hari is inborn and not acquired. The

anxiety of Hari to save his devotees is beautifully brought out in the following verse :

He does not inform Lakshmi, does not take Sankha and Chakra in his hands, does not summon any retinue, does not harness the lord of the birds, does not set right the tuft of hair falling on his ears, does not let go even the fringe of Lakshmi's upper cloth pulled from over her breasts during a quarrel—in his enthusiasm to save the life of the elephant.

In this episode there are numerous verses which the Telugu people relish and appreciate. In the story of Vamana the verses uttered by Bali in response to Sukra who tried to dissuade him from offering three feet of land to Vamana are characterised by melodious flow and deep feelings :

Is it not better that my hand should be above and his hand below—that hand which formerly enjoyed the privilege of being placed on the tufted hair, the body, the shoulder-mantle, the lotus-like feet, the cheeks and the breasts of Lakshmi? Is the worthless kingdom everlasting? Is the body deathless?

The verse is replete with the sentiment of Sringara, and at the same time reveals the unparalleled magnanimity and detachment of Bali. The following verse addressed to Durvasa by Vishnu when the former clung fast to his (Vishnu) feet, is a fine illustration of Vishnu's affection for his devotees.

Wise and pious people zealously steal my heart with ease and bind it with the creepers of pure devotion. And I too, O Sage, caught in their nets like a fat elephant, do not try to escape owing to my affection for my devotees.

In the tenth skandha there are hundreds of verses which bear testimony to Pothana's fertile imagination and powerful emotion. The beauty of the devotional feelings found in the Gopikagitas and Bhramaragitas defies description. Having failed in his attempt to hide the cows and the cowherds and having suffered defeat and disgrace at the hands of Krishna, Brahma praised Krishna in the following verse :

What for is the post of Brahma? Is it not enough if my head is covered by the dust of the feet of one of the cowherds who, in this world, in this forest and in this very herd of cattle, see you who could not be seen even by the Vedas and addressing you as Krishna, dedicate to you all their actions including speech.

The verse proclaims the superiority of the cowherds over Brahma and is full of propriety coming as it does from the mouth of Brahma himself. Similarly, many verses in Rukminikalyana, Narakasurasamhara, Syamantakopakhyana and other episodes are pregnant with feeling and thought and bear out the poetic genius of Pothana.

In the *Bhagavatha* we come across a few verses where Pothana appears to have adopted the ideas of 'Kavitraya' and Palkuriki Somanatha. In the first part of the tenth skandha Pothana wrote a verse which describes how the Gopis wandered in quest of Krishna imploring the trees to tell them about the whereabouts of Krishna. This verse resembles the verse written by Nannaya describing Damayanti's quest for Nala in the forest. The verse in which Yasoda tauntingly asks Krishna, "who is this gentlemen? Is he not Krishna? It seems he has never seen butter", resembles the verse which Nannaya put in the mouth of Drona when he addressed Drupada, brought captive by Arjuna. Pothana wrote a verse describing how the women of Mathura looked at Krishna when he entered the city along with Balarama and the cowherds, and exclaimed, "Is this indeed that wonder boy who sucked the breast milk of the demon until her life was out?" This verse is modelled on a verse which Tikkana wrote describing how the women of Hastina looked at Krishna with thirsty eyes while he was proceeding along the streets to the court of Dhritarashtra, and mentioned the same incident of Krishna's childhood.

In his *Nrisimhapurana*, Errana narrated the story of Prahlada very beautifully. There are some verses in Pothana's *Prahlada Charita* which are clear imitations of Errana's verses. Most Andhras are familiar with Pothana's verse in the *Bhagavatha*: "Does the bee which rejoices in the honey of the Mandara ever go to the Datura, etc.?" The original for this verse is to be found in Somanath's *Basavapurana*, Canto III and *Chaturveda Saramu*. The idea occurs in Pothana's *Bhogini Dandaka* also. From this we may surmise that Pothana, who was a Saivite in his early life, might have carefully studied the Kavyas of the Saiva poets.

At the beginning of *Bhagavatha*, Pothana declared : 'Some like Telugu, others like Sanskrit and yet others like both. So I shall please all of them in the various parts of my work.' In his *Bhagavatha* we come across verses packed with Sanskrit compounds as well as those composed of simple Telugu words. But, on the whole, his work contains more Sanskrit words than Telugu words. Yet this composition is throughout luminous and lucid, and free from intricate constructions and hence makes pleasant reading. If one desires to taste the sweetness of the Telugu language one has to read the *Bhagavatha* of Pothana. Pothana's poetry abounds in verbal beauty and Nannaya stated that this quality was to be found in his poetry also. Bhamaha, a great Sanskrit rhetorician, said that just as a florist weaves a garland knowing fully well which flower goes well with which other flower so as to make a pattern pleasing to the eye, even so a poet should compose a poem selecting such words and arranging them in such order that the sound pattern of the verse is highly pleasing to the ear. There is no gainsaying the fact that Pothana acquired such a high degree of skill in versification as no other Telugu poet could. Verbal beauty is uniformly present throughout his composition and offers a delightful feast to the ear.

A composition in which verbal embellishments predominate is regarded by the rhetoricians as low-class poetry. But there are some high-ranking poets who employ the verbal embellishments very lavishly, not as an end in themselves, but only as a means to the effective expression of thought and emotion. Pothana is one of them and his fondness for embellishments of sound and sense is boundless. Most of his verses, particularly those of a descriptive nature, invariably contain some sort of verbal embellishment—*antyanuprasa* or *vrittianuprasa* or *yamaka*. The sense is neatly echoed by the sound in the short *kanda* verse written by him describing the agitation and hesitation of Lakshmi, when she noticed Lord Vishnu running posthaste to save Gajendra. The alliteration of the *d* sound and the preponderance of light syllables enable the verse to communicate effectively the fast and muffled heart-beats of Lakshmi in a mood of sudden agitation.

Pothana employs verbal embellishments like *vrittyanuprasa*, *antyanuprasa*, *chekanuprasa*, *yamaka*, *slesha*, etc. very frequently with an interest bordering on craze. He also uses metrical embellishments like *dviprasa*, *triprasa*, etc. to heighten the beauty of the verses. He is interested equally, if not more, in a liberal use of Arthalankaras also. *Upama*, *utpreksha*, *rupaka*, *atisayukti* and *arthantaranyasa* are very common in his work. In many places his *upamas* are exceedingly beautiful and suggestive. The following verse may be cited as an example :

In the hand of the lotus-eyed Krishna, mount Govardhana looked pretty like a lotus. And over it the cluster of clouds shone like a swarm of bees.

In addition to *upama* (simile) the original text of the above verse contains *chekanuprasa* and *vrittyanuprasa* also. The *upama* not only gives a vivid and beautiful picture of Krishna holding up mount Govardhana in his hand with dark clouds hovering over it, but also suggests how easily Krishna lifted the mountain with his tender hands and held it as high as the sky.

In the episode of Gajendramoksham, Pothana compares the elephant to a man of doubting nature and the crocodile to a Yogin who clings steadfastly to Brahman that is pure bliss. These metaphysical similis are most appropriate to the context and lend a charming grandeur to the situation.

With its regular rhythm resulting from metrical movement, with its melodious drum-like sounds supplied by the Sabdalankaras, and with its literary flavour produced by the use of sweet and significant words, Pothana's poetry reminds one of a perfect musical concert. That is why it delights every one even as it falls on the ear whether he understands the meaning or not. This is the chief quality which secured unusual popularity to Pothana's poetry.

The style of Pothana is mainly descriptive and narrative. He narrates the story introducing short descriptions wherever necessary. Occasionally he employs short dialogues which are natural and appropriate. The dialogue between Bali and Vamana and Bali and Sukra in the Vamanavatara, and those between Hari and Narakasura may be cited as examples.

Pothana wrote some good prose passages here and there in the *Bhagavatha*. Some of them are pretty long. Such long passages are copiously embellished with Sabdalankaras like *amuprasa* and *yamaka*, and Arthalankaras like *upama*, *rupake*, etc. with a spray of *slesha* and *virodhabhasa*. They reveal his sound scholarship and mastery over language and expression. Pothana's prose, like that of Nannaya, is characterised by melodious flow in spite of the abundance of Sanskrit words and compounds. The total number of verses and prose passages contained in the *Bhagavatha* is 7,915. Of these, the prose passages number 2,364. A third of the prose bits are as a single word or a single sentence.

The *kanda* verse occupies nearly a third of the total composition of Pothana. His mastery over the art of versification enabled him to produce a rich variety of rhythmic grace in the movement of the *kanda* verse. Next to the *kanda* comes the *sisa*, numbering 899. Of these, the *tetageeti* is appended to 677 and the *ataveladi* to 222. Of the 118 *sisas* written by Pothana in his *Veerabhadravijayamu*, as many as 101 have the *ataveladi* appended to them. This shows that, as age advanced, he shifted his interest from the *ataveladi* to the *tetageeti*. The rhythm of his balanced *sisas* is too well-known to need any special mention. Among the common *vittas*, he seems to have a special fondness for the *mattebhā*. Next comes the *champakamala*, then the *utpalamala* and last of all comes the *sardula*. Critics opine that Pothana must have used a good number of the *mattebhā vritta* in the episode of Gajendra, as the story itself belongs to a *mattebhā* or fat elephant. Among the special *vrittas*, Pothana used a good number of *matlakokilas* and *taralas*, both of which have a fast and pleasing movement. In the third and tenth skandhas he used the *dandaka* metre. He composed only one *mahasragdhara* and two *sragdharas*. Whatever metre he adopts, whether *vritta* or *jati*, Pothana imparts to it a flowing and melodious movement very pleasing to the ear.

Certain peculiarities of *yati* are to be found in the portions of the *Bhagavatha* composed by Pothana. He accepted the *akhanda yati*. It occurs in the second line of the very first verse of the *Bhagavatha*. He observed *yati* between *vu* and *u* and *ri*, *ru* and *ri* and *dru* and *dre*. In two or three places

violation of *yati* rules is also found and this might have been due to inadvertence. Some editors tried to correct the peculiar *yatis* used by Pothana and some opine that such *yatis* are not in those written by Pothana. But such *yatis* were used not only by the Saivite poets but also by some others. Some Lakshanikas have not considered Pothana as a standard poet, because he observed *yati* and *prasa* between Repha and Sakatarepha.

Some deviations are seen in Pothana's *Bhagavatha* in the matter of language also. Here and there he observed *sandhi* for *kiwarthaka ekara* ; used the termination *ku* of the genitive case without *Nagagama*. Compounds like *Vikachakamalanetri*, *Misrasamasa*, *Drutadvitvasandhis*, and some other usages of the spoken tongue are found occasionally in his poems. It is the duty of the grammarians to keenly observe the usages of great poets and prescribe rules according to them. It is their mistake if they do not do so. It should never be considered as a defect on the part of the poets. To find fault with the usages of great poets from the point of the rules prescribed by grammarians is not proper. The greatness of Pothana's poetry does not suffer a little even if narrow-minded Lakshanikas do not consider him as a standard poet. He is always a great poet and if some people do not care to read his poetry thinking that there are some prosodical mistakes or grammatical errors in it, they have to repent afterwards for the loss of delight incurred by them in ignoring him.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Pothana's Personality

IT is possible to gather some idea about the character and personality of Pothana from his own works and from the legends current in the Telugu country about him. It has already been stated that though Pothana was born in a family of Saivites and has been a votary of Saivism during his early life, he developed devotion to Vishnu later and wrote the *Bhagavatha*. In spite of his strong leaning towards Vaishnavism, he never showed any disregard for Saivism. Though he might have been immersed in mundane affairs in his youth he lived a life of contentment and resignation as he developed deeper devotion towards Vishnu. In his early life he might have sought the favour of some wealthy persons of Orugallu or Sarvagna Singabhupala of Rachakonda. During that period, he must have written the *Bhogini Dandaka* at the request of Singabhupala. In his life, a transition from Saivism to Vaishnavism and from pleasure-seeking to resignation is clearly seen.

Pothana did give up his family responsibilities even during the period when he was engaged in composing the *Bhagavatha*. The traditional belief that he and his son turned tillers of the land in order to maintain the family, need not be doubted. Offering a Kavya and accepting its dedication were common occurrences in those days. Moreover, people used to believe that accepting the dedication of Kavya was one of the seven meritorious acts which led to the fulfilment of the highest end of life. Having seen Pothana suffering from poverty and toiling in the fields to maintain his family, and having come to know that he was engaged in composing a great Kavya like the *Bhagavatha*, some friends or relatives or well-wishers of his might have advised Pothana

to earn money and live happily by dedicating the work to some king. It is also quite likely that Sarvagna Singabhupala himself, having come to know of this, requested Pothana to favour him with the dedication of *Bhagavatha*. There is a popular anecdote which says that Srinatha was the brother-in-law of Pothana and that it was Srinatha who persuaded the latter to dedicate the *Bhagavatha* to some wealthy person. Another story goes on to say that after Pothana categorically refused to dedicate the *Bhagavatha* to any human being, Srinatha came to see Pothana and mockingly enquired about the welfare of the cultivator (Pothana). To this enquiry, Pothana replied as follows :

What if good poets become cultivators or diggers of roots and tubers in the interiors of the jungles in order to feed their wives and children, instead of eating the sinful food earned by selling the *kavyakanya*, delicate like the new leaf of a young mango sappling, as a prostitute to a worthless man of wealth.

This verse occurs in the *Keyurabahu Charitra* of Manchana who flourished earlier than Pothana. Pothana's authorship of this verse is, therefore, doubtful. In reply to Srinatha or someone else, Pothana might have quoted this verse of Manchana which he liked much and knew by heart. This shows that Pothana was totally averse to dedicating his work to any man and that he was content to maintain his family by self-effort. The following verse also appears in the printed texts of the *Bhagavatha*, though scholars regard it as an interpolation :

Instead of suffering the hammer-strokes of Yama after dying with intoxication by dedicating his work to the wretched kings and receiving villages, carriages and some other riches, this one, Bammera Potharaja, composed the *Bhagavatha* and dedicated it whole-heartedly to Sri Hari for the good of the world.

This verse clearly brings out Pothana's aversion to dedicating his Kavya to kings who indulge in earthly pleasures and receive from them favours like gold, clothes and estates, and his belief that such dedication leads one to infernal agonies. No wonder that Pothana entertained such ideas, having seen the circumstances and modes of living of the

kings. Yet another story tells us that, fearing that Pothana might agree to dedicate the *Bhagavatha* to someone yielding to the stress of stark penury or the persuasive pressure of friends, Goddess Sarasvati appeared before him shedding tears, and that Pothana thereupon consoled the Goddess in the following verse :

With tears rolling from your dark eyes down your breasts, why do you weep, O my mother, the beloved daughter-in-law of Lord Vishnu, the destroyer of the demon Kaitabha and the queen of Lord Brahma (the gold-bellied) ? Believe me, in thought, word and deed, O Bharati, I shall never sell you on account of hunger to those cruel traders of Karnataka.

This verse clearly shows that dedicating a Kavya means selling the Goddess of learning and that such an act causes displeasure to her. It also shows that Pothana was firmly determined never to dedicate the *Bhagavatha* to any human being, however trying his own circumstances might be. It was with this determination that he ultimately dedicated his *Bhagavatha* to Lord Sri Rama. It was Sri Rama who prompted Pothana to compose the *Bhagavatha*, when he was immersed in deep meditation on a day of lunar eclipse. Pothana believed that the same Sri Rama was making him compose the *Bhagavatha*. At the beginning and ending of every canto, Pothana was addressing Sri Rama alone. In the 'Shashtyantas', however, he described Krishna, the wanderer among the cattle of Nanda. There is no contradiction in this. In his heart filled with pure devotion, there is no difference between Sri Rama and Sri Krishna. It was his firm faith that both of them were the incarnations of Srimannarayana. That is why, in the ninth skandha, Pothana described Sri Rama as "the dark one possessing lotus-like eyes", etc. and in the tenth skandha he described Sri Krishna almost in a similar verse

Though he was oppressed by terrible poverty and though there is every possibility of acquiring wealth and thereby enjoying all worldly pleasures by just dedicating his Kavya to some king, Pothana dedicated his *Bhagavatha* to Sri Rama only and this testifies to his strength of will and sincerity of devotion. He considered only devotion to Vishnu as an

invaluable treasure. That is why he described Prahlada as frisking with jubilation, saying that he discovered the treasure called Nalinaksha, i.e., Vishnu. That Pothana regarded poverty not as a curse but as a boon from the Lord, is evident from the following words in Kuchelopakhayana :

The Lord who dispels the worries of his votaries and who is an ocean of kindness would have loaded me with all desirable things had it not been for his opinion that a poor man, if intoxicated by wealth, will not be able to see and approach Him.

He has expatiated on the same idea while explaining the greatness of service to Vishnu to Parikshit in the later part of the tenth skandha (X. 1234).

Bhakti is the first and foremost virtue of Pothana. He has described the power of Bhakti with ecstasy on many occasions. The speech of Prahlada on Bhakti crowns all of them. He holds that the limbs which do not serve Hari are no limbs, and that the life which is devoid of the thought of Hari is no life at all. He believes that except the service, glorification and contemplation of Vishnu, there is no other means for a man to get away from the troubles, worries, dangers and evils of life and to secure Moksha. Time and again he declares that the lives of those who are devoid of devotion to Hari are empty and worthless. The views contained in the speech of Prahlada are not his alone. They are Pothana's as well. Similarly, in all situations where the devotees praise the glories of God, Pothana appears to be identifying himself with them. Pothana, indeed, expressed his own feelings through Dhruva, Ambarisha, Gajendra, Bhisma, Akrura and other devotees. Pothana believes in the identity of Siva and Kesava. When he was immersed in contemplating Mahesvara on the day of the eclipse, Sri Rama appeared before him. At the commencement of the *Bhagavatha* he has expressly stated :

If one does not worship Siva with outstretched hands, if he does not praise the glory of Hari till his mouth aches, and if he does not think of virtues like kindness and truthfulness, then what is the use of his birth except defiling the mother's womb ?

It was his ardent prayer that Lord Vishnu should grant him service of His lotus-feet, friendship with his devotees and endless love towards all creatures. This very idea he has expressed in the tenth skandha through the mouth of Sudama, the garland-maker. Balarama and Krishna put up in the house of Sudama, their devotee, when they went to Mathura to kill Kamsa. Overwhelmed with this privilege, Sudama entertained them befittingly and presented them with garlands of fragrant flowers. His only prayer to Krishna was :

O Lord, the giver of boons to the ascetics, kindly grant me service of thy lotus-feet, friendship with thy devotees and everlasting kindness to all creatures.

Sri Krishna granted all these to Sudama. Nay, to Pothana too, He granted all these. Every Andhra, who is literate, recites this verse without knowing the context in which it occurs.

The sentiments expressed by the devotees in *Bhagavatha* while they sing of the glories of God may rightly belong to the devotees themselves. But the poet who delineates such situation cannot do so without himself getting into a devotional mood. Strangely, Pothana does not cease displaying his devotion to Vishnu, though indirectly, even while the enemies of Vishnu denounce Him. In such situations he adopts the mode of *vrajastuti* or veiled praise. While the characters denounce the Lord, Pothana pretends turning a deaf ear to them and feels contented by praising Him indirectly. When Krishna was about to run away taking Rukmini with him, Rukmi, the brother of Rukmini, attacks him with his army and says in a taunting manner :

Are you our equal to take away our child ? What is your worth ? Which is your family ? Where were you born ? Where were you brought up ? What is your conduct ? Who knows you ? You have no prestige, no manners. You do not come out without resorting to Maya.

Rukmi indeed meant to reprimand Krishna in these words. But Pothana, the devotee, can never reconcile his mind to denouncing Krishna. So he cleverly composed the

verse in such a way that it conveyed another meaning, suggesting that the Supreme Being is without a beginning, middle or ending, unknowable, immeasurable and above Maya. In this way, whenever the enemies of Vishnu denounce Him, Pothana adopts the mode of veiled praise, *vyajastuti*, and composes verses in such a way that they express abuse on the part of the characters and praise on his own part. When Sukra advised him not to grant the three feet of land to Vamana, Bali said to him :

Strange indeed, this one never goes to beg another (the enemy), is all alone, without parents or brothers, and is an intelligent dwarf who knows the secret that lies at the root of all branches of knowledge. When such a one stands here holding out his hands, my mind does not like to refuse.

Outwardly these words depict the miserable condition of Vamana, but on careful observation they reveal the secret of his being the Supreme Being. The heart of Pothana is a repository of such deep and pure devotion that does not allow even a bitter enemy to utter words of plain abuse against Vishnu.

Pothana described Prahlada as one who adopts the same benevolent attitude to himself and all other creatures, who, on seeing the elders, approaches and salutes them like a servant, who, on seeing other women regards them as his own mother and turns away, who alway, thinks of protecting the poor with a feeling of parental affection, who treats his friends as his own brothers, who adores his Gurus as gods and who never tells lies even in sports. It need not be doubted that all the attributes mentioned in the above verse apply to Pothana also. In the same way Pothana's personality may be seen reflected in all the devotees described in the *Bhagavatha*.

In the story of Gajendra Moksha, Pothana stated that on hearing the appeal of the Gajendra, Sri Hari immediately set out for the purpose of protecting the elephant without telling Sridevi, without holding the *sankha* and *chakra* in his hands, without summoning any retinue, without preparing Garuda for the journey, and without even leaving the fringe of the mantle snatched from the breasts of Lakshmi in the

course of an altercation. It is said that on hearing this verse, Srinatha ridiculed Pothana and asked him if Lord Vishnu who wanted to protect His devotees set out even without taking the weapons to witness the farce going on there. Pothana wanted to reply to Srinatha not directly, but through a practical joke. One day, at meal time, Pothana rose a little earlier, went out, threw a large stone in the well and returned with a hue and cry that Srinatha's son had fallen in the well. Srinatha at once rose and dashed towards the well even without washing his hands. Then Pothana calmly asked Srinatha, "Dear brother-in-law, hearing that your son has fallen into the well, why have you come running with this unclean hand and without any implements? Is it to save your child or to witness a farce?" Srinatha felt disgraced when he realised that it was a trick played by Pothana as a practical reply to his criticism. As a matter of fact Srinatha might not have criticised the verse that way. But there is a possibility of immature persons doubting why Pothana has described the incident in that way. Pothana's intention seems to be to show that Lord Vishnu behaved that way in his anxiety to protect the devotee. He knows that God protects those who surrender themselves to Him in devotion. With this confidence he spent his life unswervingly, devoting himself to the service of the lotus-feet of Lord Vishnu.

Pothana was highly philosophical by temperament. As he put it in the mouth of Bali, he knew that kingdoms are not permanent and that the bodies are not deathless. Never begging others for any favour and feeling contented with what little he had, even in poverty he lived happily. In fact, happiness and contentment are the products of the mind and not of any particular object or objects. It was his belief that "even Indra perishes if he is not contented". Sringeri said while cursing Parikshit.

We never go to accept gifts of gold, nor do we acquire riches through deception, nor do we come to worry people with our blessings either. (I. 468).

The mind of Pothana is peeping through these words, Similarly the words which Suka spoke while teaching the

path of Moksha to Parikshit in the second skandha are also noteworthy.

When there are beautiful plots of ground, why these cotton beds for lying down? When there are the natural plams, why this collection of eating plates? When there are barks, hides and grass mats, why these bales of cloth for wearing? When there are caves to live in, what for are these lots of mansions and places? Don't the trees shower fruit juice? Don't the rivers have sweet waters? Don't the virtuous ladies offer enough food? What for, then, should the ascetics serve those blind with the intoxication of wealth?

These words clearly record the views of Pothana about life.

While describing the genealogy of his family, Pothana spoke of his father, mother and elder brother with a feeling of veneration. He found his vocabulary inadequate to describe the virtues of his mother. About himself he used only one expression meaning that he was gentle and disciplined. Needless to say that he was the very embodiment of gentleness, discipline and obedience. As a matter of fact, there is nothing wrong in saying that few others have such capacity and qualification as Pothana had, to compose a Mahakavya like the *Bhagavatha*, filled with Bhakti Rasa. The reason for this is that deep devotion and perfect tranquility have become part of his nature. Yet, in the introductory part he prayed to Sarasvati as follows :

I was not born in an ant-hill or a heap of reeds or a ferry on the waters. I did not worship Kali. Yet, I have set out to write a Purana. O Mother, kindly give the clue as to how and in what manner I should proceed, and do not withdraw your benevolent support. Surely I rely on you, O Brahmi, the ocean of kindness.

These words bear testimony to his boundless meekness. He has stated that he began composing the *Bhagavatha* depending entirely on the support of Sarasvati but not on his own genius and scholarship. He also stated that it was Ramabhadra that was making him speak (write) the *Bhagavatha*. This too shows his unassuming and self-effacing nature. There are anecdotes current among the people which go even to the extent of saying that, in the absence of Pothana, the

Lord himself composed certain verses and lines in certain situations.

It is not possible even for Siva and Brahma to understand and explain the *Bhagavatha*. I shall try to present clearly what all I could hear, see and understand from learned men.

This verse too clearly shows his unassuming disposition. The saying that "the learned are to be tested in the *Bhagavatha*" suggest what a tough work is the *Bhagavatha*. In olden days, it appears that scholars were required to explain the syntactical order of the words in certain verses of *Bhagavatha* as proof of the soundness of their scholarship. In the Sanskrit language there is a lot of difference between the style of the *Bhagavatha* and that of the other Puranas. It is composed in the ornate and mature style of the Kavyas and not in the simple epic style. Moreover, as the theme is pregnant with philosophical ideas, it is particularly tough and incomprehensible in certain portions. That is why Pothana has said that it was difficult even for Siva and Brahma to understand and explain the *Bhagavatha*. He felt diffident and hesitant to lay his hands on the *Bhagavatha* because he was only a self-taught lay scholar. But having made up his mind to translate the *Bhagavatha*, he must have tried to understand its intricacies with the help of commentaries and the learned men of his times. His own philosophical insight and devotional moods might have guided him on some occasions. Even then Pothana does not claim to have mastered the *Bhagavatha*. He modestly confessed that he would try to present as much as he could grasp.

Pothana's devotion and respect for the poets of old are indeed extraordinary. The *Mahabharata*, the fifth Veda, was translated by Nannaya, Tikkana and Errana, the *Markandeya Purana* by Marana and the *Ramayana* by Bhaskara and his team long before Pothana was born. In fact, had any one of them thought of translating the *Bhagavatha* they would have done it so very efficiently. But they have not done that, and Pothana regarded it as a piece of his own good fortune. He expressed this idea in the following verse :

Great, indeed, should be the merit of my past deeds, because, poets like Nannaya and Tikkana who had translated a number of Puranas into Telugu, did not attempt to translate the *Bhagavatha*. I shall therefore, translate this *Bhagavatha* so that this life of mine shall be fruitful and there shall be no more re-births for me.

It was not, in fact, the good fortune of Pothana but it was the good fortune of the Andhras. Because other poets of old might have possessed greater scholarship and poetic skill than Pothana, but certainly they were not greater devotees. So the *Bhagavatha* would not have attained this state of maturity in their hands.

Pothana composed the *Bhagavatha* neither to show off his scholarship nor to acquire fame as a great poet, much less to obtain estates and the like. He accomplished this great task hoping that it would fulfil his life, free him from re-birth and do immense good to the world. Through his good offices, even those who are unlettered in Sanskrit got an opportunity to drink the nectar of the *Bhagavatha* to the full and experience delight. For generations, the Andhras stand irredeemably indebted to him.

While the *Bharata* and other Puranas preach the path of Karma and the Upanishads preach the path of Jnana, the *Bhagavatha* preaches the path of Bhakti, which is more acceptable to the lay people. The spontaneous and fluent verse of Pothana and the unmixed sweetness of his style contributed in no mean measure to the popularity of the *Bhagavatha* and the path of Bhakti. Moreover, many verses composed by Pothana in many situations in the *Bhagavatha*, are so appealing that they come in handy in many situations in the lives of men and serve as sources of consolation. Once a certain pandit who was suffering from utter poverty, appealed to C.P. Brown for help, including in the application the following verse from Gajendra Moksha to suggest his miserable condition :

My strength is gone, my courage is shaking, my vital airs have lost their holds, a swoon overtakes me, my body is tired, and I am exhausted. I know none else but thee. Thou shalt pardon this wretch. Kindly come and save me, O Lord. Protect me, Thou Benevolence incarnate.

Brown, it appears, sent him some money along with the following verse from the *Bhagavatha*.

A bandon this great fear that you will die. Death is inevitable to the multitudes of human beings that have taken birth. Therefore think of Hari and you shall have no more births on this earth. And O king, you shall attain the happiness of dwelling in the world of Madhava.

In this way, there are numerous verses in the *Bhagavatha* which are applicable to many situations in human life. The *Bhagavatha* is a Mahakavya which is capable of giving aesthetic pleasure in this life and the bliss of Moksha in the higher life. That is why Bhagavan Vyasa compared it to a fruit of the Kalpa tree called Veda, which slipped down from the mouth of Suka (parrot), and Pothana compared it to the Kalpa tree itself.

The Kalpa tree known as *Bhagavatha*, with delicate branches (cantos), black roots (Krishna as the root), delightful with the words of the parrots (sage Suka), adorned by fine creepers (softness), easily recognizable by the bright coloured flowers (understandable to scholars of high birth), having a beautiful circumference (a beautiful and brilliant theme), having large fruits (having Moksha as its objective) and having a bed of good diametre (having the holy Vyasa as its source) is famous in this world as the benefactor of good birds (Brahmins).

O ye men of the earth, endowed with imagination ! Drink again and again till the very end this sweet nectar-like juice of the fruit called *Bhagavatha* produced by the Kalpa tree called the Vedas and dropped down from the mouth of the parrot called sage Suka.

Ye lovers of poetic ! beauty Rise to the position of enjoying the juice of the fruit called the *Bhagavata Purana*, which has dropped from the Kalpa tree called the Vedas and which has been rendered more delicious by the admixture of the sweet juice from the mouth of the parrot called sage Suka.

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Glossary

<i>Aditi</i>	Wife of the sage Kasyapa and mother of the gods and Vamana.
<i>Advaita</i>	Doctrine of non-duality according to which Brahma and the individual Souls are identical.
<i>Agama</i>	A work inculcating the mystical worship of Siva and Sakti.
<i>Akasvani</i>	A voice from heaven.
<i>Akhandayati</i>	A caesura wherein an indivisible consonant is rhymed to a divisible consonant.
<i>Aksharabhyasa</i>	A ceremony when a child is initiated into the art of writing.
<i>Amaravati</i>	The capital city of the kingdom of heaven.
<i>Antyanuprasa</i>	Alliteration occurring at the end of words.
<i>Anubhava</i>	An external manifestation or indicating of a feeling by appropriate symptoms, such as look, gesture, etc.
<i>Aradhya</i>	Saivite Brahmin following the tradition established by Panditaradhya.
<i>Arundhati</i>	Name of the wife of the sage Vasishtha ; she is regarded as the highest pattern of conjugal excellence and wifely devotion.
<i>Asvayanas</i>	Passages of the vital air ; these are seven : ears, eyes, nostrils and the face.
<i>Avarana</i>	Anything that covers. Avaranas are seven in number. 1. Earth, 2. Water, 3. Light, 4. Air, 5. Sky, 6. Ahankara and 7. Mahat (intellect).
<i>Bhagirathi</i>	The river Ganges ; brought by the King Bhagiratha.
<i>Bhavani</i>	Goddess Parvati, the wife of Bhava (Isvara).
<i>Bhogini</i>	A woman belonging to the King's harem but not consecrated with him.
<i>Bhramaragita</i>	Lyrical verses addressed by a Gopika indirectly to a <i>bhramara</i> or bee in the hearing of Uddhava, a friend of Krishna, sent by him to know the welfare of the Gopikas.
<i>Bibhatsa</i>	Sentiment of disgust.
<i>Champu</i>	A kind of elaborate and highly artificial composition in which the same subject is continued with alterations in prose and verse.

<i>C.P. Brown</i>	An Englishman who lived in India as an officer and who did yeoman service to Telugu Language and Literature.
<i>Dattura</i>	The white thorn apple.
<i>Dvadasivrata</i>	A religious vow observed on the twelfth day of either lunar fortnight.
<i>Dvaita</i>	Doctrine of dualism according to which Brahman and the universe or the individual and the Supreme Soul are different from each other.
<i>Ganadhipati</i>	Name of Ganesa or Vinayaka ; the son of Siva, The lord of Ganas.
<i>Gangavatarana</i>	The descent of the river Ganges.
<i>Garalakantha</i>	God Siva (having poison in the neck).
<i>Gopikavastrapaharana</i>	Stealing of the clothes of Gopikas or the cow-herdresses.
<i>Hariharadvaita</i>	Doctrine according to which Hari (Vishnu) and Hara (Siva) are identical.
<i>Jiva</i>	The individual soul.
<i>Kadambari</i>	A famous prose work in Sanskrit written by Bana.
<i>Kalavatara</i>	A partial incarnation.
<i>Kanda</i>	A kind of metre in Telugu which contains four feet and sixteen Ganas.
<i>Karanamtu</i>	Village accountant.
<i>Kavikhandu</i>	A part of Skanda Purana which describes the greatness of Kasi (Varanasi).
<i>Kavitraya</i>	The three poets, Nannaya, Thikkana and Errana who translated the Sanskrit <i>Mahabharata</i> into Telugu.
<i>Kulinga</i>	A sparrow.
<i>Kunti</i>	Wife of the king Pandu and mother of the first three Pandavas.
<i>Lila</i>	Amorous or playful sport.
<i>Madana</i>	The white thorn apple.
<i>Madhura Bhakti</i>	A kind of devotion in which the devotee considers the Lord as Lover.
<i>Mirasamasa</i>	A compound wherein a Telugu word is combined with a Sanskrit word.
<i>Muhurta</i>	Time fixed for performing any ceremony.
<i>Muktapadagrastha</i>	A verbal embellishment wherein reiteration of the previous word occurs.
<i>Nilakanthasthava</i>	Panegyric praising the qualities of Siva.
<i>Nugama</i>	The augment 'na' at the end of a word.
<i>Fayobhakshanavrata</i>	A religious austerity during which only water is taken.
<i>Pragjyotisha</i>	Capital city of Narakasura.
<i>Pralaya</i>	Dissolution.
<i>P.amathas</i>	A class of Beings (said to be goblins) attending on Siva.

<i>Prasa</i>	The second letter of each of the four feet of a verse.
<i>Pratibha</i>	Intelligence ; genius ; originality.
<i>Rajasuya</i>	A great sacrifice performed by a universal monarch.
<i>Rasakrida</i>	Sportive dance practised by Krishna and the Gopis at Brindavana.
<i>Sabdalankara</i>	A figure of speech depending for its charmingness on sound or words ; verbal embellishment.
<i>Sachi</i>	Wife of Indra, King of the gods.
<i>Sahaja-Panditya</i>	A man who acquires scholarship by birth.
<i>Samsara</i>	Wordly illusion ; Succession of births.
<i>Sanchribhava</i>	A transitory feeling which serves to strengthen the prevailing sentiment.
<i>Saraka</i>	A work of hundred verses having the same Mukta (burden).
<i>Sivakesavadvaita</i>	Doctrine according to which Siva and Kesava (Vishnu) are identical.
<i>Slesha</i>	A figure of speech in which a word or a sentence yields two or more interpretations ; double entendre.
<i>Sravana</i>	Hearing the divine name of God.
<i>Rasatala</i>	One of the seven regions of worlds under the earth.
<i>Traivarnika</i>	A member of the first three castes.
<i>Tulasi</i>	The holy basil held in veneration by the Hindus.
<i>Upayas</i>	Means.
<i>Vaikuntha</i>	World of Vishnu.
<i>Vairagya</i>	Absence of wordly desires or passions.
<i>Vibhava</i>	Any condition which produces or develops a particular state of body or mind.
<i>Virodhabhasa</i>	A figure of speech in which an apparent incongruity which is merely verbal is explained away properly construing the passage.
<i>Visishtadvaita</i>	A doctrine of Ramanuja which regards Brahman and Prakriti as identical and real entities.
<i>Vrittianuprasa</i>	A kind of alliteration.
<i>Yakshas</i>	A class of demigods who are described as attendants of Kubera.
<i>Yamaka</i>	Repetition in the same stanza of words or syllables similar in sound but different in meaning ; one of the verbal embellishments.
<i>Yati</i>	Caesura ; pause.
<i>Yogagni</i>	Yoga + Agni = Fire created by the power of Yoga.

