

## The Meaning *in* the Structure of *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa*

Abstract (Section: Epics and Purāṇas)

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In the present paper we propose to discuss the analysis of the structure of *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa* (*BhP*) presented by Vallabhācārya (AD 1478-1530) in the *Bhāgavatārtha-prakarāṇa* of his work *Tattvārtha-dīpa-nibandha*. This part of the text consists of some 1922 *kārikās* in which the macro level structure of *Bhāgavata* is dealt with, together with its organization in different *skandhas*, *prakaraṇas* and *adhyāyas*. Further, the purpose and reason behind such a division and the inner harmony of it, constitutes the main focus of the text.

This is an outcome of the concerted effort by Vallabhācārya to establish *BhP* as the *caturtha-prasthāna* of Vedānta. Moreover, the four *prasthānas* are now provided a hierarchy in that the latter ones have the potential to clarify that which is not clear in the previous ones.<sup>1</sup> For this purpose, he first lays down his hermeneutical principle according to which, the correct and real understanding of the meaning of a text results only after realizing it at seven different levels, namely at the level of (i) *śāstra* (i.e. the text as a whole) (ii) *skandha* (iii) *prakaraṇa* (iv) *adhyāya* (v) *vākya* (vi) *pada* (vii) *akṣara*.<sup>2</sup> Then, he attempts to specify the meanings at these seven levels and tries to harmonize them. For this the first four levels are dealt with in the *Tattvārtha-dīpa-nibandha* and the last three in his *Subodhinī* Commentary on *BhP*.

In the first part of the present article, we will discuss the meaning *in* the structure of *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* in the light of the above text, taking into consideration the later works of Gosvāmī Puruṣottama, Ghanaśyāma Bhaṭṭa and Gokularāya.

Further, in the second part of our presentation, we will look into the meaning of the Xth *Skandha*, which is considered as the core of *BhP*, and its position within the overall structure of the text from the perspective of different commentators. Śrīdhara-Svāmin e.g. associates *āśraya* to be the main subject matter of this *skandha* in his celebrated commentary *Bhāvārtha-dīpikā*, whereas Vallabhācārya maintains that it is *nirodha*.

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<sup>1</sup> *Vedāḥ śrīkṣṇa-vākyaṇi vyāsa-sūtrāṇi caiva hi, samādhi-bhaṣā vyāsasya pramāṇaṃ tacca tuṣṭayam. Uttaraṃ pūrva-sandehavārakaṃ parikīrtitam, aviruddhaṃ tu yattuāsya pramāṇaṃ tacca nānyathā* (*Tattvārtha-dīpa-nibandha* 1.7-8)

<sup>2</sup> *Śāstre skandhe prakaraṇe'dhyāye vākyaḥ pade'kṣare, ekārthaṃ saptadhā jānan navirodhena mucyate* (*Tattvārtha-dīpa-nibandha* 3.1.2)