

Unique Methodology of this Translation

This translation of *Bhagavat-sandarbha* is not the work of one or two contemporary individuals or even of an extended group. Its roots extend much deeper than that, all the way back to Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī himself. It is the careful passing on of this body of teachings in an unbroken chain through the guidance and insight of realized masters that has made the present translation possible. In particular, this work would not have been possible without the benevolent tutelage of our guru, Śrī Haridāsa Śāstrī Mahārāja. He himself produced the first translation of the *Sandarbhas* from Sanskrit into Hindi. As such, the *Sandarbhas* formed an essential part of his life's work. He always stressed the importance of the *Sandarbhas* as the key to unlock the profound mystery of pure devotion and the indispensable prerequisite for entry into the sublime realm of "Aesthetic Vedānta".

The author of this translation is Satyanarayana Dasa, who formally studied the *Sandarbhas* in their entirety, as well as the traditional systems of Indian philosophy, under the direct guidance of Śrī Haridāsa Śāstrī Mahārāja. Like his teacher before him, Satyanarayana Dasa has made the teaching and translation of the *Sandarbhas* the focal point of his own life. He has been teaching the *Sandarbhas* for over twenty-five years. It is through his vision, inspiration and dedication that the present work is coming about.

What is being described here in brief fashion is the methodology of this translation. This is being outlined to inform the reader of the unique quality of this translation and the rigorous standards applied to ensure the highest possible authenticity to the words and intent of Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī. The translation of the text proceeds through several stages to ensure its accuracy and fidelity. The first phase of the translation is done by Satyanarayana Dasa. Over a period of several years he painstakingly went over the text numerous times, working closely with different editors. He has followed the Sanskrit text from the edition of Śrī Haridāsa Śāstrī Mahārāja and also consulted the editions of Puri Dasa, Sitanatha Gosvami and Nityasvarupa Brahmacari to corroborate the verity of the reading. In composing his detailed commentary on Jīva Gosvāmī's *anucchedas*, he has drawn primarily from the systematic teachings received from his guru on the *Sandarbhas* and the traditional systems of Indian philosophy. He has also consulted *Sarva-samvādinī*, Jīva Gosvāmī's supplementary commentary on the first four *Sandarbhas*.

Without this background, the translation of the *Sandarbhas* would be impossible, since Jīva Gosvāmī develops many of his arguments in relation to these systems, which form the context out of which the elaboration of devotion proceeds. It is evident from the style of Jīva's writing that he assumes on the part of the reader a vast and comprehensive prior knowledge of all these systems. In his commentary, Satyanarayana Dasa has provided the reader with the most essential details of this background that can make entry into this profound subject accessible.

The next phase of the work is taken up by the chief editor of the *Sandarbha* project, who before editing the translation first examines the Sanskrit text of Jīva Gosvāmī. This ensures a firsthand understanding of the original author's words and eliminates ambiguities in regard to the expressed

meaning of the translation. The Hindi translation of Śrī Haridāsa Śāstrī Mahārāja is also closely consulted to clarify the meaning of the text. From this vantage point, Satyanarayana Dasa's translation is then edited so as to bring out the subtlety of Jīva Gosvāmī's intent and to discover the delicate balance between the traditional understanding and the requirements of the modern mind. A few details about orientation in the editing work are mentioned here just to give the reader a clue as to the type of reflection that has gone into this translation.

The overriding vision that guides the editing process is one that is primarily concerned with the translation of ideas and only secondarily with that of words. Beyond this, it is the inner experience that those ideas convey that the editing attempts to make explicit. To do so, it is first necessary to be sufficiently acquainted with the complete body of the Gosvāmī teachings. How any particular idea is rendered must be consistent with the overall scriptural conclusion (*siddhānta*) presented in all their works. In our estimation, Sanskrit is a living language that must be felt and not just thought about. Of course that feeling must be "feeling-awareness" (*bhāva*), and must be established in the root meaning of words, in full correspondence with *siddhāntic* conclusions. A few other criteria that are essential to the editorial standard are: accuracy, clarity and flow of ideas, language that conveys the inner experience, objectivity, non-reductionism, and consistency of language and ideas between quoted text (e.g., a *Bhāgavata* verse), Jīva Gosvāmī's explanation of that text, and Satyanarayana Dasa's commentary on the same.

After this phase of the work is complete, the text goes back to Satyanarayana Dasa who rechecks the entire edited translation against Jīva Gosvāmī's Sanskrit. This means that the entire text is checked at least three times against the original. In this third phase of the translation process there can be quite a bit of back and forth exchange between Satyanarayana Dasa and the editor in chief to refine the language of particularly difficult passages. This cooperation results in a high standard of accuracy and a vital synthesis between tradition and modernity in order to offer the greatest benefit to the reader.

Here is a small example of the application of the above method in the rendering of the compound *bhakti-bhāvita* from the following verse:

"Therefore, My dear Uddhava, knowing your true self through direct awareness, and equipped with such knowing and realization, worship Me in devotion, through the totality of feeling and awareness."

After the first phase of the translation process, the principal clause read: "worship Me in the devotional mood (*bhakti-bhāvita*)". The word mood is generally understood as how a person feels in any particular moment. It doesn't do justice to what is conveyed by the word *bhāva*. *Bhāva* means feeling, awareness, contemplation, meditation and love. From the Gosvāmī teachings, it is understood that *bhakti* is an essential aspect of the intrinsic potency (*svarūpa-śakti*), predominated by consciousness (*cit*) and bliss (*ānanda*). So the compound *bhakti-bhāvita* implies a permeation of the individuated focal point of awareness (*cit*) by the intrinsic potency consisting of consciousness and bliss. It is an experience involving both feeling and awareness, which is indicated in the above edited version of the translation. All of this reflection has informed the translation of just two words. But the

same method of comprehensive reflection is used for all words and ideas throughout the entire text. These are some of the notable features that make this translation unique and of particular value to the reader. For more information about some of the specialized language used in this translation, please see the article that follows: *The Language of Transcendence: Key Terms and Concepts*.

The Editors