

SRIMAD BHAGAVATAM

CHAPTER 4, VOLUME 5

THE CHARACTERISTICS AND HISTORY OF R̥ṣabhadeva

PREFACE

This chapter deals with the descriptions about the personality of R̥ṣabhadeva, his qualities, his way of conducting the administration of the kingdom etc. Though he was the manifestation of Sri Bhagavan Himself, he preferred to do all the deeds expected of him as a king, as a householder, as a father and as a member of the society. How he managed all these are the matters dealt with in this chapter. More importantly, the emphasis has been made to present that the leader must practice himself all the principles enunciated in the Vedas to set an example for others to follow. It is not mere preaching which is important, but practising what has been prescribed, as a matter of routine, is the method which a responsible person must follow.

Stanza 1

śrī-śuka uvāca

*atha ha tam utpattyaivābhivyajyamāna-bhagaval-lakṣaṇaṁ sām̐yopaśama-
vairāgyaiśvarya-mahā-vibhūtibhir anudinam edhamānānubhāvaṁ
prakṛtayaḥ prajā brāhmaṇā devatāś cāvani-tala-samavanāyātitarāṁ
jagr̥dhuḥ.*

*(śrī-śuka uvāca) Sri Suka Brahma Rishi said to King
Pareekshit:*

(atha) Subsequent to his birth as the son of King Nābhi and his wife Merudevi, (utpattyā eva ha) all the people could make out that their child possessed even at the time of his birth (abhivyajyamāna-bhagaval-lakṣaṇam) all the sacred identification marks of Sri Maha Vishnu on him as there were specific signs of flag, thunderbolt etc., at the bottom of his feet and on his palms, which are seen only in Maha Vishnu.

(sāmyopaśama-vairāgyaiśvarya-mahā-vibhūtibhiḥ) As each day passed by, everyone could see that the child became increasingly peaceful, never hankered after material enjoyment, generally detached himself from the worldly attractions, showed all signs of divine attributes which are never seen on the peoples of the world, possessed prosperities of all kinds, and beamed with brightness not common to the people in general.

(anudinam edhamānānubhāvaṁ tam) As these qualities were seen prospering on their son in the increasing order as the time passed by, (prakṛtayah) the ministers, the chiefs of army, (prajā brāhmaṇā devatāḥ ca) the people of the kingdom, the saint priests, the divine beings and all others (atitarām jagṛdhuḥ) desired very strongly (avani-tala-samavanāya) that He should take over the rein of administration and control of the kingdom.

(This child never had any feeling such as certain things belonged to him and certain others belonged to someone else. Therefore, he had no bias towards anyone or towards any thing.)

Stanza 2

tasya ha vā ittham varṣmaṇā varīyasā br̥hac-chlokena caujasā balena śriyā yaśasā vīrya-śauryābhyām ca pitā ṛṣabha itīdam nāma cakāra.

(ittham varīyasā) In this manner, the powerful personality in the son of King Nābhi (br̥hac-chlokena varṣmaṇā) became the

subject matter of varied and highly esteemed descriptions by the great poets.

(ojasā balena śriyā yaśasā vīrya-śauryābhyāṁ ca) He was ever radiant with brightness, had immense physical strength, full prosperities, great fame, tremendous valour, great zeal and formidable courage.

(pitā tasya ha) Therefore, the father, King Nābhi, named his son (ṛṣabhaḥ iti idaṁ nāma vai cakāra) as ṛṣabhaḥ (the greater, the unparalleled etc.) suiting his qualities very appropriately.

Stanza 3

**tasya hīndraḥ spardhamāno bhagavān varṣe na vavarṣa tad avadhārya
bhagavān ṛṣabhadevo yogeśvaraḥ prahasyātma-yogamāyayā sva-varṣam
ajanābhaṁ nāmābhyavarṣat.**

(spardhamānaḥ) Expressing his displeasure and envy on Rṣabhadeva, (bhagavān indraḥ hi) Lord Indra (tasya varṣe na vavarṣa) did not allow rains to shower on the land of Bharat.

(tad avadhārya) Having understood the anger of Lord Indra, (ṛṣabhadevaḥ) Rṣabhadeva, (yogeśvaraḥ bhagavān) the Lord of all the Yogic powers, (prahasya) just smiled and (sva-varṣam abhyavarṣat) ensured rains to shower (ātma-yogamāyayā) through His yogic powers , at all the required places and up to whatever quantities required, all over (ajanābhaṁ nāma) Ajanābhaṁ, which is another name for His Kingdom,

Stanza 4

**nābhis tu yathābhilaṣitaṁ suprajastvam avarudhyāti-pramoda-bhara-vihvalo
gadgadākṣarayā girā svairāṁ grhīta-naraloka-sadharmāṁ bhagavantaṁ**

*purāṇa-puruṣaṁ māyā-vilasita-matir vatsa tāteti sānurāgam upalālayan
parāṁ nirvṛtim upagataḥ.*

*(suprajastvam avarudhya) As he felt fortunate enough to have a
good son (yathābhilaṣitaṁ) according to his own desire, which
fructified in the form of his son Ṛṣabhadeva,
(nābhiḥ tu) King Nābhi (ati-pramoda-bhara-vihvalaḥ) became
overwhelmed with extreme happiness.*

*(parāṁ nirvṛtim upagataḥ) He considered himself very fortunate
to have attained such happiness unknown in this world
because he could make his son, Ṛṣabhadeva,
(purāṇa-puruṣaṁ bhagavantaṁ) Who was none other than that
Very First Being, the Bhagavan,
(svairāṁ grhīta-naraloka-sadharmāṁ) who had assumed the
human form as per His own wish and following the ways of
the world,
(upalālayan) sit near him and affectionately tender him
(sānurāgam gadgadākṣarayā girā) by calling him with his
faltering words (vatsa tāta iti) “my child” “my son” etc.*

*(māyā-vilasita-matiḥ) The King did this because, as a human
being, he came under the influence of the illusions of this
world and considered the Supreme Being (Ṛṣabhadeva) as
his own real son.*

Stanza 5

*viditānurāgam āpaura-prakṛti jana-pado rājā nābhir ātmajaṁ samaya-setu-
rakṣāyām abhiṣicya brāhmaṇeṣūpanidhāya saha merudevyā viśālāyāṁ
prasanna-nipuṇena tapasā samādhi-yogena nara-nārāyaṇākhyāṁ
bhagavantaṁ vāsudevam upāsīnaḥ kālena tan-mahimānam avāpa.*

*(viditānurāgam ātmajaṁ) King Nābhi understood that his son
Ṛṣabhadeva was liked equally (āpaura-prakṛti) by all his*

ministers, ordinary people as well as all those who were placed in important positions in his kingdom.

(jana-padaḥ rājā nābhiḥ) King Nābhi was a person who always recognized the will of the people as the declaration of intent to execute the desired royal action, (abhiṣicya) enthroned his son Ṛṣabhadeva as their king (samaya-setu-rakṣāyām) for the purpose of protecting the righteousness and proper social order.

(brāhmaṇeṣu upanidhāya) He made arrangements to ensure that his son Ṛṣabhadeva was always surrounded by the brahmins (those who were erudite in Vedic knowledge) so that his actions and deeds would be in strict conformity with the Vedic principles while administering the kingdom.

(merudevyā saha) He, thereafter, left with his wife Merudevi (viśālāyām) to Viśālā (the Badri Ashram in the Himalayas) (prasanna-nipuṇena tapasā) and did very great penance.

(tapasā samādhi-yogena) Through such great austerities and yogic methods (upāsīnaḥ) he propitiated (bhagavantaṁ vāsudevam) Bhagavan Sri Vasudeva, (nara-nārāyaṇākhyam) Who is also known with the name Nara and Narayana, (kālena) and in due course of time (tan-mahimānam avāpa) he attained His position (attained liberation).

yasya ha pāṇḍaveya ślokāv udāharanti —

Hey King Pareekshit! Through the following two stanzas the greatness about this King Nābhi is being explained as told by very knowledgeable people.

Stanza 6

*ko nu tat karma rājarṣer
nābher anv ācaret pumān
apatyatām agād yasya
hariḥ śuddhena karmaṇā*

*(kaḥ nu pumān) Who else, other than (nābheḥ) King Nābhi,
(rājarṣeḥ) the greatest saint king, (anvācaret) can be so
powerful to undertake (tat karma) such deeds as done by him?
(yasya) Because of his (King Nābhi's) (śuddhena) pure and
devoted (karmaṇā) actions (Yajna) (hariḥ) Bhagavan Sri Hari
Himself (agāt) agreed to become (apatyatām) his son!*

Stanza 7

*brahmaṇyo 'nyaḥ kuto nābher
viprā maṅgala-pūjitāḥ
yasya barhiṣi yajñeśam
darśayām āsur ojasā*

*(anyah kutaḥ) Who else is there (brahmaṇyah) more devoted
to the brahmins other than (nābheḥ) King Nābhi?
(yasya) It was only (barhiṣi) in the yajna of King Nābhi
(viprāḥ) those brahmins, (maṅgala-pūjitāḥ) who were given
due respects by the prescribed offerings, (darśayāmāsuḥ) had
shown (ojasā) through their powers of Vedic hymns (yajñeśam)
that Shri Hari in reality, Who is the provider of
benedictions on the prescribed performance of the yajna.*

Stanza 8

*atha ha bhagavān ṛṣabhadevaḥ sva-varṣam karma-kṣetram
anumanyamānaḥ pradarsita-gurukula-vāso labdha-varair gurubhir anujñāto
grhamedhinām dharmān anusikṣamāṇo jayantyām indra-dattāyām ubhaya-
lakṣaṇam karma samāmnāyāmnātam abhiyuñjann ātmajānām ātma-
samānānām śatam janayām āsa.*

(*atha ha*) Thereafter, (*bhagavān ṛṣabhadevaḥ*) Bhagavan Rṣabhadeva, (*sva-varṣam karma-kṣetram anumanyamānaḥ*) considered his kingdom on this earth, known as the Ajanābhavarsha, as the place in which he is supposed to set examples of ideal and the righteous deeds as prescribed in the Vedic system of knowledge.

(*pradarśita-gurukula-vāsaḥ*) With the intention to show to the world as to how an ideal ruler should conduct himself, he set examples by his own actions such as going to the teachers for getting himself educated in all fields of knowledge (as per the Gurukula system of education); (*labdha-varaiḥ gurubhiḥ anujñātaḥ*) by getting suitable instructions from such teachers, who were shown due obeisances by him after completion of such education, to engage himself in the household activities and lead the life of a householder; (*anuśikṣamānaḥ*) and had shown to the world (*gr̥hamedhinām dharmān*) as to how to conduct righteous life as a householder; (*abhiyuñjan*) did (*karma*) all his actions (*samāmnāyāmnātam*) strictly as prescribed in the Vedas (*ubhaya-lakṣaṇam*) and conforming to the Vedic principles.

(*janayām āsa*) He begot (*ātma-samānānām ātmajānām śataṁ*) one hundred sons equalling him in all respects as to their abilities (*jayantyām*) through Jayanti, (*indra-dattāyām*) who was given to him in marriage by Lord Indra.

Stanza 9

yeṣāṁ khalu mahā-yogī bharato jyeṣṭhaḥ śreṣṭha-guṇa āsīd yenedaṁ varṣam bhāratam iti vyapadiśanti.

(yeṣāṁ jyeṣṭhaḥ bharataḥ khalu) The eldest one among these sons, named Bharata, (mahā-yogī śreṣṭha-guṇaḥ āsīt) was a great yogi and had very good qualities.

(yena idaṁ varṣaṁ) This part of the globe (bhāratam iti vyapadiśanti) known as “Bhārat” has been named after his name.

Note : We had seen earlier that this part of the globe was known as Ajanābhavarsha. From the time of the son of Ṛṣabhadeva, it came to be known as “Bhārat” in order to make known the great qualities of Bharata. The land of “Bhārat” has thus been identified with this great son of Ṛṣabhadeva.

Stanza 10

*tam anu kuśāvarta ilāvarto brahmāvarto malayaḥ ketur bhadrasena
indrasprg vidarbhaḥ kīkaṭa iti nava navati pradhānāḥ.*

Stanza 11

*kavir havir antarikṣaḥ
prabuddhaḥ pippalāyanaḥ
āvirothro 'tha drumilāś
camasaḥ karabhājanaḥ*

Stanza 12

*iti bhāgavata-dharma-darśanā nava mahā-bhāgavatās teṣāṁ sucaritaṁ
bhagavan-mahimopabr̥ṁhitaṁ vasudeva-nārada-saṁvādam
upaśamāyanam upariṣṭād varṇayiṣyāmaḥ.*

*(tam anu kuśāvarta ilāvarto brahmāvarto malayaḥ ketur bhadrasena
indrasprg vidarbhaḥ kīkaṭa iti nava navati pradhānāḥ.)*

His nine brothers, kuśāvarta, ilāvarta, brahmāvarta, malayaḥ, ketuḥ, bhadrasena, indraspṛg, vidarbhaḥ, and kīkaṭa, following immediately after him were very important personalities among the remaining ninety of them.

(iti nava) Among these ninety these nine brothers (atha) namely, kaviḥ, haviḥ, antarikṣaḥ, prabuddhaḥ, pippalāyanaḥ, āvirhotraḥ, drumilaḥ, camasaḥ, and karabhājanaḥ,

(mahā-bhāgavatāḥ) were very great devotees of the Bhagavan (bhāgavata-dharma-darśanāḥ) and were the real guides who could show to the world the exact meaning and context about the righteous principles enshrined through the Vedas.

(upariṣṭāt varṇayisyāmaḥ) I (Suka Brahma Rishi) shall explain to you (King Pareekshit) in detail later on (in the eleventh volume) (vasudeva-nārada-saṁvādam) in the form of discussions between Vasudeva and Saint Narada (teṣāṁ sucaritaṁ) about the characteristics and the great deeds of these nine persons (upaśamāyanam) leading anyone who follows their guided principles towards the path of total peace (bhagavan-mahimopabrṁhitaṁ) highlighted through the greatness about the Bhagavan.

Stanza 13

yavīyāṁsa ekāśītir jāyanteyāḥ pitur ādeśakarino mahā-śālīnā mahā-śrotriyā yajña-śīlāḥ karma-viśuddhā brāhmaṇā babhūvuḥ.

(yavīyāṁsaḥ jāyanteyāḥ) The remaining junior sons of Jayanti, (ekāśītiḥ) numbering eighty one, (pitur ādeśakarinaḥ) were all very obedient in following the instructions of their father Ṛṣabhadeva, (mahā-śālīnāḥ) were very humble in nature, (mahā-śrotriyāḥ) were very learned in all aspects of Vedic knowledge, (yajña-śīlāḥ) were naturally having the habit of performing the yajnas in the prescribed order,

(karma-viśuddhāḥ) were very pure in their thoughts and actions (brāhmaṇāḥ babhūvuḥ) and thus were qualified perfectly to be called the brahmins.

Stanza 14

bhagavān ṛṣabha-saṁjña ātma-tantraḥ svayaṁ nitya-nivṛttānārtha-paramaraḥ kevalānandānubhava īśvara eva viparītavat karmāṇy ārabhamāṇaḥ kālenānugataṁ dharmam ācaraṇenopaśikṣayann atad-vidāṁ sama upaśānto maitraḥ kāruṇiko dharmārtha-yaśaḥ-prajānandāmṛtāvarodhena gr̥heṣu lokaṁ niyamayat.

Stanza 15

yad yac chīrṣanyācaritaṁ tat tad anuvartate lokaḥ.

(ṛṣabha-saṁjña bhagavān) No doubt the One Who had manifested as Ṛṣabhadeva was none other than that Bhagavan,

(svayaṁ ātma-tantraḥ) Who was independent in the real sense,

(nitya-nivṛttānārtha-paramaraḥ) was free from the ways of the worldly life like birth, old age, disease, death etc.,

(kevalānandānubhavaḥ) and was that pure form of eternal bliss (īśvaraḥ eva) known as the Easwara (the Supreme Controller),

(karmāṇi ārabhamāṇaḥ) he conducted his deeds in such as way very routinely (viparītavat) as if he was not that Supreme Controller,

(atad-vidāṁ) showed to the people of this world, who had forgotten (dharmam) the righteous ways of living (kālenānugataṁ) because of the flow of eternal time factor,

(ācaraṇenopāśikṣayan) by setting perfect example of observing such righteous deeds through his own actions and by means of his own life,

(samaḥ upaśāntaḥ maitraḥ kāruṇikaḥ) remained peaceful, equanimous, friendly towards all life forms, and compassionate to everyone,

(dharmārtha-yaśaḥ-prajānandāmṛtāvarodhena) and for the purpose of attaining the righteous way of life, prosperities, fame, progenies, enjoying the material comforts, and ultimately the liberation,

(lokaṁ gr̥heṣu niyamayat) set an example to the world through the life of a householder,

(lokaḥ tat tat anuvartate) so that the human society follows the right methods of life (chīrṣaṇyācaritaṁ yat yat) as shown by the head of the society, that is the king himself.

Stanza 16

yadyapi sva-viditaṁ sakala-dharmaṁ brāhmaṁ guhyaṁ brāhmaṇair darśita-mārgeṇa sāmādibhir upāyair janatām anuśāsāsa.

(yadyapi sva-viditaṁ) Though Ṛṣabhadeva knew all by himself (sakala-dharmaṁ brāhmaṁ guhyaṁ) about the inherent meanings and contents of the entire Vedic knowledge which includes the administration of the kingdom and the rule of law etc.,

(janatām anuśāsāsa) he ruled the kingdom and the people (sāmādibhiḥ upāyaiḥ) through the path shown by the brahmins as per the systems enumerated in the Vedas, (brāhmaṇaiḥ darśita-mārgeṇa) by establishing the principle that the king must follow and implement the sound advice of the knowledgeable persons, who must always be available to

**him for such advice without fear or favour keeping the
interest of the people and the kingdom at large.**

Stanza 17

***dravya-deśa-kāla-vayaḥ-śraddhartvig-vividhoddeśopacitaiḥ sarvair api
kratubhir yathopadeśaṁ śata-kṛtva iyāja.***

**(sarvaiḥ api kratubhiḥ) Ṛṣabhadeva performed various yajnas
(yathopadeśaṁ śata-kṛtvaḥ iyāja) in the prescribed manner one
hundred times**

**(dravya-deśa-kāla-vayaḥ-śraddhartvig-vividhoddeśopacitaiḥ) with the
most prosperous materials/ingredients suitable for such
yajnas,**

**at the required and specified places where such yajnas were
to be performed,**

**at such specified time and period at which such yajnas were
to be performed,**

**at each and every stage of his age particularly at the time of
youthhood as specified,**

**with the correct kind of attention required for each and every
performance stage by stage as well as in totality,**

**through the priests who knew well about the Vedic principles
of the conduct of each and every yajnas,**

**and also keeping in mind the methods of propitiating each
and every divine being through such yajnas.**

Stanza 18

*bhagavataṣabheṇa parirakṣyamāṇa etasmin varṣe na kaścana puruṣo
vāñchaty avidyamānam ivātmano 'nyasmāt kathañcana kimapi karhicid
avekṣate bhartary anusavanaṁ vijṛmbhita-snehātīśayam antareṇa.*

*(etasmin varṣe) When this part of the globe (parirakṣyamāṇe)
was being administered and protected (bhagavatā ṣabheṇa) by
the Bhagavan Ṛṣabhadeva (kaścana puruṣaḥ) not even a single
person (avidyamānam iva) ever demanded (kimapi) anything
else (ātmanaḥ) for themselves, (kathañcana) by whichever
means (karhicit) or at any time (anyasmāt) from anyone
(vijṛmbhita-snehātīśayam antareṇa) other than pure love in the
increasing order (bhartari) from their own king (anusavanaṁ)
at each and every moment of their lives.*

*(na vāñchaty na avekṣate) All of them were so much contented
and happy that they never demanded anything nor expected
anything other than the love and affection of their king.*

Stanza 19

*sa kadācid aṭamāno bhagavān ṣabho brahmāvarta-gato brahmarṣi-pravara-
sabhāyāṁ prajānāṁ niśamayantīnām ātmajān avahitātmanaḥ praśraya-
praṇaya-bhara-suyantritān apy upaśikṣayann iti hovāca.*

*(saḥ bhagavān) When that Bhagavan Ṛṣabhadeva (aṭamānaḥ)
was taking round of his kingdom (kadācit) once
(brahmāvarta-gataḥ) he reached the place known as
Brahmāvarta.*

*(brahmarṣi-pravara-sabhāyāṁ) At this place there was a
conference of great saints.*

*(praśraya-praṇaya-bhara-suyantritān) Though his sons, who were
present there, were all very humble, very devoted
(avahitātmanaḥ api) and had full control of their senses and
mind, Ṛṣabhadeva (ātmajān upaśikṣayan idam ha āha) decided to
give them very valuable instructions and he started telling*

them in that assembly (prajānām niśamayantīnām) while all the people of his kingdom listened to the same.

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This completes Chapter four of Volume five of Srimad Bhagavatam.

Hari Om