

Śrī Brhad-bhāgavatāmṛta

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Volume-2

Śrī-goloka-māhātmya

The Glories of Goloka

Chapter-1

Vairāgya: Renunciation

The abode of ①
difficult to attain even for
liberated souls but for
blatant reach it @ once

2.1.14

vaikuntham durlabham muktaih
sāndrānanda-cid-ātmakam
niṣkā mā ye tu tad-bhaktā
labhante sadya eva tat

That abode, Vaikuntha (vaikuntham), is made of concentrated
ecstasy and pure consciousness (sāndrānanda-cid-ātmakam). Even
for liberated souls (muktaih) it is difficult to attain (durlabham). But
the Lord's devotees (ye tu tad-bhaktā) who are free from selfish
desires (niṣkā mā) reach it at once (labhante sadya eva tat).

Mother Uttarā now tells her son, Parīkṣit, what she understands about the transcendental nature of Vaikuṅṭha.

Parīkṣit has heard similar general descriptions of the ~~Vaikunṭha atmosphere~~ from Śukadeva Gosvāmī in the Second and Tenth Cantos of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam:

|| 2.2.17 ||
(na yatra kālo) ^{devatās} (nimīṣām) (paraḥ prabhuḥ)
(kuto nu devā jagatām ya īsire)
(na yatra sattvaṁ) (na rajas tamaś ca)
(na vai vikāro) (na mahān pradhānam) ||

In this person (**yatra**), time, the controller of the *devatās* (**kālah** 'nimīṣām **paraḥ**), has no influence (**na prabhuḥ**). What influence can the *devatās* (**kuto nu devā**), who control the material realm, have over him (**jagatām ya īsire**)? In him (**yatra**) there is not *sattva*, *rajas* or *tamas* (**na sattvaṁ na rajas tamaś ca**), no false ego (**na vai vikāro**), no *mahat-tattva*, and no *prakṛti* (**na mahān pradhānam**).

|| 2.2.18 ||

param padam vaiṣṇavam āmananti tad
yan neti netīty atad utsisṛkṣavaḥ
visṛjya daurātmyam ananya-sauhrdā
hṛdopaguhyārha-padam pade pade ||

The yogīs, desiring to give up the world which is not brahman (atad utsisṛkṣavaḥ), thoroughly know that impersonal aspect of Viṣṇu (tad param padam vaiṣṇavam āmananti), defined as “not this,” (yad na iti na iti ity) by avoiding erring intelligence concerning the Lord’s nature (visṛjya daurātmyam) and avoiding everything not related to the Lord (ananya-sauhrdā), while embracing (upaguhya) at every moment (pade pade) the worshippingable lotus feet of the Lord (arha-padam) with their whole heart (hṛdā).

|| 2.9.9 ||

(tasmai) (sva-lokaṁ) (bhagavān) (sabhājitaḥ)
(sandarśayām āsa) (param na yat-param) |
(vyapeta) (saṅkleśa) (vimoha) (sādhvasaṁ)
(sva-dr̥ṣṭavadbhir) (vibudhair) (abhiṣṭutam) ||

The Lord, gratified by his worship (**bhagavān sabhājitaḥ**), showed Brahmā Mahā-vaikuṅṭha (**tasmai sva-lokaṁ sandarśayām āsa**), to which nothing is superior (**param na yat-param**), which is free (**vyapeta**) of suffering (**saṅkleśa**), confusion (**vimoha**) and fear of offenses (**sādhvasaṁ**) and which is praised by the devatās (**vibudhair abhiṣṭutam**) who constantly see the self (**sva-dr̥ṣṭavadbhir**).

|| 2.9.10 ||
pravartate yatra rajas tamas tayoh
sattvam ca misram na ca kala-vikramah |
(na yatra mayā) (kim utāpare harer)
anuvratā yatra surāsūrcitāḥ ||

In Vaikuṅṭha (**yatra**) there is no (**na pravartate**) rajas or tamas (**rajas tamas**), and no sattva mixed with rajas and tamas (**sattvam ca tayoh misram**). There is no influence of time (**na ca kala-vikramah**). There is no influence of māyā at all (**na yatra māyā**), what to speak of its products such as material elements (**kim uta apare**). In Vaikuṅṭha the inhabitants are fully dedicated to the Lord (**yatra harer anuvratā**) and are worshipping by the devas, asuras and devotees (**sura asura arcitāḥ**).

iti sañcintya bhagavān
mahā-kāruṇiko hariḥ
darśayām āsa lokam svam
gopānām tamasah param

“After deeply considering (iti sañcintya), the all-merciful Supreme Personality of Godhead Hari (mahā-kāruṇiko bhagavān hariḥ) revealed (darśayām āsa) to the cowherd men (gopānām) His abode (lokam svam), which is beyond material darkness (tamasah param). (Bhāgavatam 10.28.14)

satyaṁ jñānam anantaṁ yad
brahma-jyotiḥ sanātanam
yad dhi paśyanti munayo
guṇāpāye samāhitāḥ

Lord Kṛṣṇa revealed (**implied**) the indestructible spiritual effulgence (**brahma-jyotiḥ sanātanam**), which is unlimited, conscious, and eternal (**yad satyaṁ jñānam anantaṁ**). Sages (**munayo**) see (**paśyanti**) that spiritual existence (**yad dhi**) in trance (**samāhitāḥ**), when their consciousness is free of the modes of material nature (**guṇāpāye**).” (Bhāgavatam 10.28.15)

Now, in texts 14 through 19, Uttarā similarly explains in a general way the transcendental existence of Vaikuṅṭha.

The Lord's impersonal effulgence faintly reflects the spiritual atmosphere of Vaikuṅṭha, which is the fullest manifestation of the Absolute Truth.

Having reestablished a personal relationship with the Lord, pure Vaiṣṇavas attain Vaikuṅṭha.

Impersonalists, however, at best attain the brahma-jyoti effulgence, where they realize their eternal existence without knowing their relationship with the Lord or the ecstatic pleasure that comes from serving Him in that relationship.

In other words, the Vaikuṅṭha atmosphere is a super-intensified version of the brahma-jyoti sky, and thus the life enjoyed by the Lord's devotees in Vaikuntha is much more wonderful than the comparatively insignificant pleasure of merging into the brahma-jyoti.

There, the NISRE
blotting enjoy the
bliss of serving the
feet in comparison to which
the bliss of liberation seems insignificant

2.1.15

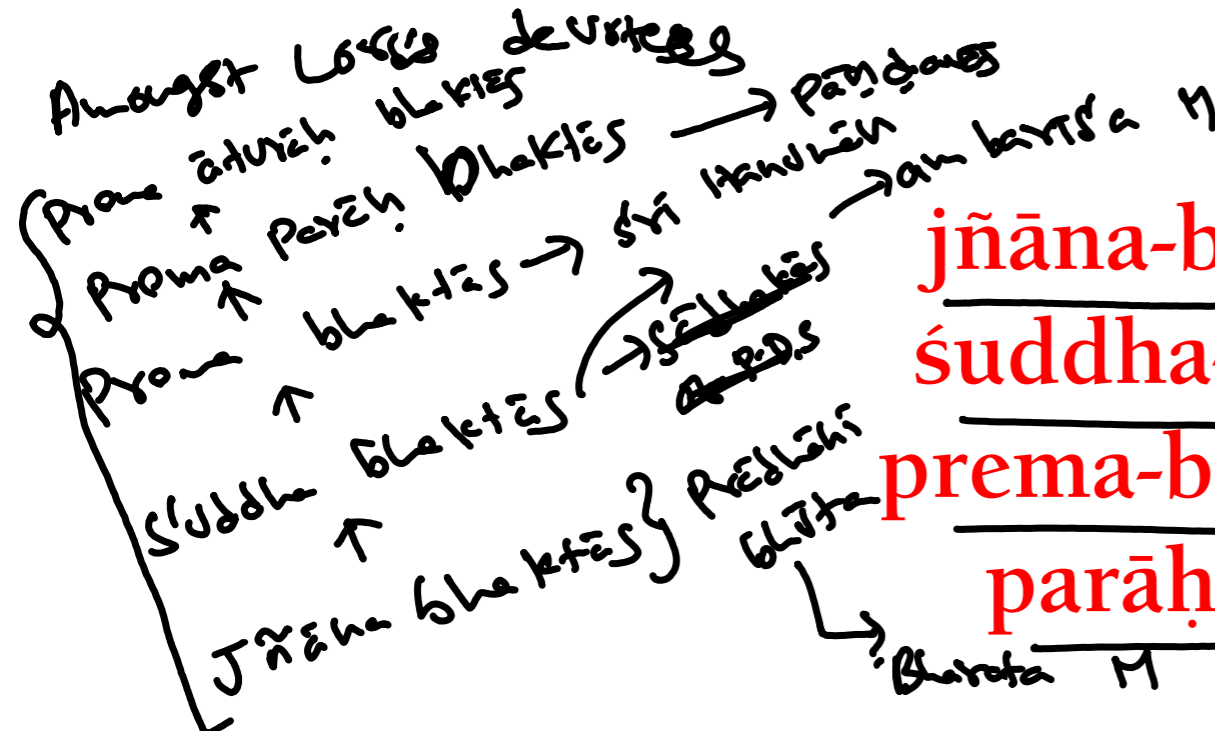
tatra śrī-kṛṣṇa-pādābja-
sākṣāt-sevā-sukhaṁ sadā
bahudhānubhavas te
ramante dhik-kṛtāmṛtam

The pure devotees living in Vaikuntha (tatra te) enjoy forever (sadā ramante) in varied ways (bahudhā anubhavantah) the happiness (sukhaṁ) of directly serving (sākṣāt-sevā) Śrī Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet (śrī-kṛṣṇa-pādābja). In comparison, the nectar of liberation appears condemned (dhik-kata amṛtam).

For the residents of Vaikuṅṭha, God is not a distant abstraction.

They see Him always and serve Him directly.

For them that service is never tedious or degrading, but is always sheer enjoyment.



2.1.16

jñāna-bhaktās tu teṣv eke
śuddha-bhaktāḥ pare 'pare
prema-bhaktāḥ pare prema-
parāḥ premāturāḥ pare

Among the Supreme Lord's devotees (teṣv), some are devotees attached to knowledge (jñāna-bhaktās jñāna-bhaktās tu eke), and others are pure (śuddha-bhaktāḥ pare). Still others are situated in love of God (apare prema-bhaktāḥ), others are immersed in love of God (pare prema-parāḥ), and yet others are painfully overwhelmed by love of God (premāturāḥ pare).

Vaisnavas develop their love of God to different extents and thus in any given lifetime attain different destinations.

→ *pradhāni bhūta bhaktas (mixed devotees)*

Jñāna-bhaktas cultivate devotional service mixed with the pursuit of knowledge.

Their interests focus on subjects such as the greatness of devotion to the lotus feet of the Supreme Lord.

For them devotional service consists of activities within the ninefold practice of sādhana-bhakti.

An example of such a Vaiṣṇava is Lord Rṣabhadeva's son Bharata Mahārāja.

Next, śuddha-bhaktas want only devotional service to the Personality of Godhead, without any mixture of fruitive work, knowledge, or renunciation.

Ambarīṣa Mahārāja is a typical śuddha-bhakta.

Prema-bhaktas like Śrī Hanumān are endowed with mature ecstatic love.

They perpetually serve the Lord with full-hearted enthusiasm, being interested only in the loving affection, intimate association, and opportunities for service that they find at the lotus feet of their beloved supreme master.

Still other devotees are prema-para-bhaktas, like Śrīmān Arjuna and his brothers.

They are not interested in the process of bhakti itself, but only in prema, ecstatic love.

सर्ववित्ता बलवत्

dhūmeyṛta

↓
Jvalita

↓
stṛpta → uḍḍṛpta.

By the causeless mercy of the Lord, entirely pure prema of the highest quality has arisen in their hearts, binding them by ropes of eagerness to see the Lord and enjoy friendly talks and other intimate dealings with Him.

Finally, premātura-bhaktas, such as the Yādavas, headed by Śrīmān Uddhava, are overwhelmed by the incessant bliss of prema and the intense desire to relish all the transformations of that prema and its related ecstasies.



Although everyone in Vaikuṅṭha has prema, we must recognize different degrees of prema.

The natural perfection of śuddha-bhakti is prema-bhakti, which is higher because devotees who have reached prema have special qualities not found in those who have attained only śuddha-bhakti.

And beyond prema-bhakti, the prema-para devotees are more elevated, and the premātura devotees still more.

Since there is
a gradation in
the levels of these
devotees, it is unfitting
that they achieve the same result.
But, in vaikunṭha no hierarchy
exists.

2.1.17

tāratamyavatām eṣām
phale sāmyaṁ na yujyate
tāratamyāṁ tu vaikunṭhe
kathañcid ghaṭate na hi

Since the levels of these devotees are various (eṣām tāratamyavatām), it seems unfitting (na yujyate) that the results they achieve be the same (phale sāmyaṁ). But in Vaikunṭha (vaikunṭhe tu) no hierarchies exist (tāratamyāṁ na hi ghaṭate).

Without higher and higher levels of enjoyment and realization of the greatness of God, the five different levels of bhakti would be incomplete.

- ① jñāna parā
- ② sthāyā bhakti
- ③ preme bhakti
- ④ preme parā
- ⑤ preme ātma.

To award the same results to devotees of differing levels of attraction would not benefit the perfect and all-compassionate Personality of Godhead.

And how could all the Lord's devotees be satisfied by only one kind of reciprocation?

Thus there is a need for hierarchy in the varieties of devotion and the corresponding moods in which the Lord reciprocates.

In Vaikuṅṭha, however, such a hierarchy is impossible to find, because the atmosphere of that place is purely spiritual.

2.1.18

paryavasyati sārūpya-
sāmīpyādau ca tulyatā
na śrūyate param prāpyam
vaikuṅṭhād adhikam kiyat

In Vaikunṭha everyone
seems to experience
same level of perfection
& a place higher than
never heard of

It follows that among devotees in Vaikuṅṭha there is equality even in
the special Vaikuṅṭha perfections (paryavasyati tulyatā), such as
living near the Supreme Lord (sāmīpya ādau) or attaining a form
like His (sārūpya). And a goal (prāpyam) higher than Vaikuṅṭha
(vaikuṅṭhād adhikam param) is unheard of (kiyat na śrūyate).

Someone might think that even though all devotees in Vaikunṭha share equally in the bliss of serving the Personality of Godhead, some hierarchy of greater and lesser engagements can be discerned.

Indeed, it seems that in Vaikunṭha the Lord's pastimes of supreme rulership and opulence are manifest more fully to some devotees than to others, just as in the material world the Lord is more intimately revealed to devotees who worship Him by brahma-satra (the sacrifice of transcendental knowledge) than to those who worship Him at the grosser level of karma-satra (mere ritual sacrifice).

In Vaikuṅṭha some devotees, such as those stationed as doorkeepers at the boundaries of the Lord's kingdom, seem to be relative outsiders compared to devotees who have more intimate services, such as (massaging the Lord's lotus feet.)

Ultimately, however, in Vaikuṅṭha all these varieties of devotional service are equal, displaying but minor variations in the mood of dāsyā-rasa in reverence.

The many kinds of Vaikuṅṭha perfection are equal manifestations of the same basic servitude.

Those perfections include sārūpya (having a transcendental body with four arms and other features like the Lord's) and sāmīpya (living close to the Lord as one of His associates or servants).

There are also other such perfections.

Those “others,” implied in this verse by the ending -ādaḥ in the word sāmīpyādaḥ, are attainments such as being posted as commander of the Lord’s army or as a personal servant massaging the Lord’s feet or dressing His hair.

The perfection of sāyujya, merging into the existence of God, is prized by impersonalists but is not found in Vaiḥṇava.

Rather than a devotional perfection, sāyujya is a form of impersonal liberation.

Even demons who hate the Personality of Godhead are sometimes given sāyujya as a reward for constantly meditating on the Lord as an enemy.

But anyone who has tasted devotional service to the Supreme Lord
rejects sāyujya.

Someone might ask, “But can’t a devotee in Vaikunṭha achieve some
special perfection by virtue of being exceptionally qualified?”

No, this verse replies.

Since Vaikunṭha is a place in which all desires are fulfilled, nothing
there beyond the perfections already easily available remains to be
achieved.