

Śrī Brhad-bhāgavatāmṛta

by Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī

Volume-2

Śrī-goloka-māhātmya

The Glories of Goloka

Chapter-1

Vairāgya: Renunciation

... I am convinced
that there must be a place
beyond Vaikuntha. PLS reveal it

2.1.24

tad-artham ucitam sthānam
ekam vaikunṭhataḥ param
apekṣitam avaśyam syāt
tat prakāśyoddharasva mām

Therefore (tad-artham) a suitable place (ucitam sthānam ekam) must surely exist for them (avaśyam apekṣitam syāt), beyond Vaikunṭha (vaikunṭhataḥ param). Please reveal it to me (tat prakāśya) and rescue me (uddharasva mām).

In this verse Mother Uttarā sums up her inquiry.

She reasons that there must be some place even greater than Vaikuṅṭha, a place suitable for the enjoyment of devotees like Śrī Nanda and Yaśodā.

That place should have certain qualifications.

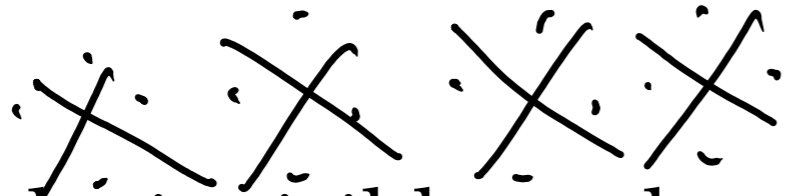
Qualifications for an abode that is fit for the vrajavāsīs

① It should be devoid of thought that the Lord is the supreme all-powerful controller (in other words, it should be free from awe and reverence).

②

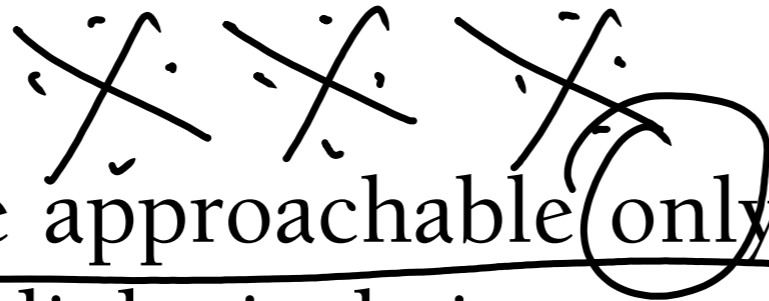
It should be untainted by flaws that impede the growth of ecstatic love.

③



It should be invisible to those who are addicted to dry knowledge.

④



And it should be approachable only by those dearest servants of the Lord who delight in being caught under the sway of a prema untasted in this world or any other.

⑤ That place should be the quintessence of attractiveness, a place fully enriched with the unique, indescribable bliss of transcendental rasa.



⑥

It should be sweeter than the sweet, superior to the superior, describable only by great saints who forever relish the taste of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet, saints like Nārada, for surely he must sing the glories of that place with his vīṇā.

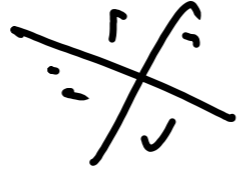


“Such a unique place must certainly exist,” Uttarā thinks, “but because it is most confidential and I am not very intelligent I am unable to ascertain its identity.”

~~Therefore, lost in an ocean of sadness, in waves of doubt, in deep currents of confusion, she asks her son, Parīkṣit, to reveal that place to her by describing it in words.~~

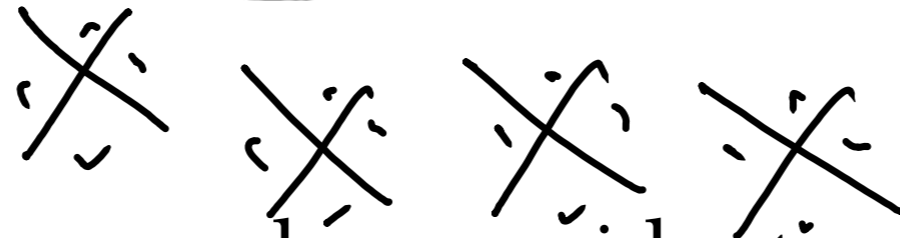
By doing this he will lift her out of the ocean of sorrow.

~~Of course, the blessed district of Mathurā, the best of all places, is already manifest on earth and can most certainly provide Śrī Nanda and others the exceptional happiness of taking part in the Lord's wonderful pastimes.~~



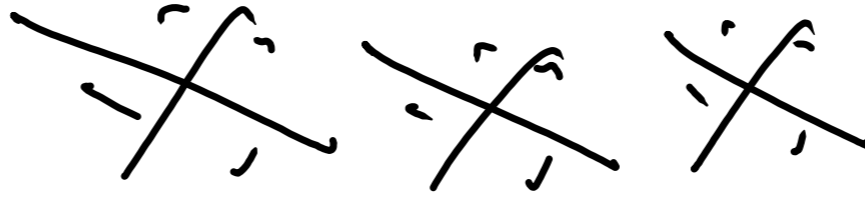
But Uttarā has doubts because that Mathurā is within the material world.

Thus she is asking whether another transcendental location exists for the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa and His favorite devotees.



To external vision the modern residents of the earthly Mathurā seem subject to the bodily transformations of disease, old age, and death and so appear entangled in mundane illusion.

Unlike the Lord's abode in Vaikuṅṭha, the Mathurā on earth does not seem to award immediate perfection to everyone who merely steps into it.



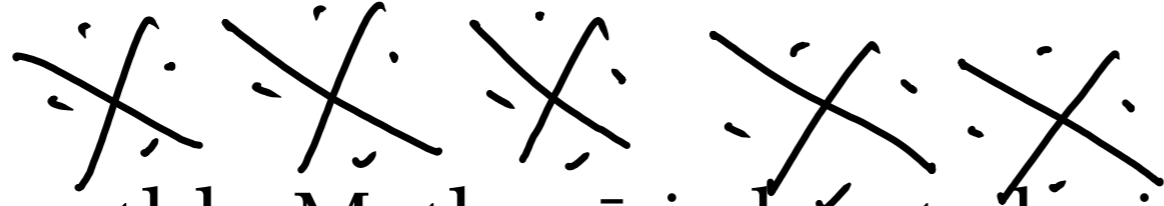
So Uttarā doubts whether the earthly Mathurā is in fact the ultimate goal of human endeavor.



And she suspects that at the time of the universal annihilation or of the partial annihilation of the three middle planetary systems, the district of Mathurā may disappear.

This question raised by Mother Uttarā, although subtle and therefore difficult, will gradually be answered by Parīkṣit through the story of Gopa-kumāra.

First Parīkṣit will describe Śrī Goloka in the spiritual world as the destination of Kṛṣṇa's most intimate devotees, and then he will speak about the pleasure pastimes Kṛṣṇa performs both there and in the Mathurā on earth.



Although the earthly Mathurā is located within the material realm, it remains untouched by the influence of illusion, just as the Supreme Lord Himself, His devotees, and His pastimes remain unaffected by illusion when they descend to the material world.

As Śrī Nārada Muni will state later in Śrī Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta (2.5.55):

nānā-vidhās tasya paricchadā ye
nāmāni līlāḥ priya-bhūmayaś ca
satyāni nityāny akhilāni tadvad
ekāny anekāni ca tāni viddhi

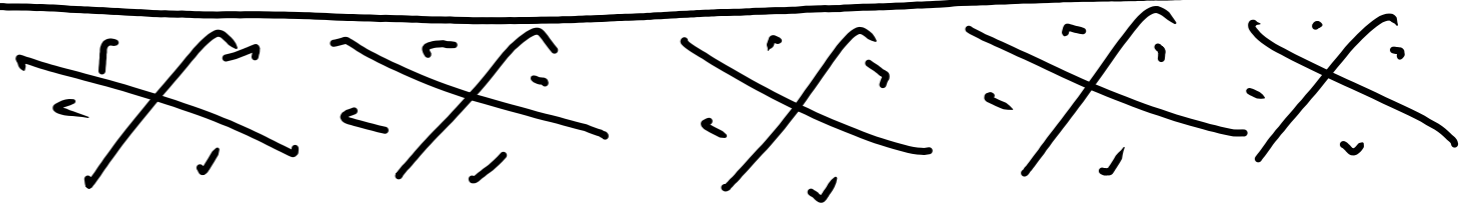
“All the paraphernalia of the Lord’s service (**tasya paricchadā ye**), including His names, His pastimes, and His favorite abodes (**nāmāni līlāḥ priya-bhūmayaś ca**), assume various forms (**nānā-vidhāh**). You should understand (**tadvad viddhi**) that just as each of these forms is eternally real (**tāni akhilāni satyāni nityāny**), each is simultaneously one and many (**ekāny anekāni ca**).”

Yogamāyā, the spiritual energy of the Lord, arranges for the present-day residents of Mathura to appear to undergo material transformations.



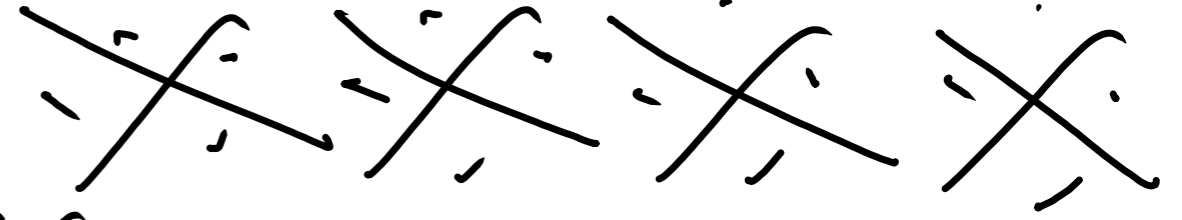
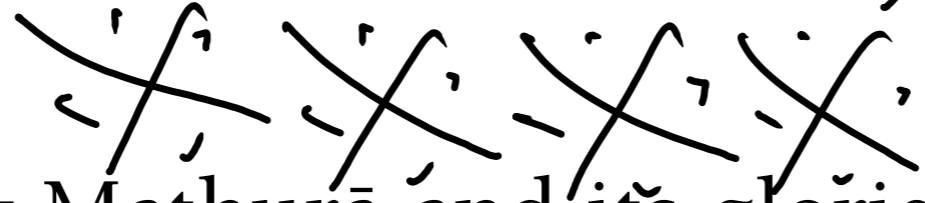
Why?

The Lord's spiritual energy does this to delude the nondevotees and satisfy the Lord's devotees, just as she prevents nondevotees from feeling ecstasy even after having personal audience of the Lord, the embodiment of highest bliss.

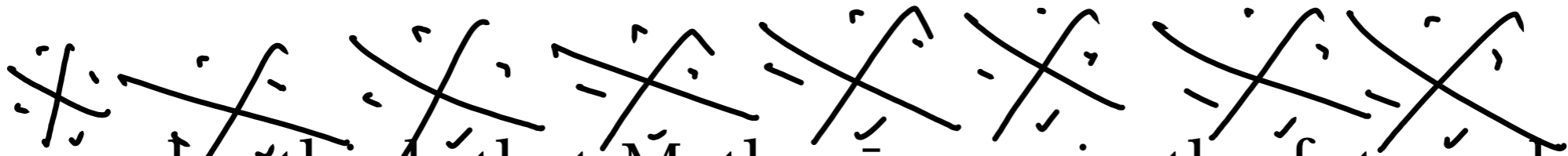


This subject will be explained later, in the narration of Gopakumāra's sojourn in Tapoloka.

That the glories of earthly Mathurā are hidden from ordinary eyes indicates the greatness of that abode.

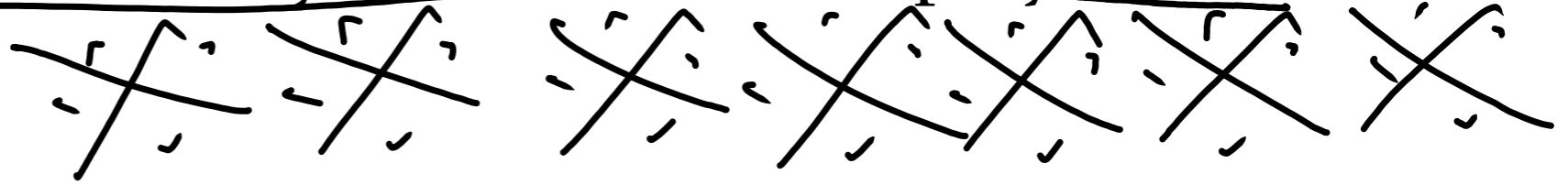


Indeed, the earthly Mathurā and its glories are eternal; they are not destroyed even when the universe is annihilated.

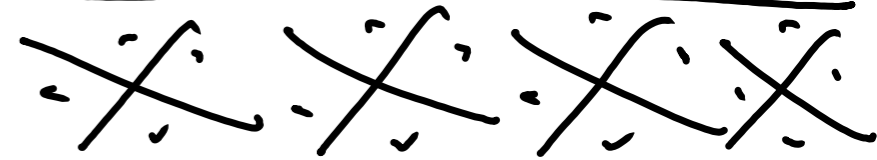


Devotees who think that Mathurā may in the future disappear are mistaken, because in fact Mathurā is beyond destruction, even by the Lord's ultimate divine weapon, the Sudarśana disc, which is the governing force underlying material time, the destroyer of the worlds.

All the same, Mother Uttarā is asking about some other supreme place because the greatness of earthly Mathurā is not at once perceived and because many people have not heard about the wonderful activities the Personality of Godhead displays there.

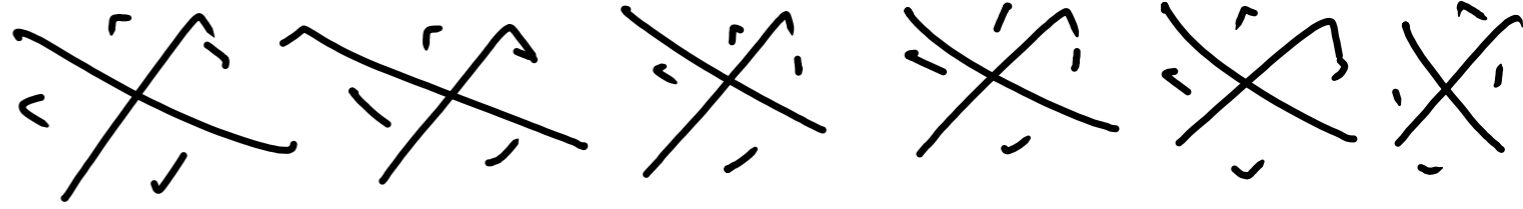


In fact the glories of the earthly Mathurā in some ways surpass those of the spiritual planet Goloka, and Śrī Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta, therefore, will describe how Gopa-kumāra, after realizing the glories of Goloka, learned about this from Śrī Nārada.



The original Personality of Godhead Śrī Kṛṣṇa descends to Mathurā in this world with all His beauty and other attributes to exhibit unprecedented playful activities.

And when the entire universe or the three middle planetary systems are destroyed, the earthly Mathurā becomes invisible and merges back into Śrī Goloka.



In other words, Mathurā is not destroyed; it remains unchanged, above the wheel of time.



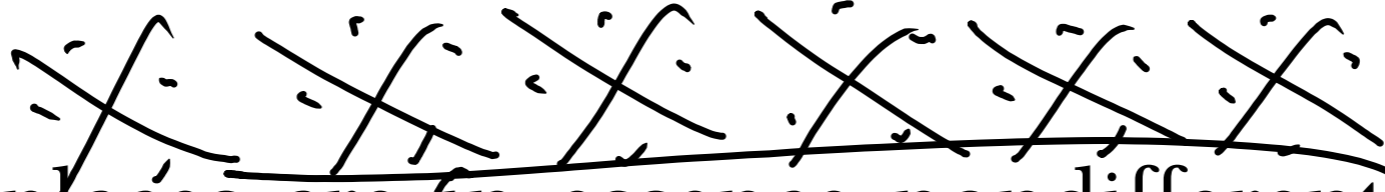
But because the Lord's pastimes are then no longer perceivable in Mathurā on earth, it seems that the Personality of Godhead continues to enjoy Himself only in the corresponding spiritual realm, Goloka.

Reasons of our imperfect understanding of the real glory of bhakti of Goloka

And so Srī Goloka is considered the ultimate destination of spiritual endeavor.



Śrī Nārada may sometimes ascribe to Mathurā on earth glories even greater than those of Goloka, but that is not contradictory.



Since the two places are (in essence nondifferent), whatever is said about one of them is true of the other.