

Śrī Brhad-bhāgavatāmṛta

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Volume-2

Śrī-goloka-māhātmya

The Glories of Goloka

Chapter-1

Vairāgya: Renunciation

When I entered the
city I heard the tumultuous
sound of worship of the
Lord. I asked about it to
people nearby

2.1.142

antaḥ-pure deva-kule
jagad-īśārcana-dhvanim
apūrvam tumulam dūrāc
chrutvāṛccham amum janān

Within the inner precincts of the city (antaḥ-pure), from a distance (dūrāt) I heard (śrutvā) the sound (dhvanim) of temple worship (deva-kule arcana) of the Lord of the universe (jagad-īśa). I had never heard such a tumult (apūrvam tumulam), so I asked about it from people nearby (aṛccham amum janān).

The noise Gopa-kumāra heard came from the Lord's ārati ceremony
in the royal temple, where many devotees were chanting and
playing musical instruments.

The sound impressed Gopa-kumāra as very wonderful.

Understanding that the Lord is being
 worshipped, I entered
 the temple eager to
 see Him. I saw
 the beautiful 4-armed
 form

vijñāya tatra jagad-īśvaram īkṣitum tam
kenāpy avārita-gatiḥ sa-javam praviśya
śaṅkhāri-pañkaja-gadā-vilasat-karābjam
śrīmac-catur-bhujam apaśyam aham samakṣam

Learning (vijñāya) that the Lord of the universe (jagad-īśvaram) was being worshiped (tatra), I wanted to see Him (tam īkṣitum). As I approached, no one stopped me (kenāpy avārita-gatiḥ), so I quickly entered the temple (sa-javam praviśya), where in front of me (samakṣam) I beheld (aham apaśyam) the beautiful four-armed form of the Lord (śrīmac-catur-bhujam), His hands resplendent with a conchshell, disc, lotus, and club (śaṅkhāri-pañkaja-gadā-vilasat-karābjam).

The guards at the door of the temple neither questioned Gopa-
kumāra nor blocked his entrance, so he eagerly ran inside.

There he saw the Deity of Viṣṇu, whose beauty and opulence more
than fulfilled the brāhmaṇa's predictions, and Gopa-kumāra's own
expectations.

The four arms of the Lord resembled the bodies of mighty serpents.

Exquisite beauty
of the Lord is
described

2.1.144

sarvāṅga-sundaratarām nava-megha-kāntim
kauśeya-pīta-vasanam vana-mālayādhyam
sauvarṇa-bhūṣaṇam avarṇya-kiśora-mūrtim
pūrṇendu-vaktram amṛta-smitam abja-netram

All the parts of His body were exquisitely attractive (sarvāṅga-sundaratarām), and His complexion resembled a new rain cloud (nava-megha-kāntim). Words can hardly describe his youthful body (avarṇya-kiśora-mūrtim), dressed in yellow silk (kauśeya-pīta-vasanam), ornamented with gold (sauvarṇa-bhūṣaṇam), and garlanded with forest flowers that increased His beauty (vana-mālayādhyam). His face (vaktram), with its sweet nectarean smile (amṛta-smitam) and lotuslike eyes (abja-netram), appeared like the full moon (pūrṇa indu).

Beginning from His eyes and mouth, every part of Lord Viṣṇu's
body was enchanting.

Gopa-kumāra could only compare His beauty to that of the most
beautiful things he knew—a rain cloud, the moon, and lotus
flowers.

Many servants were
serving Him with valuable
items & He stood
on a throne and
watched the dancing
& other entertainment

sampūjita-vividha-durlabha-vastu-vargaih
sevānuṣakta-paricāraka-vṛnda-juṣṭam
nṛtyādikaṁ ca purato 'nubhavantam ārāt
tiṣṭhantam āsana-vare su-paricchadaugham

While many attendants (paricāraka-vṛnda-juṣṭam), fondly attached to serving Him (sevānuṣakta), worshiped Him (sampūjita) with various rare items (vividha-durlabha-vastu-vargaih), He stood (tiṣṭhantam) on an excellent throne (āsana-vare) and from a distance (ārāt) watched (anubhavantam) the dancing and other entertainment (nṛtyādikaṁ ca) presented before Him (purato). Every sort of wonderful paraphernalia was being engaged for His pleasure (su-paricchadaugham).

As the most precious items to be found were presented to the Lord,
one after another, His personal attendants waved cāmara fans
intently and offered Him betel nut and other refreshments.

In the midst of all this, He stood on His throne instead of coming
forward to meet the crowd and acknowledged the entertainment
going on further away by watching with unblinking eyes.

Filled with great
bliss, I offered dandavat
& thought → "today I
have seen what I always wanted
to see"

2.1.146

paramānanda-pūrṇo 'ham
praṇaman daṇḍa-van muhuḥ
vyacintayam idaṁ svasyā-
paśyam adya didṛkṣitam

Filled with supreme bliss (paramānanda-pūrṇah), I repeatedly fell flat on the ground (aham praṇaman daṇḍa-vat muhuḥ). "Today (adya)," I thought (vyacintayam), "I have seen (svasya apaśyam) what I always wanted to see (didṛkṣitam).

I thought → "Now my
life is a success & I shall not
leave this place!"
↓
By the mercy of Vaiṣṇavas
I began to live there happily

2.1.147

samprāpto janma-sāphalyam
na gamiṣyāmy atah kvacit
vaiṣṇavānām ca kṛpayā
tatraiva nyavasam sukham

“Now my life is a success (samprāpto janma-sāphalyam). I shall never go away from this place (na gamiṣyāmy atah kvacit).” And so, by the mercy of the Vaiṣṇavas (vaiṣṇavānām ca kṛpayā), I began to live there happily (tatraiva nyavasam sukham).

Gopa-kumāra had left his family and friends to wander in search of his worshipable Lord and now had found Him.

Although as a penniless beggar from a foreign country Gopa-kumāra could hardly expect to be allowed to stay in the neighborhood of the royal palace and dine on the remnants of the king's Deity, the local Vaiṣṇavas were kind to him.

They brought him mahā-prasāda and did everything possible to encourage and protect him.

While eating the
remnants, seeing the festival
& hearing the glories, I
continued to chant my mantra

2.1.148

bhuñjāno viṣṇu-naivedyam
paśyan pūjā-mahotsavam
śṛṇvan pūjādi-māhātmyam
yatnān mantram raho japan

I would eat (bhuñjāno) remnants of food offered to Lord Viṣṇu (viṣṇu-naivedyam), witness (paśyan) the great festivals of His worship (pūjā-mahotsavam), and hear (śṛṇvan) the glories of His worship and more (pūjādi-māhātmyam), all the while carefully chanting my mantra (yatnān mantram japan) in private (raho).

While residing with the Vaiṣṇavas who served the Deity of Lord Viṣṇu, Gopa-kumāra heard from them the glories of worship of Viṣṇu, as described in various Purāṇas and other scriptures.

He heard that worshiping Viṣṇu is the highest activity for human beings, and he heard specific instructions about various aspects of His worship.

He also heard about the glories of Lord Viṣṇu's prasāda:

ṣaḍbhir māsopavāsais tu
yat phalaṁ parikīrtitam
viṣṇor naivedya-sikthānam
bhuñjatām tat kalau yuge

“All the benefits ascribed to (yat phalaṁ parikīrtitam) the vow of fasting for six months (ṣaḍbhir māsa upavāsaih tu) are gained in Kali-yuga (tat kalau yuge) by those who eat (bhuñjatām) boiled rice (siktha annam) that has been offered to Lord Viṣṇu (viṣṇor naivedya).”

From all these instructions, however, Gopa-kumāra did not receive a complete, systematic spiritual education. ❌ ❌ ❌ ❌ ❌

No one told him, for example, about such basic matters as the existence of higher planets, like the Svarga of Lord Indra.

The Vaiṣṇavas were unaware that Gopa-kumāra, despite his saintly qualities, had never had any training.

Thus he remained naive about the complexities of the material world.

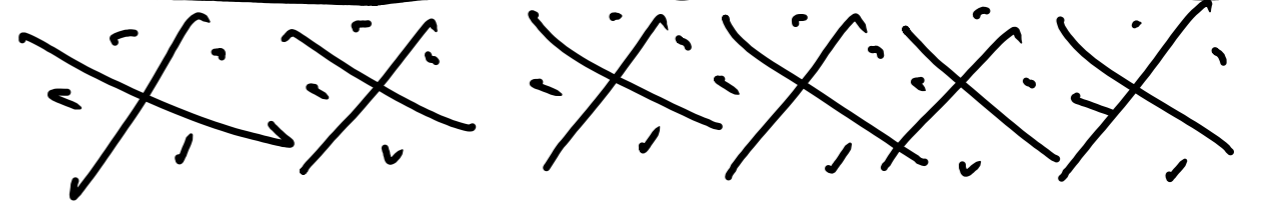
Despite the
blissful experience,
I could not forget
the beauty of this Vraja bhūmi
(The joy of playing here)

2.1.149

asyās tu vraja-bhūmeḥ śrīr
gopa-kṛīḍā-sukhaṁ ca tat
kadācid api me brahman
hṛdayān nāpasarpati

Yet my heart (me hṛdayān tu), O brāhmaṇa (brahman), never forgot (kadācid api nāpasarpati) the beauty of this Vraja-bhūmi (asyāh vraja-bhūmeḥ śrīr) and the joy of playing here as a cowherd (gopa-kṛīḍā-sukhaṁ ca tat).

Gopa-kumāra's indelible recollections of Vraja-dhāma, far from being just sentimental, were a sign that by chanting his mantra he was reaping transcendental results.



The public opulence of Lord Viṣṇu's worship did not attract him more than the simple happiness of wandering about the fields of Vraja.

While sleeping or awake, he could not forget Vraja.

Even while he took part in Lord Viṣṇu's festivals, thoughts of Vraja-bhūmi lingered in his mind.

2.1.150

After staying
here for a few days,
I developed great eagerness
to engage in that method
of worship.

evam dināni katicit
sānandaṁ tatra tiṣṭhataḥ
tādṛk-pūjā-vidhāne me
paramā lālasājani

Remaining thus (evam sānandaṁ tiṣṭhataḥ) for some days (dināni katicit) in that place (tatra), I developed great eagerness (me paramā lālasā ajani) to engage in that method of worship (tādṛk-pūjā-vidhāne).

Gopa-kumāra was eager to reciprocate in a personal way with the Lord of the universe, and the opulent worship in Viṣṇu's temple seemed such a way.

The king of that
country, being sonless,
seeing my good character,
adopted me as his son &
soon died.

2.1.151

athāputraḥ sa rājā mām
vaideśikam api priyāt
su-śīlam vīkṣya putratve
parikalpyācirān mṛtaḥ

The king of that country (atha sa rājā) was sonless (aputraḥ). And despite my being a foreigner (mām vaideśikam api), he noted (vīkṣya) my good character (su-śīlam), and he developed affection for me (priyāt). But soon after finally adopting me as his son (putratve parikalpya acirāt), he died (mṛtaḥ).

After I got the
kingdom, I arranged
to even more elaborate
worship of the Lord of
everyday for President to
many saints

2.1.152

mayā ca labdhvā tad-rājyaṁ
viṣṇu-pūjā mudādhikā
pravartitā tad-annaiś ca
bhojyante sādhave 'nv-aham

After inheriting his kingdom (mayā ca labdhvā tad-rājyaṁ), I arranged (pravartitā) even more elaborately the joyful worship of Lord Viṣṇu (viṣṇu-pūjā mudā adhikā). Every day (any-aham), saintly persons (sādhavaḥ) were fed (bhojyante) with remnants of food from this worship (tad-annaiś ca).



Simple soul that he was, Gopa-kumāra accepted his material elevation as a chance to increase his devotional service.

As king he saw to it that Lord Viṣṇu's worship was improved and that the Lord's mercy was distributed as widely as possible.

2.1.153

svayaṁ ca kvacid āsaktim
akṛtvā pūrva-vad vasan
japaṁ nirvāhayan bhujje
prasādānnaṁ prabhoḥ param

And always unattached to royal opulence (svayaṁ ca kvacid āsaktim akṛtvā), I continued living (vasan) just as before (pūrva-vad). I quietly chanted my mantra (japaṁ nirvāhayan) and ate (bhujje) only remnants of food left by the Lord as His mercy (prasāda annaṁ).

I remained unattached
to the royal opulence &
continued living as before.
I also continued to chant
mantra & ate only prasāda

Gopa-kumāra's mantra protected him from being corrupted by royal power.



Thus he was undistracted by sovereignty and wealth.

Retaining his unassuming simplicity, he went on chanting his mantra, satisfied with the gratification that his senses enjoyed from honoring Lord Viṣṇu's prasāda.

I divided the
kingly affairs &
handed over to the relatives
of the king. But still,
I was suffering due to my
connection with the kingdom

2.1.154

rājño 'sya parivārebhyaḥ
prādām rājyaṁ vibhajya tat
tathāpi rājya-sambandhād
duḥkhaṁ me bahudhodbhavet

I divided (vibhajya) the affairs of the kingdom (rājyaṁ) and handed them (prādām) over to the relatives (asya parivārebhyaḥ) and entourage of the deceased king (rājñah). But still (tathāpi) I suffered in various ways (me bahudhā duḥkhaṁ udbhavet) due to my connection with the kingdom (rājya-sambandhād).

To avoid being blamed for neglecting the kingdom while absorbed in private meditation, Gopa-kumāra delegated the practical affairs of ruling to the previous king's friends, ministers, in-laws, and immediate family.

He gave them the authority to make day-to-day decisions.

Nonetheless, various anxieties connected with the kingdom continued to be thrust upon him, and so a crisis gradually arose.



Discriminating Vaisṇavas may be better off uninvolved in the management of kingdoms.

Sometimes I feared
neighboring kingdoms & sometimes
the emperor.
BGS I had to follow his orders
→ I felt suffocated in my freedom

2.1.155

kadāpi para-rāṣṭrād bhīh
kadācic cakravartinah
vividhādeśa-sandoha-
pālanenāsvatantratā

Sometimes (kadāpi) I feared neighboring kingdoms (para-rāṣṭrād bhīh), and at other times the emperor (kadācic cakravartinah). Having to obey (pālanena) his various and abundant commands (vividha ādeśa-sandoha) stifled my freedom (asvatantratā).

Every king has enemies, including the unhappy citizens of his own state as well as the rulers of rival kingdoms.

If he is the vassal of a greater king, he must follow the overlord's whims and cannot act independently.

Gopa-kumāra felt all these anxieties.

If the prasada of
Lord is touched by an outsider
(or) carried outside temple
if there is a doubt about the
purity of the remnants, no
respectable person would eat them.

2.1.156

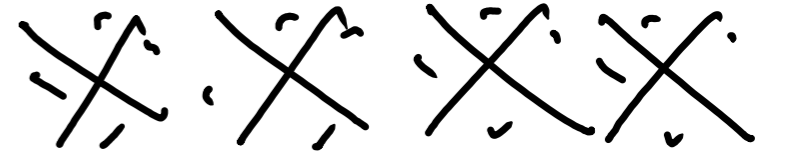
jagad-īśvara-naivedyam
sprṣtam anyena kenacit
nītam bahir vā sandigdho
na bhunkte ko 'pi saj-janaḥ

Gola Kumāra's real
problem was not even
the responsibilities of the
kingdom.

↓
But his real problem
were the brahmanas with
a predominantly Sūtra
mentality or nyāyārtha
necessity.

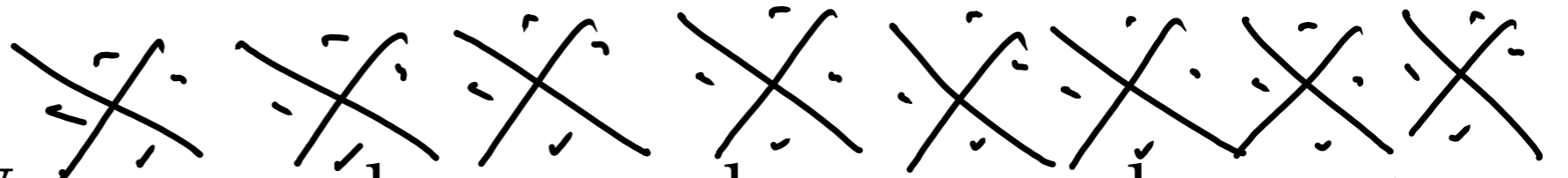
If the Supreme Lord's remnants (jagad-īśvara-naivedyam) were touched by an outsider (sprṣtam anyena kenacit), or carried outside the temple (nītam bahir vā), or if for any other reason a doubt arose about the purity of the remnants (vā sandigdho), no respectable person (na ko 'pi saj-janaḥ) would eat them (bhunkte).

Gopa-kumāra certainly should have tolerated any trouble arising from serving the Lord, but the serious obstructions that appeared in Gopa-kumāra's devotional service provoked him much more than the petty complications of royal politics.



The brāhmaṇas of this region were very strict about the food they accepted. They would not accept Lord Viṣṇu's prasāda if it had been touched by anyone other than appointed servants of the Deity or taken outside the sacred area of the temple.

These brāhmaṇas cited the tradition of cultured behavior as evidence to support their scruples: their predecessors had never accepted prasāda that had in these ways been contaminated.



Real brāhmaṇas and Vaiṣṇavas, however, become unhappy to see such behavior; for them it is difficult to live in a place where such disrespect of the Supreme Lord's prasāda is promoted.

Furthermore, their opinion on this matter is supported in scriptures such as Śrī Bṛhad-viṣṇu Purāṇa:

naivedyam jagad-īśasya anna-pānādikam ca yat
bhakṣyābhakṣya-vicāras tu nāsti tad-bhaksane dvija

brahma-van nirvikāram hi yathā viṣṇus tathaiva tat
vicāram ye prakurvanti bhakṣaṇe tad dvijātayaḥ

kuṣṭha-vyādhi-samāyuktā putra-dāra-vivarjitā
nirayam yānti te viprā yasmān nāvartate punaḥ

“O twice-born (dvija), one should never question (vicāras tu nāsti) whether remnants of food and drink (anna-pānādikam) offered to the Lord of the universe (naivedyam jagad-īśasya) are fit or unfit to eat (bhakṣya abhakṣya). One should never make such distinctions. The prasāda of the Lord (tad-bhaksane) is as incorruptible (nirvikāram hi) as the Vedic mantras (brahma-vad) and Lord Visnu Himself (yathā viṣṇus tathaiva). Those who consider (vicāram ye prakurvanti) whether the Lord’s prasāda is eatable or uneatable (bhakṣaṇe tad) will suffer leprosy (kuṣṭha-vyādhi-samāyuktā). They will lose their children and wives (putra-dāra-vivarjitā), O brāhmaṇa (viprā), and go to hell (nirayam yānti te), never to return (yasmāt nāvartate punaḥ).”

Such blow for
made me like give
up everything.
I had no desire But
the Lord whom I had long
hankered to see & whose association
I had now yearned for

2.1.157

marma-śalyena caitena
nirvedo me mahān abhūt
neśe didṛkṣitam sāksāt
prāptam tyaktum ca tat-prabhum

Such darts, shot into my vital points (etena marma-śalyena), made me like giving everything up (nirvedo me mahān abhūt). But I had no desire to leave the Lord (tat-prabhum tyaktum neśe), whom long I had hankered to see (didṛkṣitam) and whose personal contact I had now obtained (sāksāt prāptam).

To see the leaders of society refusing Viṣṇu's prasāda was more painful to Gopa-kumāra than the wounds of well-aimed arrows.

One who is cut at a major juncture of the subtle channels carrying prāṇa feels excruciating pain.

But the pain of having to watch and tolerate aparādhas in the service of Lord Viṣṇu was more painful for Gopa-kumāra than such a wound.

He lost whatever enthusiasm he had for continuing his involvement with ruling the kingdom, but he could not leave Lord Visnu.

At that time, some
saints from South India
visited there & told me
this

2.1.158

etasmin eva samaye
tatra dakṣiṇa-deśataḥ
samāgataiḥ sādhu-varaiḥ
kathitaṁ tairthikair idam

Just then (etasmin eva samaye), some venerable saints (sādhu-
varaiḥ) from the south (dakṣiṇa-deśataḥ) arrived (tatra samāgataiḥ)
on pilgrimage (tairthikair) and told me this (idam kathitaṁ):

The saintly pilgrims were Vaiṣṇavas from Jagannātha-purī.

For a while they had left that holy dhāma to see Lord Viṣṇu's Deities and devotees elsewhere, mostly in the various tīrthas.