

Śrī Brhad-bhāgavatāmṛta

by Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī

**Volume-2**

**Śrī-goloka-māhātmya**

**The Glories of Goloka**

# Chapter-2

Jñāna: Knowledge

Contrary natures  
like saguna & nirguna  
are resolved in Him -  
The difference ↓  
\* Impersonal Brahman & the  
Equality of Gt + It well established

2.2.179

sagunatvāgunatvādi-  
virodhāḥ praviśanti tam  
mahā-vibhūtir brahmāsya  
prasiddhettham tayoḥ bhidā

Contrary natures (virodhāḥ), like having qualities and having no qualities (sagunatva-agunatva-ādi), conjoin in Him (tam praviśanti). Since impersonal Brahman (brahma) is an infinite opulence (mahā-vibhūtiḥ) of the Personality of Godhead (asya), the difference between Him and Brahman (ittham tayoḥ bhidā) is well established (prasiddhā).

As rivers merge into an ocean, many opposite qualities converge in the Supreme Person.

The word ādi after saḡuᅇatva and aḡuᅇatva indicates more opposites—detachment and association, changelessness and change, inactivity and endeavor, oneness and multiplicity, nonduality and specific qualities.

Conceived as impersonal Brahman, the Supreme is devoid of qualities and other dualities.

Conceived as Paramātmā and Parameśvara, the Supreme displays characteristics such as having relationships with other living beings, possessing wonderful qualities, and so on.

Thus in truth the Supreme is full of qualities, many of them apparently contradictory.

Śāstra may sometimes say that the Supreme cannot be described in words and that He has no name, but the literal construction of these statements is refuted by the Vāsudevādhyātma:

aprasiddhes tad-guṇānām  
anāmāsau prakīrtitah  
aprākṛtatvād rūpasyāpy  
arūpo 'yaṁ pracakṣate

“Because His qualities are not well known (aprasiddheh tad-guṇānām), He is said to have no name (anāmāsau prakīrtitah). And because His form is not material (aprākṛtatvād rūpasya apy), He is said to have no form (arūpah yaṁ pracakṣate).”

Māyāvādīs argue that the Personality of Godhead may have qualities but as products of Māyā those qualities are illusory.

Thus they want to reconcile His having qualities with their idea of reality, that the Supreme actually has no qualities.

In fact, however, the supreme powers of the Absolute Truth are eternal and real, not illusory like the material creation.

And therefore when the personal feature of the Supreme, Bhagavān, is said to be nirguṇa, like Brahman, the sense is different, namely that Bhagavān transcends all material qualities.



At the same time, like the material world, He has many different qualities,  
and so He is also said to be saṅga.

This seems contradictory, but it is possible by His inconceivable, amazing  
potencies.

The Supreme Person is indeed mahimārṇava, the ocean in which all  
perfections converge. This is confirmed in many śāstras.

In the words of the Mokṣa-dharma (Mahābhārata, Śānti-parva 335.10–11):

yat kiñcid iha loka vai deha-bandham viśām-pate  
sarvaṁ pañcabhir āviṣṭaṁ bhūtair īśvara-buddhi-jaiḥ

īśvaro hi mahad bhūtaṁ prabhur nārāyaṇo virāt  
bhūtāntar-ātmā vijñeyah (saguṇo nirguṇo 'pi saḥ

“O ruler of the people (**viśām-pate**), whatever you see in this world (**yat kiñcid iha loka vai**) in connection with the material bodies of the living entities (**deha-bandham**), whatever you see composed of the five elements (**pañcabhir bhūtair āviṣṭaṁ**) born from the intelligence of the Supreme Lord (**īśvara-buddhi-jaiḥ**)—know all that to be the Supreme Lord Himself (**sarvaṁ īśvarah hi**). Both possessing qualities and having none (**saguṇo nirguṇo 'pi**), He is the ultimate element of all creation (**saḥ hi mahad bhūtaṁ**), the supreme master (**īśvarah**), the body of the universe (**virāt**), Lord Nārāyaṇa (**nārāyaṇah**). Try to understand Him (**vijñeyah**) to be the inner Self of all creatures (**bhūta antar-ātmā**).”

In the Kūrma Purāṇa:

asthūlaś cānaṇuś caiva sthūlo ’ṇuś caiva sarvataḥ  
avarnaḥ sarvataḥ proktaḥ śyāmo raktānta-locanaḥ

aiśvarya-yogād bhagavān viruddhārtho ’bhidhīyate  
tathāpi doṣāḥ parame naivāhāryāḥ kathañcana  
guṇā viruddhā api tu samāhāryāś ca sarvataḥ

“He is neither large nor infinitesimal (asthūlaś ca anaṇuś caiva); yet He is larger and smaller than everything else (sthūlah aṇuh caiva sarvataḥ). He is said to be devoid of color (avarnaḥ sarvataḥ proktaḥ); yet He is dark blue (śyāmah), and the corners of His eyes are reddish (rakta anta-locanaḥ). By the play of His personal powers (aiśvarya-yogād), the Supreme Lord (bhagavān) is known by contradictory designations (viruddha artho abhidhīyate). Yet He is the Supreme (tathāpi parame), and faults should never be ascribed to Him (doṣāḥ na eva āhāryāḥ kathañcana). In Him all contrary qualities combine (sarvataḥ viruddhā guṇā api tu samāhāryāś).”

And in the Viṣṇu-dharmottara Purāṇa:

guṇāḥ sarve 'pi yujyante hy aiśvaryāt puruṣottame  
doṣāḥ kathañcin naivātra yujyante paramo hi saḥ

guṇa-doṣau māyayaiva kecid āhur apaṇḍitāḥ  
na tatra māyā māyī vā tadīyau tau kuto hy ataḥ

tasmān na māyayā sarvaṁ sarvaiśvaryasya sambhavam  
amāyo hīśvaro yasmāt tasmāt taṁ paramaṁ viduḥ

“All qualities join together (guṇāḥ sarve 'pi yujyante) in the Supreme Person (puruṣottame) by virtue of His transcendental powers (aiśvaryāt). Yet no faults ever enter Him (doṣāḥ kathañcin na eva atra yujyante), for He is the Absolute (paramo hi saḥ). Some persons who are not truly learned (kecid apaṇḍitāḥ) say (āhuh) that good qualities and faults (guṇa-doṣau) exist in the Supreme Lord by the force of Māyā (māyayā eva). But in Him there is no Māyā (na tatra māyā), nor any agent who could possess Māyā (māyī vā). How then could (kuto hy ataḥ) He (tau) have illusory good qualities and faults that Māyā could produce (tadīyau)? The opulences of the Supreme Lord (sarvaṁ sarvaiśvaryasya) are not, therefore, generated by the force of illusion (na tasmād māyayā sambhavam). The Lord transcends Māyā (amāyo hīśvaro yasmāt), and so He is known as the Supreme (tasmāt taṁ paramaṁ viduḥ).”

All this will be more elaborately explained later on.

Although impersonal Brahman and the Personality of Godhead are but different conceptions of the same Absolute Truth, some think otherwise; they think that Brahman, the Lord's formless aspect, worshiped by yogīs, is one entity, and that His form, possessing personal qualities and worshiped by His devotees, is a different entity.

But although the Māyāvādīs think that saḡuṇa Brahman is not as real as nirḡuṇa Brahman, they still have to admit that the saḡuṇa aspect of the Supreme is the concentrated eternal essence of pure existence (śuddha-sattva).

Therefore, even in their opinion the saṅuṅa form of the Lord is superior to everything else that has form.

That personal form is realized by the Lord's unalloyed devotees, but remains invisible to persons striving to realize impersonal Brahman.

In addition, the personal aspect of the Supreme has special unique excellences, such as His distributing the topmost ecstasy of prema.

This is shown in a narrative in the Śrī Nārāyaṅīya of the Mokṣa-dharma where Uparicara Vasu performs a sacrifice in which he—but not Bṛhaspati and others—is able to see the Personality of Godhead accepting His share of the offerings.

Another vivid example appears in the history of Brahmā's sons Ekata, Dvita, and Trita, all great yogīs, who went to Śvetadvīpa to see the Supreme Lord.

Even after intense endeavor they were unable to have His audience.

But when Śrī Sanaka and his brothers, who constantly perceived Brahman and were the most elevated of self-contented sages, visited Śrī Vaikuṅṭha, they did see the Personality of Godhead, and the ecstasy they felt was so powerful that various transformations became manifest in them.

This same incident is described in the Third Canto of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (3.15.43):

tasyāravinda-nayanasya padāravinda-  
kiñjalka-miśra-tulasī-makaranda-vāyuh  
antar-gatah sva-vivareṇa cakāra teṣām  
saṅkṣobham akṣara-juṣām api citta-tanvoḥ

The wind carrying the aroma of tulasī (**tulasī-makaranda-vāyuh**) which had touched the filaments of the Lord's toe nails on his lotus feet (**tasya aravinda-nayanasya padāravinda-kiñjalka-miśra**) entered their minds through the nostrils (**antar-gatah sva-vivareṇa**) and began to agitate their minds and bodies (**saṅkṣobham cakāra teṣām citta-tanvoḥ**), even though they were fixed in Brahman (**akṣara-juṣām api**).



The conclusion is that the Supreme's features of Brahman and the jīva soul are two of the Personality of Godhead's opulent expansions, as many authoritative sources confirm.

For example, according to one saying by saintly devotees, parāt-param brahma ca te vibhūtayah: "The Supreme Truth, Brahman, is also one of Your vibhūtis, O Lord."

In Bhagavad-gītā (10.20) Śrī Kṛṣṇa includes the soul as one of His vibhūtis. Aham ātmā guḍākeśa/ sarva-bhūtāśaya-sthitah: "O conqueror of sleep, I am the soul situated in the hearts of all living beings."

Śrī Brahma-saṁhitā (5.40) also states:

yasya prabhā prabhavato jagad-aṇḍa-koṭi-  
koṭiṣv aśeṣa-vasudhādi-vibhūti-bhinnam  
tad brahma niṣkalam anantam aśeṣa-bhūtam  
govindam ādi-puruṣam tam aham bhajāmi

“I worship Govinda (tam govindam aham bhajāmi), the primeval Lord, who is endowed with great power (ādi-puruṣam). The glowing effulgence of His transcendental form (yasya prabhā) is the impersonal Brahman (brahma), which is absolute, complete (niṣkalam), and unlimited (anantam aśeṣa-bhūtam) and which displays (prabhavatah) the varieties of countless planets (aśeṣa-vasudhādi), with their different opulences (vibhūti-bhinnam), in millions and millions of universes (jagad-aṇḍa-koṭi-koṭiṣu).”

In other words, Brahman is the Supreme Person’s partial expansion. And as stated elsewhere:

anārambham tamo yānti paramātma-vinindanāt  
parādhīnaś ca baddhaś ca svalpa-jñāna-sukhe sthitah

alpa-śaktiḥ sa-doṣaś ca jīvātmā nedrśaḥ paraḥ  
vadatā tu tayor aikyam kim tair na duṣkṛtam kṛtam

“Those who blaspheme the Supreme Soul (paramātma-vinindanāt) go to darkness (tamo yānti) that has no beginning or end (anārambham). The jīva soul (jīvātmā) is subordinate, bound (parādhīnaś ca baddhaś ca), weak (alpa-śaktiḥ), full of faults (sa-doṣaś ca), and absorbed in very insignificant awareness and enjoyment (svalpa-jñāna-sukhe sthitah); but the Supreme has just the opposite qualities (na idrśaḥ paraḥ). What wickedness does one not commit (kim tair na duṣkṛtam kṛtam) by saying (vadatā) that the jīva soul and the Supreme Soul are the same (tayor aikyam)?”

antaryāmy-aihya-vācīni vacanāniha yāni hi  
tāni dr̥ṣṭvā bhramantīha durātmāno 'lpa-cetasah

asy asmi tvam aham svātmety abhidhā gocaro yataḥ  
sarvāntaratvāt puruṣas tv antar-yāmī bhidām ayan

“When fools and rascals (durātmāno alpa-cetasah) read (vacanāni) the scriptural statements that describe the oneness of the soul and the Supersoul (iha yāni hi antaryāmy-aihya-vācīni), they become bewildered (tāni dr̥ṣṭvā bhramanti iha). These statements inspire them to tell one another (yataḥ abhidhā gocarah), ‘I am you , and you are me (asy asmi tvam aham), my own self (svātmety).’ But actually the Supreme Person (puruṣas tv) is the indwelling regulator (sarvāntaratvāt), the Soul within everyone (antar-yāmī), and so He is different from the individual soul (bhidām ayan).

ato bhramanti vacanair asurā moha-tatparaiḥ  
tan-mohane parā prītir devānām paramasya ca  
ato mahāndha-tamasi narake yānty abhedataḥ

“In this way (**ato**), demons (**asurā**) are bewildered (**bhramanti**) by statements (**vacanair**) intended to confuse them (**moha-tatparaiḥ**). And that bewilderment (**tan-mohane**) is pleasing (**parā prītir**) to the demigods (**devānām**) and to the Supreme Lord Himself (**paramasya ca**). For thinking that the soul and Supersoul are one and the same (**ataḥ abhedataḥ**), the demons go to the hell (**narake yānty**) called Mahāndha-tamas (**mahāndha-tamasi**).”