

Śrī Brhad-bhāgavatāmṛta

by Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī

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- ① Vairāgye
- ② Jñāna
- ③ bhajane.
- ④ Vaikunthe.

Part 4

Vaikuntha- The Spiritual Kingdom

Text-1

I wandered alone
observing on the earth
splendor on earth.
I started living in a forest
& forgot everything

ekākinātra bhramatā mayāsyā
bhūmeḥ śriyaṃ kutracid apy adṛṣṭām
sampaśyatā samvasatā vanāntaḥ
sarvaṃ vimohād iva vismṛtaṃ tat

I wandered alone (mayā ekākinā bhramatā), observing (sampaśyatā) on the earth (asyāḥ bhūmeḥ) a splendor (śriyaṃ) I had never seen anywhere (kutracid apy adṛṣṭām). Taking up residence in a forest (samvasatā vana antaḥ), as if in a daze (vimohād iva) I forgot everything from before (sarvaṃ tat vismṛtaṃ).

This Fourth Chapter describes the transcendental reality of Vaikuṅṭha and the appearance and qualities of its inhabitants.

The chapter glorifies the Deity forms of the Supreme Lord and extols the position of Ayodhyā above Vaikuṅṭha, and of Dvārakā above Ayodhyā.

The first part of the chapter shows that Śrī Vraja-bhūmi in Mathurā District is superior to every other place in the material universe and even to the abode of liberation.

When Gopa-kumāra returned to the earth where he was born, he could see with his own eyes the special beauty of Vṛndāvana forest and the rest of Vraja-bhūmi.

↓ he was seeing vṛjābhūmi beyond the material veil.

Nowhere else inside or outside this universe had he seen such splendor.

Taking up residence again in the various forests of Vraja, Gopa-kumāra was so enchanted that he forgot everything the associates of Lord Nārāyaṇa had told him about how to attain the spiritual kingdom of Vaikuntha.

The very name of this district, Mathurā, implies that it charms and agitates—literally, “churns” (mathnāti)—the mind of everyone who goes there.

TEXT 2

In the course of
my playful wandering
I came to Mathurā & heard
the śrīmad Bhāgavatam from
the brāhmaṇas

śrīman-madhu-purīm krīḍā-
bhramaṇa-kramato gataḥ
tatra māthura-viprebhyo
'śrausaṁ bhāgavatādikam

In the course of my playful wandering (krīḍā-bhramaṇa-kramato), I came to Mathurā, Śrī Madhupurī (śrīman-madhu-purīm gataḥ). There (tatra) I heard (aśrausaṁ) the Bhāgavatam and other scriptures (bhāgavatādikam) from the local brāhmaṇas (māthura-viprebhyah).

By the grace of the Lord of Mathurā, Gopa-kumāra obtained everything he desired.

Following the regular parikrama path, he eventually arrived in Mathurā City.

Then the devoted and learned brāhmanas of Mathurā taught him the essence of the revealed scriptures, primarily as given in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam and a few other texts that faithfully follow the Bhāgavatam on the science of bhagavad-bhakti.

After rightly
understanding
how to bhakti
to this forest I got
my SH

TEXT 3

bhaktim nava-vidhām samyag
jñātvedam vanam āgataḥ
apaśyaṁ sahasaivātra
śrīmad-guru-varam nijam

After rightly understanding (samyag jñātvā) the meaning of devotional service in its nine forms (bhaktim nava-vidhām), I came to this forest (idam vanam āgataḥ). And as soon as I arrived (sahasā eva atra) I met (apaśyaṁ) my divine spiritual master (nijam śrīmad-guru-varam).

By hearing Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam from the qualified Mathurā brāhmaṇas, at last Gopa-kumāra systematically learned the science of devotional service.

→ Value System of a devotee
↳ āhukāyadye sen kalpo
pratikāyadya varjanam

He learned what is favorable and unfavorable to bhakti, or in other words what a devotee should accept and what he should reject.

→ To properly value the association of Vṛndāvana dhāra
we need to be enabled by knowledge of bhāgavata-dharma.

This knowledge of bhāgavata-dharma enabled him to properly value the association of Śrī Vṛndāvana-dhāma and of that special resident of Vṛndāvana his spiritual master.

TEXT 4

He embraced me,
blessed me &
in this way showed
extreme mercy

pūrva-vad rājamāno 'sau
dr̥ṣṭvā mām praṇatam mudā
sāśīr-vādam samāliṅgya
sarva-jño 'kṛpayat-tarām

He appeared splendid (asau rājamānah) just as before (pūrva-vad). And when he saw me lying prostrate before him (dr̥ṣṭvā mām praṇatam), he joyfully embraced me (mudā samāliṅgya) and offered his blessings (sa āśīr-vādam). Thus my all-knowing master (sarva-jño) showed me his extreme mercy (akṛpayat-tarām).

In all the time that Gopa-kumāra had been away on higher planets,
his spiritual master had not changed, so it was easy for Gopa-
kumāra to accept that the spiritual master was both an incarnation
of the Supreme Lord and a rasika expert in the unique mood of
Vraja-bhūmi.

The spiritual master showed Gopa-kumāra complete mercy by
teaching him enough about devotional service to lead him through
the entire process, up to the stage of full realization.

Being omniscient, the spiritual master was competent to perform
this service.

TEXT 5

tasya prasādam āsādya
mahā-gūḍha-prakāśakam
anvatiṣṭham yathādiṣṭam
bhakti-yogam anāratam

Receiving his
Grace, which revealed
confidential secrets
followed P.D.S of I
in future

Receiving his grace (tasya prasādam āsādya), which revealed to me the most confidential secrets (mahā-gūḍha-prakāśakam), I followed (anvatiṣṭham) his instructions (yathā ādiṣṭam) by practicing bhakti-yoga without interruption (bhakti-yogam anāratam).

Devotional service is the highest form of yoga because it is the means for attaining the world of Vaikuntha and, even more important, reestablishing one's own connection with the Personality of Godhead's lotus feet.

Gopa-kumāra now endeavored with all sincerity to follow this process systematically, according to his guru's instructions.

TEXTS 6-7

Overcome by
Prema, I lost control
of myself & could not
do anything except
chant H/K's names
& pray for jñāna

sañjātenācirāt prema-pūreṇa vivaśo 'bhavam
na kartum aśakam kiñcit param taṁ samakīrtayam

śrī-kṛṣṇa gopāla hare mukunda govinda he nanda-kiśora kṛṣṇa
hā śrī-yaśodā-tanaya prasīda śrī-ballavī-jīvana rādhikeśa

Such a flood of pure love of God (prema-pūreṇa) so quickly awakened within me (acirāt sañjātena) that I lost control of myself (vivaśo abhavam). I was unable to do anything (na kiñcit kartum aśakam) but chant the Lord's glories (param taṁ samakīrtayam): “O Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Gopāla, Hari, Mukunda (śrī-kṛṣṇa gopāla hare mukunda)! Govinda! O Nanda-kiśora! Kṛṣṇa (govinda he nanda-kiśora kṛṣṇa)! O darling son of Śrī Yaśodā (hā śrī-yaśodā-tanaya), please show me Your favor (prasīda)! O life of the divine cowherd girls (śrī-ballavī-jīvana), O Lord of Rādhikā (rādhikeśa)!”

On this visit to Vraja-bhūmi, Gopa-kumāra quickly achieved the perfection of prema-bhakti.

This prema so overwhelmed him that he was unable to do anything but sing the Lord's glories; he could not even perform proper worship.

→ PREM-JYOTIS'PTA BRĀHMANĀ

To show his student how he was performing nāma-saṅkīrtana, Gopa-kumāra here chants a few of the Supreme Lord's favorite names.

TEXT 8

Thus I called
out to Kṛṣṇa
sometimes dancing, singing
& turning here & there
totally forgetting my body

evam sa-gānam bahudhāhvayaṁ tam
kṣaṇam pranṛtyan kṣaṇam udrudaṁś ca
unmatta-vat kāmam itas tato 'haṁ
bhramāmi dehādikam asmaran svam

Thus (evam) I called out to Kṛṣṇa (āhvayaṁ tam) and sang His glories in various ways (sa-gānam bahudhā). At one moment (kṣaṇam) I danced exuberantly (pranṛtyan), at another sobbed out loud (kṣaṇam udrudaṁś ca). Like a madman (unmatta-vat) I wandered here and there (ahaṁ itas tato bhramāmi) according to my whims (kāmam), forgetting my own body and everything else (svam dehādikam asmaran).

Caught up in this state of pure love, Gopa-kumāra completely disregarded external conditions.

He wandered aimlessly like a madman, expressing his transcendental agitation by calling out such things as “Where are You, where are You, O mighty-armed one?”

TEXT 9

ekadā tam nija-prāṇa-
nātham paśyann ivāgrataḥ
dhartum dhāvan gato moham
nyapatam prema-vihvalaḥ

once I thought I saw
my Lord & ran to hold
Him. But I fainted.

Once (ekadā) I thought I saw (paśyann iva) the Lord of my life (tam nija-prāṇa-nātham) standing before me (agrataḥ), and I ran (dhāvan) to take hold of Him (hartum). Overwhelmed by love (prema-vihvalaḥ), I fainted (gato moham) and fell to the ground (nyapatam).

The phrase prema-vihvalaḥ, “overwhelmed by love,” explains why Gopa-kumāra was behaving so strangely.

TEXTS 10-11

At that moment
The Vaikuntha Vests
Came & took
me to Vaikuntha
on their airplane
when I opened my eyes
I saw them
beside me

tāvat taiḥ pārśadair etya vaikunṭham netum ātmanah

yānam āropitaḥ sadyo vyutthāyācālayam dr̥sau

sarvam anyādr̥śam dr̥ṣtvā vismitaḥ svasthatām gataḥ

pārśve 'paśyam purā dr̥śāms tān evātma-priyam-karān

At that moment (tāvat) the associates of the Lord (taiḥ pārśadair) arrived in an airplane (etya) to take me to Vaikunṭha (ātmanah vaikunṭham netum). They at once put me on that plane (sadyah yānam āropitaḥ) and carried me away (vyutthāya), and when I opened my eyes (acālayam dr̥sau) I saw that everything was different (sarvam anyādr̥śam dr̥ṣtvā). Shocked (vismitaḥ), I returned to full consciousness (svasthatām gataḥ) and saw them beside me (pārśve apaśyam), the same benefactors (tān eva ātma-priyam-karān) I had met before (purā dr̥śāms).

Just as Gopa-kumāra's pure love reached its peak, the messengers of Vaikuṅṭha came to bring him to their Lord's kingdom.

They took Gopa-kumāra unconscious onto their Vaikuṅṭha vehicle, and while in flight he woke up.

Opening his eyes and looking around, he was astonished to find himself in unfamiliar surroundings.

He was certainly no longer in Vraja-bhūmi.

The Vaikuṅṭha-dūtas, Gopa-kumāra's instructors, had previously evoked in him the desire to see Vaikuṅṭha and had taught him the specific methods for approaching Vaikuṅṭha.

Now, by carrying him there, they were personally awarding him the success of his endeavors.

The plane was
wonderful &
very brilliant &
all the luminaries

TEXT 12

mahā-tejasvinām tejo
muṣṇato 'nupamaṁ varam
vimānaṁ योग्याम अरूढान्
anirūpyaṁ su-rūpa-vat

The plane upon which they rode (vimānaṁ arūḍhān) was wonderful (yogyam), incomparable (anupamaṁ), indescribably beautiful (anirūpyaṁ su-rūpa-vat), excelling in brilliance (muṣṇatah tejo) the most powerful luminaries (mahā-tejasvinām).

The airplane from Vaikuntha glowed more brilliantly than the sun.

In the material world, airplanes (vimānas) also transport the demigods through outer space, but those material airplanes are nothing like the one Gopa-kumāra and his escorts were riding.

It was certainly yogya, a suitable conveyance for Gopa-kumāra.

Words could not describe how elegantly it was built, since it was manifested from the pure substance of the spiritual world.

TEXT 13

sambhramāt praṇamantaṁ mām
āśliṣyāśvāsayan muhuh
aicchan sva-sadrśaṁ rūpaṁ
dātum yukti-śatena te

AS I
I
The
Tried to
to
to

As I reverently offered obeisances (sambhramāt praṇamantaṁ mām), those associates of the Lord embraced me (āśliṣya) and reassured me again and again (āśvāsayan muhuh). Putting forward hundreds of arguments (dātum yukti-śatena), they wished (te aicchan) to give me a bodily form like theirs (sva-sadrśaṁ rūpaṁ dātum).

The associates of Nārāyaṇa assured Gopa-kumāra that he need not be so surprised and should not treat them with such reverence.

They were his friends, they told him, and were now bringing him to Vaikuṅṭha.

They furthermore tried to convince him to accept a Vaikuṅṭha body like theirs, with four arms.

His human body, they argued, was not suitable for living in Vaikuṅṭha; it would not be adequate for fully enjoying Vaikuṅṭha life.

TEXT 14

tad asvī-kṛtya tu svīyam
govardhana-bhuvam vapuh
teṣām prabhāvatas tādṛg-
guṇa-rūpādy alambhayam

But, I refused
the offer.
by their influence the
beauty of their SP. Qualities
& beauty to my Cowherd body

But I refused their offer (tad asvī-kṛtya), and instead (tu), by their influence (teṣām prabhāvatah), my own body (svīyam vapuh) born in Govardhana (govardhana-bhuvam) assumed (alambhayam) qualities and beauty like theirs (tādṛg-guṇa-rūpādy).

Gopa-kumāra did not want to accept sārūpya-mukti, the form of liberation in which one's body is virtually indistinguishable from that of Lord Nārāyaṇa.

He was satisfied with the body of a resident of Govardhana.

Nonetheless, his hosts blessed his body with qualities like theirs, making it eternal, purely spiritual, and effulgent.

In addition, Gopa-kumāra gained the mystic powers to do whatever he might want, powers that all residents of Vaikunṭha naturally possess.

I in their company
traveled to vaikunṭha
a path inconceivable, blissful
& distinct from this world

TEXT 15

paramānanda-yuktena
durvitarkyeṇa vartmanā
jagad-vilakṣaṇenāham
vaikunṭham taiḥ saha vrajan

In their company (taiḥ saha) I traveled along the path to Vaikunṭha (aham vaikunṭham vrajan), a path inconceivable (durvitarkyeṇa vartmanā), supremely blissful (paramānanda-yuktena), and distinct from everything in this world (jagad-vilakṣaṇena).

TEXTS 16–17

On my way
to Vaikuntha, all
the residents of the
planets on the way were
honoring me & showering
flowers. I felt
embarrassed.

tesu lokeshv alokesvā- varāṇeshv api sarvatah
dr̥ṣṭi-pāte 'pi lajjeyam pūjye tad-adhikāribhiḥ

loka-pālādibhiś cordhva- mukhaiḥ sāñjali-mastakaiḥ
vegād utkṣipyamānābhiḥ puṣpa-lājādi-vr̥ṣṭibhiḥ

My eyes fell upon (dr̥ṣṭi-pāte) all those worlds, cosmic regions (tesu lokeshv alokesu sarvatah), and coverings of the universe I had visited before (āvarāṇeshv api), and I felt ashamed (lajjā iyam). The residents and presiding rulers of those places (tad-adhikāribhiḥ loka-pāla ādibhiḥ ca) were honoring me (pūjye). Faces upraised, palms joined above their heads (ūrdhva- mukhaiḥ sāñjali-mastakaiḥ), they vigorously showered (vegād utkṣipyamānābhiḥ) flowers, parched rice, and other auspicious offerings upwards toward me (puṣpa-lāja ādi vr̥ṣṭibhiḥ).

Gopa-kumāra had previously traveled to the abode of liberation by passing through the sphere of the sun, but the path of the present journey to Vaikuṅṭha was even more exceptional.

This was the path the pure devotees traverse when they leave this material world for the spiritual world.

Unlike tiresome material roads, this path is supremely blissful, and it leads to the realm of Vaikuṅṭha, a realm superior even to the abode of liberation.

The same worlds Gopa-kumāra had previously reached with great labor within the fourteen planetary systems and beyond, he now easily passed through one after another.

He passed the planets encircled by the Lokāloka Mountain and entered the part of the universe where sunlight cannot reach.

Then he went again through each of the eight covering shells of the universe.

On his first trip to Mahākāla-pura, the abode of liberation, Gopa-kumāra had known well that the regions through which he was passing were all creations of material illusion.

On the present journey, however, his realization was more advanced; he now understood that liberation itself is of little value, so he was ashamed even to look at the material attractions he had once found of interest.

As he passed by all the planets, he had to tolerate the respectful greetings of Indra and the other rulers.

TEXT 18

White ↑
Praised + wo- BT
I felt it to be tring
Then I reached the
abode of Lord Śiva

taiḥ stūyamāno jaya-śabda-pūrvakam
praṇamyamānaś ca pade pade calan
tuccham puro mukti-padam ca locayan
ūrdhvam tataḥ śrī-śiva-lokam avrajam

Praised by cries of “Victory!” (taiḥ jaya-śabda-pūrvakam stūyamāno) and offered obeisances at every step (praṇamyamānaś ca pade pade), I moved on (calan), and before my eyes (purah) I saw (locayan) the abode of liberation (mukti-padam) and how trifling it was (tuccham). And traveling upward from there (ūrdhvam tataḥ), I came to the world of Lord Śiva (śrī-śiva-lokam avrajam).

TEXT 19

somaṁ śivaṁ tatra mudā praṇamya
tenādara-prema-sad-ukti-jālaiḥ
ānandito vākya-mano-durāpa-
māhātmya-mālaṁ tam agāṁ vikunṭham

There
graciously received
me.
But I moved on &
replied

There (tatra) I ~~bowed down~~ (praṇamya) to Lord Śiva (śivaṁ) and Umā (sa umam) with great pleasure (mudā), and he made me feel blissful (tena ānanditah) with a flood of gracious words (sad-ukti-jālaiḥ), filled with love and respect (ādara-prema). And then I went on (agām), to that place (tam) whose garland of glories (māhātmya-mālaṁ) cannot be touched by words or by the mind (vākya-mano-durāpa)—Vaikuṅṭha (vikunṭham).

TEXT 20

pārṣadair idam ukto 'ham
tvam tiṣṭheha kṣanam bahiḥ
vijñāpya prabhum asmābhiḥ
purīm yāvat pravekṣyase

The persons said:
Can you pls wait outside?
We can take u in after taking
permission from our Lord

The associates of the Lord (pārṣadaih) told me (idam uktah aham):
You please wait here for a moment outside (tvam tiṣṭheha kṣanam
bahiḥ). We should take permission from our Lord (vijñāpya
prabhum asmābhiḥ) before bringing you into His city (purīm yāvat
pravekṣyase).

The Vaikuṅṭha-dūtas asked Gopa-kumāra to stay behind in the gateway while they went inside Vaikuṅṭha to secure permission for his entrance.

This is the standard etiquette for introducing someone to the supreme opulence of Vaikuṅṭha: specific permission should be obtained for him either from Lord Vaikuṅṭhanātha directly or from a proper deputized authority.