

Śrī Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta

by Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī

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

Part 4

Vaikuntha- The Spiritual Kingdom

TEXT 173

mahā-vibhūti-śabdena

yoga-śabdena ca kvacit

yoga-māyādi-śabdena

yā kvacic ca nigadyate

Lakṣmī is sometimes called (yā kvacic ca nigadyate) by such various terms as mahā-vibhūti (mahā-vibhūti-śabdena), yoga (yoga-śabdena ca kvacit), and yoga-māyā (yoga-māyādi-śabdena).

Lakṣmī is sometimes
called as
a) महाविभूति
b) योग
c) योगमायै

These words describe the goddess Lakṣmī according to her various identities and activities.

In addition to these terms, she is sometimes called prakṛti, śakti, and so on.

The Mahā-saṁhitā explains:

śrī-bhū-durgeti yā bhinnā
jīva-māyā mahātmanah
ātma-māyā tad-icchā syād
guṇa-māyā jaḍātmikā

activity of
manifesting
the jīvas

“She has the different names (yā bhinnā) Śrī, Bhū, and Durgā (śrī-
bhū-durgā iti), which respectively indicate the Supreme Soul’s
energy for manifesting the jīvas (jīva-māyā mahātmanah), His
personal energy of desire (ātma-māyā tad-icchā syād), and His
energy of the material modes that constitute inert matter (guṇa-
māyā jaḍātmikā).”

The Śabda-mahodadhi dictionary gives the following definition:

tri-guṇātmikātha jñānam ca
viṣṇu-śaktis tathaiva ca
māyā-śabdena bhāṇyante
śabda-tattvārtha-vedibhiḥ

“Expert knowers of the science of language (śabda-tattvārtha-vedibhiḥ) say (bhāṇyante) that the word māyā (māyā-śabdena) refers to the potency of the three material modes (tri-guṇātmikā), to knowledge (atha jñānam ca), and to the personal energy of Lord Viṣṇu (viṣṇu-śaktis tathaiva ca).”

And the Skanda Purāṇa says:

māyā-mayety avidyety
niyatir mohanīti ca
prakṛtir vāsanety evaṁ
tavecchānanta kathyate

“O Lord Ananta (ānanta), Your desire is called (tava icchā kathyate)
by various names (evaṁ): memory (vāsanā ity), nature (prakṛtiḥ),
the enchanter (mohanī iti), fate (niyatih), ignorance (avidyā iti),
and the source of illusion (māyā-maya ity).”

TEXT 174

yā sāndra-sac-cid-ānanda-
vilāsābhyudayaātmikā
nityā satyāpy anādy-antā
yānirvācyā svarūpataḥ

She personifies
the glorious celebration
& bliss of ānanda
She is
nityā (eternal)
satyā (absolutely real)
& anādy-antā (without beginning or end)
yānirvācyā (beyond describing)
svarūpataḥ (essence)

She (yā) personifies the glorious celebration (vilāsa abhyudaya ātmikā) of existence, knowledge, and bliss (sāndra-sac-cid-ānanda). She is eternal (nityā), absolutely real (satyā), and without beginning or end (anādy-antā). The essence of her identity is beyond describing (yā anirvācyā svarūpataḥ).

Because Mahā-lakṣmī is the total energy of the Supreme Truth, it is impossible to describe her completely.

TEXT 175

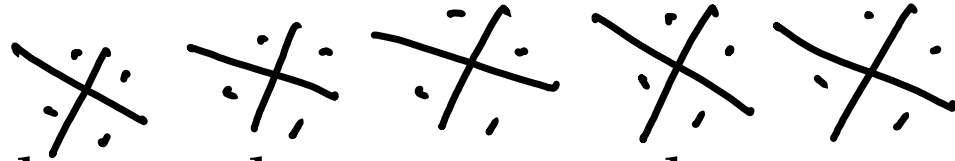
bhagavad-bhajanānanda-
vaicitrī-janani hi sā
nānā-vidho bhagavato
viśeṣo vyajyate yayā

a) She is Mother of varieties of ecstasy due to worship of Lord & His different features
b) Through her the Lord displays His different features

She is the mother who gives birth (sā hi janani) to the varieties (vaicitrī) of ecstasy that appear during the worship of the Lord (bhagavad-bhajana ānanda). Through her (yayā) the Supreme Lord displays (bhagavatah vyajyate) His different features (nānā-vidha viśeṣah).

The previous two verses have described the goddess Lakṣmī's primary characteristics (svarūpa-lakṣaṇa), and now this verse describes her secondary characteristics (tatastha-lakṣaṇa).

She is the agent who manifests the many varieties of charm and sweetness in the Lord's devotional service.



Although the devotees of the Lord are one with Him in the sense that they too have purely spiritual identities, both the Lord and His devotees have unique individual qualities.

The jīvas and the Personality of Godhead both belong to the same category, Brahman, but the jīva-brahma differs from the para-brahma, as rays of light differ from the sun.

In a similar way, devotional service to the Supreme Brahman is one but displays numerous varieties, by which devotees taste newer and newer sweetness at every moment during His worship.

It is the Lord's consort Lakṣmī who displays all the varieties of the Supreme Person and His devotional service.

He is the ultimate truth, one without a second, yet He has innumerable forms.

He is both one and many. He has countless varieties of beauty and charm and countless varieties of pastimes, each one full of diversity.

All of this is forever manifest as substantial reality with the help of the goddess Lakṣmī.

TEXT 176

tathaiiva lakṣmyā bhaktānām
bhakter lokasya karmaṇām
sā sā viśeṣa-vaicitrī
sadā sampadyate yataḥ

∴ Slo 17 the
source of
a) devotees
b) D-S
c) world
d) activities
varieties in.

Thus (tathaiiva) the distinct varieties (sā sā viśeṣa-vaicitrī) of the Lord's devotees (bhaktānām), of His devotional service (bhakter), of His world (lokasya), and of His activities (karmaṇām) constantly arise from Lakṣmī (lakṣmyā sadā sampadyate yataḥ).

The Lord has many devotees, like Śrī Śeṣa and Garuḍa.

His devotional service has many forms, like hearing and chanting.

His abode, Śrī Vaikuṅṭha, has a multitude of opulences.

And He engages in many different activities.

Lakṣmī is the energy of the Lord through whom all this variety is manifest.

Without her participation, the other energies of the Lord could not be displayed in diversity, because they are basically one with Him as pure spirit.

As the word sadā in this verse indicates, the unfolding of transcendental variety is eternal and ever expanding.

In the words of Śrī Viṣṇu-saṁhitā:

icchā-śaktir jñāna-śaktih
kriyā-śaktir iti tridhā
śakti-śaktimatoś cāpi
na bhedaḥ kaścid iṣyate

“She expands into three energies (iti tridhā)—the energy of desire (icchā-śaktih), the energy of knowledge (jñāna-śaktih), and the energy of action (kriyā-śaktih). No difference (na bhedaḥ) can ever be found (kaścid iṣyate) between the energy and its possessor (śakti-śaktimatoḥ cāpi).”

At the end of the second chapter, the nature of variety within the Absolute Truth has already been elaborately discussed.

In short, Lord Nārāyaṇa has various associates by His side, like Śeṣa (the son of Kadrū) and Garuḍa (the son of Vinatā).

Śrī Nārāyaṇa's Vaikuntha appears in the material world in various forms like Śvetadvīpa and Ramāpriya-loka.

Various tastes appear in the different limbs (aṅgas) of His devotional service, beginning with hearing and chanting.

In His diverse pastimes He displays a host of wonderful qualities like His
compassionate concern for His devotees.

And in His highest abode He enjoys Himself in various ways, such as
drinking His mother's breast milk, crawling on the ground, and playing
children's games.

TEXT 177

sā ca tasyāś ca sā ceṣṭā
jñeyā tac-chuddha-sevakaih
atarkyā śuṣka-dustarka-
jñāna-sambhinna-mānasaih

Pure devotees
Can understand
her & her activities.
But persons whose minds
are confused by dry & bad logic
cannot understand her

The pure servants of the Lord (tac-chuddha-sevakaih) understand (jñeyā) her and her activities (sā ca tasyāś ca sā ceṣṭā). But persons whose minds are confused (sambhinna-mānasaih) by dry knowledge derived from bad logic (śuṣka-dustarka-jñāna) cannot figure out what she is (atarkyā).

Philosophers can never fathom the truth of the Supreme Lord's personal energy with their dry, faulty logic.

Nārada said in Text 165, durvitarkyā hi sā śaktiḥ (“Inconceivable indeed is this energy”), and he made this statement in the course of proving that the Personality of Godhead in His expanded forms is both one and many.

Now he extends this idea of inconceivability to all the varieties of spiritual and material existence, which without exception emanate from Him.

TEXT 178

sā parāparayoḥ śaktyoḥ
parā śaktir nigadyate
prabhoḥ svābhāvikī sā hi
khyātā prakṛtir ity api

of the
divisions of
energy of Lord
Parā śakti is
she acts on her own
& is also called Prakṛti

Of the two divisions of the Lord's energy (prabhoḥ śaktyoḥ)—the superior and the inferior (parā aparayoḥ)—she is known as the superior energy (sā parā śaktih nigadyate). She acts on her own (sā hi svābhāvikī) and is also called prakṛti [nature] (prakṛtir ity api khyātā).

Authorities like Prahlāda Mahārāja have glorified this principal energy of the Supreme as His parā śakti.

In the Viṣṇu Purāṇa (1.19.176–177) Śrī Prahlāda contrasts her with the aparā-śakti, the inferior energy of the Supreme:

sarva-bhūteṣu sarvātman yā śaktir aparā tava
guṇāśrayā namas tasyai śāśvatāya sureśvara

yātīta-gocarā vācām manasām cāviśeṣaṇā
jñāni-jñāna-paricchedyā vande tām īśvarīm parām

“O Soul of all beings (sarvātman), O Lord of the demigods (sureśvara), I offer my obeisances (namas tasyai) to that eternal (śāśvatāya) but inferior energy of Yours (tava aparā śaktih) who is the shelter of the material modes (yā guṇāśrayā) found in all created beings (sarva-bhūteṣu). She is devoid of variety (aviśeṣaṇā) and beyond comprehension (atīta-gocarā) by words and the mind (vācām manasām). She delimits the knower and his knowledge (jñāni-jñāna-paricchedyā). I offer my homage to her (vande tām), the supreme controller in this world (īśvarīm parām).”

The Supreme Lord's inferior energy, called Māyā, who manifests inert matter,
is beyond the range of words and the mind because she is devoid of material
distinctions—categories, qualities, and so on.

This is so because she is in essence an aspect of the Absolute Truth.

Vidyā potency of mahāmāyā

Nonetheless, being the illuminator of all things, she manifests the difference
between the jīva, who is the knower, and his knowledge.

She does this the same way she illuminates the distinctions between external
objects like clay pots.

Another way of understanding this concept is that the Lord's inferior energy delimits the jñāna of the jñānīs, the understanding of persons exclusively dedicated to theoretical knowledge; these speculative philosophers cannot surmise the truth about her by conjecture, because she limits the power of their knowledge.

Indeed, only those persons who have pure devotion for the Supreme Lord have the mental strength to understand her.

She is called īśvarī because she belongs to the essential being of the Lord.

She is identical with Him in eternality and other transcendental qualities.

Alternatively, the current verse spoken by Nārada does not refer to the Lord's inferior energy, even though it includes the word prakṛti.

Rather, Nārada is saying that the Lord's superior energy, who is completely capable of arranging all the varieties that emanate from the Lord, is called parā because she belongs to the pleasure potencies of the spiritual realm.

She is also called śakti and prakṛti by the speakers of the Purāṇas.

The word prakṛti means "intrinsic nature," indicating that she is the natural, autonomous potency of the Personality of Godhead.

She is said to be nondifferent from Him because her substance is the same as His.

TEXT 179

amśāḥ bahu-vidhās tasyā
lakṣyante kārya-bhedataḥ
tasyā eva praticchāyā-
rūpā māyā guṇātmikā

She has
many expansions
↓
Māyā (guṇātmikā)
→ appears as her shadow.

She has many expansions (tasyāḥ bahu-vidhāḥ amśāḥ), who are named (lakṣyante) in terms of the various manifestations they produce (kārya-bhedataḥ). Māyā (māyā), who comprises the material modes (guṇātmikā), appears as her shadow (tasyā eva praticchāyā-rūpā).

Although the expansions of the Lord's divine energy are immeasurably variegated, they can be analyzed in terms of the visible existences they create—that is, the varieties of devotees, devotional service, and objects of devotion, each with their ecstasies, moods of exchange, and external appearances.

varieties of material energy?

The manifestations of the material energy can also be categorized in terms of diverse activities in fruitive work, materialistic devotion, cultivation of knowledge, and so on, each with its own subdivisions.

In the Visnu Purāṇa (1.3.2) Śrī Parāśara Ṛṣi describes the manifold effects of the Lord's creative potency thus:

śaktayaḥ sarva-bhāvānām
acintya-jñāna-gocarāḥ
yato 'to brahmaṇas tās tu
sargādyā bhāva-śaktayaḥ
bhavanti tapatām śreṣṭha
pāvakasya yathoṣṇatā

“All things that exist (sarva-bhāvānām) have their own potencies (śaktayaḥ), understandable only by transcendental intelligence (acintya-jñāna-gocarāḥ). O best of ascetics (tapatām śreṣṭha), the Supreme Truth (brahmaṇas) also has (bhavanti) His real potencies (bhāva-śaktayaḥ) for creation and other functions (sargādyā), and these belong to Him (tās) as the power of heat belongs to fire (yathā pāvakasya uṣṇatā).”

Commenting on this verse, Śrīla Śrīdhara Svāmī has written:

loke hi sarveṣām bhāvānām maṇi-mantrādīnām śaktayaḥ acintya-jñāna-gocarāḥ,
acintyaṁ tarkāsaḥam yaj jñānaṁ kāryānyathānupapatti-pramānakam tasya gocarāḥ
santi. yad vā, acintyā bhinnābhinnatvādi-vikalpaiś cintayitum aśakyāḥ kevalam
arthāpatti-jñāna-gocarāḥ santi. yata evam ato brahmaṇaḥ śrī-viṣṇor api tās tathā-
vidhāḥ sargādyāḥ sargādi-hetu-bhūtā bhāva-śaktayaḥ svabhāva-siddhāḥ śaktayaḥ
santy eva, pāvakasya dāhakatvādi-śakti-vat.

“Like gems, mantras, and so on, all things in this world have energies that can be
understood only by ‘inconceivable knowledge.’ This is the kind of knowledge one can
acquire not by speculative reasoning but only by confronting tangible evidence one
cannot otherwise explain. Or to put things another way, these energies are inconceivable
in that one can understand them not by analyzing them in terms of how, for example,
they differ or don’t differ but only through arthāpatti—that is, presuming what is
required to make sense of the known facts. Therefore, just as fire has potencies like the
power to burn, the Absolute Truth, Śrī Viṣṇu, has inconceivable energies—His innate
existential potencies—which are the causes of creation and so on.””

There is also this statement from śruti (Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad 6.8):

na tasya kāryam karam ca vidyate
na tat-samaś cābhyadhikaś ca drśyate
parāsyā śaktir vividhaiva śrūyate
svābhāvīkī jñāna-bala-kriyā ca

“He is not obliged to work (na tasya kāryam) and has no material senses to carry out work (na tasya karam ca vidyate). No one can be found equal to Him or greater (na tat-samah ca abhyadhikaś ca drśyate). And as we hear from scripture (śrūyate), His own superior energy (asya parā śaktih) has her manifold aspects (vividhaiva)—knowledge, power, and movement (jñāna-bala-kriyā ca)—which act autonomously (svābhāvīkī).”

Thus all things have their own inconceivable energies, like the power of heat in fire.

And the Supreme has His own inconceivable energies, nondifferent from Him.

This is affirmed in the śruti text cited above, parāsyā śaktir vividhaiva śrūyate.

Thus nothing can defeat the potencies of the Supreme, just as not even the most potent conveyers of subtle power in the material world—gems, mantras, and so on—can remove the heat-giving potency of fire.

In short, the Supreme has eternal, unbounded powers. As declared in the
Brhad-āraṇyaka Upaniṣad (4.4.22), sadā ayam asya sarvasya vaśī
sarvasyeśānah sarvasyādhipatih: “This Supreme is always the controller of
everything, the ruler of everything, the master of everything in this world.”

The Supreme Brahman is the cause of the creation, maintenance, and
destruction of the universe through His potency known as Māyā, who is the
shadow form of His internal pleasure potency (cid-vilāsa-śakti).

Māyā, who manifests the three modes of material existence, produces the
variegated creation, and because she is the shadow of the Lord’s spiritual
energy, material phenomena resemble the transcendental reality of
Vaikuṇṭha.