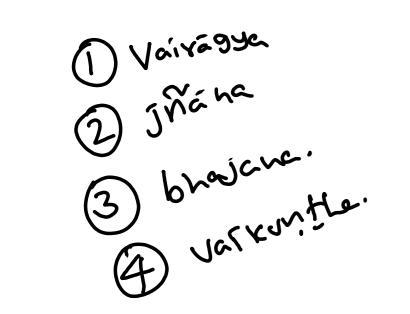
Śrī Brhad-bhāgavatāmrta

by Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī

11



Part 4

Vaikuntha- The Spiritual Kingdom

sri-nārada uvāca sri-nārada uvāca "saumā yā mayoddistāh sāksād-bhagavatā samāh iš key oktoretasām arcana-māhātmyam tāvad āstām su-dūratah ādyām ādhunikīm vārcām sva-dharmādv-sāksāc-chrī-bhagavad-buddhvā Li na pātit Nā

Śrī Nārada said: The Deity forms (yā pratimā) I have mentioned (mayā uddistāh) are all equal to the original Personality of Godhead (sākṣād-bhagavatā samāh). There is no need to even mention (tāvad āstām su-dūratah) the glories of worshiping Them (tāsām arcana-māhātmyam). Persons who worship the Lord's Deity (arcām bhajatām)—be it ancient, new, or even concocted (ādyām ādhunikīm vā krtrimām api)—provided they worship the Deity as being directly the Lord Himself (sākṣāc-chrī-bhagavad-buddhyā bhajatām), will not fall down from their religious status or be otherwise at fault (na pātityādi-doṣaḥ syād), even if they neglect their prescribed duties and other such principles (sva-dharmādy-anapekṣayā). Rather, their behavior should be considered exemplary (guna eva mahān matah), and such Deity worship (sevā) should be regarded (matāh) as exalted devotional service (uttamā bhaktih), yielding the best of fruits (phalam yā paramam mahat).

Even irregular worship of the Supreme Lord in His Deity form is all-auspicious.

Because of the strength of bhakti, worshipers who fail to observe all the prescribed varnāśrama duties are not to be considered fallen from the standards of civilized behavior.

Nor should they be considered unqualified for material reasons, nor faulted for imperfect knowledge of the methods of worship.

Ordinarily, offenses committed in ritual Deity worship bring infamy in this life and hellish punishment in the next.

But worship of the Lord's Deity performed with faith and devotion is transcendental.

Persons who practice devotional service are excused for their lack of material qualification:

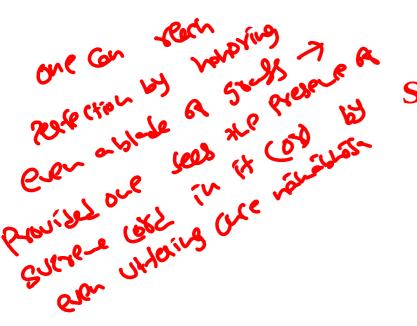
mat-karma kurvatām pumsām kriyā-lopo bhaved yadi teṣām karmāṇi kurvanti tisraḥ koṭyo maharṣayaḥ

"If (yadi) persons doing devotional service to Me (mat-karma kurvatām pumsām) happen to fail to execute some of their karmic duties (kriyā-lopo bhaved), thirty million exalted sages (tisraḥ koṭyo maharṣayaḥ) carry out those obligations on their behalf (teṣām karmāṇi kurvanti)." (Padma Purāṇa) The general opinion of saintly persons is that devotional worship of the Supreme Lord's Deity is always praiseworthy.

And exalted Vaiṣṇava ācāryas consider Deity worship a principal activity of pure devotional service.

The primary meaning of the word bhakti is sevā ("service"), and service to the Lord in the form of Deity worship includes elements of all the methods of bhakti-yoga.

This worship leads to the highest perfection of life, far beyond accomplishments in the four ordinary categories of human endeavor.

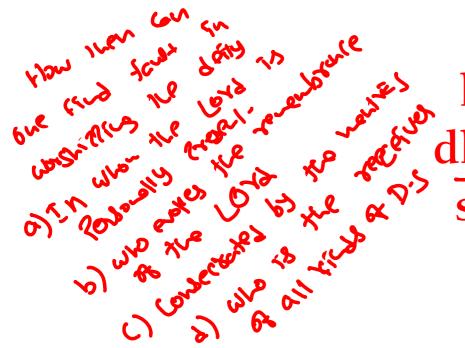


TEXT 210 siddhiḥ syād bhagavad-dṛṣṭyā tṛṇa-sammānanād api sakṛd uccāraṇān nāmābhāsasya śravaṇāt tathā

One can reach perfection (siddhiḥ syād) by honoring even a blade of grass (tṛṇa-sammānanād api)—provided one sees within it the presence of the Supreme Lord (bhagavad-dṛṣṭyā)—or by just once uttering (sakṛd uccāraṇād) or hearing (śravaṇāt tathā) even a faint semblance of the Lord's name (nāma ābhāsasya). One who understands that in a blade of grass the Supersoul is present along with the jīva soul, and who therefore honors the grass by watering it and bowing down, is in fact performing devotional service to the Supreme Lord.

Such a person easily attains liberation or whatever else he desires.

And the same results are obtainable from just once pronouncing or hearing even a dim reflection of the Lord's holy name.



TEXT 211 kutas tat-smārake tasyādhisthāne mantra-samskrte sarva-bhakti-pade pūjyamāne dosādi-tarkaņam

How then (kutah) can one find fault (doṣādi-tarkaṇam) in worshiping (pūjyamāne) the Deity, in whom the Lord personally appears (tasya adhiṣṭhāne), who evokes remembrance of the Lord (tat-smārake), who has been consecrated by mantras (mantrasamskrte), and who is the receiver of all kinds of devotional service (sarva-bhakti-pade)? When the Deity of Lord Viṣṇu has been properly installed with the āvāhana ("invitation") mantras and is worshiped by devotees who have put aside all misconceptions that He is a statue of wood or stone, such worship is faultless.

Even logicians have to admit the existence of inconceivable potencies in special worldly things—gems, mantras, potent medicines, and so on.

If even material objects act in ways undetectable by mundane senses and intelligence, then why can't the Supreme Lord, in His own creation, appear as He wants?

The Lord's Deity helps the conditioned souls in their meditation by allowing them to see the Lord's form.

Those who visit the Deity see the beauty of all His limbs simultaneously and are effortlessly transported to the ocean of devotional ecstasy.

Simply by worshiping the Deity one performs all nine processes of bhaktiyoga—hearing, chanting, remembering, serving the Lord's lotus feet, worshiping, offering prayers, becoming the Lord's servant, becoming His friend, and surrendering everything.

TEXT 212

kadāpi krsna-pratimārcanāvatām

na sambhavet kṛṣṇa-pareṣv anādaraḥ

ghațeta cet karhy api tad-vișaktito

gṛṇanti nāgas tad amī stuvanty atha

Persons who properly worship Kṛṣṇa in His Deity form (kṛṣṇapratimā arcanāvatām) never disrespect (na kadāpi anādaraḥ sambhavet) Kṛṣṇa's devotees (kṛṣṇa-paresu). And if (cet) because of being absorbed in worship (tad-viṣaktitah) they accidentally do so (karhy api ghaṭeta), the devotees (amī) make light of such offenses (na tad agah gṛṇanti) and praise the worshipers (atha stuvanty). Although worship of the Supreme Lord's Deity is a powerful means of devotional service, its good effects can be completely nullified by offenses against Vaiṣṇavas.

Nārada here assures Gopa-kumāra that serious worshipers of the Deity are spiritually mature enough to know that they must carefully avoid displeasing any Vaiṣṇava.

Moreover, if a careless neophyte absorbed in Deity worship neglects or disrespects Vaiṣṇavas, the Vaiṣṇavas mercifully overlook the trespass and instead see only the worshiper's sincere attachment to the Lord.