

Brihad Bhagavatamrita

TEXTS 213–215

Summary

Translation: There are others, however, who concoct some new image and call it Lord Hari but who actually see that form as different from the Lord. They worship with the idea that the Deity is no more than stone or some other material substance, and they respect neither the devotees of Lord Hari nor living beings in general. Proud of their worship, they transgress the injunctions of the Vedas and the Lord. These foolish worshipers, the lowest of all the Lord's devotees, do not obtain the promised fruits of worship.

1. Which type of deity worshiper is criticized in the scriptures ?

Ans: When criticizing those attached to Deity worship, the scriptures are really speaking about offensive worshipers who think the Deity only an image of the Supreme Lord, not the Lord in person.

2. Why are they criticized and called prākṛta (“materialistic”)? Why does the Lord not accept their offerings?

Ans: Such offensive worshipers lack proper respect for the Deity and the Vaiṣṇavas, those worshipers naturally offend all living entities and violate the basic principles of the Vedas. Such conditioned souls consider the Supreme Lord’s Deity a material statue and His worship an empty ritual

3. Whose offering does the Lord accept even though fully satisfied?

Ans: He is satisfied by the worship of His pure devotees. Because He obtains the fulfillment of His desires from them, He is not attracted by the offerings of others.

4. Do the imperfect worshipers simply waste the wealth and other resources they expend for the Lord?

Ans: When one worships the Supreme Person in any fashion, the result is always for one's benefit. Materialistic worshipers, therefore, do not achieve the primary goal of devotional service—pure love—because the Lord is not actually pleased by their offerings. They achieve only material benefits (a mere semblance of spiritual benefit). Ex: Image reflected in mirror.

5. But why do such people worship the Lord to accomplish their selfish ends?

Ans: Because without making an offering to Him they cannot achieve their own purposes, just as a mirror cannot reflect beautiful decorations of a face that has not been decorated.

6. The compassionate Lord accepts the offerings of foolish worshiper but what do they receive?

Ans: If a devotee worships the Lord for selfish purposes, the result is only a semblance of treasure of prema. The immature devotee receives some unimportant reward instead of the real success of pure devotion.

7. How does He show His mercy for the benefit of such worshipers?

Ans: The Lord refuses the offerings of persons too foolish to know what is good for them and what is not, He is actually bestowing His mercy. Seeing the frustration and anxiety of someone who has spent wealth and effort for ritualistic worship without devotion, the Lord mercifully ignores the worship to induce the materialistic person to stop his useless endeavor and labor in ignorance.

8. Shouldn't the Lord reward even a violent worshiper?

Ans: The answer, again, is that the Supreme Person is all-merciful. If He were to encourage such an offering by awarding benefits, He would be harming the sacrificial victims.

9. what use, then, is the attempt of an ordinary person to worship the Lord?

Ans: The attempt is useful because it can eventually lead to one's complete fulfillment whereas no other effort will. There is no other way to achieve the perfection of life. Even impure worship, in the short term only marginally fruitful, will gradually lead to complete perfection if the Supreme Lord kindly accepts the worship.

10. What “ātmanaḥ prabhur ayam nija-lābha-pūrṇo” means in the context of Pure devotees?

Ans: The Supreme Lord, being the personal friend and master (prabhuḥ) of all living beings (ātmanaḥ), is satisfied (pūrṇa) when His devotees succeed (nija-lābha) and when He can thus have their loving association.