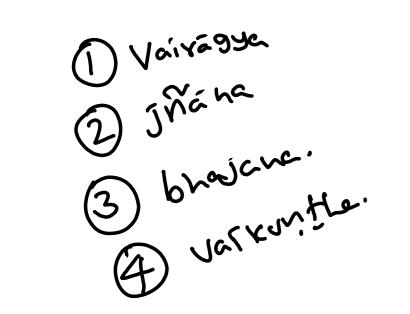
Śrī Brhad-bhāgavatāmrta

by Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī

11



Part 4

Vaikuntha- The Spiritual Kingdom

TEXTS 216–217

ady apy aśeṣa-sat-karma-p<u>halato</u> 'dhikam uttamam

teṣām api phalaty eva tat-pūjā-phalam ātmanā

athāpi bhagavad-bhakti-yogyam na jāyate phalam iti sadhu-varais tat tat tatra tatra vinindyate

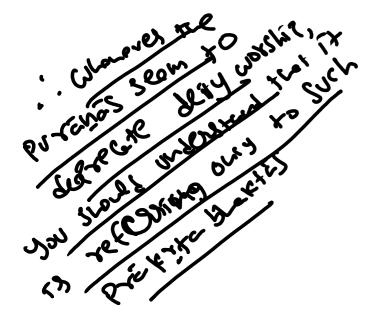
CXIII

Although (<u>yady apy</u>) the <u>fruit of their worship of Hari (tat-pūjā-phalam</u>) is in itself (ātmanā) greater than (adhikam uttamam) the results of all pious mat<u>erial activities</u> (a<u>śesa-sat-karma-phalato</u>), the<u>y</u> do not gain the highest fr<u>uit (na jāyate phalam</u>) the<u>y</u> would have derived (te<u>sām api phalaty</u>) from proper devotional service to the Lord (bhagavad-bhakti-yogyam). In various scriptures (tatra tatra), therefore (<u>iti</u>), the best of saintly persons (sadhuvaraih) condemn such materialistic worship (tat tat vinindyate). How can worship of the Supreme Lord not be fruitful, and if fruitful how can it be criticized? This verse and the next answer these doubts.

Faithless worship of the Lord's Deity results in vast, faultless material enjoyment, unencumbered by the complications that result from ordinary fruitive rituals, like being promoted to heaven.

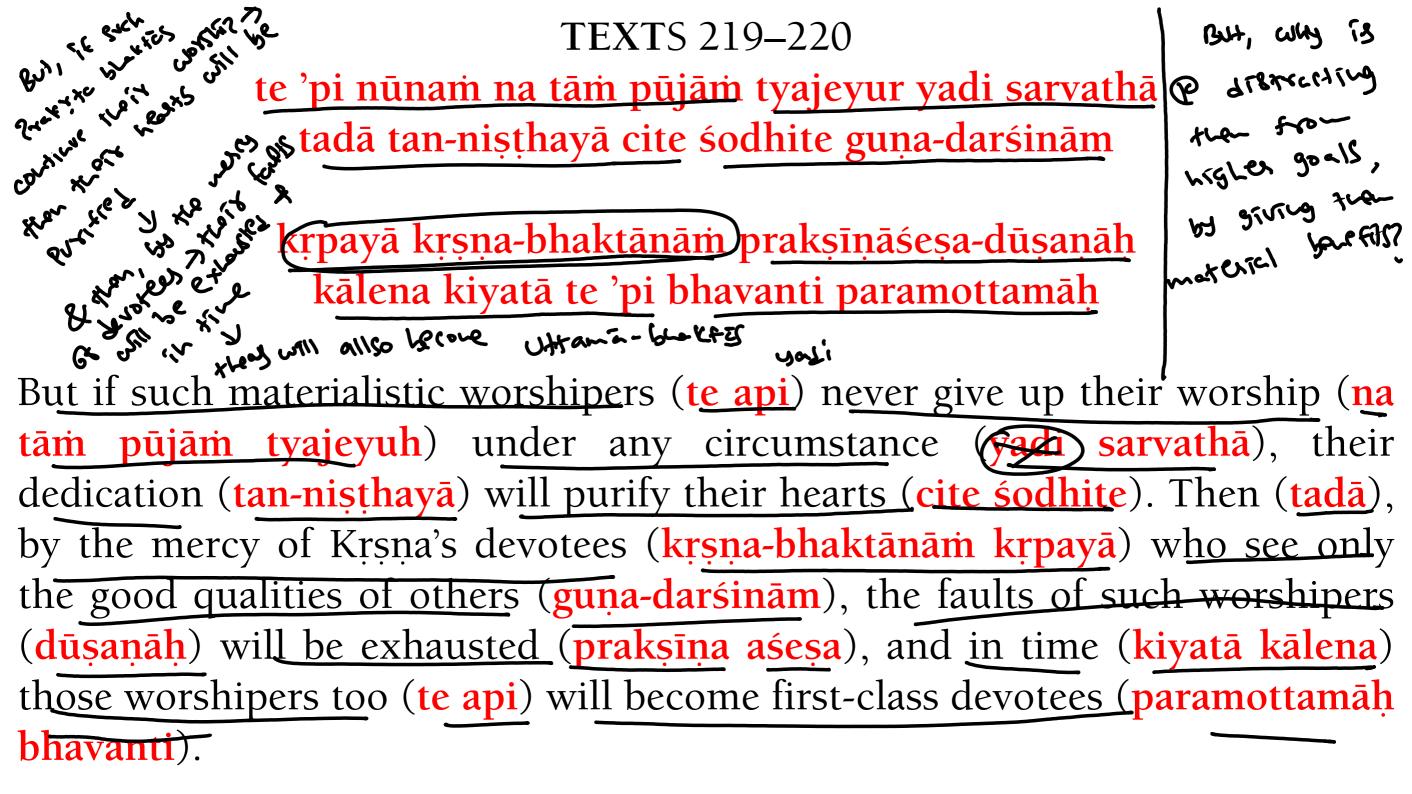
But only pure devotional service grants one the most rare treasure of pure love for the lotus feet of Śrī Krsna, which in turn grants entrance to His abode, where one can see Him and play with Him forever.

Thus the most perceptive authorities on devotional service are usually critical of the Deity worship of neophytes with weak faith.



TEXT 218 t<u>āni tāni purā</u>ņādivacanāny akhilāny api tat-tad-viṣayakāny eva manyasva na tu sarvataḥ

When the Purāņas and other scriptures (tāni tāni purāņādi) make statements that belittle Deity worship (vacanāny akhilāny api), you should understand (manyasva) that all such statements (tat-tad) refer to (those particular worshipers (viṣayakāny eva), not to all devotees (na tu sarvataḥ).



A person questioning the value of granting petty material enjoyment to such casual worshipers might support his doubt by citing scripture: vāsudeve mano yasya japa-homārcanādisu tasyāntarāyo maitreya devendratvādikam phalam

"O Maitreya (maitreya), for a person whose mind is focused on Lord Vāsudeva (vāsudeve mano yasya) by chanting of mantras (japa), by offering of oblations (homa), by worship of the Lord's Deity, and so on (arcana ādisu), such results as becoming the king of the demigods (devendratva ādikam phalam) are simply obstacles to his progress (tasya āntarāyah)."

This doubt is cleared by texts 219 and 220.

Anyone following the process of Deity worship seriously, without giving it up under any circumstance, will be purified and in a short time will become a perfect devotee of the Lord.

This guarantee stands even if the worshiper has regarded the Deity as a stone statue, different from the Supreme Person, or has concocted a new image of the Lord, or has been led away from the path of sanātana-dharma by excessive pride, or has treated other living entities with contempt, or even if he has shown no respect for Vaisnavas.

But hypocrites who merely make a show of Deity worship for a short time may only in the distant future become perfect devotees.

Showbottle worshipers who offend Vaisnavas do not deserve to have their ambitions fulfilled at all, but they may attain perfection by the mercy of the Vaisnavas, for the Vaisnavas are very merciful, kind even to their enemies.

But wouldn't it be better for Vaisnavas simply to neglect such offenders and let them remain in ignorance?

Perhaps, but pure Vaiṣṇavas see only the good qualities in everyone.

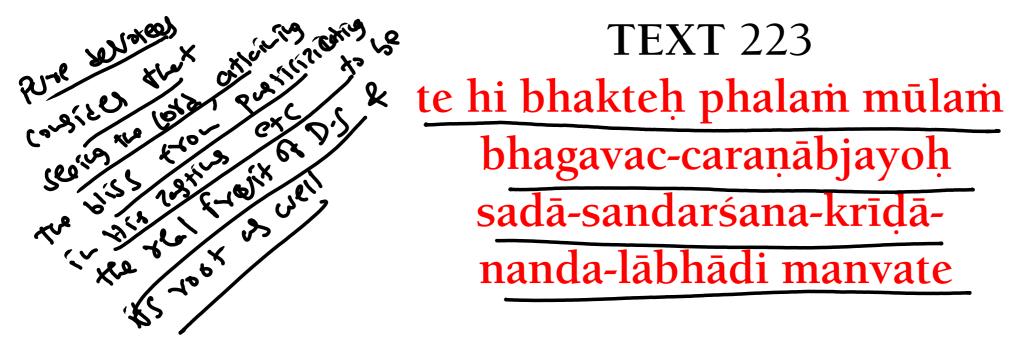
Since even superficial, pretentious worshipers of the Deity are meditating on the transcendental form of the Lord, saintly devotees simply ignore the offenses and shower mercy.



Netron (1) black 12 xyathā sakāma-bhaktā hi bhuktvā tat kāmitam phalam 🖋 kāle bhakti-prabhāveņa yogyam vindanti tat phalam

yathā ca tatra tat-kālam bhakter yogyam na sat phalam sañjātam iti tac chuddha- bhaktimadbhir vinindyate xe ye sur a wordal. xer,

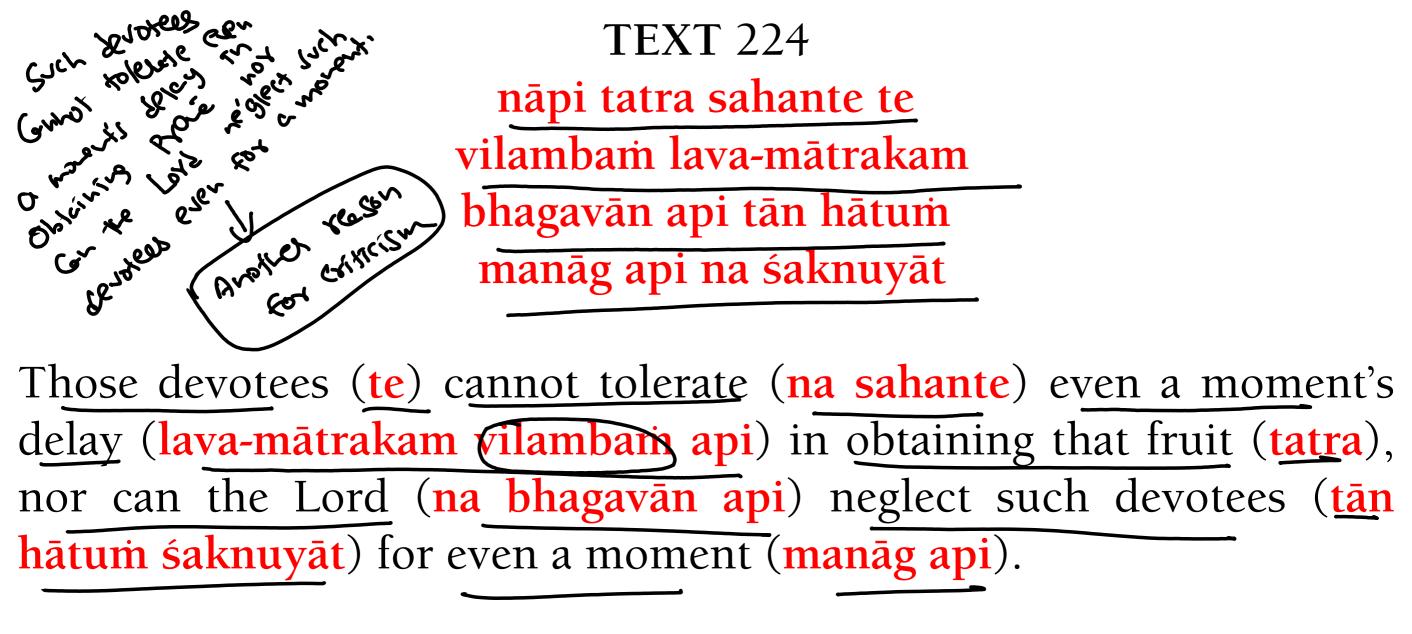
Devotees who have material desires (yatha sakama-bhakta hi) first enjoy (bhuktvā) the material results for which they hanker (tat kāmitam phalam), and later (kale), on the strength of devotional service (bhakti-prabhavena), they enjoy the true fruit of devotion (tat yogyam phalam vindanti). But because (yathā ca) that fruit (sat bhakter yogyam phalam) does not at first appear (na tat-kālam sanjātam), pure devotees (suddha-bhaktimadbhir) decry (vinindyate) what those worshipers first achieve (tat).



Pure devotees, after all (te hi), think that (manvate) seeing the Lord constantly (sadā-sandarśana), attaining bliss from taking part in His pastimes, and relishing subsequent pleasures (krīdā ānanda lābha ādi) are the fruit (phalam) of devotional service (bhagavac-caraņābjayoh bhakteh), and its root as well (mūlam).

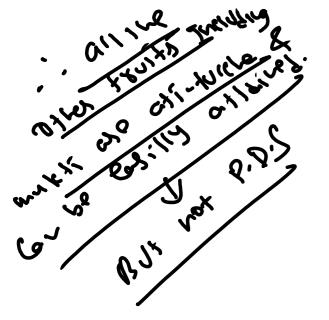
Achieving the perfection of prema is only the beginning of Vaikuntha life.

After that, a liberated devotee makes further advancement, receiving special individual mercy from the Lord by being allowed to serve Him in person and to enjoy in other ways the nectar of devotion.



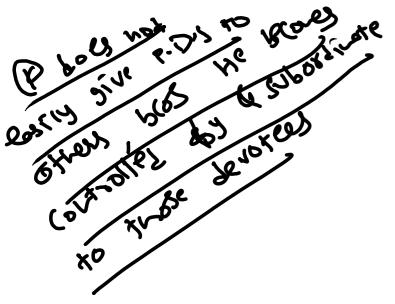
Once a devotee's pure love of God is awakened, he can no longer wait to see the Lord and serve Him.

In that consciousness, it is difficult for the devotee to understand why others hesitate to take full shelter of prema-bhakti, and so he may speak critically of compromised, materialistic behavior.



TEXT 225 ato 'nyāny ati-tucchāni sarva-kāma-phalāni hi muktiś ca su-labhāny asmāt tad-bhaktir na tu tādṛśī

Thus (atah) all the other fruits of desires (aŋyāŋy sarva-kāmaphalāni) are paltry (ati-tucchāni hi), even liberation (muktih ca). From the Personality of Godhead (asmāt) they are easily obtained (su-labhāny), but (tu) His pure devotional service (tad-bhaktih) is not (na tādṛśī).



TEXT 226 <u>tat-prasādena bhaktānām</u> adhīno bhagavān bhavet iti svātantrya-hānyeva na tām dadyān maheśvaraḥ

By the mercy of pure devotional service (tat-prasādena), the Personality of Godhead (bhagavān), the supreme controller (maheśvaraḥ), becomes subordinate to His devotees (bhaktānām adhīnah bhavet). This in effect (iti) deprives Him of independence (svātantrya-hānyā iva), so pure devotional service He rarely bestows (na tām dadyāt). Pure love for Śrī Kṛṣṇadeva is more difficult to obtain than liberation. In the words of Sukadeva Gosvāmī:

rājan patir gurur alam bhavatām yadūnām daivam priyah kula-patih kva ca kinkaro vah astv evam anga bhagavān bhajatām mukundo muktim dadāti karhicit sma na bhakti-yogam

O King Parīkṣit (rājan)! Kṛṣṇa (bhagavān mukundo) was the protector, instructor (patih guruh), object of worship, giver of affection (daivam priyaḥ), and the protector (kula-patiḥ) of both the Yadus and Pāṇḍavas (bhavatām yadūnām). But he was sometimes your servant (kva ca kinkaro vaḥ). The Lord gives liberation (muktim dadāti karhicit) but not even bhāva-bhakti (na bhakti-yogam) to those who worship him (bhajatām). (Bhāgavatam 5.6.18) One of Kṛṣṇa's names is Mukunda, which can be divided into three parts: mu ("liberation"), kum ("happiness"), and da ("giving"), meaning that Kṛṣṇa bestows the bliss of liberation.

Or kum can be understood to mean "devotional service," so Kṛṣṇa is the bestower of both liberation and devotional service.

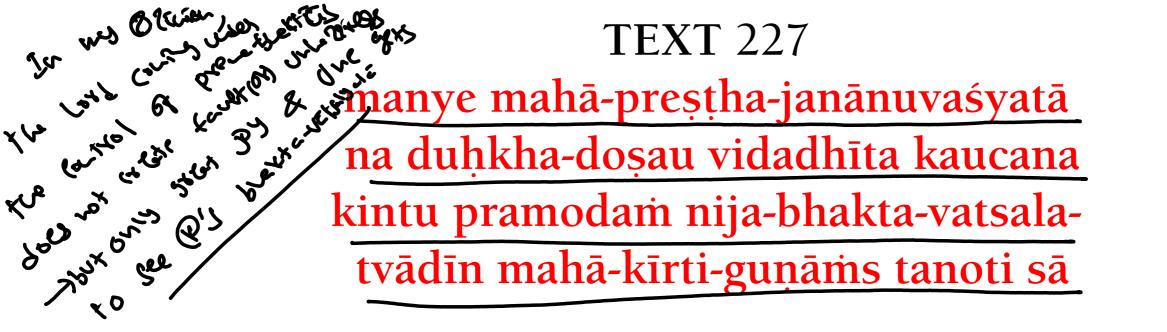
However, although the Lord often awards liberation and ordinary devotional service, He very rarely gives prema-bhakti.



Some say it is because when Bhagavān, the supremely independent controller of all, gives prema-bhakti He becomes obliged to give up His independence, for devotees who have prema keep Him helplessly under their control.

Or, taking the title Bhagavān to express His absolute omniscience, the idea is that He knows the impropriety of giving prema-bhakti to anyone uneducated in the rasas of pure devotion.

Other reasons for the Lord's hesitancy to grant prema-bhakti will be discussed later on.



In my opinion (manye), the Lord's coming under the control (anuvaśyatā) of His dearmost servants (mahā-preṣṭha-jana) creates no unhappiness or fault (na duḥkha-doṣau vidadhīta) of any kind (kaucana). Rather (kintu), it creates great joy (ṣā pramodam) and broadcasts (tanoti) such glorious qualities of the Lord (mahā-kīrti-gunān) as His affectionate concern for His devotees (nija-bhakta-vatsalatva ādīn).

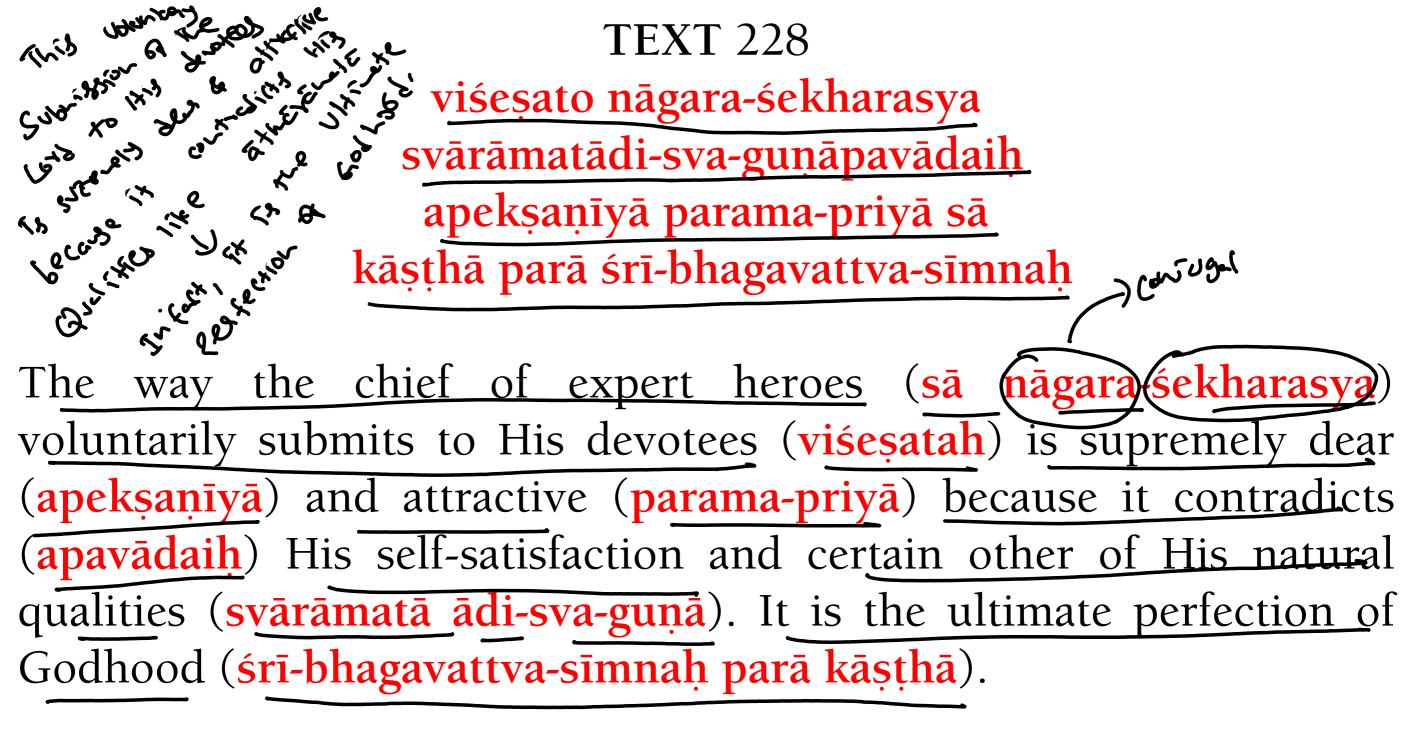
Having recounted others' thoughts on why the Personality of Godhead rarely bestows prema-bhakti, Nārada now discloses his own.

First, he refutes the idea that the Lord wants to avoid losing His independence.

The Lord causes no distress for His devotees when He submits Himself to their desires, nor by surrendering His independence does He suffer.

Rather, these intimate dealings bring joy to the entire world, and they spread the Lord's fame for being generous and concerned for His devotees.

Because the Lord's submission to His devotees enlarges their mutual joy, it is a source of delight rather than distress; furthermore, because it increases His glories, it is faultless.

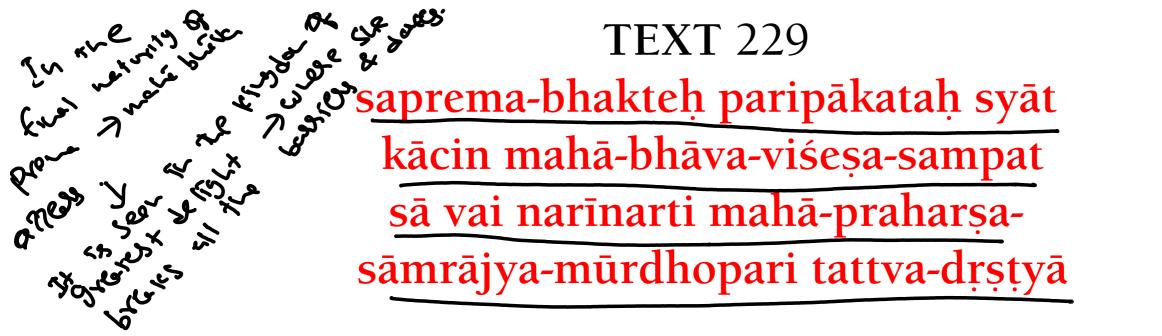


The greatness of God is seen most fully when He becomes subordinate to His servants.

In such intimate dealings the Lord reveals His most special qualities, like His unselfish efforts to give happiness to His devotees.

This aspect of His personality attracts the admiration of pure Vaisnavas, even when it seems to contradict such features of His absolute status as His eternal self-satisfaction, His effortless acquisition of whatever He might desire, His supreme mastery of the powers of mystic yoga, and so on.

One may learn more about this topic by studying such pastimes of Kṛṣṇa as His destroying the pride of Satyabhāmā, as told in Śrī Hari-vamśa and other devotional scriptures.



In the final maturity (paripākataḥ) of devotional service in pure love (saprema-bhakteḥ), sometimes a unique treasure appears (kācit viśeṣa-sampat syāt)—mahā-bhava, the highest stage of ecstasy (mahā-bhāva). With the vision of truth (tattva-dṛṣtyā), one sees it in the kingdom of the greatest delight (mahā-praharṣa-sāmrājya-mūrdha-upari), where it dances exuberantly upon the ramparts (sā vai narīnarti).

In mahā-bhāva, the most rare experience, one suffers the torment of burning in the fire of separation from Kṛṣṇa.

From the purely spiritual point of view, this so-called suffering is actually the most sublime ecstasy.