

Śrī Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta

by Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī

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

Part 4

Vaikuntha- The Spiritual Kingdom

yady apy aśeṣa-sat-karma-phalato 'dhikam uttamam

teṣām api phalaty eva tat-pūjā-phalam ātmanā

tathāpi bhagavad-bhakti-yogyam na jāyate phalam

iti sadhu-varais tat tat tatra tatra vinindyate

Although (yady apy) the fruit of their worship of Hari (tat-pūjā-phalam) is in itself (ātmanā) greater than (adhikam uttamam) the results of all pious material activities (aśeṣa-sat-karma-phalato), they do not gain the highest fruit (na jāyate phalam) they would have derived (teṣām api phalaty) from proper devotional service to the Lord (bhagavad-bhakti-yogyam). In various scriptures (tatra tatra), therefore (iti), the best of saintly persons (sadhu-varaih) condemn such materialistic worship (tat tat vinindyate).

Even though the devotees worship the Lord with the results of their pious activities, still they do not get the highest results. ∴ no devotees criticize such worship.

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 Kṛṣṇa, 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

tāni tāni purāṇādi-
vacanāny akhilāny api
tat-tad-viṣayakāny eva
manyasva na tu sarvataḥ

• • • Whenever the
Purāṇas seem to
disregard
you should understand that it
is referring only to such
people who

When the Purāṇas and other scriptures (tāni tāni purāṇādi) 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).

TEXTS 219-220

te 'pi nūnam na tām pūjām tyajeyur yadi sarvathā

tadā tan-niṣṭhayā cite śodhite guṇa-darśinām

kṛpayā kṛṣṇa-bhaktānām prakṣiṇāśeṣa-dūṣaṇāh

kālena kiyatā te 'pi bhavanti paramottamāh

But, if such devotees continue their worship & then, by the mercy of devotees, their hearts will be purified & they will also become Uttamā-bhaktes

But, why is distracting them from higher goals, by giving them material benefits?

But if such materialistic worshipers (te api) never give up their worship (na tām pūjām tyajeyuh) under any circumstance (yadi sarvathā), their dedication (tan-niṣṭhayā) will purify their hearts (cite śodhite). Then (tadā), by the mercy of Kṛṣṇa's devotees (kṛṣṇa-bhaktānām kṛpayā) who see only the good qualities of others (guṇa-darśinām), the faults of such worshipers (dūṣaṇāh) will be exhausted (prakṣiṇa aśeṣa), and in time (kiyatā kālena) those worshipers too (te api) will become first-class devotees (paramottamāh bhavanti).

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-homārcanādiṣu
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 Vaiṣṇavas.

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

But wouldn't it be better for Vaiṣṇavas 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.

TEXTS 221-222

yathā sakāma-bhaktā hi bhuktvā tat kāmitam phalam
kāle bhakti-prabhāveṇa योग्यां vindanti tat phalam

yathā ca tatra tat-kālam bhakter योग्यां na sat phalam
sañjātam iti tac chuddha-bhaktimadbhir vinindyate

Even though, still Sakāma bhakti, (eventually) become bhakti, attain grace by devoting to the deity. But still the devotees later, are still devotees, such a work.

Devotees who have material desires (yathā sakāma-bhaktā hi) first enjoy (bhuktvā) the material results for which they hanker (tat kāmitam phalam), and later (kāle), on the strength of devotional service (bhakti-prabhāveṇa), they enjoy the true fruit of devotion (tat योग्यां phalam vindanti). But because (yathā ca) that fruit (sat bhakter योग्यां phalam) does not at first appear (na tat-kālam sañjātam), pure devotees (śuddha-bhaktimadbhir) decry (vinindyate) what those worshipers first achieve (tat).

TEXT 223

te hi bhakteḥ phalam mūlam
bhagavac-caraṇābjayoḥ
sadā-sandarśana-kriḍā-
nanda-lābhādi manvate

Pure devotees
consider that
seeing the Lord, attaining
the bliss from participating
in His pastimes etc
is the fruit of D.S. & so
it's root as well

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 (kriḍā ānanda lābha ādi) are the fruit (phalam) of devotional service (bhagavac-caraṇābjayoḥ bhakteḥ), and its root as well (mūlam).

Achieving the perfection of prema is only the beginning of Vaikunṭha 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.

TEXT 224

nāpi tatra sahante te
vilambam lava-mātrakam
bhagavān api tān hātum
manāg api na śaknuyāt

Such devotees
cannot tolerate
a moment's delay
in obtaining the
Lord's grace. It is
not for a moment
that they neglect
such devotees.

Another reason
for criticism

Those devotees (te) cannot tolerate (na sahante) even a moment's delay (lava-mātrakam vilambam api) in obtaining that fruit (tatra), nor can the Lord (na bhagavān api) neglect such devotees (tān hātum śaknuyāt) for even a moment (manāg api).

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 tādrśī

... all the
other fruits including
mukti
Can be easily attained.
But not P.D.S

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

Ⓐ dog not
only give P.D. to
others give
control by & subordinate
to those devotees

TEXT 226

tat-prasādena bhaktānām
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 Śukadeva Gosvāmī:

rājan patir gurur alam bhavatām yadūnām
daivam priyah kula-patiḥ kva ca kiṅkaro vaḥ
astv evam aṅga 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 priyah), and the protector (kula-patiḥ) of both the Yadus and Pāṇḍavas (bhavatām yadūnām). But he was sometimes your servant (kva ca kiṅkaro 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.

Why?

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.

TEXT 227

manye mahā-preṣṭha-janānuvaśyatā
na duḥkha-doṣau vidadhīta kaucana
kintu pramodaṁ nija-bhakta-vatsala-
tvādīn mahā-kīrti-guṇāms tanoti sā

In my opinion
The Lord's coming under
the control of His dear-
most servants
→ but only joy of
to see (P) broadcasts
of the Lord's
bhaktavatsalatva gets

In my opinion (manye), the Lord's coming under the control (anuvaśyatā) of His dearest servants (mahā-preṣṭha-jana) creates no unhappiness or fault (na duḥkha-doṣau vidadhīta) of any kind (kaucana). Rather (kintu), it creates great joy (sā pramodaṁ) and broadcasts (tanoti) such glorious qualities of the Lord (mahā-kīrti-guṇān) 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.

TEXT 228

viśeṣato nāgara-śekharasya
svārāmatādi-sva-guṇāpavādaiḥ
apekṣaṇīyā parama-priyā sā
kāṣṭhā parā śrī-bhagavattva-sīmnaḥ

This voluntary
subjection of the
Lord to His devotees
is supremely dear & attractive
because it contradicts His
Qualities like self-satisfaction
In fact, it is the ultimate
perfection of Godhood.

The way the chief of expert heroes (sā nāgara-śekharasya) voluntarily submits to His devotees (viśeṣataḥ) is supremely dear (apekṣaṇīyā) and attractive (parama-priyā) because it contradicts (apavādaiḥ) His self-satisfaction and certain other of His natural qualities (svārāmatā ādi-sva-guṇā). It is the ultimate perfection of Godhood (śrī-bhagavattva-sīmnaḥ parā kāṣṭhā).

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 Vaiṣṇavas, 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-varṇa and other devotional scriptures.

TEXT 229

saprema-bhakteḥ paripākataḥ syāt
kācin mahā-bhāva-viśeṣa-sampat
sā vai narīnarti mahā-praharṣa-
sāmrajya-mūrdhopari tattva-dṛṣṭyā

It is the final maturity of the devotee
It is seen in the kingdom of the greatest delight
It is seen in the kingdom of the greatest delight
It is seen in the kingdom of the greatest delight

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-dṛṣṭyā), one sees it in the kingdom of the greatest delight (mahā-praharṣa-sāmrajya-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.