

Śrī Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta

by Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī

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

Part 4

Vaikuntha- The Spiritual Kingdom

TEXT 38

indra-candrādi-sadr̥śās
tri-netrās̄ catur-ānanāḥ
catur-bhujāḥ sahasrāsyāḥ
kecid aṣṭa-bhujās tathā

Some of
them looked like
Indra, Candra etc.
→ They had 3 eyes, 4 heads,
& 8 arms (or) 1000 faces.

Some (kecid) looked like Indra, Candra, or other demigods (indra-candra ādi sadr̥śāḥ). Some had three eyes, or four heads (tri-netrāḥ catur-ānanāḥ), or four arms (catur-bhujāḥ), or eight (kecid aṣṭa-bhujāḥ)—or a thousand faces (sahasra āsyāḥ).

Some of the Vaikuṅṭha residents looked like the king of heaven, Indra, with a thousand eyes on their bodies and thunderbolt weapons in their hands.

Others appeared like the gods of the moon, sun, fire, and wind.

These demigods headed by Indra are not actually incarnations of the Supreme Lord like Śiva and Brahmā, who are especially empowered guṇa-avatāras.

If required for service to Lord Nārāyaṇa, the Vaikuṅṭha-vāsīs can assume the exact forms of ordinary demigods; but empowered incarnations and direct expansions of Nārāyaṇa, such as Ananta Śeṣa, the Vaikuṅṭha-vāsīs can only emulate, to the extent of copying certain of their bodily features.

TEXT 39

etat-parama-vaicitrī-
hetum vakṣyāmi te 'grataḥ
kṛṣṇa-bhakti-rasāsvāda-
vatām kim syān na sundaram

Later I shall
explain the reason
for such extreme
variety in Vaiṣṇavī.
For those who enjoy
Kṛṣṇa-bhakti-rasā
is there anything
not beautiful?

Later I shall explain to you (vakṣyāmi te agrataḥ) the reason (hetum) for this extreme variety of appearances (etat-parama-vaicitrī). For those who enjoy the moods of devotion to Kṛṣṇa (kṛṣṇa-bhakti-rasāsvādatām), is there anything not beautiful (kim syān na sundaram)?

In Vaikuṅṭha the liberation of sārūpya, having a form similar to that of the Supreme Lord, is available to everyone.

We may reasonably expect, therefore, that all the Vaikuṅṭha residents should have four arms and look like Lord Nārāyaṇa.

Why then did some of them look like humans, monkeys, and all sorts of other forms of life?

Gopa-kumāra later heard from Nārada Muni the definitive philosophical explanation for this variety, and in the course of the present narration Gopa-kumāra will relate that to his own student.

But even granting that there is a reason for varieties of bodies in Vaikuntha, why should Lord Narāyaṇa's devotees assume ugly bodies like those of monkeys?

In response it may be said that we know from common worldly experience that anyone who has intense attraction to something cannot help but see that thing as beautiful, no matter what it is.

This is also true on the spiritual level, otherwise why would the Supreme Lord and His devotees be so attracted to persons like Hanumān and Jāmbavān?

TEXTS 40-41

sarva-prapañcātītānām teṣām vaikunṭha-vāsinām
tasya vaikunṭha-lokasya tasya tan-nāyakasya ca

tāni mähātmya-jātāni prapañcāntar-gataiḥ kila
dr̥ṣṭāntair nopayujyante na śakyante ca bhāṣitum

The residents
of Vaikunṭha are
transcendent to matter.
↓
SARVA for conditions
is V. VESIS to understand
is not possible & vai nāya
with words & their
analogy & thought

The residents of Vaikuntha (teṣām vaikunṭha-vāsinām) transcend everything material (sarva-prapañca atītānām). For persons within the material creation (prapañca antar-gataiḥ), the manifold glories of those residents (tāni mähātmya-jātāni) and the glories of the Vaikunṭha world (tasya vaikunṭha-lokasya) and its master (tasya tan-nāyakasya ca) are beyond analogy (dr̥ṣṭāntair na upayujyante) and beyond the power of words to describe (na śakyante ca bhāṣitum).

Normally the varieties of life forms in any realm indicate a vast hierarchy of relative superiority and inferiority, as Gopa-kumāra saw among the residents of heaven.

Such a hierarchy might seem out of place in Vaikuṅṭha, where everyone should be equal on the platform of sac-cid-ānanda.

Gopa-kumāra wants to explain carefully to his student the real situation but is afraid of committing offenses by applying material examples to the transcendental reality of Vaikuṅṭha.

Therefore he first gives a disclaimer: Comparisons to things of the known world may help neophytes begin to understand the spiritual world but can never do full justice to that higher reality.

Since the categories of spiritual existence are totally different from those of the material world, spiritually immature intelligence has no power to comprehend them directly.

TEXTS 42-43

tathāpi bhavato brahman prapañcāntar-gatasya hi
prapañca-parivārāntar-dṛṣṭi-garbhita-cetasah

tad-dṛṣṭāntākulenaiva tat tat syād bodhitam sukham
tathety ucyeta yat kiñcit tad āgaḥ kṣamatām hariḥ

Nonetheless, this eye a resident of the material world only of intelligence confined to material reality. I use material analogy so that u can come close to understanding sp. reality.

→ May Lord Hari forgive this offense.

→ Pre-Īyotiḥ pra brāhmaṇā

Nonetheless (tathāpi), my dear brāhmaṇa (brahman), you are a resident of the material world (bhavatah prapañca antar-gatasya hi), and your intelligence (cetasah) is confined (garbhita) because all you can see is what is material (prapañca-parivāra-antar-dṛṣṭi). So I say (ucyeta) “It is like this (tathā ity)” so that by material examples (tad-dṛṣṭānta ākulena eva) you might understand various things more easily (tat tat sukham bodhitam syād). May Lord Hari forgive this offense (yat kiñcit tad āgaḥ kṣamatām hariḥ).

An attempt to describe spiritual existence in material terms is, strictly speaking, inappropriate and impossible, yet if a conditioned soul can be even a little attracted by words evoking some of the glories of Vaikuṅṭha, and if he can be encouraged to take up the task of spiritual development, the impossible can indeed become possible.

Any honest attempt to enlighten the conditioned soul with Vaikuṅṭha consciousness is worthwhile and praiseworthy.

Even though our thinking may now be covered by concepts of matter and conditioned life, pure Vaiṣṇavas can guide us gradually to transcendental understanding.

We know from ordinary experience what a king is, so if we can further appreciate the Personality of Godhead as the supreme king, we have begun to understand His glories.