

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 44

The hierarchy
among the devas
is only apparent.
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Actually, they enjoy equality

tatratyānām ca sarveṣām
teṣām sāmyaṁ parasparam
tāratamyam ca lakṣyeta
na virodhas tathāpi ca

Though there seem to be hierarchies in Vaikunṭha (tāratamyam ca lakṣyeta), its residents all (tatratyānām ca sarveṣām) enjoy equality among themselves (teṣām sāmyaṁ parasparam). In this there is no contradiction (na virodhas tathāpi ca).

The residents of Vaikunṭha are equal because all of them can do anything they want.

That some of them appear greater than others is not contradictory, because all these devotees show their natural opulence and power in different degrees by their own free choice.

TEXT 45

na mātsaryādayo doṣāḥ
santi kasyāpi teṣu hi
guṇāḥ svābhāvikā bhānti
nityāḥ satyāḥ sahasraśaḥ

Ties have no
faults like envy
their natural good qualities
always shine forth

Absent (na santi) among them (kasyāpi teṣu) are faults like envy (mātsarya ādayo doṣāḥ). And their innate good qualities (svābhāvikā satyāḥ guṇāḥ) shine forth (bhānti) forever (nityāḥ) by the thousands (sahasraśaḥ).

The superficial appearance of superior and inferior classes among the residents of Vaikuntha cannot cause dissatisfaction there, because the Vaikunṭha-vāsīs are all faultless.

They are never affected by jealousy, the inability to tolerate the superiority of others.

They never quarrel and never disrespect anyone. Rather, they are eternally full in all good qualities, including friendship, humility, and respect.

Material qualities may also be considered eternal in the sense that material nature herself is eternal, but the qualities of the residents of Vaikunṭha are not only eternal (nityāḥ) but also real (satyāḥ); they are not products of Māyā.

The qualities of the Vaikuṅṭha-vāsīs are svābhāvikāh, the natural, spontaneous expressions of spiritual personality.

As Lord Brahmā describes in the Third Canto of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (3.15.18–19):

pārāvatānyabhṛta-sārasa-cakravāka-
dātyūha-haṁsa-śuka-tittiri-barhiṇām yaḥ
kolāhalo viramate 'cira-mātram uccair
bhr̥ṅgādhipē hari-kathām iva gāyamāne

The clamor (kolāhalo) of the doves, cuckoos, cranes, cakravākas, gallinules, swans, parrots, partridges and peacocks (pārāvata-anyabhṛta-sārasa-cakravāka-dātyūha-haṁsa-śuka-tittiri-barhiṇām yaḥ) immediately ceases (viramate acira-mātram) when the king of bees (bhr̥ṅgādhipē) loudly hums (uccaih gāyamāne), with resemblance to glorification of the Lord (hari-kathām iva).

mandāra-kunda-kurabotpala-campakārṇa-
punnāga-nāga-bakulāmbuja-pārijātāḥ
gandhe 'rcite tulasikābharanena tasyā
yasmiṁs tapaḥ sumanaso bahu mānayanti

In the forests of Vaikuṅṭha (yasmin), on smelling the scent of tulasī used in the garlands of the Lord (gandhe ābharanena arcite tulasikā), the mandāra, kunda, kuraba, water lily, campaka, arṇa, punnāga, nāgakeśara, baluka, lotus and pārijāta trees, being of pure mind (sumanasah), give great respect to tulasī (bahu mānayanti) for her performance of austerity to achieve that position (tasyāḥ tapaḥ).

Gopa-kumāra's further description of his own experience of Vaikuṅṭha will establish that the pigeons and other creatures mentioned by Brahmā are all personal associates of Lord Nārāyaṇa.

TEXT 46

prapañcāntar-gatā bhoga-
parā viṣayiṇo yathā
bahir-drṣṭyā tathekṣyante
te hi muktārcitāṅghrayaḥ

Superficially
these V. Vaṣis look
in the sense enjoyers
but they focus feet
is worshiped even by
liberated souls

Superficially (bahir-drṣṭyā) those residents of Vaikuṅṭha (te) may appear (tathā īkṣyante) like (yathā) sense enjoyers (bhoga-parā viṣayiṇaḥ) of the material realm (prapañca antar-gatā), but in fact their feet are worshiped by liberated souls (te hi mukta Arcita aṅghrayaḥ).

Because the devotees of Vaikuntha enjoy their senses in wonderful ways, living a life full of song and dance, one might judge them to be no better than the selfish materialists of the world of Māyā.

The truth is, however, that the feet of the Vaikunṭha-vāsīs are worshiped by elevated souls who have transcended the limits of matter, given up the attractions of sense pleasure, and dedicated themselves fully to the service of the Supreme Lord.

There is no valid reason to suspect that the devotees of Vaikunṭha are ever addicted to the paltry enjoyment provided by material senses.

In Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (3.15.17, 20), Lord Brahmā also points this out in his description of Vaikuntha:

vaimānikāḥ sa-lalanāś caritāni śaśvad
gāyanti yatra śamala-kṣapaṇāni bhartuḥ
antar-jale 'nuvikasan-madhu-mādhavīnām
gandhena khaṇḍita-dhiyo 'py anilam kṣipantaḥ

In the Vaikuntha planets the inhabitants fly in their air planes (yatra vaimānikāḥ) accompanied by their wives and consorts (sa-lalanāḥ), and eternally sing of the character and activities of the Lord (śaśvad gāyanti bhartuḥ caritāni) which are devoid of all inauspicious qualities (śamala-kṣapaṇāni). While singing, they criticize the wind (anilam kṣipantaḥ) since it distracts their minds (khaṇḍita-dhiyah) with its perfume of honey laden Madhavi flowers (madhu-mādhavīnām gandhena), which had blossomed inside the water (antar-jale anuvikasan).

In other words, even while enjoying wonderfully, the devotees in Vaikuntha are always absorbed in the ecstasy of worshiping the Personality of Godhead.

The mādhavī flower blooms during the spring, when the attraction of sense pleasures reaches a peak.

Yet even though such attractions may stimulate the senses of the devotees, this does not at all distract them from their devotional service.

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yat saṅkulam hari-padānati-mātra-dr̥ṣṭair
vaidūrya-mārakata-hema-mayair vimānaiḥ
yeṣāṁ br̥hat-kaṭi-taṭāḥ smita-śobhi-mukhyaḥ
kṛṣṇātmanām na raja ādadhur utsmayādyaiḥ

Vaikunṭha (yat) is filled with (saṅkulam) airplanes (vimānaiḥ) made of gold, vaidūrya and emeralds (vaidūrya-mārakata-hema-mayair), obtained solely by worship of the Lord's lotus feet (hari-pada ānati-mātra-dr̥ṣṭair). It is filled with devotees (yeṣāṁ) absorbed in the Lord (kṛṣṇātmanām) who cannot be disturbed (na raja ādadhuh) by the smiles, glances and words (utsmayādyaiḥ) of the most beautiful women (śobhi-mukhyaḥ) with broad hips (br̥hat-kaṭi-taṭāḥ) and smiling faces (smita).

Ḳarmīs, jñānīs, and yogīs cannot hope to obtain anything for sense gratification like what the devotees of Vaikuṅṭha enjoy.

All this enjoyment, however, never degrades the Vaikuṅṭha devotees from the mode of pure goodness, because they are perfectly fixed in the loving service of Lord Nārāyaṇa.

TEXT 47

te nirvikāratā-prānta-
sīmām prāptāś ca tanvate
vikārāl līlayā citrān
prabhu-līlānusāriṇaḥ

Even though
the V-V have reached
the limit of changelessness
still they playfully show
all kinds of transformations
while taking part in Prabhu-līlā

Those devotees (te) have attained (prāptāḥ) the absolute limit of changelessness (nirvikāratā-prānta-sīmām), yet they playfully show (līlayā tanvate) all kinds of transformations (citrān vikārāt) while taking part in their Lord's pastimes (prabhu-līlā anusāriṇaḥ).

In both types of the Supreme Lord's pastimes—those predominated by the mood of opulence and those predominated by sweetness—the devotees who take part pretend to undergo transformations just to create the varieties that give the Lord pleasure.

In Vaikuṅṭha there are no forces of nature to impel anyone to do anything he doesn't want to.

The only force impelling the devotees is pure love, which makes them act exclusively for the pleasure of Lord Nārāyaṇa.

TEXT 48

Even though
all the residents
are equal, still they
exhibit variety, following
the airplane

atas te 'nyonyam ekatvam
gatā api pṛthag-vidhāḥ
tat sthānam sa vimānaughas
tatratyam sarvam īdṛśam

Thus (ataḥ), although equals (anyonyam ekatvam gatā api), they manifest individual variety (pṛthag-vidhāḥ). In that place (tat sthānam) everything is so (tatratyam sarvam īdṛśam), including the profusion of airplanes (sa vimāna oghah).

Because the Personality of Godhead wants to enjoy varied pastimes, His devotees, who are all essentially equal on the platform of pure spiritual existence, assume different forms and positions in His service.

Even the apparently inanimate things of Vaikuṅṭha are of the same transcendental nature.

Thus the airplanes, trees, houses, and so on are all perfect living beings, qualitatively one with the Supreme Lord and with all other living persons, and they appear in whatever forms the Lord requires for His pleasure.