

Śrī Brhad-bhāgavatāmṛta

by Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī

Volume - 2

Śrī-goloka-māhātmya

The Glories of Goloka

Part 5

Prema- Love of God

Text 200

pitāmaho 'sau kuru-pāṇḍavānām
brhad-vrato dharma-paro 'pi bhīṣmaḥ
vrajāṅganotkarṣa-nirūpanena
tam anta-kāle bhagavantam astaut

Blissful
@ the time of
Prasanna's baby, while
staying in the forest.

[Nārada continued:] The grandfather (pitāmahaḥ) of the Kurus and Pāṇḍavas (kuru-pāṇḍavānām)—Bhīṣma himself (asau bhīṣmaḥ), sworn to the great vow of lifelong celibacy (brhad-vrataḥ) and strictly true to the principles of religion (dharma-parah)—at the time of passing away (anta-kāle), praised the Personality of Godhead (tam bhagavantam astaut) by telling of the excellence (utkarṣa-nirūpanena) of the young women of Vraja (vraja-aṅganā).

As wonderful as it is that Akrūra appreciated the gopīs, it is even more amazing that Bhīṣma, a warrior and lifelong celibate who should know nothing about such things, also glorified these young girls.

As Bhīṣma lay on a bed of arrows on the Kurukṣetra battlefield, just before he left his body, he sang the glories of Kṛṣṇa's girlfriends in Vṛndāvana.

This was the same Bhīṣma who was a strict naiṣṭhika-
brahmacārī, a kṣatriya more interested in warfare than
romantic concerns, the same Bhīṣma who dueled with his
own guru, Paraśurāma, the Supreme Lord's incarnation, and
shot cruel arrows at Kṛṣṇa, Arjuna's chariot driver.

Such a great authority is Bhīṣma that if he considers the gopīs
so elevated, surely they must be.

Text 201

The gopīs
absorbed by deep
His expert actions, words, glances etc.
attending to
in harmony
& attending to nature
of Kṛṣṇa himself. they responded

lalita-gati-vilāsa-valgu-hāsa-
praṇaya-nirīkṣaṇa-kalpitoru-mānāḥ
kṛtam anukṛtavatya unmadāndhāḥ
prakṛtim agan kila yasya gopa-vadhvaḥ

The gopīs (gopa-vadhvaḥ) were worshipped (kalpita uru-mānāḥ) by Kṛṣṇa's expert actions (lalita-gati-vilāsa), emotional displays, words and glances (valgu-hāsa-praṇaya-nirīkṣaṇa). Attaining those qualities (kṛtam), they responded in harmony to his most extraordinary displays of love (anukṛta-vatya), blinded by the madness of love (unmada andhāḥ). How amazing (kila) that these gopīs attained the nature of Kṛṣṇa himself (yasya prakṛtim agan).

This verse from Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (1.9.40) is among those that impart Bhīṣma's final words.

The Supreme Personality of Godhead Kṛṣṇa favored the gopīs with the highest honor by worshiping them with His own graceful movements and gestures during His rāsa-līlā and other pastimes.

Therefore the gopīs should be understood to be the greatest devotees of the Supreme Lord, greater than all the recipients of the Lord's gifts of sense enjoyment, power, liberation, and devotion, and greater even than Mahā-lakṣmī.

When Kṛṣṇa left the gopīs at the beginning of the rāsa dance, in their ecstatic madness they became as if blind; in other words, they lost their ability to see the means and ends of happiness in this world and the next.

In that state they acted out His pastimes, like the lifting of Govardhana Hill, and became just like Him.

That is to say, they entered a special kind of trance in which their bodies assumed many of His excellent qualities (prakṛtim aḡan).

The gopīs, fixed in the sac-cid-ānanda spiritual nature, then appeared worthy of worship by the entire world, able to deliver the universe, and full of compassion for everyone.

Or, taking the meaning of the word prakṛti to be “mind” and agan to be “entered,” when Kṛṣṇa was away from the rāsa dance the gopīs deeply entered His mind, and because of their extreme devotion while feeling His absence they became the object of His deep meditation.

Therefore the gopīs are glorified in this way:

viyoginīnām api paddhatim vo
na yogino gantum api kṣamante
yad dhyeya-rūpasya parasya puṁso
yūyam gatā dhyāna-padam durāpam

“Even great yogīs (yoginah api) are not able to pursue (na gantum kṣamante) your method of worshiping the Supreme Lord (vah paddhatim) with the feeling of His absence (viyoginīnām api). He is the proper object of meditation (yad dhyeya-rūpasya), but you have become (yūyam gatā) the object of His (puṁso parasya dhyāna-padam). This is a perfection nearly impossible to attain (durāpam).”
(Padyāvalī of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, 351)

Though Kṛṣṇa is the supreme goal, rarely achieved, of powerful lords of the universe like Brahmā and other demigods, of self-satisfied yogīs like Sanaka and his brothers, of pure devotees like Nārada, and of beloved consorts like the goddess Lakṣmī, Kṛṣṇa truly worships the gopīs, endeavoring to attract them with His unprecedented and splendid pastimes.

When the gopīs are maddened in the height of their love in separation, they cannot discern right from wrong.

And so they imitate Kṛṣṇa's activities and invade Kṛṣṇa's own mind.

Thus they are surely the greatest of all Vaiṣṇavas, and to be the only object of desire for these greatest of Vaiṣṇavas, Kṛṣṇa must be the Supreme Person.

Thinking like this, Bhīṣma, filled with ecstasy at the time of his passing away, prayed that Śrī Gopīnātha be present before his eyes as he left his body.

The ladies of
Yudhishtira spoke the
same way when they
were watching the
leaving to Dwarka

Text 202

tās tathaiivāhur anyonyam
kauravendra-pura-striyah
paśyantyo bhagavantam tam
gacchantam sva-puram tatah

The ladies of the capital of King Yudhisthira (tāh kauravendra-pura-striyah) spoke the same way (tathaiiva āhuh) among themselves (anyonyam) while watching (paśyantyah) that very Personality of Godhead (tam bhagavantam) leave (gacchantam) for His own capital (sva-puram tatah):

Since the greatly learned Bhīṣma knew about the glories of the Personality of Godhead, it is understandable that he should have spoken such praise of the gopīs.

More surprising, however, is that women without such specialized knowledge could glorify the gopīs in the same way, as did the women of Hastināpura.

As described in the First Canto of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (1.10.20):

anyonyam āsīt sañjalpa
uttama-śloka-cetasām
kauravendra-pura-strīṇām
sarva-śruti-mano-harah

The Kuru women (kauravendra-pura-strīṇām), fully absorbed
in Kṛṣṇa (uttama-śloka-cetasām), conversed about him
(anyonyam sañjalpa āsīt) with words attractive to all ears
and minds (sarva-śruti-mano-harah).

Śrīla Śrīdhara Svāmī explains:

“The prayers of the ladies in Hastināpura attracted the attention of all the Vedas, and thus the personified Upaniṣads congratulated those ladies. Because the ladies belonged to the capital of Śrī Yudhiṣṭhira, the Kaurava king, it is implied that by their connection with him they certainly could have spoken such realizations.”

What is more, the women of Hastināpura expressed those
realizations at a moment of painful crisis for them, when
Kṛṣṇa was leaving the Kaurava capital for His own city,
Dvārakā.

Kṛṣṇa's influence is so wonderful that even while Kṛṣṇa was
abandoning them they could glorify their rivals in Dvārakā
and Vṛndāvana.