

Śrī Brhad-bhāgavatāmṛta

by Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī

Volume - 2

Śrī-goloka-māhātmya

The Glories of Goloka

Part 7

Jagad-ānanda

The Bliss of the Worlds

Text 113

ete 'linas tava yaśo 'khila-loka-tīrtham
gāyanta ādi-puruṣānupatham bhajante
prāyo amī muni-gaṇā bhavadiya-mukhyā
gūḍham vane 'pi na jahaty anaghātma-daivam

These bees
must all be grt
sages & devotees
they are worshipping U
following U & chanting U
Even though U have disguised
within the forest
→ they refuse
to abandon U!

“O original personality (ādi-puruṣa), these (ete) bees (alinah) must all be great sages (muni-gaṇāḥ) and most elevated devotees of Yours (bhavadiya mukhyāḥ), for they are worshiping You (prāyah amī bhajante) by following You along the path (anupatham) and chanting (gāyantah) Your (tava) glories (yaśah), which are themselves a holy place (tīrtham) for the entire world (akhila-loka). Though You have disguised Yourself within this forest (gūḍham vane api), O sinless one (anagha), they refuse to abandon You (na jahati), their worshipable Lord (ātma-daivam).”

Better than the nonmoving creatures are those who can move,
beginning with the insects, bugs, and worms.

Parīksit Mahārāja now recounts Lord Kṛṣṇa's praise of the bees
who follow His brother Balarāma wherever He goes
(Bhāgavatam 10.15.6).

As explained before, this praise is also applicable to Kṛṣṇa
Himself.

Those bees never stop chanting Kṛṣṇa's glories, which are like holy pilgrimage sites that bestow spiritual upliftment on all living beings.

Kṛṣṇa's glories, like a universally magnanimous spiritual master, can deliver any person, whether fit to be saved or not.

Those glories bestow upon everyone who comes in contact with them divine knowledge of the greatness of pure devotional service.

The bees that follow Kṛṣṇa are great sages, but not sages like the self-satisfied impersonalists; rather, they are Kṛṣṇa's devotees (bhavadīya).

And of His devotees they are among the most elevated (mukhyāḥ) because although Kṛṣṇa hides Himself in the forest they never stop following Him.

He is their all-in-all, the Lord of their life.

To join Him in the forest, they disguise themselves as bees and thus take the opportunity to worship Him always with their songs.

Here Lord Kṛṣṇa calls Balarāma ādi-puruṣa, the original Supreme Person.

This means that the bees, who are always with Kṛṣṇa, are among the ādi-sevakas, the Lord's original eternal servants.

They always worship Him suitably according to the various pastimes He performs. Śrī Kṛṣṇa also calls Balarāma anagha, meaning “sinless,” “free from all faults,” “neglectful of all offenses against Him,” and “granting salvation from all miseries.”

Because Kṛṣṇa is anagha in these ways, the bees can never abandon Him; they worship Him in any circumstance, fearless of reactions for their offenses and confident that devotional service will protect them from all distress.

In truth, the bees of Vrndāvana are better than other sages
because the bees never stop singing the glories of Kṛṣṇa
whereas other sages sometimes fall silent, absorbed in ecstatic
trance.

Those bees are like the great Vaiṣṇava munis who never stop
seeking Kṛṣṇa even though He is hidden in the forest of the
Vedas.

Though His pastimes are difficult to understand and His service is difficult to achieve, the determined Vaiṣṇavas never abandon Him; they strive to locate His glories even on the paths of karma and jñāna.

They always sing those glories and promote them as the most serviceable spiritual asset, and so they realize Kṛṣṇa directly as the indwelling Supersoul of all jīvas, their worshipable Supreme Lord.

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As Vaiṣṇava sages surrender to Kṛṣṇa, giving up everything to serve Him in pure love, so do the bees in Vṛndāvana.

Text 114

sarasi sārasa-hamṣa-vihaṅgās

cāru-gīta-hṛta-cetasa etya

harim upāsata te yata-cittā

hanta mīlita-dṛśo dhṛta-maunāḥ

“The charming (cāru) flute song (gīta) steals away (hṛta) the minds (cetasah) of the cranes (sārasa), swans (hamṣa), and other lake-dwelling birds (sarasi vihaṅgāḥ). Indeed, they approach (hanta te etya) Kṛṣṇa (harim), close (mīlita) their eyes (dṛśah) and, maintaining (dhṛta) strict silence (maunāḥ), worship Him (upāsata) by fixing their consciousness upon Him in deep meditation (yata cittah).”

This is another verse sung by the gopīs who were trying to console one another during the daytime, when Kṛṣṇa was absent.

The birds of Vraja are superior to the bugs and insects, but even among the birds there are different levels of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

The waterfowl are a little less fortunate than the others because they have less opportunity to be close to Kṛṣṇa.

The waterfowl described in this verse (Bhāgavatam 10.35.11)
live in a far-away lake filled with clean water, clusters of
lotuses, and various other attractions.

Innumerable cranes, swans, and other birds forever sport in
that lake.

But when they hear the beautiful song of Kṛṣṇa's flute, their
minds are captivated.

First they become bewildered and fly about madly in all directions.

Then they return to the lake and settle down to engage in serious worship of Lord Hari.

To fix their attention exclusively on Him, they restrain their minds, bodies, and speech.

They subdue their minds, close their eyes, and resort to complete silence, bringing not only mind, sight, and speech but all their senses under strict control.

Or, understanding the word upāsata to mean “they approached” rather than “they worshiped,” the birds leave the lake to come near Kṛṣṇa and sit by His side.

Being close to Kṛṣṇa gives them the highest pleasure, as shown by the way they become peaceful, closing their eyes and staying silent.

The word hanta in this verse indicates joy and surprise.

2nd Understanding

But it can also be taken to express disappointment, and accordingly the whole statement of the verse can be understood in a different way: The birds approached Kṛṣṇa and apparently calmed down, but were their minds actually peaceful?

Not at all.

Taking the liberty of adding the negative prefix a- to the words mīlita and dhr̥ta-maunāḥ, we can read, we can read te 'yata-cittā / hantāmīlita-dṛśo 'dhr̥ta-maunāḥ: the birds could not control their minds (ayata-cittāḥ), could not close their eyes (amīlita-dṛśaḥ), and could not be silent (adhṛta-maunāḥ).

Their meditation on Kṛṣṇa caused such ecstatic mental transformations that they couldn't possibly keep their minds calm.

They were in such anxiety from being unable to see Krsna that they couldn't close their eyes, which even lost the natural ability to blink.

And they took to such loud saṅkīrtana of Krsna's names that any trace of sobriety was out of the question.

3rd understanding → EXPRESSION of love.

Or, understanding the birds' condition in another way:

As a result of worshiping Kṛṣṇa by meditating on Him, they attained the ecstasy of mūrccchā, loss of consciousness.

Their minds dissolving into oblivion, they simply closed their eyes and fell silent.

In other words, the gopī speaking implies, though these birds are members of a different species of life, though they live in the sky, though they are males, and though they live in a distant lake, where they are busy enjoying in various ways, the song of Kṛṣṇa's flute has forcibly dragged them into Kṛṣṇa's association.

Concentrating their minds on Kṛṣṇa has awakened in the birds
a transcendental prema that has destroyed their natural peace
and thoughtfulness, disturbed their consciousness with all
sorts of agitation, and rendered them completely bewildered.

What can be said, then, of the constant state of the gopīs, who
have no other purpose in life than to serve Kṛṣṇa?

They too must be suffering, but much more severely.

Text 115

All the birds in the forest have risen to the trees to see (Kṛṣṇa). With closed eyes they are listening to the sweet vibrations of His flute & they are attracted to any other sound → surely, these birds are on the same level of the grs sages.

prāyo batāmba munayo vihaḡā vane 'smin
kṛṣṇeksitam tad-uditam kala-venu-gītam
āruhya ye druma-bhujān rucira-pravālān
śṛṇvanti mīlita-dṛśo vigatānya-vācaḥ

“O mother (amba), in this (asmin) forest (vane) all the birds (ye vihaḡāḥ) have risen (āruhya) onto the beautiful (rucira-pravālān) branches of the trees (druma-bhujān) to see Kṛṣṇa (kṛṣṇa-īkṣitam). With closed eyes (mīlita-dṛśaḥ) they are simply listening in silence (śṛṇvanti) to the sweet vibrations (kala) of His flute (tad-uditam venu-gītam), and they are not attracted by any other sound (vigatānya-vācaḥ). Surely (bata) these birds are on the same level (prāyaḥ) as great sages (munayaḥ).”

Another gopī, enchanted by hearing Kṛṣṇa's flute, sings this verse (Bhāgavatam 10.21.14) to Mother Yaśodā, or else to a girlfriend.

Here even more fortunate birds are glorified, those who live in the same trees that provide shade for Kṛṣṇa as He wanders about the Vṛndāvana forest.

All the birds in Vṛndāvana should be recognized as great sages; or, as indicated by the word prāyaḥ (taken to mean "many"), sages are not so numerous in Vraja, but there are many birds.

These birds are able to hear the mellow song of Kṛṣṇa's flute, which Kṛṣṇa plays for the enjoyment of the cows and the cowherd boys and girls of Śrī Vṛndāvana.

When Kṛṣṇa is far away, the birds may not hear the sound distinctly, but still its effect on them is vivid.

That sound bestows upon them the vision of Kṛṣṇa (kṛṣṇasya īkṣitam), and by bringing them to the tops of the trees it also becomes the means by which Kṛṣṇa sees them (kṛṣṇena īkṣitam).

The flute song is also kṛṣṇekṣitam (“seen by Kṛṣṇa”), in the sense that only Kṛṣṇa can conceive of such beautiful music.

It is produced from Kṛṣṇa (kṛṣṇasya uditam), and this suggests also that the sound of the flute creates an opportunity for the birds to perceive Kṛṣṇa by hearing; hearing the sound is another way for them to see Kṛṣṇa, who is not easily visible to them through the abundant foliage.

Though the rich new growth on the branches makes it difficult for the birds to see Kṛṣṇa, it also attracts Kṛṣṇa to the trees to pick the fresh leaves, fruits, and flowers.

So the birds put aside their normal business of foraging and fly to the highest branches, where the leaves and twigs don't block the line of sight between them and Kṛṣṇa.

Perched in the treetops, eyes closed in meditation, the birds
appear like great sages.

Indeed, sages who want to devote themselves to Kṛṣṇa perch
themselves on various branches of the tree of the Vedas, which
bear the attractive, tender twigs of various methods for spiritual
advancement.

The sages learn from the Vedas how to realize Kṛṣṇa, and with
enthusiasm they practice the disciplines approved by the Vedas,
such as offering to Kṛṣṇa the results of all work.

But even while seriously studying the Vedas and pondering what they mean, the sages become attracted to hearing Kṛṣṇa's all-attractive flute and become eager to see Him.

They cease to be attached to their Vedic education and instead become attached to seeing Kṛṣṇa constantly in their hearts.

Closing their eyes in great ecstasy, they then dedicate themselves exclusively to His nāma-saṅkīrtana.

Or else it may be understood that sages devoted to the Personality of Godhead come to the Vrndāvana forest to become birds and listen to the song of His flute.

According to the commentary of Śrīla Śrīdhara Svāmī, all sages, even if content in their own selves, should become birds in the Vrndāvana forest.

Or, granting that some sages are disqualified from entrance into Vrndāvana because they are less fortunate and confused by Māyā, at least most of them should (prāyaḥ).

They should become birds in Vṛndāvana because thus they can easily achieve what they aspire for, and much more.

Because the birds living in the Vṛndāvana forest have the great fortune to be able to hear Kṛṣṇa's flute so often, they should be acknowledged to be greater devotees than the bees.

And thinking about the birds makes Kṛṣṇa's girlfriends even more disappointed than before:

“How terrible this is! We don't have such unalloyed devotion
for Kṛṣṇa. We can't see Kṛṣṇa or hear His flute when He goes
to the forest. We can't renounce everything and climb the
branches of the trees. And when we don't see Him, we can't
simply stop talking and close our eyes like these birds. To hell
with us gopīs!”