

Laghu - Bhāgavatāmṛta

Part-1

The Sweetness of Kṛṣṇa

Chapter-2

Description of the Puruṣāvatāras and
Guṇāvatāras

What are *Avataras*?

What are Avataras?

Text-1

**athāvatārāḥ kathyante
kṛṣṇo yeṣu ca puṣkalah**

Among the avatāras described (**atha avatārāḥ kathyante**), Kṛṣṇa is svayaṁ-rūpa, the complete avatārī, the basis of all other forms (**kṛṣṇo yeṣu ca puṣkalah**).

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- By previously describing Kṛṣṇa as svayam, it is understood that Kṛṣṇa is the root of all the avatāras.
- Now begins a description of the avatāras.
- It may be objected that Kṛṣṇa is also glorified as one of the avatāras. This verse responds.
- Occasionally he is counted as an avatāra because of appearing in this world like the others.
- He however is puṣkala, svayaṁ-rūpa.
- Haima says puṣkalas tu pūraṇe, śreṣṭhe: puṣkala means complete or best

What are Avataras?

Text-2

**tal-lakṣaṇam –
pūrvoktā viśva-kāryārtham
apūrvā iva cet svayam |
dvārāntareṇa vāviḥsyur
avatārās tadā smṛtāḥ**

If the forms previously described (svayam-rūpa, tad-ekātma or āveśa) (**pūrvoktā cet**) appear in this world (**āviḥ syuh**) as ever-unique (**apūrvā iva**), either directly or through an agent (**svayam vā dvārāntareṇa**), for certain purposes in the material world (**viśva-kāryārtham**), they are known as avatāras (**avatārās tadā smṛtāḥ**).

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- If (cet) the forms previously described such as svayaṁ-rūpa (pūrvoktā) appear (āviṣyuh) in this world directly (svayam) or through an agent (dvārāntareṇa) they are considered avatāras.
- The form that descends from the spiritual world to the material world is called an avatāra.
- Matsya and Haṁśa, who appeared directly for Brahmā, manifested forms without a visible source, according to Mahābhārata and other scriptures, whereas Garbhodakaśāyī-viṣṇu appears from Kāraṇodakaśāyī-viṣṇu.
- Kṛṣṇa appears from Vasudeva, and Rāma appears through Daśaratha.
- What is their purpose?

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- They appear to produce the universe or to perform activities within the universe (viśva-kāryārtham).
- That means they appear to produce mahat-tattva by agitating prakṛti (Mahāviṣṇu) or to satisfy the devatās by killing the sinful, to give bliss to the devotees longing to see the Lord by becoming visible to them, and to preach pure bhakti.
- Apūrvā iva means that they appear ever-unique, as if not having appeared before.
- Thus they are all remarkable.

What are Avataras?

Text-3

**tac ca dvāram tad-ekātma-
rūpas tad-bhakta eva ca |
śeṣa-śāyy-ādiko yadvad
vasudevādiko 'pi ca**

The agent of the Lord's appearance (**tac ca dvāram**) may be a tad-ekātma-rūpa (the Lord) or a devotee (**tad-ekātma-rūpas tad-bhakta eva ca**). Mahāviṣṇu lying on Śeṣa is an example of the tad-ekātma-rūpa agent (cause of Garbhodakaśāyī-viṣṇu) (**śeṣa-śāyy-ādiko yadvad**) and Vasudeva (father of Kṛṣṇa) is an example of a devotee acting as agent (**vasudevādiko 'pi ca**).

- This verse explains the agents of the Lord's appearance. The term is explained fully.

What are Avataras?

Text-4

**puruṣākhyā guṇātmano
līlātmānaś ca te tridhā**

There are three types of avatāra (**te tridhā**): puruṣāvatāras, guṇāvatāras and līlāvatāras (**puruṣākhyā guṇātmano līlātmānaś ca**).

- This verse classifies the avatāras.

What are Avataras?

Text-5

prāyaḥ svāmśās tathāveśā
avatārā bhavanty amī |
atra yaḥ syāt svayamrūpaḥ
so 'gre vyaktībhaviṣyati

The avatāras are generally the svāmśa and āveśa forms (**prāyaḥ svāmśāh tathāveśā amī avatārā bhavanty**). The appearance of the svayam-rūpa as avatāra (**yaḥ svayamrūpaḥ atra vyaktībhaviṣyati**) will be explained later (**sah agre syāt**).

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- Svāmśa refers to Saṅkarṣaṇa lying on Śeṣa and others. (Śeṣa here is the Lord not a jīva)
- Āveśa refers to Nārada, the Kumāras, Pṛthu and others.
- “Generally” means that sometimes the svayam-rūpa appears.
- Atra means “among the avatāras.”
- The description of the appearance of the svayam-rūpa will occur after the discussion of the Lord of Vaikuṅṭha (in Chapter Five).

The Purusavataras

The Purusavataras

Text-6

tatra puruṣa-lakṣaṇam, yathā śrī-viṣṇu-purāṇe
tasyaiva yo 'nugūṇa-bhug bahudhaika eva
śuddho 'py aśuddha iva mūr̥ti-vibhāga-bhedaiḥ |
jñānānvitaḥ sakala-sattva-vibhūti-kartā
tasmai nato 'smi puruṣāya sadāvyayāya || iti |

The puruṣa is described in the Viṣṇu Purāṇa (**tatra puruṣa-lakṣaṇam, yathā śrī-viṣṇu-purāṇe**):

I offer my respects to the indestructible Lord (**tasmai nato 'smi sadā vyayāya puruṣāya**) whose is a portion of Kṛṣṇa (**yah tasya eva**), who partakes of material creation through his glance (**anugūṇa-bhug**), who is one but is many (**eka eva bahudhā**), because of manifesting many amśas (**mūr̥ti-vibhāga-bhedaiḥ**), who is pure but appears impure (**śuddho 'py aśuddha iva**), who is full of knowledge (**jñānānvitaḥ**), and who is the cause of distributing all living entities (**sakala-sattva-vibhūti-kartā**). **Viṣṇu Purāṇa**

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- Śrīdhara Svāmī comments that this verse is continuous with the previous verse concerning the Supreme Lord.
- This verse describes the puruṣāvatāras according to the Viṣṇu Purāṇa. There is a description of the Supreme Lord previous to this in the Viṣṇu Purāṇa:

nānto 'sti yasya na ca yasya samuddbhavo 'sti
vṛddhir na yasya pariṇāma-vivarjitasya
nāpakṣayaṁ ca samupaity avikalpa-vastu
yas tam nato 'smi puruṣottamādyam idyam.

I offer respects to the worshipable Lord (**tam idyam nato 'smi**) who is the source of the puruṣāvatāras (**yah puruṣottamādyam**), who has no destruction (**yasya na antah asti**), no creation (**na ca yasya samuddbhavo asti**), no increase (**na yasya vṛddhir**), no transformation into something else (**pariṇāma-vivarjitasya**), no decay (**nāpakṣayaṁ ca samupaity**) and who is without doubt real (**avikalpa-vastu**).

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- Yah refers to a portion of the Lord.
- Anugūṇa means continuous material gūṇas.
- He is responsible for starting the material manifestation made of guṇas by his glance and maintaining control over it.
- Though he is one, without giving up that oneness, he becomes many by aṁśas he shows different forms (mūrti-vibhāga-bhedaiḥ).
- He is the cause of distribution of all life forms (sakala-sattva-vibhūti-kartā).
- But would he not become contaminated because of his contact with matter?
- The verses says that he is pure, though appearing impure, because he performs the creation of the universe by his will alone, and though he enters the universe he does not touch it because of his acintya-śakti.

The Purusavataras

Text-7

tatra kārīkā –
parameśāṁśa-rūpo yaḥ
pradhāna-guṇa-bhāg iva |
tad-īkṣādi-kṛtir nānā
vatāraḥ puruṣaḥ smṛtaḥ

Here is an explanatory verse (**tatra kārīkā**):

He is known as the puruṣa (**puruṣaḥ smṛtaḥ**) who manifests many avatāras (**yaḥ nānā avatāraḥ**), who glances over matter to manifest the universe from prakṛti (**tad-īkṣādi-kṛtir**), who maintains its transformations (**pradhāna-guṇa-bhāg iva**), and who is the aṁśa of Kṛṣṇa (**parameśa aṁśa-rūpaḥ**).

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- This verse clarifies the meaning.
- Kārikā is a commentary.
- Amara-koṣa says kārīkā yātanāvṛtṭyāḥ: Kārīkā means torture and repetition.
- In this way the characteristics of the three puruṣas have been shown.

The Purusavataras

Text-8

asyāvatāratvaṁ ca śrī-bhāgavate
dvitīya-skandhe –
ādyo 'vatāraḥ puruṣaḥ parasya iti

The Second Canto of Bhāgavatam (śrī-bhāgavate dvitīya-skandhe) describes the puruṣas as avatāras (asya avatāratvaṁ): The first puruṣāvatāra of Kṛṣṇa is Mahā-viṣṇu (parasya ādyo puruṣaḥ avatāraḥ). SB 2.6.42

- Parasya refers to Kṛṣṇa, the source of the avatāras.

The Purusavataras

Text-9

**tasya ca bhedaḥ, yathā sātvata-tantre –
viṣṇos tu trīṇi rūpāṇi puruṣākhyāny atho viduḥ |
ekam tu mahataḥ sraṣṭṛ dvitīyaṁ tantu-saṁsthitam |
tṛtīyaṁ sarva-bhūtaṣṭhaṁ tāni jñātvā vimucyate || iti**

The types of puruṣāvatāra are described in the Sātvata-tantra (**tasya ca bhedaḥ, yathā sātvata-tantre**):

The wise know (**atho viduḥ**) that the puruṣa consists of three forms of the original Viṣṇu –Saṅkarṣaṇa (**viṣṇos tu trīṇi rūpāṇi puruṣākhyāny**). The first is the creator of the mahat-tattva (**ekam tu mahataḥ sraṣṭṛ**). The second is situated within the universe (**dvitīyaṁ tantu-saṁsthitam**). The third is situated within each living entity (**tṛtīyaṁ sarva-bhūtaṣṭhaṁ**). Knowing these three, one becomes liberated (**tāni jñātvā vimucyate**).

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- The creator of the mahat-tattva is the antaryāmi of prakṛti called Saṅkarṣaṇa (Mahā viṣṇu).
- The second is the antaryāmī of Brahmā and is called Pradyumna (Garbhodakaśāyī-viṣṇu).
- The third is the antaryāmī of all jīvas and is called Aniruddha (Kṣīrodakaśāyī-viṣṇu).

The Purusavataras

Text-10

tatra prathamam, yathaikādaśe –
bhūtair yadā pañcabhir ātma-sṛṣṭaiḥ
puraṁ virājam viracayya tasmin |
svāmśena viṣṭaḥ puruṣābhidhānam
avāpa nārāyaṇa ādidevaḥ

The first puruṣa is described in the Eleventh Canto of Bhāgavatam (**tatra prathamam, yathā ekādaśe**):

When the primeval Lord Nārāyaṇa (**yadā nārāyaṇa ādidevaḥ**) created His universal body (**virājam puraṁ viracayya**) out of the five elements produced from Himself (**ātma-sṛṣṭaiḥ pañcabhir bhūtair**) and then entered within that universal body (**tasmin viṣṭaḥ**) by His own plenary portion (**svāmśena**), He thus became known as the puruṣa (**puruṣa abhidhānam avāpa**). **SB 11.4.3**

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- Nārāyaṇa is called ādideva (original god) because he has his own inherent powers.
- When Saṅkarṣaṇa (ātma) created the abode of the universe out of the five elements generated by (sṛṣṭaiḥ) himself, and entered the universe as Pradyumna, that form became known as the puruṣa.

Text-11

brahma-saṁhitāyām ca –
tasminn āvirabhūl liṅge mahā-viṣṇur jagat-patiḥ ||
sahasra-śīrṣā puruṣa ity ārabhya
nārāyaṇaḥ sa bhagavān āpas tasmāt sanātanāt |
āvirāsan kāraṇārṇonidhiḥ saṅkarṣaṇātmakaḥ |
yoga-nidrām gatas tasmin sahasrāmśaḥ svayam mahān ||
tad-roma-bila-jāleṣu bījaṁ saṅkarṣaṇasya ca |
haimāny aṇḍāni jātāni mahā-bhūtāvṛtāni tu || ity etad antam

Brahma-saṁhitā also describes this first puruṣa (**brahma-saṁhitāyām ca**):

Having previously been in another form (covered by effulgence) (**implied**), Mahāviṣṇu, the lord of all living entities (**mahā-viṣṇur jagat-patiḥ**), appeared in the form of Nārāyaṇa (**tasminn liṅge āvirabhūd**). This form of Mahāviṣṇu, the soul of the universe, creates countless universes. Because he has countless avatāra forms within the universes, he is said to have countless heads, countless eyes, countless feet and countless arms (**sahasra-śīrṣā puruṣa ity ārabhya**). The supreme lord is called Nārāyaṇa (**sah bhagavān nārāyaṇaḥ**) because the waters of the Kāraṇa ocean arise from his eternal form (**tasmāt sanātanāt kāraṇārṇonidhiḥ āpah āvirāsan**). The waters are non-different from Saṅkarṣaṇa (**saṅkarṣaṇātmakaḥ**). This Mahāviṣṇu lies in yoga-nidrā in this ocean (**svayam mahān tasmin yoga-nidrām gataḥ**). Countless avatāras reside in him (**sahasrāmśaḥ**). The seed in the form of the mass of jīvas (**bījaṁ**) lay within the hair holes of Saṅkarṣaṇa (Mahāviṣṇu) since the time of the previous devastation (**tad saṅkarṣaṇasya-roma-bila-jāleṣu**). (When he placed the jīvas into prakṛti by his glance) prakṛti took the form of golden eggs (**haimāny aṇḍāni jātāni**), the primitive forms of universes, covered with the five great elements before they combine and become functional (**mahā-bhūtāvṛtāni tu**). **Brahma-saṁhitā 5.10-13**

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- Mahāviṣṇu or Saṅkarṣaṇa appeared visibly, as a form of Nārāyaṇa, expanded from Kṛṣṇa's original form, representing him (tasmin liṅge).
- This form appeared for glancing over prakṛti. But in the Viṣṇu Purāṇa it is said:

**āpo nārā iti proktā āpo vai nara-sūnavah
tasya tā ayanam pūrvam tena nārāyaṇaḥ smṛtaḥ**

The word āpaḥ and nārā are synonymous for “water” (**āpo nārā iti proktā**) since the waters are considered the sons of Nara, the primeval male or Mahāviṣṇu (**āpo vai nara-sūnavah**). Since these waters take shelter (ayana) of Mahāviṣṇu from the ancient past (**tasya tā ayanam pūrvam**), he is called Nārāyaṇa (**tena nārāyaṇaḥ smṛtaḥ**). **Viṣṇu Purāṇa 1.4.6**

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- So what connection has the verse with this definition of Nārāyaṇa?
- Thus Brahma-saṁhitā gives a similar explanation.
- “The supreme lord is called Nārāyaṇa because the waters of the Kāraṇa ocean arise from his eternal form.”
- Because the water arose from Saṅkarṣaṇa it is considered non-different from Saṅkarṣaṇa (saṅkarṣanātmaka).
- He lies sleeping (yoga-nidram) in that ocean (tasmin) on his bed of Śeṣa.
- The word Nārāyaṇa is used suitably to denote Saṅkarṣaṇa lying on the causal ocean (which takes shelter of him).

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- He has countless amśas such as Pradyumna.
- His activity is described.
- Lying on his bed of Śeṣa he glanced over prakṛti.
- By that glance he placed the group of small jīvas, who are the seed of the universe (bījam), and who were lying in his hair pores during pralaya, into the womb of prakṛti. (These words are supplied to the verse to complete the meaning.)
- Then the golden globes appeared.
- The rest is clear.

The Purusavataras

Text-12

liṅgam atra svayaṁ-rūpasyāṅga-bheda udīritah

Liṅgam refers (**liṅgam atra**) to a form different from the original (**svayaṁ-rūpasyāṅga-bheda udīritah**).

- Jīva Goswāmī explains in his commentary on Brahma-saṁhitā that Mahāviṣṇu becomes covered with effulgence at the time of placing the jīvas in prakṛti, and thus his form becomes indistinct at that time. This is called liṅga.

The Purusavataras

Text-13

**dvitīyaṃ, yathā tatraiva tad-anantaram –
pratyekam evam ekāṃśād ekāṃśād viśati svayam**

The second form of the puruṣa is also described in Brahma-saṃhitā (**dvitīyaṃ, yathā tatraiva**):

Eternal Mahāviṣṇu, the soul of the universes with countless heads (**tad-anantaram**), enters (**viśati svayam**) into each of these universal eggs (**pratyekam**) by means of expanded forms (**evam ekāṃśād ekāṃśād**). **Brahma-saṃhitā 5.14**

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- Another version has pratyāṇḍam instead of pratyekam.
- Svayam means svayam prabhuḥ and refers to Mahāviṣṇu.
- Thus (evam) after placing the jīvas in prakṛti by his glance, he enters into each of the universes (pratyekam), appearing in each one as Pradyumna (ekāṁśād).
- He enters into each of the universes by these aṁśa forms.

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Text-14

garbhodaka-śayaḥ padmanābho 'sāv aniruddhakaḥ |
iti nārāyaṇopākhyāna uktaṁ mokṣa-dharmake |
so 'yaṁ hiraṇyagarbhasya pradyumnatve niyāmakah

In the story of Nārāyaṇa in Mokṣa-dharma (**mokṣa-dharmake nārāyaṇopākhyāna**) it is said (**iti uktaṁ**) that the Viṣṇu lying in the Garbhodaka with the lotus growing from his navel (**asāv garbhodaka-śayaḥ padmanābhah**) is called Aniruddha (**aniruddhakaḥ**). But he is actually the form known as Pradyumna (**sah ayam pradyumnatve**), and is the producer and antaryāmī of Brahmā (**hiraṇyagarbhasya niyāmakah**).

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- In the Nārāyaṇīya section of the Mahābhārata the second puruṣa is described:

**asman mūrṭiś caturthīyā sāsṛjac cheṣam avyayam
sa hi saṅkarṣaṇaḥ proktaḥ pradyumnaṁ so 'py ajījanat
pradyumnāc cāniruddho 'haṁ sargo mama punaḥ punaḥ
aniruddhāt tathā brahmā tan-nābhi-kamalodbhavaḥ**

The fourth form created the indestructible Śeṣa (**asman caturthīyā mūrṭih sāsṛjat śeṣam avyayam**), and is called Saṅkarṣaṇa (**sa hi saṅkarṣaṇaḥ**). He gave birth to Pradyumna (**sah apy pradyumnaṁ ajījanat**). From Pradyumna appeared myself, Aniruddha (**pradyumnāc cāniruddho ahaṁ**). I carry out creation repeatedly (**sargo mama punaḥ punaḥ**). Brahmā arose from the navel of Aniruddha (**aniruddhāt tathā brahmā tan-nābhi-kamalodbhavaḥ**). **Mahābhārata Śānti-parvā 339.70-72**

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aniruddho hi lokānām mahān ātmeti kathyate
yo 'sau vyaktatvam āpanno nirmame ca pitāmaham

Aniruddha (**aniruddhah**), who, equipped with power of manifestation (**yah asau vyaktatvam āpannah**), created Brahmā (**nirmame ca pitāmaham**), is called the great soul of the worlds (**lokānām mahān ātmeti kathyate**). [Mahābhārata Śānti-parvā 340.27-28](#)

- Bhāgavatam also describes the second puruṣa:

yasyāmbhasi śayānasya yoga-nidrām vitanvataḥ
nābhi-hradāmbujād āsīd brahmā viśva-sṛjām patih

yasyāvayava-samsthānaiḥ kalpito loka-vistarāḥ
tad vai bhagavato rūpaṁ viśuddham sattvam ūrjitam

A part of the puruṣa lies down within the water of the universe (**yasyāmbhasi śayānasya yoga-nidrām vitanvataḥ**), from the navel lake of His body sprouts a lotus stem, and from the lotus flower atop this stem, Brahmā, the master of all engineers in the universe, becomes manifest (**nābhi-hradāmbujād āsīd brahmā viśva-sṛjām patih**). It is believed that all the universal planetary systems are situated on the extensive body of the puruṣa (**yasyāvayava-samsthānaiḥ kalpito loka-vistarāḥ**), but He has nothing to do with the created material ingredients. His body is eternally in spiritual existence par excellence (**tad vai bhagavato rūpaṁ viśuddham sattvam ūrjitam**). [SB 1.3.2-3](#)

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- The various planets such as Pātāla (loka-vistarahaḥ) should be thought of as if they were parts of the body of Viṣṇu, such as the feet (avayava-samsthānaiḥ).
- This is a meditation (kalpitaḥ) for strengthening the minds of persons with gross intellect.
- This form is pure or non-material (viśuddham) because it is endowed with self-manifesting conscious form (sattvam).
- But here there is the doubt whether Brahmā arose from Pradyumna or Aniruddha.
- The text says that he who is lying on the Garbhodaka (actually Pradyumna) is Aniruddha.

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- Because they are non-different, in the Mahābhārata Aniruddha is said to be the source of Brahmā.
- Actually however, Pradyumna is the source of Brahmā.
- This is clear from the Bhāgavatam verse quoted, since it is clearly shown that Garbhodakaśāyī produces Brahmā.
- The master (sa ayam), in the form of Pradyumna, is the producer and antaryāmī (niyāmakah) of Brahmā (hiraṇyagarbhasya).

The Purusavataras

Text-15

atha yat tu tṛtīyaṁ syād rūpaṁ
tac cāpy adṛśyata |
kecit svadehāntar iti
dvitīya-skandha-padyataḥ

The third puruṣa (**atha yat tu tṛtīyaṁ syād rūpaṁ**) is described (**tac cāpy adṛśyata**) in the verse from the Second Canto of Bhāgavatam (**dvitīya-skandha-padyataḥ**) starting kecit svehantara (**kecit svadehāntar iti**).

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- This verse describes the third puruṣāvatāra. The proof is the following verse:

kecit sva-dehāntar-hṛdayāvakāṣe
prādeśa-mātram puruṣam vasantam
catur-bhujam kañja-rathāṅga-śaṅkha-
gadā-dharam dhāraṇayā smaranti

Others conceive (**kecit dhāraṇayā smaranti**) of the Personality of Godhead (**puruṣam**) residing within the body in the region of the heart (**sva-dehāntar-hṛdayāvakāṣe vasantam**) and measuring only eight inches (**prādeśa-mātram**), with four hands carrying a lotus, a wheel of a chariot, a conch shell and a club respectively (**catur-bhujam kañja-rathāṅga-śaṅkha-gadā-dharam**). **SB 2.2.8**

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- The lord of the milk ocean, Aniruddha, the third puruṣa, with a form measuring one pradeśa, residing in the heart of all living entities, is the object of meditation.
- One pradeśa is the length from the tip of thumb to the tip of index finger.

The Gunavataras

The Gunavataras

Text-16

guṇāvatārās tatrātha
kathyante puruṣād iha |
viṣṇur brahmā ca rudraś ca
sthiti-sargādi-karmaṇe

The guṇāvatāras (**guṇāvatārāh**), arising from Garbhodakaśāyī (**tatrātha puruṣād**), are now described (**iha kathyante**). Viṣṇu, Brahmā and Śiva (**viṣṇur brahmā ca rudraś ca**) are involved in maintenance, creation and destruction (**sthiti-sargādi-karmaṇe**).

- Puruṣāt means from Pradyumna – Garbhodakaśāyī, who is a svāmī form arising from Mahāviṣṇu.

The Gunavataras

Text-17

**yathā prathame –
sattvaṁ rajas tama iti prakṛter guṇās tair
yuktaḥ paraḥ puruṣa eka ihāsyā dhatte |
sthity-ādaye hari-viriñci-hareti samjñāḥ
śreyāṁsi tatra khalu sattva-tanor nṛṇāṁ syuḥ**

In the First Canto it is said (**yathā prathame**):

The one supreme puruṣa (**paraḥ puruṣa ekaḥ**), accepting (**dhatte**) the guṇas of prakṛti known as sattva, rajas and tamas (**sattvaṁ rajas tama iti prakṛter guṇāḥ**), for creation, maintenance and destruction (**sthity-ādaye**), is called Viṣṇu, Brahmā and Śiva (**hari-viriñci-hareti samjñāḥ**). The best results for the devotees will come (**nṛṇāṁ śreyāṁsi syuḥ**) from Viṣṇu with śuddha-sattva body (**tatra khalu sattva-tanor**). [SB 1.2.23](#)

Srila Baladeva Vidyabhusana

- Paraḥ-puruṣaḥ here refers to Garbhodakaśāyī, who is one alone within the universe.
- For maintenance, creation and destruction (sthity-ādaye) of the universe (asya), he associates with the three guṇas as the controller of each guṇa by accepting the forms of Viṣṇu, Brahmā and Śiva.
- The benefits of dharma, artha, kāma and moksā (śreyāṁsi) for humanity arise from the Viṣṇu (sattva-tanoh) among the three.

The Gunavataras

Text-18

atra kārīkā –
yogo niyāmakatayā guṇaiḥ
sambandha ucyate |
ataḥ sa tair na yujyate
tatra svāmśaḥ parasya yaḥ

An explanatory verse (**atra kārīkā**):

The relationship of the puruṣa with the guṇas (**guṇaiḥ yogah**) is that of being their controller (**niyāmakatayā sambandha ucyate**). Among the three (**tatra**), he who is the svāmśa of svayaṁ-rūpa Kṛṣṇa (**parasya svāmśaḥ yaḥ**), is not bound by the guṇas (**sah taiḥ na yujyate**).

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- How can there be a relation between the material guṇas and the supreme lord, for it is said māyā paraity abhimukhe ca vilajjamānā: māyā cannot stand in front of the Lord. (SB 2.7.47)
- This verse answers.
- The guṇas are controlled and the puruṣa, among the three forms, is the controller of the guṇas. That is called yoga.
- He is not bound by the guṇas.
- Among the three forms (tatra) he who is the svāmī of Kṛṣṇa (parasya), Viṣṇu, is not in contact with the guṇas.

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- Drumila explains:

ādāv abhūc chata-dhṛtī rajasāsyā sarge
viṣṇuḥ sthitau kratu-patir dvija-dharma-setuḥ
rudro 'pyayāya tamasā puruṣaḥ sa ādya
ity udbhava-sthiti-layāḥ satataṁ prajāsu

In the beginning (**ādāv**), the puruṣa (**sah ādyah puruṣaḥ**) appeared as Brahmā (**śata-dhṛtī abhūt**) through rajoguṇa (**rajasā**) for creation (**asya sarge**), as Viṣṇu, the lord of sacrifice (**viṣṇuḥ kratu-patir**), and protector of dharma of the brāhmaṇas (**dvija-dharma-setuḥ**), for maintenance (**sthitau**), and as Śiva through tamo-guṇa (**tamasā rudrah**) for destruction (**apyayāya**). In this way creation, maintenance and destruction of the living entities takes place at all times (**ity prajāsu udbhava-sthiti-layāḥ satataṁ**). **SB 11.4.5**

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- The lord by his will becomes Brahmā and Śiva by association with rajas and tamas.
- He becomes Buddha by association with pāṣaṇḍa-dharma.
- He becomes R̥ṣabha by association with extreme renunciation.
- However, because he is the supreme lord, he does not become contaminated by this association.

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- By worship of such forms, dharma cannot be perfected and liberation cannot be achieved.
- In Hari-vamśa, Śiva himself says mukti-pradātā sarveṣāṃ viṣṇur eva na saṁśayaḥ: Viṣṇu is without doubt the giver of liberation to all beings.
- Viṣṇu is not even in contact with sattva-guṇa, but rather he simply controls it by his will.
- Thus it has been said that all benefits arise from him.

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- Vāmana Purāṇa says:

**brahma-viṣṇvīśa-rūpāṇi
trīṇi viṣṇor mahatmanah
brahmaṇi brahma-rūpaḥ sa
śiva-rūpaḥ śive sthitaḥ
prthag eva sthito devo
viṣṇu-rūpi janārdanaḥ**

The three forms of Brahma, Viṣṇu and Śiva (**brahma-viṣṇu-īśa-rūpāṇi trīṇi**) are actually forms of Viṣṇu, the great soul of all beings (**viṣṇor mahatmanah**). He is situated as the form of Brahmā in Brahmā (**brahmaṇi brahma-rūpaḥ sa**) and the form of Śiva in Śiva (**śiva-rūpaḥ śive sthitaḥ**). Janārdana takes a separate form as Viṣṇu (**prthag eva sthito devo viṣṇu-rūpi janārdanaḥ**).

- Though the controller of the guṇas is only one person, for action in relation to the guṇas, he takes these forms with various degrees of covering.

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pārthivād dāruṇo dhūmas
tasmād agnis trayīmayah
tamasas tu rajas tasmāt
sattvaṁ yad brahma-darśanam

Smoke is superior to dull wood (**pārthivād dāruṇo dhūmah**), and fire, sacred to the Vedas, is superior to smoke (**tasmād agnis trayīmayah**). Similarly rajas is superior to tamas (**tamasas tu rajas tasmāt**), and sattva is superior to rajas, since it is favorable for realizing the Lord (**sattvaṁ yad brahma-darśanam**). [SB 1.2.24](#)

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- Wood, smoke and fire have natures of inactivity, slight action and manifest action, with no expectation of (performing) sacrifice in wood, slight expectation in smoke, and full expectation in fire.
- So tamas, rajas and sattva, have natures of ignorance, action and knowledge.
- Tamas yields no spiritual insight, rajas yields slight spiritual insight and sattva yields spiritual insight directly.
- Because tamas and rajas do not encourage spiritual vision of the Lord but sattva does, it is considered the best.

The Gunavataras - Brahma

Text-19

tatra brahmā –
hiraṇyagarbhaḥ sūkṣmo 'tra
sthūlo vairāja-samjñakaḥ |
bhogāya sṛṣṭaye cābhūt
padmabhūr iti sa dvidhā

Brahmā appearing from the lotus is of two types (**padmabhūr iti sa dvidhā**): Hiraṇyagarbha who is subtle (**hiraṇyagarbhaḥ sūkṣmah**) and appears for his own enjoyment (**bhogāya abhūt**), and Vairāja who is gross (**sthūlo vairāja-samjñakaḥ**) and appears for creating the universe (**sṛṣṭaye cābhūt**).

- These are apparently different jīvas who exist simultaneously. Viśvanātha Cakravartī in his commentary on Canto 3 of Bhāgavatam explains there are three forms of Brahmā: Hiraṇyagarbha, Vairāja, who is the total of the elements as they exist in the stem of the lotus, and four-headed Brahmā.

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- The Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva just described are actually forms of Viṣṇu.
- Now they will each be described in detail with precise explanation.
- Since the lord as Brahmā has already been described, now the jīva as Brahmā is described.
- Hiranyagarbha has a subtle body (sūkṣmaḥ) made of mahat-tattva.

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- The Supreme Lord can see him but the devatās and others cannot.
- Vairāja has a body which is gross, made of the aggregate of all elements.
- He has four heads, eight eyes, and eight arms for creation, is visible to the devatās, and gives them benedictions.
- Hiraṇyagarbha's purpose is enjoyment and Vairāja's purpose is creation of the universe.

The Gunavataras - Brahma

Text-20

vairāja eva prāyaḥ syāt
sargādy-artham caturmukhaḥ |
kadācid bhagavān viṣṇur
brahmā san sṛjati svayam

Vairāja generally has four heads (**vairāja prāyaḥ caturmukhaḥ syāt**) and carries out creation and other works (**sargādy-artham**). Sometimes Viṣṇu becomes Brahmā (**kadācid bhagavān viṣṇur brahmā san**) and carries out creation himself (**sṛjati svayam**).

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- Sargādi indicates that besides creation, Vairāja is involved in preaching the Vedas.
- veda-pracāraṇārthāya brahmā jātaś caturmukhaḥ: four-headed Brahmā is born for preaching the Vedas. (Kūrma Purāṇa)

The Gunavataras - Brahma

Text-21

tathā ca pādme –
bhavet kvacin mahākalpe
brahmā jīvo 'py upāsanaiḥ |
kvacid atra mahāviṣṇur
brahmatvaṁ pratipadyate

Padma Purāṇa says (**tathā ca pādme**):

Sometimes a jīva becomes Brahmā (**jīvah brahma bhavet**) in a mahā-kalpa (**kvacin mahākalpe**) by intense worship (**upāsanaiḥ**).

Sometimes Garbhodakaśāyī becomes Brahmā in that planet (**kvacid atra mahāviṣṇur brahmatvaṁ pratipadyate**).

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- This verse is a proof for the two types of four-headed Brahmā.
- Mahāviṣṇu here refers to Garbhodakaśayī.
- The jīva who is supposed to become Brahmā also sometimes resides in the same planet when the Lord becomes Brahmā during a mahā-kalpa, since he is not liberated yet, but only after a hundred years.
- Thus it is said yāvad adhikāram avasthitir ādhikārikāṇam: those who hold powers in this world as controllers remain in this world until their tenure has expired. (Brahma-sūtra 3.3.33)

The Gunavataras - Brahma

Text-22

viṣṇur yatra mahā-kalpe
sraṣṭṛtvam ca prapadyate |
tatra bhunkte tam praviśya
vairājaḥ saukhya-sampadam |
ato jīvatvam aiśyaṁ ca
brahmaṇaḥ kāla-bhedataḥ

The vairāja-brahmā remains enjoying (**vairājaḥ saukhya-sampadam bhunkte**), merged into Viṣṇu (**tam praviśya**) when Viṣṇu becomes the creator Brahmā (**viṣṇur sraṣṭṛtvam ca prapadyate**) during that mahā-kalpa (**yatra mahā-kalpe**). In different kalpas Brahmā (of either type) is sometimes a jīva and sometimes the Lord (**ato jīvatvam aiśyaṁ ca brahmaṇaḥ kāla-bhedataḥ**).

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- This verse explains.
- The vairāja, four-headed Brahmā, enters into Viṣṇu who carries out the creation.
- It is understood that the Hiraṇyagarbha form would be subject to the same conditions.
- Because of being checked from carrying out the creation by Viṣṇu, he experiences the wealth of enjoyment offered by the devatās when he is merged in Viṣṇu.
- By taking away Brahmā's work but not his enjoyment, Viṣṇu shows his great generosity.
- The last line sums up the two types.

The Gunavataras - Brahma

Text-23

īśatvāpekṣayā tasya
śāstre proktāvatāratā |
samaṣṭitvena bhagavat-
sannikṛṣṭatayocyate |
asyāvatāratā kaiścid
āveśatvena kaiścana

Brahmā is called an avatāra in the scriptures (**śāstre prokta avatāratā**) because the Lord himself takes the role of Brahmā (sometimes) (**tasya īśatva apekṣayā**). Other ācāryas explain (**kaiścid ucyate**) that Brahmā is called an avatāra (**asya avatāratā**) because of the complete merging of the Lord's power with Brahmā so that he can create the universe (**samaṣṭitvena bhagavat- sannikṛṣṭatayā**). Other ācāryas explain that Brahmā is avatāra because he is an āveśāvatāra (**āveśatvena kaiścana**).

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- This verse describes various opinions on calling Brahmā an avatāra.
- He is called avatāra when Garbhodakaśāyī (īśatvāpekṣayā) takes up the role of creation.
- This is taking the primary meaning of avatāra.
- Some ācāryas (kaiścit) say that Brahmā is called an avatāra because he is mixed with the Lord, being completely pervaded by the Lord (samaṣṭitvena).
- The root of samaṣṭi is aś meaning “to pervade.”

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- Thus it means that Brahmā is fully pervaded by the Lord who has the intelligence to carry out creation.
- It is like the merging of milk and water.
- Thus Brahmā is called an avatāra because of such intimate mixing with the Lord.
- Some say that he is avatāra because he is an āveśāvatāra.
- The Lord carries out the creation by entering into Brahmā, like the sun's rays, but not present to the same extent as in the previous explanation. (*The first explanation can be termed bhagavad-aveśa and the second explanation can be termed śakty-aveśa.*)
- Since Brahmā is actually a jīva (in these two cases), this is a secondary use of the word avatāra.

The Gunavataras - Brahma

Text-24

tathā brahma-saṁhitāyām
bhāsvān yathāśma śakaleṣu nijeṣu tejaḥ
svīyam kiyat prakāṣayaty api tadvad atra |
brahmā ya eṣa jagad aṇḍa vidhāna kartā
govindam ādi puruṣam tam aham bhajāmi

Thus Brahma-saṁhitā says (**tathā brahma-saṁhitāyām**):

I worship the supreme lord Govinda (**govindam ādi puruṣam tam aham bhajāmi**) who becomes Brahmā, the creator of the universe (by bestowing his powers to that jīva) (**brahmā ya eṣa jagad aṇḍa vidhāna kartā**), just as the sun displays (**yathā bhāsvān prakāṣayaty**) a small portion of its powers of heat and light (**svīyam kiyat tejaḥ**) in all the sun stones which represent it (**aśma śakaleṣu nijeṣu**). **Brahma-saṁhitā 5.49**

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- This is an example of Brahmā as an āveśāvatāra.
- Just as the sun (bhāsvān) reveals its power to some degree in a group of sunstones—producing in them some light and burning power—in the universe (atra) Govinda sometimes bestowing his own powers to some very pure jīva, who becomes Brahmā (āveśāvatāra).
- That Brahmā performs the secondary creation (vidhāna) within the universe.
- One should see the explanation of Rudra for more elaborate explanation.

The Gunavataras - Brahma

Text-25

garbhodaśāyino 'syābhūt
janma nābhisaroruhāt
kadācit śrūyate nīrāt
tejovātādikād api

The birth of Brahmā (**asya janma**) takes place from the lotus growing from the navel of Garbhodakaśāyī (**garbhodaśāyino nābhisaroruhāt abhūt**). Sometimes it is described that he appears from the Garbhodaka water (**kadācit śrūyate nīrāt**), from light or from air (**tejo vātādikād api**).

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- Additional information about Brahmā's birth is given in this verse.
- Nīrāt means “from the Garbhodaka.”
- According to the will of the Lord, Brahmā may appear from different sources such as water, light or air.

The Gunavataras - Rudra

The Gunavataras - Rudra

Text-26

rudra ekādaśa-vyūhas
tathāṣṭa-tanur apy asau |
prāyaḥ pañcānanas tryakṣo
daśa-bāhur udīryate

Rudra has eleven expansions (**rudra ekādaśa-vyūhas**) and eight types of forms (**tathā aṣṭa-tanuh**). Generally these have five heads, three eyes (**prāyaḥ pañcānanas tryakṣo**) and ten arms each (**daśa-bāhur udīryate**).

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- From detailed statements, it is also known that there are two types of Śiva or Rudra.
- It has already been stated in that the Lord himself takes the form of Rudra.
- The present verse describes his form.
- According to Mahābhārata the eleven forms are: Aja, Ahirbudhnya, Virupākṣa, Raivata, Hara, Bahurūpa, Tryambaka, Sāvitra, Jayanta, Pinākī and Aparājita. (Mahābhārata 12.201.18) (*These are different from the eleven names given in Bhāgavatam 3.12.12: Manyu, Manu, Mahinasa, Mahān, Śiva, Ṛtadhvaja, Ugraretā, Bhava, Kāla, Vāmadeva and Dhṛtavrata.*)

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- Śiva are earth, water, fire, air, ether, the sun, the moon and the performer of sacrifice. (*This means that Śiva is the presiding deity of these items*)
- The word “generally” is used because it is seen that there is also a one-headed Rudra in the water.

The Gunavataras - Rudra

Text-27

**kvacij jīva-viśeṣatvaṃ
harasyoktaṃ vidher iva |
tat tu śeṣavad evāstām
tad-amśatvena kīrtanāt**

Sometimes a special jīva takes the role of Śiva (**kvacij jīva-viśeṣatvaṃ harasya uktam**), in a manner similar to Brahmā (**vidher iva**). Śiva should be considered like Śeṣa, with two forms (**tat tu śeṣavad evāstām**), since Śiva is also glorified as an amśa of Viṣṇu (**tad-amśatvena kīrtanāt**).

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- This verse describes a jīva taking the role of Śiva.
- The Vedas say yaṁ kāmāye taṁ ugraṁ kṛṇomi taṁ brāhmaṇa taṁ ṛṣiṁ taṁ sumedhām: I make whomever I desire into Śiva; I make whomever I desire into Brahmā or a sage. [Ṛg Veda 10.125.05.2](#)

atha puruṣo ha vai nārāyaṇo kāmāyata prajā sṛjeya...

**nārāyaṇad brahma jāyate nārāyaṇād rudro jāyate nārāyaṇāt prajāpatir
jāyate nārāyaṇād indro jāyate nārāyaṇād aṣṭa-vasavo jāyante nārāyaṇad
ekādaśa-rudrā jayante nārāyaṇad dvādaśādityāḥ**

Nārāyaṇa desired to create progeny (**atha puruṣo ha vai nārāyaṇo prajā sṛjeya kāmāyata**). From Nārāyaṇa Brahmā was born (**nārāyaṇad brahma jāyate**). From Nārāyaṇa Rudra was born (**nārāyaṇād rudro jāyate**). From Nārāyaṇa Prajāpati was born (**nārāyaṇāt prajāpatir jāyate**). From Nārāyaṇa Indra was born (**nārāyaṇād indro jāyate**). From Nārāyaṇa the eight Vasus were born (**nārāyaṇād aṣṭa-vasavo jāyante**). From Nārāyaṇa the eleven Rudras were born (**nārāyaṇad ekādaśa-rudrā jayante**). From Nārāyaṇa the twelve Ādityas were born (**nārāyaṇad dvādaśādityāḥ**).

[Nārāyaṇa Upaniṣad](#)

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**eko ha vai nārāyaṇa āsīn na brahma na īśānaḥ
tasya dhyānāntasthasya lalāṭāt tryakṣaḥ śula-pāṇih puruṣojāyata vibhrac-
chriyaṁ satyam brahmacaryaṁ tapo vairagyam**

In the beginning only Nārāyaṇa existed (**eko ha vai nārāyaṇa āsīn**) and not Brahmā or Śiva (**na brahma na īśānaḥ**). From his forehead arose Śiva with three eyes, holding a trident (**tasya dhyānāntasthasya lalāṭāt tryakṣaḥ śula-pāṇih puruṣojāyata**). He was endowed with beauty, truth, celibacy, austerity and renunciation (**vibhrac-chriyaṁ satyam brahmacaryaṁ tapo vairagyam**). **Mahā Upaniṣad**

**prajāpatiṁ ca rudraṁ cāpy aham eva sṛjāmi vai
tau hi mām na vijānīto mama māyā-vimohitau**

I create Brahmā and Śiva also (**prajāpatiṁ ca rudraṁ cāpy aham eva sṛjāmi vai**). They (**tau hi**), being bewildered by my māyā (**mama māyā-vimohitau**), do not know me (**mām na vijānīto**). **Mokṣa-dharma**

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- These quotations illustrate that a jīva takes birth as Śiva. Their death is also described.

**brahma śambhus tathaivārkaś candramāc ca śatakratuḥ
evam ādyās tathaivānye yuktā vaiṣṇava-tejasā
jagat kāryāvasāne tu viyuyante ca tejasā
vitejasaś ca te sarve pañcatvaṃ upayānti vai**

Brahmā, Śiva, the sun, the moon, Indra (**brahma śambhus tathaivārkaś candramāc ca śatakratuḥ**), and other devatās (**evam ādyās tathaivānye**) accept the power of Viṣṇu (**yuktā vaiṣṇava-tejasā**). However when work in the universe is finished (**jagat kāryāvasāne tu**), they become bereft of powers (**viyuyante ca tejasā**) and in that state they all die (**vitejasaś ca te sarve pañcatvaṃ upayānti vai**). **Viṣṇu-dharma**

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- Similarly, when śruti says only Nārāyaṇa existed, it indicates that previous Śivas have disappeared.
- Thus it is true that Śiva is also a jīva, otherwise the scriptures would be contradicted.
- The example of Brahmā is also given to illustrate a jīva taking the role of Śiva.
- But Śiva is like Śeṣa who has two forms.
- The Śeṣa who acts as the bed of Viṣṇu is the Supreme Lord.
- The form of Śeṣa who holds up the universe on his hoods is a jīva. This will be made clear elsewhere.
- Thus one form of Śiva is a jīva and another is a svāmīśa form (tad-amśatvena), because the scriptures declare it so.

The Gunavataras - Rudra

Text-28

haraḥ puruṣa-dhāmatvān
nirguṇaḥ prāya eva saḥ |
vikāravān iha tamo-
yogāt sarvaiḥ pratīyate ||

Śiva is without a touch of the material guṇas (**haraḥ nirguṇaḥ prāya eva**) since he is the Lord (**puruṣa-dhāmatvād**). However, the ignorant perceive him (**sarvaiḥ pratīyate**), among the guṇāvatāras, to be contaminated by tamo-guṇa (**iha tamo-yogāt vikāravān**).

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śivaḥ śakti-yutaḥ śaśvat
trilingo guṇa-samvṛtaḥ

Lord Śiva is always united with his personal energy, the material nature. Manifesting himself in three features in response to the entreaties of nature's three modes, he thus embodies the threefold principle of material ego in goodness, passion and ignorance. [SB 10.88.3](#)

- Verse 17 described the Lord taking the roles of Śiva and Brahmā.
- Because that Śiva is a form of the puruṣa (puruṣa-dhāmatvāt) he is certainly without material guṇas.

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- The word *prāya* (generally) is used to indicate that by his own will he is covered by *tamo-guṇa* (and he appears to be contaminated).
- Among the *guṇāvatāras* (*iha*) he thus appears to be transformed, by those who are ignorant (*sarvaiḥ*). But actually he is not transformed or contaminated at all.
- This verse gives proof of his appearing to be covered by *tamo-guṇa*.
- Śiva is always endowed with the *guṇas* in equilibrium which are accepted by his will (*śakti-yutaḥ*), and when the *guṇas* become agitated, he becomes connected with the three *guṇas* (*trilingaḥ*) and becomes covered from far off by the *guṇas* of *prakṛti* (*saṁvṛtaḥ*).

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- It is well known that Śiva is related to tamo-guṇa, but why does it say that he associates with all three guṇas?
- This is because the three guṇas are mixed together.
- Thus sattva and rajas are present along with tamo-guṇa.
- It should be understood that this verse describes the perceptions of common people only.

The Gunavataras - Rudra

Text-29

yathā brahma-saṁhitāyām–
kṣīram yathā dadhi vikāra viśeṣa yogāt
sañjāyate na hi tataḥ pṛthag asti hetoḥ |
yaḥ śambhutām api tathā samupaiti kāryād
govindam ādi puruṣam tam aham bhajāmi

Just as milk (**kṣīram yathā**) is transformed into curd (**dadhi sañjāyate**) by the action of acids (**vikāra viśeṣa yogāt**), but yet the effect curd is neither same as, nor different from, its cause, viz., milk (**na hi tataḥ pṛthag asti hetoḥ**), so I adore the primeval Lord Govinda (**govindam ādi puruṣam tam aham bhajāmi**) of whom the state of Śambhu is a transformation (**yaḥ śambhutām api tathā samupaiti**) for the performance of the work of destruction (**kāryād**). **Brahma-saṁhitā 5.45**

Srila Baladeva Vidyabhusana

- This verse shows that Śiva, being the Lord, is beyond the guṇas, though he appears to have become transformed by the guṇas.
- Milk gives rise to yogurt, by contact with a particular agent, but the yogurt is still not different from its cause – the milk.
- Similarly Govinda becomes Śiva by accepting a relation with tamo-guṇa by his own will.
- But Govinda and Śiva are non-different.
- Because the transformation is superficial or apparent, it does not affect Govinda's svarūpa.

The Gunavataras - Rudra

Text-30

vidher lalāṭāj janmāsya
kadācit kamalāpateḥ |
kālāgni-rudraḥ kalpānte
bhavet saṅkarṣaṇād api

Sometimes Rudra arises from the forehead of Brahmā (**vidher lalāṭād asya janma**). And sometimes he is born from the forehead of Viṣṇu (**kadācit kamalāpateḥ**). Kālāgni-rudra appears (**kālāgni-rudraḥ bhavet**) from Saṅkarṣaṇa (**saṅkarṣaṇād**) at the end of the kalpa (**kalpānte**).

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- This verse describes the places of Śiva's appearance.
- Śatapatha-brāhmaṇa says that Śiva arises from the forehead of Brahmā and Mahā Upaniṣad and some Purāṇas state that Śiva arises from Viṣṇu's forehead.
- These are descriptions from different kalpas.
- Kālāgni-rudra is described in Bhāgavatam:

**pātāla-talam ārabhya saṅkarṣaṇa-mukhānalaḥ
dahann ūrdhva-śikho viṣvag vardhate vāyuneritaḥ**

Beginning from Pātāla-loka (**pātāla-talam ārabhya**), a fire grows, emanating from the mouth of Lord Saṅkarṣaṇa (**saṅkarṣaṇa-mukha analaḥ vardhate**). Its flames shooting upward (**ūrdhva-śikho**), driven by great winds (**vāyuneritaḥ**), it scorches everything in all directions (**dahann viṣvag**). **SB 11.3.10**

The Gunavataras - Rudra

Text-31

sadā-śivākhyā tan-mūrtis
tamogandha-vivarjitā |
sarvakāraṇa-bhūtāsāv
aṅga-bhūtā svayaṁ prabhoḥ |
vāyavyādiṣu saiveyaṁ
śiva-loke pradarśitā

The form called Sadāśiva (**sadā-śivākhyā tad-mūrtih**) is devoid of any trace of tamas (**tamo gandha-vivarjitā**). He is directly Nārāyaṇa, the vilāsa or svāmśa of svayaṁ-rūpa Kṛṣṇa (**svayaṁ prabhoḥ aṅga-bhūtā**) and is the cause of all causes (**asāu sarvakāraṇa-bhūtaḥ**). That form is described as dwelling on Śiva-loka (Vaikuṅṭha) (**sah eva iyaṁ śiva-loke**) in the Vāyu Purāṇa and other scriptures (**vāyavyādiṣu pradarśitā**).

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- Kṛṣṇa is the svayaṁ-rūpa and Nārāyaṇa and other forms are vilāsa and svāmśa forms.
- Some jīvas are āveśa forms.
- From the svāmśa form of Garbhodakaśāyī come Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva.
- These three are forms of īśvara and sometimes Brahmā and Śiva are jīvas.
- This is approved by the scriptures.
- But someone may object as follows.
- “Actually this is not quite accurate. According to the scriptures Sadāśiva is the root form of all others. He expands into the form of Nārāyaṇa and others. Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva arise from him.

Srila Baladeva Vidyabhusana

- A more authoritative statement, coming from the śruti, the Kaivalya Upaniṣad, is as follows:

By meditating on the supreme lord Śiva with three eyes and blue throat, accompanied by his consort Umā, who is inconceivable, invisible, peaceful, with countless forms, eternal, without beginning, middle or end, the one powerful entity, composed of knowledge and bliss, the astonishing person with no form, the sage attains the original source, beyond the material realm. He is Brahma, he is Śiva, he is Indra, he is the indestructible, the supreme independent. He is Viṣṇu, Prāṇa, Kālāgni and the moon. He is all beings who have appeared in the past and who will appear in the future. Knowing him one surpasses death. There is no other path for liberation.”

Srila Baladeva Vidyabhusana

- The present verse answers this objection.
- The form called Sadāśiva who is without a trace of tamoguna, who is the cause of all causes, is the Nārāyaṇa vilāsa form (aṅga-bhūtā) of svayaṁ-rūpa Kṛṣṇa (svayaṁ-prabhoḥ).
- In the Taittirīya Upaniṣad, the names Nārāyaṇa, Acyuta and Śiva are used to indicate only one person.
- When the Kaivalya Upaniṣad mentions Umā, that word refers to Kīrti, a consort of Nārāyaṇa.

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- Trilocana means “one who sees all three divisions of time.”
- Nīlakaṅṭha means “he whose throat is decorated with a sapphire ornament.”
- This must be accepted as the meaning since the context of the verse indicates that the words cannot refer to Śiva.
- Quoting Vāyu Purāṇa, Jīva Gosvāmī in Bhāgavata-sandarbhā identifies this form and planet in the same way.

The Gunavataras - Rudra

Text-32

tathā ca brahma-saṁhitāyām ādi-śiva-kathane-
niyatih sā ramā devi
tat priyā tad vaśamvadā |
tal liṅgam bhagavān śambhur
jyoti rūpaḥ sanātanaḥ |
yā yonih sāparā śaktih

Brahma-saṁhitā speaks of the original Śiva who is Nārāyaṇa (**tathā ca brahma-saṁhitāyām ādi-śiva-kathane**):

Ramā (**sā ramā devi**), under the control of the Lord (**tad vaśamvadā**), is self-manifesting (**niyatih**) and dear to the Lord (**tat priyā**). The Lord's eternal form called Śambhu (**bhagavān śambhur sanātanaḥ**) – whose body is pure consciousness (**jyoti rūpaḥ**) and who is a portion of the Lord – is a representative of Kṛṣṇa or liṅgam (**tad liṅgam**), and the inferior energy is called the yoni (**sah aparā śaktih yā yonih**). **Brahma-saṁhitā 5.8**

Srila Baladeva Vidyabhusana

- This verse describes Sadāśiva (a Viṣṇu form, whose consort is Lakṣmī or Ramā) who is expansion of svayaṁ-rūpa Kṛṣṇa. This is understood from saying ādi-śiva.
- The rest of the verses in this context are:

**kāma-bījaṁ mahad-hareḥ
liṅga yony ātmikā jātā imā māheśvarī prajāḥ ||
śaktimān puruṣaḥ so 'yaṁ liṅga rūpī maheśvaraḥ |
tasminn āvirabhūl liṅge mahāviṣṇur jagat patiḥ ||**

Śambhu develops the desire to see māyā for creating the universes and mahat-tattva (the transformation of prakṛti after being injected with the jīvas) then appears as the seed of creation (**kāma-bījaṁ mahad-hareḥ**). Thus the living entities (bodies) make their appearance (**imā jātā**) by the portion of Viṣṇu impregnating prakṛti (**liṅga yony ātmikā**) and are known as her offspring (**prajāḥ**). This powerful puruṣa (**sah śaktimān puruṣaḥ**) who is a representative of Kṛṣṇa (**ayaṁ liṅga rūpī**) is actually the supreme lord (**maheśvaraḥ**). Being Kṛṣṇa's aṁśa (**tasminn liṅge**), Mahāviṣṇu then appeared with distinct form (**mahāviṣṇur āvirabhūt**) as the master of all living entities in the universe (**jagat patiḥ**). **Brahma-saṁhitā 5.9-10**

Srila Baladeva Vidyabhusana

- Previously in the Brahma-saṁhitā it was described that Viṣṇu enjoys with Ramā. Who is she?
- She is subservient to Viṣṇu (niyatā) in that enjoyment.
- Arising from his svarūpa, she never leaves him. Thus it is said that she is most dear and obedient (tat-priyā tad-vaśaṁvadā) .
- Hayaśīrṣa-pañcarātra says na viṣṇunā vinā devī na viṣṇuḥ padmajām vinā: Lakṣmī does not exist without Viṣṇu and Viṣṇu does not exist without Lakṣmī.
- Viṣṇu Purāṇa says nityaiva sā jagannmātā viṣṇoḥ śrīr anapāyinī: Lakṣmī, mother of the universe, is eternal and never leaves Viṣṇu.

Srila Baladeva Vidyabhusana

- Bhagavān Śambhu is the expansion of svayaṁ-rūpa Kṛṣṇa.
- He is called the liṅga or representation of Kṛṣṇa.
- Bhagavān refers to the lord of Vaikuṅṭha endowed with the six powers.
- Śambhu means “he who creates good fortune.”
- Appearing as Saṅkarṣaṇa in the second vyūha he creates the bodies for the jīvas who were previously merged in prakṛti.
- Thus he is called Śambhu.
- His form is knowledge or consciousness (jyoti-rūpaḥ).

Srila Baladeva Vidyabhusana

- By Śambhu being under Kṛṣṇa's control (being his liṅga), Kṛṣṇa's position as svayaṁ-rūpa can be understood, just as one can understand a bull by seeing his distinctive dewlap.
- Because Kṛṣṇa is the svayaṁ-rūpa with Śambhu (Mahāviṣṇu) as his vilāsa form, Śambhu is called liṅga or his representative.
- She who is the material cause, upādāna, consisting of mahat-tattva and other elements (yoniḥ) is called the inferior śakti, matter made of three guṇas.
- The mahat-tattva (bījam) is the result of Kṛṣṇa's aṁśa Saṅkarṣaṇa (Mahāvisnu) (hareḥ) desiring (kāma) to glance upon māyā.

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- Mahat-tattva is prakṛti endowed with the unlimited jīvas.
- The offspring of māyā (bodies of the jīvas) arise from the combination of the glance of Saṅkarṣaṇa (who is called liṅga) and māyā (yoni).
- Though the offspring are said to belong to prakṛti (māheśvarī), this is a secondary meaning, since she is dependent on Saṅkarṣaṇa for the creation of bodies. The next verse explains this.
- The puruṣa, possessor of śakti or māyā (śaktimān), the expansion of Kṛṣṇa (liṅga-rūpī) is called maheśvara, the great lord.
- Saṅkarṣaṇa (mahāviṣṇu) appeared as the controller of prakṛti, given charge by Kṛṣṇa (liṅge).

The Gunavataras - Visnu

The Gunavataras - Visnu

Text-33

śrī-viṣṇuḥ, yathā śrī-ṭṛtīye
tal loka-padmaṁ sa u eva viṣṇuḥ
prāvīviśat sarva-guṇāvabhāsam |
tasmin svayaṁ vedamayo vidhātā
svayambhuvaṁ yaṁ sma vadanti so 'bhūt

Viṣṇu is described in the Third Canto (śrī-viṣṇuḥ, yathā śrī-ṭṛtīye):

Viṣṇu entered (sah viṣṇuḥ prāvīviśat) that lotus of all the planets (tal loka-padmaṁ), which reveals all the enjoyable objects for the jīvas (sarva-guṇāvabhāsam). Brahmā (vidhātā), known as self-born (svayambhuvaṁ yaṁ sma vadanti), composer of the Vedas (vedamayo), appeared within that lotus (tasmin svayaṁ abhūt).

Srila Baladeva Vidyabhusana

- This verse describes Viṣṇu who instigates sattva-guṇa.
- Sa refers to Garbhodakaśāyī Viṣṇu or Pradyumna.
- He entered the planets in the form of a lotus (loka-padma).
- This lotus was endowed with all enjoyable material objects (sarva-guṇāvabhāsa).
- Viṣṇu does not have īśvara and jīva forms like Brahmā and Śiva, and thus two forms are not mentioned here.

The Gunavataras - Visnu

Text-34

yo viṣṇuḥ paṭhyate so 'sau
kṣīrāmbudhiśayo mataḥ |
garbhodaśāyinas tasya
vilāsatvān muniśvaraiḥ |
nārāyaṇo virāḍ antar
yāmī cāyaṁ nigadyate

He who is called Viṣṇu is Kṣīrodakaśāyī (**yo viṣṇuḥ paṭhyate sah asau kṣīrāmbudhiśayo mataḥ**). He is the vilāsa form of Garbhodakaśāyī (**garbhodaśāyinaḥ vilāsatvād**) and is praised by the best of sages (**ayam muniśvaraiḥ nigadyate**) as Nārāyaṇa, Virāḍ (universal form) and antaryāmī (soul within) (**nārāyaṇo virāḍ antaryāmī**).

Srila Baladeva Vidyabhusana

- What is he called when he entered the lotus?
- Garbhodakaśāyī, or Pradyumna with a thousand heads, becoming Aniruddha with four arms, enters the lotus of the worlds and lies down on the Milk Ocean.
- Thus he is called Kṣīrodakaśāyī.
- Why is the protector of the jīvas in the world also called Nārāyaṇa?
- Nārāyaṇa refers to the shelter of nāra, or one who is the shelter of all tattvas. Thus it refers to Kāraṇodakaśāyī or Garbhodakaśāyī.
- However, Kṣīrodakaśāyī is the vilāsa form of Garbhodakaśāyī.
- He is thus non-different from them and can also be called Nārāyaṇa.

The Gunavataras - Visnu

Text-35

viṣṇu-dharmottarādy-uktā
yāḥ pūryo 'jāṇḍa-madhyataḥ |
santi viṣṇu-prakāśānām
tāḥ kathyante samāsataḥ

Now the abodes where Viṣṇu appears (**yāḥ pūryo ajah viṣṇu-prakāśānām santi**) within the universe (**aṇḍa-madhyataḥ**) will be described in brief (**tāḥ samāsataḥ kathyante**) according to scriptures such as Viṣṇu-dharmottara (**viṣṇu-dharmottarādy-uktā**).

- The great powers of Kṣīrodakaśāyī within the universe will be described.

The Gunavataras - Visnu

Text-36

yathā –
rudropariṣṭād aparah
pañcāyuta-pramāṇataḥ |
agamyah sarva-lokānām
viṣṇu-lokaḥ prakīrtitaḥ

Above Śiva's abode (**rudropariṣṭād**) is Viṣṇu's abode (**viṣṇu-lokaḥ prakīrtitaḥ**), unattainable by all people (**sarva-lokānām agamyah**). It is incomparable (**aparah**) and measures fifty thousand yojanas (**pañcāyuta-pramāṇataḥ**).

The Gunavataras - Visnu

Text-37

tasyopariṣṭād brahmāṇḍaḥ
kāñcanoddīpti-samyutaḥ |
meros tu pūrva-dig-bhāge
madhye tu lavaṇodadheḥ |
viṣṇuloko mahān proktaḥ
salilāntara-samsthitaḥ

Beyond this Viṣṇu-loka (**tasyopariṣṭād**), east of Meru (**kāñcanoddīpti-samyutaḥ meros tu pūrva-dig-bhāge**), in the center of the salt ocean (**lavaṇodadheḥ madhye**), lies the great planet of Viṣṇu (**viṣṇuloko mahān proktaḥ**), situated in the water (**salilāntara-samsthitaḥ**), where Brahmā sometimes goes (**brahmāṇḍaḥ**).

- Brahmāṇḍa may be analyzed as brahmanā anta “where Brahmā goes.”

The Gunavataras - Visnu

Text-38

tatra svapiti gharmāmbhe
devadevo janārdanaḥ |
lakṣmī-sahāyaḥ satataṁ
śeṣa-paryaṅkam āsthitaḥ

Janārdana (devadevo janārdanaḥ) accompanied by Lakṣmī (lakṣmī-sahāyaḥ satataṁ) sleeps on the bed of Śeṣa in the salt water (tatra śeṣa-paryaṅkam āsthitaḥ svapiti) at the end of the summer season (gharmāmbhe).

The Gunavataras - Visnu

Text-39

meroś ca pūrva-dig-bhāge
madhye kṣīrārṇavasya ca |
kṣīrāmbu-madhyagā śubhrā
devasyānyā tathā purī

East of Meru (**meroś ca pūrva-dig-bhāge**) in the center of the milk ocean (**kṣīrārṇavasya ca madhye**) there is another city of the Lord (**devasyānyā tathā purī**) called Śubhrā (**śubhrā**).

The Gunavataras - Visnu

Text-40

lakṣmī-sahāyas tatrāste
śeṣāsana-gataḥ prabhuḥ |
tatrāpi caturo māsān
suptas tiṣṭhati vārṣikān

There the Lord (**tatra prabhuḥ**) along with Lakṣmī (**lakṣmī-sahāyah**) lies on Śeṣa (**śeṣāsana-gataḥ āste**), sleeping (**suptas tiṣṭhati**) for the four months of the monsoon season (**caturo māsān vārṣikān**).

The Gunavataras - Visnu

Text-41

tasminn avāci dig-bhāge
madhye kṣīrārṇavasya tu |
yojanānām sahasrāṇi
maṇḍalaḥ pañca-vimśatiḥ
śvetadvīpatayā khyāto
dvīpaḥ parama-śobhanaḥ

South of that place (**tasminn avāci dig-bhāge**), in the milk ocean (**kṣīrārṇavasya madhye**), is a most splendid island called Śvetadvīpa (**śvetadvīpatayā khyāto dvīpaḥ parama-śobhanaḥ**), measuring twenty-five thousand yojanas (**pañca-vimśatiḥ sahasrāṇi yojanānām maṇḍalaḥ**).

The Gunavataras - Visnu

Text-42

**narāḥ sūrya-prabhās tatra
śītāmśu-sama-darśanāḥ |
tejasā durnirīkṣyās ca
devānām api yādava**

The men there shine like the sun (**tatra narāḥ sūrya-prabhās**) and are as beautiful as the moon (**śītāmśu-sama-darśanāḥ**). Because of their effulgence (**tejasā**) even the devatās find it hard to gaze upon them (**devānām api durnirīkṣyāḥ**), O Yādava (**yādava**)!

The Gunavataras - Visnu

Text-43

brahmāṇḍe ca –
śveto nāma mahān asti
dvīpaḥ kṣīrābdhi-veṣṭitaḥ |
lakṣa-yojana-vistāraḥ
suramyāḥ sarva-kāñcanaḥ

Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa says:

There is a place called Śvetadvīpa (**śveto nāma mahān dvīpaḥ asti**) surrounded by the milk ocean (**kṣīrābdhi-veṣṭitaḥ**). It is a hundred thousand yojanas in breadth (**lakṣa-yojana-vistāraḥ**), very pleasant, and completely golden (**suramyāḥ sarva-kāñcanaḥ**).

The Gunavataras - Visnu

Text-44

kundendu-kumuda-prakhyair
lola-kallola-rāśibhiḥ |
dhautāmala-śilopetaḥ
samantāt kṣīra-vāridheḥ

Surrounded by the milk ocean (**samantāt kṣīra-vāridheḥ**), piled with spotless stones (**dhauta-amala-śila-upetaḥ**), the island is washed by the restless waves (**lola-kallola-rāśibhiḥ**) which shine like the jasmine flower, the moon or the lotus (**kunda-indu-kumuda-prakhyair**).

The Gunavataras - Visnu

Text-45

kim ca viṣṇu-purāṇādau
mokṣa-dharme ca kīrtitam |
kṣīrābdher uttare tīre
śveta-dvīpo bhaved iti

Moreover in the Viṣṇu Purāṇa and Mokṣa-dharma it is said (**kim ca viṣṇu-purāṇādau**):

Śvetadvīpa lies on the northern shore of the milk ocean (**kṣīrābdher uttare tīre śveta-dvīpo bhaved iti**).

- Other opinions on the location of Śvetadvīpa are now given. It should be understood the location will differ in different kalpas.

The Gunavataras - Visnu

Text-46

**śuddhodād uttare śveta
dvīpaṃ syāt pādma-sammatam**

According to Padma Purāṇa (**pādma-sammatam**), Śvetadvīpa is north of the ocean of sweet water (**śuddhodād uttare śveta dvīpaṃ syāt**).

The Gunavataras - Visnu

Text-47

viṣṇuḥ sattvaṁ tanotīti
śāstre sattva-tanuṁ smṛtaḥ |
avatāra-gaṇaś cāsya
bhavet sattva-tanus tathā |
bahiraṅgam adhiṣṭhānam
iti vā tasya tat tanuḥ

Because Viṣṇu distributes (tanoti) sattva (**viṣṇuḥ sattvaṁ tanoti iti**) he is known as sattva-tanu (**śāstre sattva-tanuṁ smṛtaḥ**). His avatāras are also known as sattva-tanu for this reason (**asya avatāra-gaṇah ca**). Or sattva-tanu can mean (**sattva-tanus tathā**) that the Lord resides in those who have sattva-guṇa bodies in the material world (**tat tanuḥ tasya bahiraṅgam adhiṣṭhānam bhavet iti vā**).

Srila Baladeva Vidyabhusana

- “It has been said that Viṣṇu is sattva-tanu (having a body of sattva).
- Does that mean he has a body made of material sattva-guṇa?
- If that were so, worshipping him would not give liberation.
- It is said **ātmeti tūpagacchanti grāhayanti ca**: the ācāryas acknowledge and teach that God is the object of meditation. (**Brahma-sūtra 4.1.3**)
- This means that worship of the Supreme should yield liberation.”

Srila Baladeva Vidyabhusana

- The present verse explains the meaning of sattva-tanu.
- Viṣṇu is called sattva-tanu because he distributes sattva-guṇa.
- The avatāras of Kṣīrodakaśāyī Viṣṇu are also called sattva-tanu because they also distribute sattva-guṇa.
- Or it can mean that a sattva-guṇa body is the Lord's place of appearance in the material world.
- **sattvaṁ yad brahma-darśanam**: through sattva one can realize brahman. (SB 1.2.24)
- When the heart becomes pure and peaceful (in sattva), the Lord reveals himself there through knowledge arising from such purity.
- Thus that sattva body is his abode. His spiritual abode however is Vaikuṅṭha.

The Gunavataras - Visnu

Text-48

**ato nirguṇatā samyak
sarva-śāstre prasidhyati**

Thus, it is proved in all scriptures (**atah sarva-śāstre prasidhyati**) that Viṣṇu is completely beyond the material guṇas (**samyak nirguṇatā**).

The Gunavataras - Visnu

Text-49

tathā hi śrī-daśame –
harir hi nirguṇaḥ sāksāt
puruṣaḥ prakṛteḥ paraḥ |
sa sarva-dṛg upadraṣṭā
tam bhajan nirguṇo bhavet

It says in the Tenth Canto:

Lord Hari, however, has no connection with the material modes (**harir hi nirguṇaḥ sāksāt**). He is the Supreme Personality of Godhead (**puruṣaḥ**), the all-seeing eternal witness (**sarva-dṛg upadraṣṭā**), who is transcendental to material nature (**prakṛteḥ paraḥ**). One who worships Him becomes similarly free from the material modes (**tam bhajan nirguṇo bhavet**). **SB 10.88.5**

Srila Baladeva Vidyabhusana

- Viṣṇu is beyond the guṇas because he activates sattva by his will alone.
- It is clearly evident (sākṣāt) because he is not covered at all by the guṇas, whereas others like Brahmā are covered by the guṇas.
- This is because he is superior to prakṛti.
- By his own will, he accepts dealing with the guṇas (Śiva has an appearance of being covered by the guṇas).
- But this is not the case with others.
- He sees everyone (sarva-dṛk), having knowledge by which to award liberation.

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- He is the witness (upadraṣṭā), seeing all the liberated souls at close range – he is attained by the liberated souls.
- Others such as Brahmā are rejected by the liberated souls as their goal.
- Therefore by worshipping him, one also becomes free of the guṇas.
- The śruti says **nirañjanaḥ paramaṁ sāmyaṁ upaiti**: the pure person attains a nature similar to the supreme Lord's. (Munḍaka Upaniṣad 3.1.3)

The Gunavataras - Visnu

Text-50

**tena sattva-tanor asmāt
śreyāmsi syur itīritam**

Thus, because he is beyond the guṇas (**tena**), it is said (**iti īritam**) that the best results arise from Viṣṇu (**tena śreyāmsi syur**) who is sattva-tanu (**sattva-tanoh**) (Verse 47).

The Gunavataras - Visnu

Text-51

ity ato vihitā śāstre
tad-bhakter eva nityatā

Because of this (**ity atah**), according to the scriptures (**śāstre vihitā**), one should always perform bhakti to Viṣṇu alone (**tad-bhakter eva nityatā**).

- Iti atah indicates “because of the supremacy of Viṣṇu, who is beyond the guṇas as just described.”
- It should always be performed because not doing so is a loss.

The Gunavataras - Visnu

Text-52

tathā hi pādme –
smartavyaḥ satataṁ viṣṇur
vismartavyo na jātucit |
sarve vidhi-niṣedhāḥ syur
etayor eva kiṅkarāḥ

Thus Padma Purāṇa says:

One should always remember Viṣṇu (**smartavyaḥ satataṁ viṣṇur**) and never forget him (**vismartavyo na jātucit**). All rules and prohibitions (**sarve vidhi-niṣedhāḥ**) are the servants of these two principles (**etayor eva kiṅkarāḥ syuh**).

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- This is the proof of the previous statement.
- Etayoḥ means “remembering Viṣṇu and not forgetting him.”
- Just as performing sandhyā rites daily takes one to Pitr-loka, performing bhakti takes one to Viṣṇu-loka.

The Gunavataras - Visnu

Text-53

ataeva tatraiva –
vyāmohāya carācarasya jagatas te te purāṇāgamās
tām tām eva hi devatām paramikām jalpantu kalpāvadhi |
siddhānte punar eka eva bhagavān viṣṇuḥ samastāgama-
vyāpāreṣu vivecana-vyatikaram nīteṣu niścīyate

In the Padma Purāṇa it is also said:

For bewildering the living entities of the universe (**jagatah carācarasya vyāmohāya**), let the Purāṇas and other scriptures speak (**te te purāṇa āgamāh jalpantu**), until the end of the kalpa (**kalpāvadhi**), about their various “supreme” devatās (**tām tām eva hi paramikām devatām**). However, in conclusion (**siddhānte**), Lord Viṣṇu alone (**bhagavān viṣṇuḥ eka eva**) is discerned (**niścīyate**) in all the scriptures and in all conduct (**samasta āgama-vyāpāreṣu**) through harmonizing all statements with intelligence (**vivecana-vyatikaram nīteṣu**). [Padma Purāṇa 4.93.26](#)

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- “But one cannot conclude that Viṣṇu is supreme, because there is a variety of opinions expressed in the various Purāṇas uttered by Vyāsa, where Brahmā and Śiva are also declared to be supreme.”
- But the supremecy of Viṣṇu is proved by the above mentioned scriptures (ataeva tatraiva).
- For bewilderment of the universe composed of moving entities such as men and devatās and non-moving entities such as the presiding deities of mountains, let the Purāṇas and other scriptures proclaim devatās such as Brahmā and Śiva to be supreme till the end of the kalpa.
- However, since there is a conclusion reached (siddhānte) by the Brahma-sūtras and its commentary in the form of the Bhāgavatam, in which all scriptures are considered, and finally harmonized through discrimination by use of direct and indirect meaning of the words, the form of Viṣṇu composed of unobstructed knowledge and bliss is determined to be supreme.

The Gunavataras - Visnu

Text-54

śrī-prathama-skandhe –
mumukṣavo ghora-rūpān
hitvā bhūta-patīn atha |
nārāyaṇa-kalāḥ śāntā
bhajanti hy anasūyavaḥ

Thus in the First Canto it is said:

Those who are serious about liberation (**mumukṣavo**) are certainly nonenvious, and they respect all (**anasūyavaḥ**). Yet they reject the horrible and ghastly forms of the demigods (**ghora-rūpān bhūta-patīn atha hitvā**) and worship only (**bhajanti hy**) the all-blissful forms of Lord Viṣṇu and His plenary portions (**nārāyaṇa-kalāḥ śāntā**). **SB 1.2.26**

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- Since Viṣṇu is supreme, he alone should be worshipped.
- That is indicated in this verse.
- Because Brahmā, Rudra and others (bhūta-patīn) have forms of rajas and tamas (ghora-rūpān) they should be rejected, and because Viṣṇu's expansions have forms of sattva (śāntā) they should be accepted.
- Those interested in liberation should not hate the devatās (anasūyavaḥ). Thus it is said:

harir eva sadārādhyah
sarva-deveśvareśvarah
itare brahma-rudrādyā
nāvajñeyah kadācana

Viṣṇu, the lord of all lords of devatās (**harir eva sadārādhyah sarva-deveśvareśvarah**) should always be worshipped (**sadā ārādhyah**). But one should never disrespect Brahmā, Rudra and others (**itare brahma-rudrādyā nāvajñeyah kadācana**). **Padma Purāṇa**

The Gunavataras - Visnu

Text-55

**atra svāmśā harer eva
kalā-śabdena kīrtitāḥ**

In the above verse (**atra**), the word kalā (**kalā-śabdena**) indicates the svāmśa forms of Viṣṇu (**harer svāmśā eva kīrtitāḥ**).

- Svāmśa indicates forms such as Matsya and Kūrma who are equal to the svayaṁ-rūpa Kṛṣṇa because they have forms which are unobstructed knowledge and bliss.

The Gunavataras - Visnu

Text-56

ato vidhi-harādīnām
nikhilānām suparvaṇām |
śrī-viṣṇoḥ svāmśa-vargebhyo
nyūnatābhiprakāśitā

Thus Brahmā, Śiva and other devatās (**ato vidhi-hara ādīnām nikhilānām suparvaṇām**) are shown to be less than (**nyūnatā abhiprakāśitā**) all the svāmśa forms of Viṣṇu (**śrī-viṣṇoḥ svāmśa-vargebhyo**).

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- The intention here is to show that Brahmā, Rudra and others should also worship Viṣṇu.
- Because Viṣṇu has a form of knowledge and bliss which is not at all covered, the forms of Brahmā, Śiva and other devatās are clearly shown to be less than the svāmśa forms of Viṣṇu such as Matsya and Kūrma.

The Gunavataras - Visnu

Text-57

yathā tatraiva --
athāpi yat-pāda-nakhāvasṛṣṭam
jagad viriñcopahr̥tārhaṇāmbhaḥ
seśam punāty anyatamo mukundāt
ko nāma loke bhagavat-padārthaḥ

Thus, in the First Canto it is also said:

Who can be worthy of the name of the Supreme Lord (**ko nāma loke bhagavat-padārthaḥ**) but the Personality of Godhead Śrī Kṛṣṇa (**mukundāt anyatamo**)? Brahmā (**viriñcaḥ**) collected (**upahr̥ta**) the water emanating from the nails of His feet (**yat-pāda-nakhāvasṛṣṭam**) in order to award it to Lord Śiva as a worshipful welcome (**arhaṇa ambhaḥ**). This very water [the Ganges] is purifying the whole universe (**jagad punāty**), including Lord Śiva (**sa īśam**). **SB 1.18.21**

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- Even if Brahmā and Śiva are the actually the supreme lord in some kalpas, they worship the pure sattva form of Viṣṇu in order to teach the devatās, as if they were pure sattva forms which had been covered by rajas and tamas.
- If they are jīvas, then this goes without saying. That is made clear in this verse.
- The water touching the feet of Mukunda purifies the world, along with Śiva (sa īśam).
- Other than Mukunda, who should be designated as bhagavān? No one else.
- Bhagavān who possesses all six aiśvaryas completely should be served by all others, since he is served even by Brahmā and Śiva.

The Gunavataras - Visnu

Text-58

mahā-varāhe ca –
matsya-kūrma-varahādyāḥ
samā viṣṇor abhedataḥ |
brahmādyām asamāḥ proktāḥ .
prakṛtis tu samāsamā

And in the Mahā-varāha Purāṇa it is said:

Matsya, Kūrma, Varāha and other avatāras (**matsya-kūrma-varahādyāḥ**) are equal to Viṣṇu and non-different from him (**viṣṇoh samāḥ abhedataḥ**). Brahmā and others below him are not equal to Viṣṇu (**brahmādyām asamāḥ proktāḥ**). However, the cit-śakti of the Lord is different and non-different from him (**prakṛtis tu sama asamā**).

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- Brahmādyām asamāḥ means that by their very natures Brahmā and others are not equal to Viṣṇu. (This refers to the kalpas where jīvas take the role of Brahmā and Śiva.)
- Rāmacandra Kavirāja has said:

“Prahlaḍa, Dhruva, Vibhīṣaṇa, Bali, Vyāsa, Ambarīṣa and others, by worshipping Viṣṇu, became dear to Brahmā and Śiva. Others such as Rāvaṇa, Bāṇa, Paṇḍraka, Vṛka and the demon Krauñca, who were devotees of Brahmā and Śiva, are not dear to Brahmā and Śiva, and are not dear to Viṣṇu. They are thus enemies of the world. You may consider that Śiva is a follower of Viṣṇu or Viṣṇu is a follower of Śiva. Or you may consider all the three equal! But by looking at the type of people who become followers of Śiva and Brahmā, we offer our respects with our heads to the servants of Viṣṇu, and take shelter of them.”

The Gunavataras - Visnu

Text-59

atra prakṛti-śabdena
cit-chaktir abhidhīyate |
abhinna-bhinna-rūpatvād
asyaivoktā samāsamā

In the previous verse (**atra**), prakṛti refers to the Lord's cit-śakti (**prakṛti-śabdena cit-chaktir abhidhīyate**). Because it is different and non-different from the Lord (**abhinna-bhinna-rūpatvād**) it is called samāsamā (**asya eva sama asamā uktā**).

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- In this verse the word prakṛti is defined.
- Prakṛti in the context refers to the cit-śakti, the svarūpa-śakti of the Lord.
- It is described in the śruti with **parāsyā śakti vividhaiva śrūyate svābhāvikī jñāna-bala-kriyā ca**: The lord (asya) has many spiritual energies (parā śakti), such as the energy of jñāna, bala and kriyā. (**Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad**)

**viṣṇu-śakti parā proktā kṣetra-jñākhyā tathāparā
avidyā-karma samjñānyā tṛtīyā śaktir iṣyate**

The Lord has a superior energy (**viṣṇu-śakti parā proktā**), another energy called the jīva (**kṣetra-jña ākhyā tathā aparā**) and a third energy (**tṛtīyā śaktir iṣyate**), the material energy, called avidyā-karma (**avidyā-karma samjñānyā**). **Viṣṇu Purāṇa**

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- Because that energy is different and non-different from the Lord it is called samāsama according to the Varāha Purāṇa.
- Because this spiritual śakti is non-different from Viṣṇu as heat is non-different from fire, it is called svābhāvikī in the Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad.
- According to Amara-koṣa, svarūpa, svabhāva and nisarga have the same meaning.
- When we say Viṣṇu's śakti we make distinction by the power of viśeṣa, though difference between the Lord and his energy is only apparent.
- For instance the wise say “existence exists” or “time exists at all times” even though there are no real internal distinctions in existence.
- But can we not say simply that this is the nature of things to have no internal distinctions?

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- No, rather we call such nature the power of viśeṣa.
- Viśeṣa is apparent difference, not actual difference.
- Without that viśeṣa there could be no condition of distinguishing an object from its quality.
- And we cannot say that “existence exists” is simply an erroneous statement, because it can never be cancelled by saying, for instance, “a pot exists.”
- Nor is it misidentification, for though we can say “The lion is not Devadatta,” one can never say “Existence does not exist.”

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- The quality is non-different from the object, and self-accomplished.
- Thus, in this explanation there is no infinite regression which requires a third entity to give a relation between the object and its quality .
- This non-difference of object and quality is accomplished by the very capacity of the object to hold quality.
- This is similar to the distinction between the appearance of desire in the Lord to create the universe and his inherent knowledge.
- Because of this viśeṣa which we propound, the condition of object and quality, soul and body, avatāra and avatārī exist as one in Viṣṇu.
- Though they are non-different, viśeṣa is the attribute by which one can apprehend them as different.
- Additional matter on the subject can be taken from other authorized scriptures.