

# Canto Five - Chapter Seventeen

## The Descent of the River Ganges

|| 5.17.1 ||

śrī-śuka uvāca

tatra bhagavataḥ sāksād yajña-lingasya viṣṇor vikramato vāma-pādānguṣṭha-nakha-nirbhinnordhvāṇḍa-kaṭāha-vivareṇāntaḥ-praviṣṭā yā bāhya-jala-dhārā tac-caraṇa-paṅkajāvanejanāruṇa-kiñjalkoparañjitākhila-jagad-agma-malāpahopasparśanāmalā sāksād bhagavat-padīty anupalakṣita-vaco 'bhidhīyamānāti-mahatā kālena yuga-sahasropalakṣaṇena divo mūrdhany avatatāra yat tad viṣṇu-padam āhuḥ.

When the Lord appeared as Vāmana and stepped over the earth with his right foot (**tatra bhagavataḥ sāksād yajña-lingasya viṣṇor vikramataḥ**), the water which entered from outside (**antaḥ-praviṣṭā yā bāhya-jala-dhārā**), by piercing the covering of the universe with the big toe of his left foot (**vāma-pāda aṅguṣṭha-nakha-nirbhinna ūrdhva aṇḍa-kaṭāha-vivareṇa**), tinted red from the color of Lord's feet and the kumkuma (**aruṇa-kiñjalka-uparañjita**) coming from the water that washed his lotus feet (**tat-caraṇa-paṅkajāvanejana**), which purifies by its touch all sins of the world (**upasparśana-akhila-jagad-agma-mala-apaha**) but remains pure (**amalā**), not known by any other name (**anupalakṣita-vacaḥ**), was called Bhagavat-padī, “water coming from the foot of the Lord (**sāksād bhagavat-padī ity abhidhīyamāna**).” After a long time, a thousand yugas (**ati-mahatā kālena yuga-sahasra-upalakṣaṇena**), the river descended to Dhruva-loka (**divaḥ mūrdhany avatatāra**), which then became known as Viṣṇu-pada, the abode of Viṣṇu (**tad viṣṇu-padam āhuḥ**).

॥ 5.17.2 ॥

yatra ha vāva vīra-vrata auttānapādiḥ parama-bhāgavato 'smat-kula-devatā-  
caraṇāravindodakam iti yām anusavanam utkr̥ṣyamāṇa-bhagavad-bhakti-yogena  
dr̥ḍham klidyamānāntar-hṛdaya autkaṇṭhya-vivaśāmīlita-locana-yugala-kuḍmala-  
vigalitāmala-bāṣpa-kalayābhivyajyamāna-roma-pulaka-kulako 'dhunāpi  
paramādareṇa śirasā bibharti.

On Dhruva-loka (**yatra**), Dhruva Mahārāja, the famous son of Mahārāja Uttānapāda (**auttānapādiḥ**), known as an exalted devotee of the Supreme Lord (**parama-bhāgavataḥ**) because of his firm determination in executing devotional service (**vīra-vrata**), whose heart is softened (**dr̥ḍham klidyamāna antar-hṛdaya**) with bhakti-yoga increasing at every moment (**anusavanam utkr̥ṣyamāṇa-bhagavad-bhakti-yogena**), whose hairs stand on end (**abhivyajyamāna-roma-pulaka-kulakah**) while tears (**bāṣpa-kalayā**) flow uncontrolled (**vivaśā vigalita**) from his closed eyes (**amīlita-locana-yugala-kuḍmala**) in great longing (**autkaṇṭhya**), with great respect (**parama ādareṇa**) even now (**adhunā api**) holds on his head (**śirasā bibharti**) that water, thinking “This is the foot water from the deity of our family (**asmat-kula-devatā-caraṇāravinda-udakam iti**).”

### || 5.17.3 ||

tataḥ sapta ṛṣayas tat prabhāvābhijñā yām nanu tapasa ātyantikī  
siddhir etāvati bhagavati sarvātmani vāsudeve 'nuparata-bhakti-  
yoga-lābhenaivopekṣitānyārthātma-gatayo muktim ivāgatām  
mumuksava iva sabahu-mānam adyāpi jaṭā-jūṭair udvahanti.

The seven great sages (**tataḥ sapta ṛṣayah**), aware of the influence of the water of the Gaṅgā (**tat prabhāva abhijñā**), ignoring all other goals (**upekṣitā anya artha-ātma-gatayah**) because of their continuous bhakti-yoga to the all-pervading Supreme Lord Vāsudeva (**bhagavati sarvātmani vāsudeve anuparata-bhakti-yoga-lābhena**), thinking “This is the perfection of austerities (**tapasa ātyantikī siddhir etāvati**),” to this day (**adyāpi**) respectfully keep (**sabahu-mānam udvahanti**) Ganges water in their matted locks (**yām jaṭā-jūṭair**), as much as persons desiring liberation respect liberation (**mumuksavah muktim iva**).

|| 5.17.4 ||

tato 'neka-sahasra-koṭi-vimānānīka-saṅkula-deva-yānenāvatar-  
antīndu maṇḍalam āvārya brahma-sadane nipatati.

After purifying the seven planets near Dhruva-loka (**tatah**), the Gaṅgā's water, carried on the path through the heavens (**deva-yānena avatarantī**) by throngs of celestial airplanes (**aneka-sahasra-koṭi-vimānānīka-saṅkula**), inundates the moon (**indu maṇḍalam āvārya**) and finally reaches Lord Brahmā's abode atop Mount Meru (**brahma-sadane nipatati**).

॥ 5.17.5 ॥

**tatra caturdhā bhidyamānā caturbhir nāmabhiś catur-diśam  
abhispandantī nada-nadī-patim evābhiniviśati sītālayanandā  
cakṣur bhadreti.**

On top of Mount Meru (**tatra**), the Gaṅgā divides into four branches (**caturdhā bhidyamānā**), each of which flows in a different direction (**catur-diśam abhispandantī**). These branches, known by the names (**caturbhir nāmabhih**) Sītā, Alakanandā, Cakṣu and Bhadrā (**sītā-alakanandā-cakṣur-bhadrā iti**), flow down to the ocean (**nada-nadī-patim eva abhiniviśati**).

## || 5.17.6 ||

sītā tu brahma-sadanāt kesarācalādi-giri-śikharebhyo 'dho 'dhaḥ  
prasravantī gandhamādana-mūrdhasu patitvāntareṇa  
bhadrāśva-varṣam prācyām diśi kṣāra-samudram abhipraviśati.

The branch of the Ganges known as the Sītā, flowing from Brahmapurī atop Mount Meru (**sītā tu brahma-sadanāt**), runs down to the nearby peaks of the Kesarācala Mountains (**kesarācalādi-giri-śikharebhyo adho adhaḥ prasravantī**), and from there, to the peak of Gandhamādana Mountain (**gandhamādana-mūrdhasu patitvā**). It then flows into the land of Bhadrāśva-varṣa (**antareṇa bhadrāśva-varṣam**). Finally it reaches the ocean of salt water in the east (**prācyām diśi kṣāra-samudram abhipraviśati**).

|| 5.17.7 ||

evam mālyavac-chikharān niṣpatantī tato 'nuparata-vegā  
ketumālam abhi cakṣuḥ pratīcyām diśi sarit-patim praviśati.

The branch of the Gaṅgā known as Cakṣu (**cakṣuḥ**), falling from the summit of Mālyavān Mountain (**evam mālyavan-śikharān niṣpatantī**), cascades into Ketumāla-varṣa (**tato ketumālam abhi**) with uninterrupted force (**anuparata-vegā**) and enters the ocean of salt water in the west (**pratīcyām diśi sarit-patim praviśati**).



|| 5.17.8 ||

**bhadrā cottarato meru-śirasō nipatitā giri-śikharād giri-śikharam atihāya śṛṅgavataḥ śṛṅgād avasyandamānā uttarāms tu kurūn abhita udīcyām diśi jaladhim abhipraviśati.**

The branch of the Gaṅgā known as Bhadrā, flowing from the northern side of Mount Meru (**bhadrā ca uttarato meru-śirasah**), fall onto the peaks of Kesara Mountain, Nīla Mount, Śveta Mountain and Śṛṅgavān Mountain in succession (**nipatitā giri-śikharād giri-śikharam atihāya śṛṅgavataḥ śṛṅgād avasyandamānā**). Then it runs down into the province of Kuru (**uttarāms tu kurūn abhita**) and flows into the saltwater ocean in the north (**udīcyām diśi jaladhim abhipraviśati**).

|| 5.17.9 ||

tathaiivālananandā dakṣiṇena brahma-sadanād bahūni giri-kūṭāny  
atikramya hemakūṭād dhaimakūṭāny ati-rabhasatara-ramhasā luṭhayantī  
bhāratam abhivarṣam dakṣiṇasyām diśi jaladhim abhipraviśati yasyām  
snānārtham cāgacchataḥ puṃsaḥ pade pade 'śvamedha-rājasūyādīnām  
phalam na durlabham iti.

Similarly (**tathā eva**), the branch of the Gaṅgā known as Alakanandā (**alakanandā**), flowing from the southern side of Brahmapurī (**dakṣiṇena brahma-sadanād**), passes over the tops of mountains in various lands (Kesarācala and Niṣadha) (**bahūni giri-kūṭāny atikramya**), and falls down with fierce force (**ati-rabhasatara-ramhasā luṭhayantī**) upon the peaks of the mountains Hemakūṭa and Himakūṭa (Himālaya) (**hemakūṭād haimakūṭāny**) and, falling in Bhārata-varṣa (**bhāratam abhivarṣam**), flows into the ocean of salt water in the south (**dakṣiṇasyām diśi jaladhim abhipraviśati**). It is not very difficult (**na durlabham**) for persons who bathe in this river (**yasyām snānārtham ca āgacchataḥ puṃsaḥ**) to achieve with every place (**pade pade**) the results of performing great sacrifices like the Rājasūya and Aśvamedha (**aśvamedha-rājasūya ādīnām phalam**).

|| 5.17.10 ||

**anye ca nadā nadyaś ca varṣe varṣe santi bahuśo merv-ādi-giri-  
duhitarah śataśah.**

Many other rivers, both big and small (**anye ca nadā nadyaś ca**), daughters Meru and other mountains (**merv-ādi-giri-duhitarah**), flow to the various tracts of land (**bahuśo varṣe varṣe santi**) in hundreds of branches (**śataśah**).

|| 5.17.11 ||

**tatrāpi bhāratam eva varṣam karma-kṣetram anyāny aṣṭa  
varṣāṇi svargiṇām puṇya-śeṣopabhoga-sthānāni bhaumāni  
svarga-padāni vyapadiśanti.**

Among the nine varṣas (**tatrāpi**), the tract of land known as Bhārata-varṣa (**bhāratam eva varṣam**) is understood to be the field of karma (**karma-kṣetram vyapadiśanti**) and the other eight varṣas (**anyāny aṣṭa varṣāṇi**) are known as “heaven on earth (**bhaumāni svarga-padāni**),” places to enjoy the remainder of pious acts (**puṇya-śeṣa upabhoga-sthānāni**) after leaving Svarga (**svargiṇām**).

॥ 5.17.12 ॥

**eṣu puruṣāṇām ayuta-puruṣāyur-varṣāṇām deva-kalpānām nāgāyuta-prāṇānām vajra-samhanana-bala-vayo-moda-pramudita-mahā-saurata-mithuna-vyavāyāpavarga-varṣa-dhṛtaika-garbha-kalatrāṇām tatra tu tretā-yuga-samaḥ kālo vartate.**

In these eight varṣas (**eṣu**), human beings like devatās (**deva-kalpānām puruṣāṇām**) live ten thousand years according to earthly calculations (**ayuta-puruṣa āyuh-varṣāṇām**). They have the bodily strength of ten thousand elephants (**nāga-ayuta-prāṇānām**). They have wives who conceive once in the last year of their lives (**varṣa-dhṛta-eka-garbha-kalatrāṇām**), after sexual enjoyment of the couples (**mahā-saurata-mithuna-vyavāyāpavarga**), excited by thunderbolt bodies possessing strength, youth and fragrance (**vajra-samhanana-bala-vayo-moda-pramudita**). There the happiness is like that of Treta-yuga (**tatra tu tretā-yuga-samaḥ kālah vartate**).

|| 5.17.13 ||

yatra ha deva-patayaḥ svaiḥ svair gaṇa-nāyakair vihita-mahārhaṇāḥ sarvartu-kusuma-stabaka-phala-kisalaya-śriyānamyamāna-viṭapa-latā-viṭapibhir upaśumbhamāna-rucira-kānanāśramāyatana-varṣa-giri-droṇīṣu tathā cāmala-jalāśayeṣu vikaca-vividha-nava-vanaruhāmoda-mudita-rāja-haṃsa-jala-kukkuṭa-kāraṇḍava-sārasa-cakravākādibhir madhukara-nikarākṛtibhir upakūjiteṣu jala-kriḍādibhir vicitra-vinodaiḥ sulalita-sura-sundarīṇām kāma-kalila-vilāsa-hāsa-lilāvalokākṛṣṭa-mano-dṛṣṭayaḥ svairam viharanti.

There, the chiefs of devatās (**yatra ha deva-patayaḥ**), their glances and minds attracted (**ākṛṣṭa-mano-dṛṣṭayaḥ**) by the playful glances and smiles (**kāma-kalila-vilāsa-hāsa-lilā-avaloka**) of beautiful women (**sulalita-sura-sundarīṇām**) because of their desire, amuse themselves (**svairam viharanti**) freely with ingredients supplied by their followers (**svaiḥ svair gaṇa-nāyakair vihita-mahārhaṇāḥ**) in pastimes such as water sports (**jala-kriḍādibhir vicitra-vinodaiḥ**) in clear lakes (**amala-jalāśayeṣu**) resounding with the sounds (**upakūjiteṣu**) of various groups of bees (**madhukara-nikara ākṛtibhir**), swans, water hens, cranes and kāraṇḍavas (**rāja-haṃsa-jala-kukkuṭa-kāraṇḍava-sārasa-cakravākādibhir**) excited by the fragrance of a variety of blooming lotuses (**vikaca-vividha-nava-vana-ruha āmoda mudita**) growing in valleys between the mountains (**varṣa-giri-droṇīṣu**), which have hermitages and pleasant gardens (**rucira-kānana āśrama-āyatana**) splendid with trees and creepers (**latā-viṭapibhir upaśumbhamāna**) whose branches are bent down (**ānamyamāna-viṭapa**) by the abundance of fruits and flowers of all seasons (**sarva rtu-kusuma-stabaka-phala kisalaya-śriyā**).

॥ 5.17.14 ॥

navasv api varṣeṣu bhagavān nārāyaṇo mahā-puruṣaḥ  
puruṣāṇām tad-anugrahāyātma-tattva-vyūhenātmanādyāpi  
sannidhīyate.

To show mercy to his devotees (**tad-anugrahāya**) in each of these nine tracts of land (**navasv api varṣeṣu**), the great Lord known as Nārāyaṇa (**bhagavān nārāyaṇaḥ puruṣāṇām mahā-puruṣaḥ**) remains near his devotees (**sannidhīyate**) in various forms (**ātma-tattva-vyūhena**).

॥ 5.17.15 ॥

ilāvṛte tu bhagavān bhava eka eva pumān na hy anyas tatrāparo  
nirviśati bhavānyāḥ śāpa-nimitta-jño yat-pravekṣyataḥ strī-  
bhāvas tat paścād vakṣyāmi.

In the tract of land known as Ilāvṛta-varṣa, the only male person is Lord Śiva (**ilāvṛte tu bhagavān bhava eka eva pumān**). No other male exists there (**na hy anyah**). One who knows about Durgā's curse (**bhavānyāḥ śāpa-nimitta-jño**) does not enter there (**na hy nirviśati**). If any foolish man dares to do so (**yat-pravekṣyataḥ**), he turns into a woman (**strī-bhāvah**). I shall explain this later (**tat paścād vakṣyāmi**).



|| 5.17.16 ||

**bhavānī-nāthaiḥ strī-gaṇārbuda-sahasrair avarudhyamāno  
bhagavataś catur-mūrter mahā-puruṣasya turīyām tāmasīm  
mūrtim prakṛtim ātmanaḥ saṅkarṣaṇa-samjñām ātma-samādhi-  
rūpeṇa sannidhāpyaitad abhigṛṇan bhava upadhāvati.**

In Ilāvṛta-varṣa, Lord Śiva is always encircled (**avarudhyamānah**) by ten billion maidservants of goddess Durgā (**bhavānī-nāthaiḥ strī-gaṇa arbuda-sahasrair**). Uttering the following mantra (**etad abhigṛṇan**) in meditation (**ātma-samādhi-rūpeṇa sannidhāpya**), Śiva worships (**bhava upadhāvati**) Saṅkarṣaṇa (**saṅkarṣaṇa-samjñām**), his source (**prakṛtim ātmanaḥ**), the spiritual form in charge of ignorance (**turīyām tāmasīm mūrtim**), among the four forms of the Lord (**bhagavataḥ mahā-puruṣasya catur-mūrteḥ**).

|| 5.17.17 ||

śrī-bhagavān uvāca

om namo bhagavate mahā-puruṣāya sarva-guṇa-  
saṅkhyānāyānantāyāvyaktāya nama iti.

Śiva said: I offer respects to Bhagavān, the great puruṣa (**om namo bhagavate mahā-puruṣāya**), the revelation of all qualities (**sarva-guṇa-saṅkhyānāya**), the unlimited (**anantāyā**), and the unfathomable (**avyaktāya**).

|| 5.17.18 ||

**bhaje bhajenyāraṇa-pāda-paṅkajam**  
**bhagasya kṛtsnasya param parāyaṇam**  
**bhakteṣv alam bhāvita-bhūta-bhāvanam**  
**bhavāpaham tvā bhava-bhāvam īśvaram**

I worship wholeheartedly (**bhaje bhajenya**) the Lord (**īśvaram**) with lotus feet (**araṇa-pāda-paṅkajam**), the highest shelter of all six qualities (**bhagasya kṛtsnasya param parāyaṇam**), the ornament of the devotees (**bhakteṣv alam**), the object of meditation for Brahmā (**bhāvita-bhūta-bhāvanam**), the destroyer of material life (**bhavāpaham**), who has prema for me (**bhava-bhāvam**), your servant (**tvā**).

॥ 5.17.19 ॥

na yasya māyā-guṇa-citta-vṛttibhir  
nirīkṣato hy aṅv api dr̥ṣṭir a jyate  
īśe yathā no 'jita-manyu-ramhasām  
kas taṁ na manyeta jigīṣur ātmanah

What person, desiring to conquer the senses (**kaḥ ātmanah jigīṣuh**), will not worship the Lord (**taṁ na manyeta**) whose vision (**yasya dr̥ṣṭih**) is not affected (**na a jyate**) by the actions of the mind (**citta-vṛttibhih**) influenced by the guṇas of māyā (**māyā guṇa**) when he glances (**aṅv api nirīkṣatah**) in order to regulate matter (**īśe**), though we (**naḥ**), having the force of uncontrolled anger (**ajita-manyu-ramhasām**), are affected by when we glance at matter (**na yathā**).

|| 5.17.20 ||

asad-dr̥śo yaḥ pratibhāti māyayā  
kṣībeva madhv-āsava-tāmra-locanaḥ  
na nāga-vadhvo 'rhaṇa īsire hriyā  
yat-pādayoḥ sparśana-dharṣitendriyāḥ

For persons with impure vision (**asad-dr̥śo yaḥ**), the Supreme Lord appears (**pratibhāti**) like an intoxicated person by the influence of māyā (**māyayā kṣība iva**), but he is not such a red-eyed drunk (**madhv-āsava-tāmra-locanaḥ**). The wives of Kāliya were unable to worship the Lord (**na nāga-vadhvo arhaṇa īsire**) because of shyness (**hriyā**), since their senses were agitated by the touch of his feet (**yat-pādayoḥ sparśana-dharṣita indriyāḥ**).

॥ 5.17.21 ॥

yam āhur asya sthiti-janma-samyamam  
tribhir vihīnam yam anantam ṛṣayaḥ  
na veda siddhārtham iva kvacit sthitam  
bhū-maṇḍalam mūrdha-sahasra-dhāmasu

The sages say (**ṛṣayaḥ āhuh**) that he is the cause of maintenance, creation and destruction of the universe (**yam asya sthiti-janma-samyamam**), that he is without material guṇas (**tribhir vihīnam**), and that he is unlimited (**yam anantam**). He does not even feel the universe situated on his thousands of hoods (**na veda bhū-maṇḍalam kvacit mūrdha-sahasra-dhāmasu sthitam**), since it is like a mustard seed (**siddhārtham iva**).

|| 5.17.22-23 ||

yasyādyā āsīd guṇa-vigraho mahān  
vijñāna-dhiṣṇyo bhagavān ajaḥ kila  
yat-sambhavo 'ham tri-vṛtā sva-tejasā  
vaikārikam tāmasam aindriyam sṛje

ete vayam yasya vaśe mahātmanah  
sthitāḥ śakuntā iva sūtra-yantritāḥ  
mahān aham vaikṛta-tāmasendriyāḥ  
sṛjāma sarve yad-anugrahād idam

First there was the form of māyā (**ādyā āsīd guṇa-vigraho**) called mahat-tattva (**mahān**). Lord Brahmā (**bhagavān ajaḥ**) is the shelter of sattva-guṇa (**vijñāna-dhiṣṇyah**). From Brahmā I appear (**yat-sambhavo aham**). By the Lord's power and the power of the guṇas (**tri-vṛtā sva-tejasā**), I create (**sṛje**) the devatās, the elements and the senses (**vaikārikam tāmasam aindriyam**). All of us (**ete vayam**)—mahat-tattva, the devatās, the elements and senses (**mahān aham vaikṛta-tāmasa indriyāḥ**)---are like birds (**sthitāḥ śakuntā iva**) tied by a thread (**sūtra-yantritāḥ**). Under his control (**yasya mahātmanah vaśe**), by his mercy (**yad-anugrahād**), we create this universe (**sṛjāma sarve idam**).

|| 5.17.24 ||

yan-nirmitām karhy api karma-parvaṇīm  
māyām jano 'yam guṇa-sarga-mohitaḥ  
na veda nistāraṇa-yogam añjasā  
tasmai namas te vilayodayātmane

Man (**janah**), bewildered by the creations of the guṇas (**guṇa-sarga-mohitaḥ**), does not know māyā (**na veda māyām**), who ties the knot of karma (**karma-parvaṇīm**) and who appears by the will of the Lord (**yad-nirmitām**), and he does not at all know (**na karhy api veda**) bhakti-yoga, the method to become quickly free from māyā (**añjasā nistāraṇa-yogam**). I offer respects to Paramātmā (**tasmai namas te ātmane**), the destroyer of māyā for the devotee and creator of māyā for the non-devotee (**vilaya udaya**).