

Brihad Bhagavatamritam

Srila Sanatan Goswami

श्रीश्रीबृहद्भागवतामृतम्

Sri Sri Brihad-Bhagavatamritam

Part 2: Goloka-Mahatmya

with the

Dig-darshani Commentary

by

Srila Sanatan Goswami

In devotional service of Sri Gauranga's Divine Messenger,
The Living Embodiment of Sri Gauranga's Teachings,
Prabhupada Sri Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Goswami

This book has been produced as an offering to
Ananta Sri Vibhusita Nitya-Lila-Pravistha
Om Vishnupada Paramahamsa Paribrajakarcharya
Srila Bhakti Rakshak Sridhar Dev-Goswami Maharaj

Humbly begging for the divine guidance graciously given by
Om Vishnupada Paramahamsa Paribrajakacharya
Srila Bhakti Sundar Govinda Dev-Goswami Maharaj

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Srila Bhakti Rakshak Sridhar Maharaj
and Srila Bhakti Sundar Govinda Maharaj

श्रीसिद्धान्तसरस्वतीति विदितौ गौडीयगुर्वन्वये ।
भातो भानुरिव प्रभातगगने यो गौरसङ्कीर्तनैः ।
मायावादतिमिङ्गिलोदरगतानुद्धृत्य जीवानीमान् ।
कृष्णप्रेमसुधाब्धिगहनसुखं प्रादात् प्रभुं तं भजे ॥

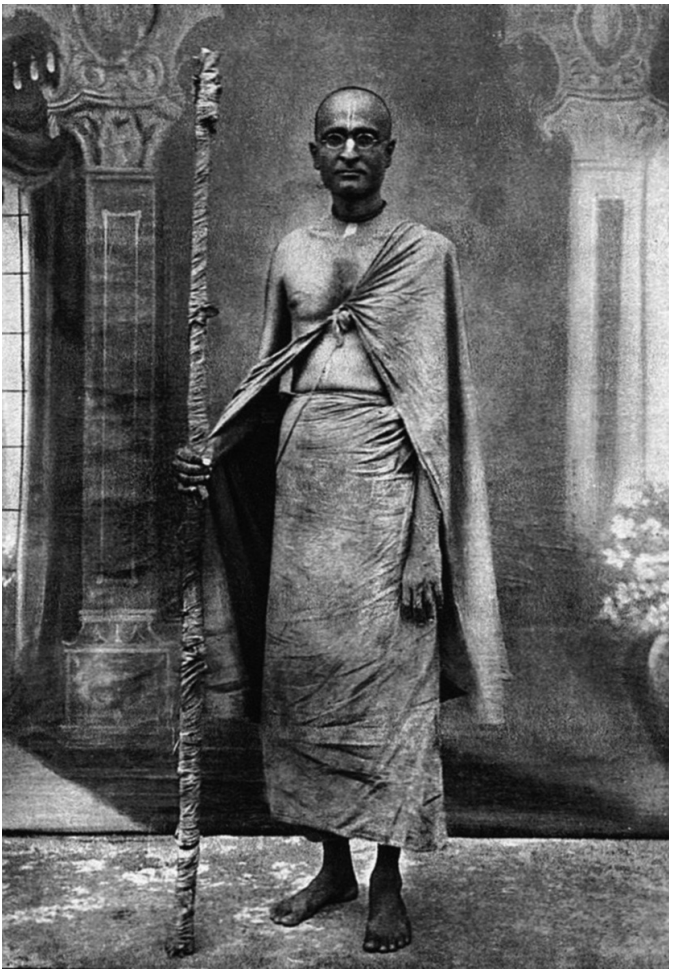
sri siddhanta-sarasvatiti viditau gaudiya-gurv-anvaye
bhato bhanur iva prabhata-gagane yo gaura-sankirtanih
mayavada-timingilodara-gatan uddhrtya jivaniman
krishna-prema-sudhabdhi gahana sukham pradat prabhum tam bhaje

In the great Gaudiya Vaishnava Acharya's line,
as Srila Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati he is known.

Like the radiant sun in the morning sky,
he came to rescue souls swallowed by
the all-destroying mayavada philosophy.

By spreading the teaching of Sri Gauranga
to sing the holy name of Lord Krishna,
he gave everyone the chance to dive in the ocean
of love for Sri Krishna, the Supreme Person.

Srila Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati,
my lord, my divine master,
at his feet, I pray
— to serve him forever.



Sri Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati

श्रीश्रीबृहद्भागवतामृतम्
द्वितीयखण्डम्
[श्रीगोलोकमाहात्म्यम्]
प्रथमोऽध्यायः — वैराग्यम्
नमः श्रीकृष्णाय भगवते श्रीराधिकारमणाय ॥

Sri Sri Brihad-Bhagavatamritam

Part Two

The Glories of Sri Goloka

Chapter One: Vairagya — Detachment

Obeisance to Sri Krishna the Supreme Lord, the delight of Sri Radhika

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 1
श्रीजनमेजय उवाच—
सत्यं सच्छास्त्रवर्गार्थसारः संगृह्य दुर्लभः ।
गूढः स्वमात्रे पित्रा मे कृष्णप्रेम्णा प्रकाशितः ॥१॥
sri-janamejaya uvaca—
satyam sac-chastra-vargartha-sarah sangrihya durlabhah ।
gudhah sva-matre pitra me krishna-premna prakashitah ।।1।।

Sri Janamejaya said: It is true that my father gathered together the essence of all the rare and beautiful meanings found in the body of the genuine scriptures; then, moved by Krishna prema, love for Krishna, he revealed that most essential teaching to his own mother.

Dig-darshini

Obeisance to the Supreme Lord, Sri Chaitanyadev. Having taken shelter of the jewel of His divine form, this inert person now dances wondrously. Here the abode of those who are vessels containing the essence of Sri Krishna's mercy is described. That abode is eternally filled with the sweetness of bliss arising from the joyful abundance of Hari's divine play. Seven chapters have been composed to establish the supreme excellence of that abode in every respect, while first removing the thorns of possible objections. In the first chapter, the greatness of Bhurloka is described through a historical account presented in the form of Uttara's questions and their

answers, as a preparation for describing the glory of Goloka. This is accomplished through descriptions of the increasingly exalted opulence with which Hari is worshipped by a Brahmin who governs a village, a king who rules a region, and an emperor, an overlord of many kings. Thereafter, to prepare the way for the mother's questions to her son, Janamejaya the delight-filled descendant of Parikshit fittingly addresses this question to Jaimini.

At the outset, before beginning the account, Janamejaya asks this question while affirming the truth of what he has already heard, desiring thereby to delight his guru. The genuine scriptures are Srimad Bhagavatam and related works devoted entirely to explaining bhakti: devotional service rendered for the pleasure of Sri Bhagavan. The meanings taught by that body of scripture include bhakti together with its accompanying features, the means by which it is attained, and other related subjects. Their essence is that portion from which nothing need be discarded. This essence is difficult to obtain because the extensive study of many scriptures is extremely difficult, and because their true intention is hard to discern through deliberation upon commentaries and other such methods. The words "having gathered together" mean that Parikshit collected and unified this essence from all those different bodies of scripture. Janamejaya therefore says, "It is true that my father Parikshit revealed this teaching, although it was confidential, to his mother Uttara." The cause of his revealing this teaching was prema for Krishna—either Parikshit's own prema or that of his mother.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 2
श्रीमद्भागवताम्भोधिपीयूषमिदमापिबन्।
न तृप्यामि मुनिश्रेष्ठ त्वन्मुखाम्भोजवासितम्॥२॥
srimad-bhagavatambhodhi-piyusham idam apiban ।
na tripyami muni-sreshtha tvan-mukhambhoja-vasitam ।।2।।

O foremost of sages, although I drink this nectar from the ocean of Srimad Bhagavatam, perfumed by the lotus of your mouth, I am not yet satisfied.

Dig-darshini

Nevertheless, Janamejaya now expresses his desire to hear still more. The word "Srimad" indicates the Bhagavata scriptures, those scriptures centred upon Bhagavan and endowed with every form of beauty and excellence. They are compared to oceans because both their words and their meanings are without limit. Alternatively, just as the Ocean of Milk is foremost among all oceans, Srimad Bhagavatam is the foremost of all genuine scriptures. It is itself an ocean because its greatness is unfathomable, and for other similar reasons. Its nectar is the supremely sweet and essential meaning presented here in the account called Bhagavat-kripa-

sara-nirdhara, "The Determination of the Essence of Bhagavan's Mercy." Janamejaya says, "Although I am drinking this nectar I am not satisfied. I cannot cease desiring to drink more." Why is this? He addresses Jaimini: "O foremost of sages! O foremost among the Bhagavatas!" The nectar has been perfumed by the lotus of Jaimini's mouth and its fragrance. Because it produces the highest spiritual relish, one can never become satiated by drinking it.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 3
तन्मातापुत्रयोर्विद्वन् संवादः कथ्यतां तयोः।
सुधासारमयोऽन्योऽपि कृष्णपादाब्जलुब्धयोः ॥३॥
tan mata-putrayor vidvan samvadah kathyatam tayoh ।
sudha-saramayo 'nyo 'pi krishna-padabja-lubdhayoh ।।3।।

Therefore, O learned sage, please relate another conversation between that mother and son, both of whom are deeply eager for the lotus feet of Krishna. Surely that conversation also consists of the pure essence of nectar.

Dig-darshini

Therefore, Janamejaya asks Jaimini to narrate another conversation between that mother and son, Uttara and Parikshit. Their conversation consists of the very essence of nectar—supreme sweetness and other such excellences—because both of them are rasikas, connoisseurs of divine rasa, intensely eager for the lotus feet of Krishna. By addressing Jaimini as "learned," Janamejaya means, "O you who are fully acquainted with all divine truths."

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 4
श्रीजैमिनिरुवाच—
नैतत् स्वशक्तितो राजन् वक्तुं ज्ञातुं च शक्यते।
सर्वज्ञानां च दुर्ज्ञेयं ब्रह्मानुभाविनामपि ॥४॥
sri-jaiminir uvaca—
naitat sva-shaktito rajan vaktum jnatum ca shakyate ।
sarvajnanam ca durjneyam brahmanubhavinam api ।।4।।

Sri Jaimini said: O King, this cannot be spoken or understood by anyone's personal power. It is difficult to comprehend even for those who know all things and for those who directly experience Brahman.

Dig-darshini

Intending to explain that this subject cannot be grasped through the power of anyone's speech or mind, Jaimini replies with the words na etat, "not this." "This" refers to the nectar of the ocean of Srimad Bhagavatam in the form of the account describing the glory of Goloka and related subjects. "Those who know all things" refers to siddhas (perfected beings) possessing knowledge of the past, present, and future, while "those who have experienced Brahman"

refers to muktas (liberated souls). Thus, the verse indicates that even through the realization of Brahman, it is exceedingly difficult to understand the glory of Sri Bhagavan and the eternal associates of the Lord who belong to Him.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 5
कृष्णभक्तिरसाम्भोधेः प्रसादाद् बादरायणेः।
परीक्षिदुत्तरापार्श्वे निविष्टोऽश्रौषमञ्जसा ॥५॥
krishna-bhakti-rasambhodheh prasadat badarayaneh ।
parikshid-uttara-parshve nivishto 'shrausham anjasa ।।5।।

By the mercy of Sri Sukadev, the son of Badarayana and an ocean of the rasa (nectar) of Krishna-bhakti, I sat beside Parikshit and Uttara and heard this account directly.

Dig-darshini

How, then, was Jaimini able to narrate the great account previously spoken by Parikshit? He answers with the words krishna-bhakti-rasambhodheh. By the mercy of Sri Sukadev, the son of Badarayana, Jaimini sat beside Parikshit and Uttara and heard this account directly. The intended meaning is this: "Although I am all-knowing and have directly experienced Brahman, this account could not have been spoken or understood through those powers. Rather, Sri Sukadev placed me near Parikshit and Uttara, knowing that Jaimini alone was fit to make Janamejaya hear this Bhagavatamrita in the form of their conversation. Having directly experienced it, I now narrate it. Even this was possible solely through the mercy of Suka that supreme and foremost Bhagavata." The verse also indicates that a presentation of something directly experienced reaches the listener's heart more effectively and appropriately than the presentation of something understood merely through the power of knowledge.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 6
परं गोप्यमपि स्निग्धे शिष्ये वाच्यमिति श्रुतिः।
तच्छ्रूयतां महाभाग गोलोकमहिमाधुना ॥६॥
param gopyam api snigdhe shishye vacyam iti shrutih ।
tac chruyatam maha-bhaga goloka-mahimadhuna ।।6।।

Although this subject is supremely confidential, scripture declares that it must be revealed to an affectionate disciple. Therefore, O greatly fortunate one, now hear the glory of Goloka.

Dig-darshini

Although this subject is supremely confidential, Jaimini indicates that he will nevertheless speak it. By addressing Janamejaya as "O greatly fortunate one," he indicates that Janamejaya is qualified to hear it. Previously, Janamejaya heard the greatness of those who are most dear to Sri Bhagavan. Now he should hear the glory of Goloka,

the abode most dear to Sri Bhagavan. The intended meaning is that this description of Goloka is itself Sri Bhagavatamrita, since it culminates in the glorification of Sri Bhagavan and the foremost of His devotees.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 7
श्रीकृष्णकरुणासारपात्रनिर्धारसत्कथाम्।
श्रुत्वाभूत् परमानन्दपूर्णा तव पितामही ॥७॥
sri-krishna-karuna-sara-patra-nirdhara-sat-katham ।
shrutvabhut paramananda-purna tava pitamahi ।।7।।

After hearing that excellent account determining the recipients of the essence of Sri Krishna's mercy, your grandmother became filled with supreme bliss.

Dig-darshini

"The essence of Sri Krishna's mercy" means the most supremely excellent manifestation of His extraordinary compassion. Your grandmother Uttara became filled with overwhelming bliss after hearing that true and supremely excellent account determining those who are the recipients of Bhagavan's mercy.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verses 8–9
तादृग्भक्तिविशेषस्य गोपीकान्तपदाब्जयोः।
श्रोतुं फलविशेषं तद्भोगस्थानं च सत्तमम् ॥८॥
वैकुण्ठादपि मन्वाना विमृशन्ती हृदि स्वयम्।
तच्चानाकलयन्ती सा पप्रच्छ श्रीपरीक्षितम् ॥९॥
tadrig-bhakti-visheshasya gopi-kanta-padabjayoh ।
shrotum phala-vishesham tad-bhoga-sthanam ca sattamam ।।8।।
vaikunthad api manvana vimrishanti hridi svayam ।
tac canakalayanti sa papraccha sri-parikshitam ।।9।।

Desiring to enjoy the juice of the special fruit of extraordinary bhakti for the lotus feet of Krishna the beloved of the gopis, and considering that the supreme abode in which that fruit is enjoyed must be even more exalted than Vaikuntha, she pondered the matter within her heart. Unable to determine the answers to every question within herself, she asked Sri Parikshit.

Dig-darshini

Uttara desired to hear about the special fruit of that indescribable and extraordinary form of bhakti for the lotus feet of Sri Krishna, the beloved of the gopis. She also wished to hear about the place in which that special fruit is enjoyed, considering that place to be even more excellent than Vaikuntha. Alternatively, the construction may be understood as follows: she desired to hear both about that special fruit and about the place in which it is enjoyed. Considering that place to be even more exalted than Vaikuntha, she reflected within her heart, "Which place could it be?" Unable to determine

this herself, your grandmother asked her son Sri Parikshit. Because the verb "to ask" may take two objects, both the special fruit and the place in which it is enjoyed are understood as the objects of her question.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verses 10–11
श्रीमदुत्तरोवाच—
कामिनां पुण्यकर्तृणां त्रैलोक्यं गृहिणां पदम् ।
अगृहाणां च तस्योर्ध्वं स्थितं लोकचतुष्टयम् ॥१०॥
भोगान्ते मुहुरावृत्तिमेते सर्वे प्रयान्ति हि ।
महरादिगताः केचिन्मुच्यन्ते ब्रह्मणा सह ॥११॥
srimad-uttarovaca—
kaminam punya-kartrinam trailokyam grihinam padam ।
agrihanam ca tasyordhvam sthitam loka-catustayam ।।10।।
bhogante muhur avrittim ete sarve prayanti hi ।
mahar-adi-gatah kecin mucyante brahmana saha ।।11।।

Sri Uttara said: For householders who perform pious deeds while desiring their rewards, the three worlds are their destination after death. For those who have renounced household life, the four worlds situated above them are the destination. When their enjoyment in those seven worlds comes to an end, all these people repeatedly return to an Earthly birth, although some who managed to reach Maharloka and the higher worlds may instead become liberated together with Brahma.

Dig-darshini

Those who possess extraordinary prema for the lotus feet of Sri Gopinatha must certainly attain a destination far more exalted than anything attained by others, and that destination must be entirely distinct from every other realm. Desiring to inquire about this, Uttara first describes the various destinations attained by different kinds of souls, beginning with the words kaminam and continuing through the word ucitam in verse 24. In these two and a half verses, she first describes the different destinations of those devoted to karma, distinguishing between those who are attached to enjoyment and those who are detached.

"Pious deeds" refers to auspicious activities, including obligatory daily duties, duties performed on particular occasions, and works undertaken for the fulfilment of particular desires. For householders who perform these deeds while desiring their results, the three worlds—Bhurloka, Bhuvarloka, and Svarloka—constitute the places they go to enjoy those results. The word kaminam indicates those who perform pious acts while conceiving various desired rewards and longing to attain them. Householders who are free from such desires and devoted solely to the proper performance of their prescribed duties may also reach Maharloka and the higher worlds;

and then, through the purification of consciousness and other progressive developments they may eventually attain liberation. As Sri Rudra states in the Fourth Canto of Srimad Bhagavatam, "A person firmly devoted to his prescribed duty attains the position of Brahma after one hundred births."

Those described as "without homes" are lifelong celibate students, vanaprasthas, and renounced ascetics. Their destinations are the four worlds situated above the three ordinary worlds: Maharloka, Janaloka, Tapoloka, and Satyaloka. Sri Sukadev explains in the Second Canto of Srimad Bhagavatam: "Beyond the three divisions are the abodes of those who do not produce offspring, whereas the householder, whose vow is not so great, remains within the three worlds." Here, "those who do not produce offspring" refers to lifelong celibates, vanaprasthas, and renunciants, and their ashrams, or places of enjoyment, lie beyond the three worlds. The householder remains within those three worlds because his vow is not so great, being without lifelong celibacy and not having renounced the life of sexual union.

Among those residing in these realms, those who retain material desires repeatedly take birth again, whereas those who are free from desires and devoted solely to performing dharma, their prescribed duties, attain liberation after their enjoyment is complete. Some who lack complete vairagya first enjoy the pleasures of Maharloka and the higher worlds and, when the great cosmic dissolution arrives, become liberated together with Brahma. Others, according to their own desire, enjoy various pleasures while gradually advancing along the path that beginns with light, and are then liberated in successive stages of progress. Thus the words bhogante indicate that when their period of enjoyment has ended, they repeatedly return and take birth in Bharata-varsha (India) and elsewhere. As stated in the Bhagavad-gita: "Those who know the three Vedas, drink soma, and are purified of sin worship Me through sacrifice, seeking entrance into heaven. Attaining the pious world of Indra, the person enjoys the celestial pleasures of the gods. Having enjoyed that vast heavenly realm they then return to the world of mortals when their accumulated merit is exhausted. In this way, those who follow the religion of the three Vedas and desire objects of enjoyment repeatedly come to heaven and Earth and then go away." The Gita also states: "From the world of Brahma downwards, all worlds are places from which one returns, O Arjuna." The expression "Maharloka and the higher worlds" includes Janaloka, Tapoloka, and Satyaloka. Some persons devoted to performing dharma — their prescribed duties — without selfish desire remain in Satyaloka until Brahma's appointed period of authority ends. According to the principle that those who hold appointed positions remain for the duration of their office, when

Brahma is liberated, they too attain liberation. It is therefore stated: "When the cosmic dissolution arrives, all the perfected souls enter the supreme destination together with Brahma."

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 12
केचित् क्रमेण मुच्यन्ते भोगान् भुक्त्वार्चिरादिषु।
लभन्ते यतयः सद्यो मुक्तिं ज्ञानपरा हि ये ॥१२॥
kecit kramena mucyante bhogan bhuktvarcir-adisu ।
labhante yatayah sadyo muktim jnana-para hi ye ।।12।।

Some attain liberation gradually, after enjoying the pleasures found on the path beginning with light, whereas those renunciants who are whole-heartedly devoted to gaining spiritual knowledge attain liberation immediately.

Dig-darshini

The word "some" refers to those devoted to yoga. In accordance with the statements of the Sruti, the word arcih, "light," here refers to the presiding deity of fire. The word adi, "and so forth," includes the Sisumara planetary system (the Pole star and its surrounds) and the other stages of progress described by Sri Sukadev in the Second Canto of Srimad Bhagavatam: "Travelling through the sky by the luminous Sushumna passage, the path leading to Brahman, the yogi reaches Vaisvanara, the deity of fire. Purified of all contamination, he then ascends to Hari's Sisumara planetary system, O King. Passing beyond that system, which is the navel of the universe and belongs to Vishnu, he proceeds alone in his subtle and stainless form to Maharloka, which is honoured by the knowers of Brahman and where the gods whose lives extend for an entire kalpa enjoy themselves. When he sees the universe being consumed by the fire issuing from the mouth of Ananta, he departs for the higher realm known as Brahmaloka, the abode served by the great perfected masters. There are no sorrow, old age, death, distress, or anxiety in that realm. Its inhabitants experience pain only from the compassion that arises within their hearts when they behold the unbearable suffering of those who do not understand the process of liberation. Thereafter, becoming fearless, the yogi progressively dissolves the gross elements into their subtler causes: earth into water, water into fire, fire into air, and air into ether. Contemplating the Absolute, the yogi then withdraws his thinking from the nose and the sense of smell, dismissing the faculty of scenting, then withdrawing from taste through the faculty of taste, withdrawing from perceiving 'form' through dismissing the eye and the sense of sight, then touch through the skin, and sound through hearing. Through the life-air he withdraws the functions of action. He next enters the principle of mind, composed of the subtle elements, senses, and presiding deities, and then proceeds with a clear mind into the principle of cosmic intelligence, where

the activities of the material qualities become restrained. Finally, through that purified identity, the blissful yogi reaches the peaceful and blissful Supreme Absolute Being. One who follows this divine path never again becomes bound within this world."

Those who are paramahamsas, however, become liberated immediately upon the death of the body. This is expressed by the words "the renunciants attain liberation immediately."

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 13
भक्ता भगवतो ये तु सकामाः स्वेच्छयाखिलान् ।
भुञ्जानाः सुखभोगांस्ते विशुद्धा यान्ति तत्पदम् ॥१३॥
bhakta bhagavato ye tu sa-kamah svecchayakhilan ।
bhunjanah sukha-bhogams te visuddha yanti tat-padam ।।13।।

Those devotees of Bhagavan who possess material desires freely enjoy every kind of pleasurable enjoyment. Becoming completely purified, they then attain His abode.

Dig-darshini

Having described the heavenly enjoyment, gradual liberation, and immediate liberation attained by people devoted to karma and jnana, according to whether they possess material desires or are free from them, Uttara now describes in this and the following verse the destinations attained by devotees of Sri Bhagavan, distinguishing between devotees who possess desires and those who do not. "Devotees who possess material desires" means those who worship Bhagavan while longing for material enjoyment. The words "according to their own desire" exclude any suggestion that they remain subordinate to karma or to other forces. The expression "every kind" includes enjoyments available throughout the three worlds, in Maharloka and the higher realms, upon the path beginning with light, and even in Swetadwip, Ramapriya, and the other Vaikuntha realms manifested within the material cosmos. By describing these enjoyments as "consisting of happiness," the verse excludes the faults, sufferings, and other afflictions present within the enjoyments of the three worlds. The word visuddhah, "completely purified," indicates that their latent desire for enjoyment is entirely severed. Because the verse uses the present participle "while enjoying," it indicates that even during their period of worldly enjoyment they become purified through the power of bhakti for Bhagavan. They then attain the pada, the abode, of the Supreme Lord.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 14
वैकुण्ठं दुर्लभं मुक्तैः सान्द्रानन्दचिदात्मकम् ।
निष्कामा ये तु तद्भक्ता लभन्ते सद्य एव तत् ॥१४॥

vaikuntham durlabham muktaih sandrananda-cid-atmakam |
nishkama ye tu tad-bhakta labhante sadya eva tat ||14||

Vaikuntha, composed of concentrated spiritual consciousness and bliss, is difficult to attain even for liberated souls. Yet devotees of Bhagavan free from material desire attain that abode immediately.

Dig-darshini

Uttara now identifies that destination as Vaikuntha, the abode bearing that name. Sri Sukadev gives a general description of its nature in the Second Canto of Srimad Bhagavatam: "There, time—who rules even the sleepless gods—has no dominion, and what then need be said of the gods who govern the worlds? There are no material goodness, passion, or ignorance, nor material transformation, the mahat-tattva, or primordial nature. Those who desire to reject everything that is not that Reality by declaring, 'Not this, not this,' call it the supreme abode of Vishnu. Abandoning all crookedness and possessing undivided affection for the Lord, they embrace within their hearts His worshipful feet at every step." It is also stated there: "Being worshipped by Brahma, Bhagavan revealed to him His own supreme realm, beyond which there is nothing higher. That realm is free from all affliction, delusion, and fear, and is praised by those who have directly realized their true selves. Neither passion nor ignorance, nor even material goodness mixed with them, operates there, nor does the force of time. Maya does not exist there, much less any of her products. Only the followers of Hari, who are worshipped by both devas and asuras, reside there."

In the Tenth Canto it is said: "Having thus reflected, the all-powerful and greatly compassionate Bhagavan revealed to the cowherd men His own realm, which lies beyond material darkness. That eternal spiritual radiance is truth, knowledge, infinity, and Brahman. Sages behold it when the material qualities have ceased and their minds are absorbed in samadhi."

The words "beyond darkness" distinguish that realm as a region existing beyond tamas, material nature. The description of Parabrahman as a loka indicates its concentrated manifestation as a spiritual realm. What is that abode like? It is difficult to attain even for liberated souls. By this statement, the destination attained by devotees is declared to be vastly superior to that attained by ordinary liberated persons. Why is this so? Vaikuntha consists of concentrated ananda and chit—bliss and spiritual consciousness. It is therefore condensed spiritual reality, whereas the happiness experienced by ordinary liberated souls is insignificant in comparison. This distinction will be made clear later. The devotees of Bhagavan attain that abode called Vaikuntha.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 15
तत्र श्रीकृष्णपादाब्जसाक्षात्सेवासुखं सदा।
बहुधानुभवन्तस्ते रमन्ते धिक्कृतामृतम् ॥१५॥
tatra sri-krishna-padabja-sakshat-seva-sukham sada ।
bahudhanubhavantas te ramante dhik-kritamritam ।।15।।

There, those devotees eternally delight in directly experiencing, in many different ways, the happiness of serving the lotus feet of Sri Krishna—a happiness before which even the nectar of liberation is regarded with contempt.

Dig-darshini

What is the concentrated happiness found in Vaikuntha? Uttara briefly explains it here. The devotees who have reached Vaikuntha eternally experience in many different ways the happiness of directly and personally serving the feet of Sri Krishna. Thus they always delight within Vaikuntha, playing with Bhagavan and experiencing the happiness of divine play consisting of service to Him. This subject will be described more fully later in the account of Vaikuntha. What kind of happiness is this? It makes amrita—the happiness of liberation—seem contemptible and utterly insignificant, because the happiness of service to Bhagavan is concentrated supreme bliss.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 16
ज्ञानभक्तास्तु तेष्वेके शुद्धभक्ताः परेऽपरे।
प्रेमभक्ताः परे प्रेमपराः प्रेमातुराः परे ॥१६॥
jnana-bhaktas tu teshv eke shuddha-bhaktah pare 'pare ।
prema-bhaktah pare prema-parah prematurah pare ।।16।।

Among those devotees, some are jnana-bhaktas, others are pure devotees, others are prema-bhaktas, others are wholly devoted to prema, and still others are overwhelmed by prema.

Dig-darshini

Uttara now begins, in these four and a half verses, to describe the different destinations attained by devotees according to the distinct features of their devotional moods. Some are jnana-bhaktas, devotees whose bhakti is joined with spiritual knowledge, such as Bharata and others. Here, jnana means knowledge that the happiness of liberation is insignificant, together with knowledge of the glory of bhakti for the lotus feet of Sri Bhagavan. Bhakti may refer to the nine processes of devotion or simply to direct service. Others are pure devotees, whose bhakti is unmixed with karma, jnana, or vairagya, and who desire nothing but bhakti for Bhagavan, such as Ambarisha and others. Others are prema-bhaktas, devotees endowed with loving bhakti, whose own selves are eternally dedicated to service and who seek nothing but loving association with and service to the lotus feet of their most beloved and exalted

Lord, such as Sri Hanuman and others. Others are wholly devoted to prema. Rather than being primarily attached to bhakti as a practice, they make prema alone their entire purpose. Through the pure and supreme prema produced by Bhagavan's unconditional mercy, they become bound by chains of longing to behold Him, direct vision of Him, friendship, intimate joking, affection, and other rich relationships. Sri Arjuna and the other Pandavas are examples. Still others are overwhelmed by prema. They are made helpless by the uninterrupted wealth of their love, and their hearts are drawn by the many extraordinary relationships arising from that prema. Sri Uddhava and some other Yadavas are examples. Although no one can attain Vaikuntha without prema for Bhagavan, gradations must nevertheless be understood within prema according to differences of bhava. Pure bhakti naturally culminates in prema-bhakti, yet a distinction is recognised between pure devotees and prema-bhaktas because the latter possess a special and exclusive dedication to prema. In the same way, the superior distinctions of souls wholly devoted to prema, and beyond them of those overwhelmed by prema, should also be understood.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 17
तारतम्यवतामेषां फले साम्यं न युज्यते।
तारतम्यं तु वैकुण्ठे कथञ्चिद् घटते न हि ॥१७॥
taratamyavatam esham phale samyam na yujyate ।
taratamyam tu vaikunthe kathancid ghatate na hi ।।17।।

Since gradations exist among devotees, it would not be fitting for them all to attain the same result. Yet no gradation whatsoever can exist within Vaikuntha.

Dig-darshini

Although all these devotees possess bhakti, differences in their devotional moods make corresponding differences in what they attain appropriate. Uttara expresses this intention with the words taratamyavatam. Taratamya means comparative degrees of lesser and greater excellence. It would not be appropriate for these five kinds of devotees, among whom specific gradations exist, to receive an identical result. Pure bhakti must certainly deserve a special fruit beyond that of jnana-bhakti; prema-bhakti must deserve something beyond pure bhakti; bhakti wholly devoted to prema must deserve a result beyond prema-bhakti; and bhakti overwhelmed by prema must deserve an even higher fruit. Otherwise, these progressively exalted forms of devotion would not receive their full and proper fulfilment. Moreover, these supreme devotees possess distinct individual tastes. If Bhagavan, who is supremely compassionate and affectionate toward His devotees, were to give them all one identical result, He would fail to grant what each one most desires and would instead impose upon some

of them something they do not desire. Such conduct would not accord with His glorious ability to provide a variegated sweetness. One might therefore suggest that gradations of attainment simply exist within Vaikuntha itself. Uttara answers that this cannot be so. Vaikuntha is one uniform reality composed of concentrated sat, chit, and ananda; consequently, no essential distinction or gradation can exist there.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 18
पर्यवस्यति सारूप्यसामीप्यादौ च तुल्यता।
न श्रूयते परं प्राप्यं वैकुण्ठादधिकं कियत् ॥१८॥
paryavasyati sarupya-samipyadau ca tulyata ।
na shruyate param prapyam vaikunthad adhikam kiyat ।।18।।

Even distinctions such as sarupya and samipya ultimately resolve into equality, and no destination higher than Vaikuntha is heard of anywhere.

Dig-darshini

One might argue that gradations can nevertheless be conceived within Vaikuntha. Although the devotees may equally experience the bliss of worship, some attain distinct forms of sarupya and other kinds of mystical perfection. Furthermore, because Sri Bhagavan eternally manifests His supremely majestic pastimes there, some devotees may serve at a distance as gatekeepers and in other capacities as officials, like those engaged in different functions within a sacrificial assembly, while others remain close to the Lord and serve Him personally by massaging His feet and performing similar services. Yet Uttara replies that, when the matter is considered according to its ultimate truth, all these differences culminate in equality and therefore do not fully resolve the difficulty.

Sarupya means possessing a form similar to Bhagavan's, such as a four-armed form. Samipya means dwelling close to Him as one of His personal associates. The word adi includes positions such as commander of His forces and particular services such as massaging His feet or arranging His hair. It does not include sayujya. Sayujya may be awarded, through the power of remembrance of Sri Bhagavan, even to asuras who hate Him, and it ultimately amounts only to liberation. Those who serve Bhagavan in any manner regard such liberation with complete indifference and consider it worthy of contempt. One might then ask whether these devotees could attain some other destination suited to their individual natures. Uttara answers that no higher destination than Vaikuntha is heard of, because Vaikuntha is regarded as the final and supreme limit of everything that can be attained.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 19
तत्प्रदेशविशेषेषु स्वस्वभावविशेषतः ।
स्वस्वप्रियविशेषाप्त्या सर्वेषामस्तु वा सुखम् ॥१९॥
tat-pradesha-vishesheshu sva-sva-bhava-visheshatah ।
sva-sva-priya-visheshaptya sarvesham astu va sukham ।।19।।

Perhaps all of them find happiness within particular regions of Vaikuntha, according to their particular natures, by attaining darshan of the particular form of the Lord most dear to each of them.

Dig-darshini

One might propose that, within special regions of Vaikuntha itself, all these devotees attain distinct results corresponding to their individual natures through the action of particular potencies of Sri Bhagavan. Uttara therefore asks in this and the following verse what destination could be appropriate for those most extraordinary devotees who embody such exceptional prema for the lotus feet of Sri Krishna, the beloved of the gopis.

The special regions of Vaikuntha are unique abodes such as Sri Ayodhya and Dwaraka. As it is stated: "In whatever forms the cities dear to Bhagavan exist upon the earth, those same cities also exist within Vaikuntha, where they are honoured as the settings for His corresponding pastimes." The word "all" refers to liberated souls belonging to the five classes of devotees previously described. The word va, "perhaps," indicates that this explanation is accepted only provisionally to complete the line of reasoning, because the proposal that there are particular forms of distinction within Vaikuntha has not yet been firmly established.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 20
परां काष्ठां गतं तत्तद्रसजातीयतोचितम् ।
अथापि रासकृत्तादृग्भक्तानामस्तु का गतिः ॥२०॥
param kashtham gatam tat-tad-rasa-jatiyatocitam ।
athapi rasa-krit-tadrig-bhaktanam astu ka gatih ।।20।।

Perhaps the happiness of every devotee reaches its supreme limit in a manner appropriate to the particular nature of one's own rasa. Even so, what destination can be fitting for extraordinary devotees of the Lord who render service to Him by participating in the rasa dance?

Dig-darshini

One might object that if gradations are admitted in this way, the happiness of some devotees would necessarily be less than that of others. This seems inappropriate, because all devotees of Bhagavan—and especially those who attain Vaikuntha, whose glory surpasses even that of liberated souls—should experience

happiness vastly greater than liberation. Uttara answers with the word param, "supreme." This qualifies the happiness mentioned in the previous verse and indicates that it reaches the final limit of supreme greatness. But if every devotee's happiness reaches the supreme limit, how can there still be gradation? To answer this, she says tat-tat-rasa-jatiyatocitam. Rasa here means the particular devotional bhava in which each devotee is situated. The happiness born from each devotee's own nature is perfectly suited to that particular rasa. Thus, in accord with their individual rasas, the happiness experienced within the hearts of the devotees reaches its own specific limit.

"The Lord who performs the rasa dance" means Sri Krishna, the beloved of the gopis. And "such devotees" refers to those entirely exceptional devotees who embody an indescribable, natural, and supremely exalted prema for His two lotus feet.

Uttara asks, "What destination is there for them? What special attainment can be suitable for them?" The intended meaning is this: let it be accepted that pure devotees experience a form of devotional happiness superior to that of jnana-bhaktas. Even where such gradation exists and could ordinarily give rise to rivalry or envy, the devotees who have attained Vaikuntha are already free, by the very nature of bhakti, from envy and all other faults that produce sorrow and distress. Deeply attached to one another through supreme prema, they all experience, according to their respective capacities, uninterrupted happiness in worshipping Bhagavan—a happiness born from unconditional bhakti to Him. Nevertheless, what special distinction should there be for the pure devotees who have no desire even for the happiness of residing in Vaikuntha? What further distinction should there be for the prema-bhaktas, the greatest servants who are entirely indifferent to everything apart from their Lord; for the prema-paras, the Lord's greatest intimate friends and the special recipients of His natural compassion; and for the prematuras, whose very lives belong to Him alone and whose souls are bound to Him through the most extraordinary varieties of loving relationship? Alternatively, on the authority of statements found in the Skanda Purana and other scriptures, the matter may be explained as follows. Within Vaikuntha itself are cities such as Ayodhya and Dwaraka, existing just as they do within this world, together with their respective associates, families, and the particular forms of the Lord who preside over them. In Ayodhya, devotees like Hanuman eternally behold Sri Raghunatha being served by Sri Sita, Lakshmana, and others, and as before they experience in many ways the happiness of dasya that they most desire. Similarly, in Dwaraka, Sri Yudhishthira and the other Pandavas worship Sri Devaki-nandana with the highest affection, just as they did previously. He

remains the younger brother of Sri Balarama, the beloved of Sri Rukmini, Satyabhama, and the other queens, the friend of Arjuna, and He sometimes visits the Pandavas within their own residences. In the same way, the Yadavas render many extraordinary forms of service to Sri Yadavendra, who is accompanied by Sri Uddhava and who is dearer to them than all wealth, royal splendour, and even life itself. Through an uninterrupted succession of varied relationships of prema, they freely experience an overwhelming abundance of supreme bliss both outwardly and inwardly. The good fortune of serving the lotus feet of their supremely beloved Lord, together with His mercy, prema, and loving pastimes, which they experienced while living in this world, is experienced by them in exactly the same manner within Vaikuntha. Even if there were no essential difference between their service here in the mortal realm and their service in Vaikuntha, no fault would arise, because at all times and in every place they remain the special objects of Bhagavan's supreme favour. Or perhaps some distinction does exist. Yet it could never be greater than, or even equal to, the abundant bliss of pure prema-filled worship of Bhagavan, which alone they consider supremely desirable. It is therefore not worthy of very great attention.

In this way, because the jnana-bhaktas retain some connection with the trace of jnana and therefore do not experience the full wealth of such prema, their happiness in Vaikuntha is chiefly internal and contemplative, corresponding to their devotional condition. The pure devotees experience a happiness greater than theirs, pervading all the senses through hearing, chanting, remembering, and the other processes of bhakti. The prema-bhaktas experience still greater supreme happiness throughout their external and internal faculties and bodily limbs through the constant varieties of loving vision and service. The prema-paras experience happiness greater still, pervading their entire being through intense longing, direct vision of the Lord, friendship, intimate joking, affection, and other loving exchanges. The prematuras experience the most extraordinary and incomparably greater happiness through an uninterrupted succession of loving meetings, pastimes, and personal dealings. This happiness pervades not only their entire being but also all their associates and everything connected with them, and it even surpasses all ordinary conceptions of such experience. Therefore, when gradations of attainment arise from gradations of spiritual practice and devotional disposition, one should not argue that differences of greater and lesser happiness are impossible within Vaikuntha, the realm embodying the final limit of supreme happiness.

Only an exceptionally exalted spiritual practice that has itself reached the highest possible limit produces an exceptionally exalted

result that has also reached its highest possible limit. Such a result belongs exclusively to those who possess that extraordinary prema for the two lotus feet of Sri Krishna, the beloved of the gopis, and not to others. In comparison with them, all other devotees necessarily possess a lesser degree of attainment. Nevertheless, because of the intrinsic nature of Vaikuntha, every devotee there experiences, according to the disposition of his own heart, the supreme limit of the happiness appropriate to his particular rasa. Even so, those entirely exceptional devotees who are filled with such natural and overwhelming prema for the two lotus feet of Sri Nanda-kishora must possess a result that is itself entirely exceptional in every respect.

Uttara therefore asks: "What other destination could that be?"

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verses 21–22
ये सर्वनैरपेक्ष्येण राधादास्येच्छवः परम् ।
सङ्कीर्तयन्ति तन्नाम तादृशप्रियतामयाः ॥२१॥
अन्येषामिव तेषां च प्राप्यं चेद् हृन्न तृप्यति ।
अहो नन्दयशोदादेर्न सहे तादृशीं गतिम् ॥२२॥
ye sarva-nairapekshyena radha-dasyecchavah param ।
sankirtayanti tan-nama tadrisha-priyatamayah ।।21।।
anyesham iva tesham ca prapyam ced hrin na tripyati ।
aho nanda-yashodader na sahe tadrishim gatim ।।22।।

Entirely indifferent to everything else, they desire only to serve Sri Radha as her maidservants. Filled with such extraordinary love, they perform sankirtan of the names of the Lord of the rasa dance. If their attainment is merely the same as that of other devotees, my heart cannot be satisfied. Ah! I cannot tolerate that Nanda, Yashoda, and the other residents of Braja might attain Vaikuntha only.

Dig-darshini

To demonstrate just how extraordinary these devotees are, Uttara describes them more specifically. There are those personages who are entirely indifferent to all the various forms of spiritual practice, perfection, and attainment pursued by others, persons who desire only dasya to Sri Radha, the supremely beloved of Sri Madana-gopala. In other words, there are some who aspire, "May we become the maidservants of Sri Radhika." By attaining this alone, everything they desire, and even that which surpasses their desires, is automatically and perfectly fulfilled.

Uttara then identifies the extraordinary spiritual practice appropriate for attaining this supremely extraordinary fruit: they perform sankirtan of His names. The greatest devotees loudly sing the names of Sri Krishna the connoisseur of the rasa dance, singing with beautiful melodies and perfectly metrical songs. They

are devotees of Krishna completely composed of an indescribable, natural prema that is extraordinary in every respect, prema that has attained the ultimate limit of supreme greatness, a form of loving devotion that makes Him supremely dear to them. Alternatively, their performance of sankirtan of His names is itself the defining symptom of their perfect love.

One might propose that just as Dwaraka and other cities exist within Vaikuntha, Sri Mathura-puri may also exist there, and that within its Gokula these devotees may freely enjoy pastimes with their Lord. Just as the Yadavas experience greater happiness than the Pandavas, they may experience happiness even greater than that of the Yadavas, corresponding to the excellence of their spiritual practice. Uttara replies that if the attainment of these extraordinary devotees of the Lord of the rasa dance is ultimately of the same general kind as that of the Pandavas, Yadavas, and others, her heart cannot be satisfied, because such an explanation would make their attainment much too similar to that of other devotees. Perhaps, through the supreme mercy of the lotus feet of Sri Gopinatha, those who have perfected such prema through spiritual practice might be assigned such a destination, and Uttara might somehow endure that conclusion. Yet she can never accept that Nanda and the other cowherd men, Yashoda and the other gopis, and all the other residents of Braja who follow them—whose eternal prema has reached its absolute supreme limit—should receive merely the same kind of destination. Such a conclusion would be inconsistent.

Therefore, with sorrow at being forced toward the previous conclusion, she exclaims, "Ah!" The expression "Nanda, Yashoda, and others" includes all the cowherd men, gopis, and residents of Braja. Uttara cannot tolerate their being assigned a destination comparable to the attainment of others, because it would be improper for the greatest devotees and those of lesser attainment to receive an equal result.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 23
विविधानां महिम्नां हि यत्र काष्ठाः पराः पराः ।
कोटीनां पर्यवस्यन्ति समुद्रे सरितो यथा ॥२३॥
vividhanaṁ mahimnam hi yatra kashthah parah parah ।
kotinam paryavasyanti samudre sarito yatha ।।23।।

For within Nanda, Yashoda, and the other residents of Braja, the highest limits of countless varieties of glory all culminate, just as rivers enter the ocean.

Dig-darshini

Uttara now gives the reason for her conclusion. The countless glories connected with beauty, sweetness, skill, dharma, artha, kama, vairagya, jnana, realized knowledge, bhakti, prema, and innumerable

other excellences all attain their highest and final limits within Sri Nanda, Yashoda, and the other residents of Braja. Their glories are described as diverse because each of these countless forms of greatness possesses many different varieties. All these glories enter and culminate within Sri Nanda and the other Brajabasis. Indeed, the greatness of other devotees is described throughout scripture partly to reveal the glory of the residents of Braja, within whom all transcendental excellences must ultimately find their highest fulfilment. The example is therefore given of rivers, which have no destination other than the ocean and must eventually enter it.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 24
तदर्थमुचितं स्थानमेकं वैकुण्ठतः परम् ।
अपेक्षितमवश्यं स्यात् तत् प्रकाश्योद्धरस्व माम् ॥२४॥
tad-artham ucitam sthanam ekam vaikunthatah param ।
apekshitam avashyam syat tat prakashyoddharasva mam ।।24।।

For them there must necessarily exist one unique and fitting abode beyond Vaikuntha. Please reveal that place and rescue me from my distress.

Dig-darshini

Uttara now concludes her question. For Sri Nanda, Yashoda, and the other residents of Braja, there must be another abode beyond Vaikuntha, or an abode superior to it, perfectly suited to them. That place must be entirely untouched by even the scent of Sri Bhagavan's majestic opulence; free from the vision of awe and reverence; untainted by any defect that could interrupt the growth of the Brajabasi's prema; unseen by hearts whose devotion is mixed with jnana; desired by the minds of prema-bhaktas; adorned by the Lord's beloved associates filled with joy and absorbed in a transcendental prema-rasa that outwardly follows the customs of ordinary human life; fully nourished by a unique and indescribable rasa of overwhelming divine bliss; sweeter than the sweetest thing in every respect; supremely excellent; and endowed with the ultimate limit of countless varieties of the sweetest and most exalted greatness. It must be a place secretly celebrated by the solitary vina of Sri Narada, who is eternally satisfied in tasting the honey of the lotus feet of Sri Krishna. Such an abode must be supremely suitable, unique, without a second, necessarily required, and worthy of the highest regard.

Uttara reasons, "That place must certainly exist, but because it is supremely confidential, I cannot understand it with my limited intelligence. I am therefore submerged in a vast ocean of sorrow filled with waves of doubt and made terrifying by the great whirlpool of confusion. Please reveal that abode through your words and rescue me from this ocean of grief."

Although Sri Mathura on earth is the crown of all holy places and is the supremely fitting abode in which Sri Nanda and the other residents of Braja enjoy their special pastimes with their Lord, Uttara may disregard it as their ultimate destination for several possible reasons. Because Mathura appears within the material cosmos, and because ordinary people externally perceive bodily transformations and other apparently material conditions among its present inhabitants, one might fear that it is a product of Maya. Alternatively, unlike Vaikuntha, mere arrival in earthly Mathura does not immediately grant everyone the supreme fruit already described, and one might therefore doubt whether Mathura itself can be regarded as the direct embodiment of the highest goal of life. Or, because it appears within the mortal world, one might fear that it disappears along with other places when the three worlds or the entire universe are destroyed. For such reasons, Uttara asks about another destination suitable for the residents of Braja. Thus, although Sri Goloka will soon be described as their destination, the text will later explain that Sri Bhagavan performs the same kinds of pastimes within earthly Mathura. In truth, although Mathura appears within the material cosmos, it can never be material, because it is the most beloved playground of Sri Bhagavan, just as Bhagavan Himself and His servants can never be touched by Maya. Sri Narada will later declare: "Know that His many ornaments and personal articles, His names, His pastimes, and His beloved abodes are all real and eternal, just as He is. They are one and yet many." The external transformations that ordinary people appear to observe in Mathura exist only to bewilder nondevotees and to increase the happiness of Bhagavan's devotees. Similarly, even when nondevotees directly behold the form of Sri Bhagavan, who is concentrated supreme bliss, spiritual happiness does not arise within them. This principle will be made clear later in Tapoloka. Thus, Mathura's being supremely hidden is itself a special and exalted quality. It is never destroyed, even at the time of cosmic dissolution.

Moreover, because Goloka exists above Sri Sudarshan, the form of time that destroys the universe, it can never be threatened by time. Nevertheless, because its extraordinary glory is supremely concealed and does not quickly manifest throughout the worlds, and because people do not ordinarily hear of Sri Bhagavan's eternally manifest pastimes there, Uttara asks this question.

The text will later explain that only after one has realized the glory of Sri Goloka can one properly realize the similar glory of earthly Mathura. Indeed, Sri Narada will later reveal that in certain respects Mathura's glory is even greater than Goloka's, for at particular times Sri Krishna, Bhagavan Himself, descends there together with all His forms and associates to perform extraordinary pastimes

and taste a happiness unavailable anywhere else. Yet when the universe or the three worlds are destroyed, earthly Mathura may become unmanifest, become one with Sri Goloka, or remain situated above the Sudarshan chakra. Because its usual earthly setting is then no longer externally present, those particular pastimes may not continue there in precisely the same manner as before. At such times Sri Bhagavan freely enjoys those pastimes within Sri Goloka, which is identical in nature to Mathura. In this way, Goloka's status as the supreme destination is established. At other times, following Sri Narada's explanation, the glory of earthly Mathura may be understood as even greater than that of Goloka. Yet because these two abodes are nondifferent, whatever glory belongs to either one ultimately belongs to both. In this way, every apparent difficulty is resolved.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 25
श्रीजैमिनिरुवाच—
मातुरेवं महारम्यप्रश्नेनानन्दितः सुतः ।
तां नत्वा साश्रुरोमाञ्चमारेभे प्रतिभाषितुम् ॥२५॥
sri-jaiminir uvaca—
matur evam maha-ramya-prashnenananditah sutah ।
tam natva sashru-romancam arebhe pratibhashitum ॥25॥

Sri Jaimini said: Delighted by this most beautiful question from his mother, her son bowed before her and, with tears in his eyes and the hairs of his body standing on end, began to reply.

Dig-darshini

The son of Uttara, Sri Parikshit, began to answer her question. By expressing his approval of her inquiry, offering obeisance to his worshipful Lord, and promising, "I shall explain it," he formally began his reply.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 26
श्रीपरीक्षिदुवाच—
श्रीकृष्णजीविते मातस्तदीयविरहासहे ।
तवैव योग्यः प्रश्नोऽयं न कृतो यश्च कैश्चन ॥२६॥
sri-parikshid uvaca—
sri-krishna-jivite matas tadiya-virahasahe ।
tavaiva yogyah prashno 'yam na krito yash ca kaishcana ॥26॥

Sri Parikshit said: O mother, whose very life is Sri Krishna and who cannot bear separation from Him, this question is worthy of you alone. No one has ever asked it before.

Dig-darshini

To fix his mother's mind on hearing the answer and to awaken joy within her, Parikshit first expresses his approval of her question. "O you whose life was given by Sri Krishna" means that He preserved

her child within the womb from Asvatthama's brahmastra and thereby gave life to her. Alternatively, it means, "O you whose very life is Sri Krishna," or, "O you for whom Sri Krishna alone is life." Thus, she had offered her entire self to Him, her life depended upon Him alone, and her whole being was absorbed in Him. Parikshit further describes her as one who cannot tolerate separation from Sri Krishna.

Sri Suta states in the First Canto of Srimad Bhagavatam: "Subhadra, Draupadi, Kunti, the daughter of Virata, Gandhari, Dhritarashtra, Yuyutsu, Kripacarya, Nakula and Sahadeva, Bhima, Dhaumya, and the women headed by the daughter of the king of Matsya became overwhelmed and could not bear separation from the wielder of the Sarnga bow." The daughter of Virata and the daughter of the king of Matsya both refer to Uttara. By mentioning her twice, the text indicates the extraordinary intensity of her prema, because her bewilderment in separation from Sri Krishna was especially great. Similarly, by addressing her here in two ways, Parikshit reveals the supreme excellence of her exceptional bhakti for Sri Krishna. Therefore, this question is worthy of her alone and could properly have been asked only by her. The word eva, "alone," indicates that just as Uttara was entirely exceptional, her question was also entirely exceptional. Parikshit therefore adds that no one had ever asked such a question before.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 27
निजप्रियसखस्यात्र श्रीसुभद्रापतेरहम्।
येन पौत्रतया गर्भे तव सज्जन्म लम्भितः ॥२७॥
nija-priya-sakhasyatra sri-subhadra-pater aham ।
yena pautrataya garbhe tava saj-janma lambhitah ।।27।।

By Sri Krishna's grace, I was born as your son, and as the grandson of Arjuna the husband of Krishna's sister Sri Subhadra Devi.

Dig-darshini

Parikshit now indicates that a proper answer to this question can be given only through the supreme compassion of Bhagavan Sri Krishna. Therefore, before offering obeisance to Him, Parikshit begins by describing in this and the following four verses the favours Sri Krishna bestowed upon him. Here in Bharata-varsha, within the central region, in a human birth and within a great kshatriya dynasty, Sri Krishna granted him an excellent and flawless birth within Uttara's womb as the grandson of His dear friend Sri Arjuna. These words connect with the conclusion in verse 32: "After bowing to Him, I shall answer your question." By identifying Arjuna as "the husband of Sri Subhadra," the sister of Bhagavan, rather than merely as Arjuna, who had other wives, the verse indicates a particularly intimate bond of prema between Arjuna and Bhagavan.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 28
गर्भान्तरे च धृतचक्रगदेन येन ब्रह्मास्त्रतोऽहमवितः सहितो भवत्या।
बाल्ये नरेषु निजरूपपरीक्षणं च नीतो मुहुः परमभागवतोचितं यत् ॥२८॥
garbhantare ca dhrita-cakra-gadena yena
brahmastrato 'ham avitah sahito bhavatya ।
balye nareshu nija-rupa-parikshanam ca
nito muhuh parama-bhagavatocitam yat ।।28।।

Within your womb, He appeared holding His discus and mace and protected me together with you from the brahmastra. Then, throughout my childhood, He repeatedly led me to search among human beings for the form He had shown me within the womb—an activity befitting a supreme Bhagavata.

Dig-darshini

Sri Krishna held His discus and mace and protected Parikshit together with Uttara. The First Canto of Srimad Bhagavatam describes Him as follows: "With blood-red eyes and a mace in His hand, He moved about in every direction around the child, repeatedly whirling His mace, which shone like a blazing meteor."

The Tenth Canto similarly states: "When the weapon of Drona's son had scorched this body of mine, the last seed of the Kuru and Pandava dynasties, He entered the womb of my mother, who had taken shelter of Him, and protected me while holding His discus."

In his childhood, Parikshit repeatedly examined the people around him, searching for the form Sri Krishna had revealed to him within the womb. That form is described in the First Canto as beautiful, dark-complexioned, infallible, dressed in garments like lightning, endowed with four long and splendid arms, and adorned with earrings of molten gold. Parikshit would look at each person and consider, "Could this be that same person, or not?" Thus he was repeatedly led to search for Him throughout his childhood. The First Canto explains: "Because the Lord had become famous to him in this way, he came to be known throughout the world as Parikshit. Remembering the person he had seen, he would examine every person he encountered in this world." Such searching was befitting a supreme Bhagavata, because it arose from his constant absorption in meditation upon the form of Sri Krishna.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 29
येनानुवर्ती महतां गुणैः कृतो विख्यापितोऽहं कलिनिग्रहेण।
सम्पद्य राज्यश्रियमद्भुतां ततो निर्वेदितो भूसुरशापदापनात् ॥२९॥
yenanuvarti mahatam gunaih krito
vikhyapito 'ham kali-nigrahena ।
sampadya rajya-shriyam adbhutam
tato nirvedito bhusura-shapa-dapanat ।।29।।

By Him I was endowed with qualities that made me a follower of the great souls, and I became renowned for subduing Kali. Then, after I had attained the wondrous splendour of kingship, He caused a brahmana's curse to be pronounced upon me and thereby made me detached from worldly life.

Dig-darshini

Sri Krishna made Parikshit a follower of great kings such as Ikshvaku by endowing him with qualities such as protecting his subjects, honouring the brahmanas, and remaining true to his promises. Thus, in the First Canto of Srimad Bhagavatam, the brahmanas said to Sri Yudhishthira: "O son of Pritha, this child will protect the people like Ikshvaku, the son of Manu. He will be devoted to the brahmanas and true to his promises like Rama, the son of Dasaratha. He will be charitable and give shelter to those who approach him, like King Shibi, the son of Ushinara, and he will spread the fame of his family like Bharata, the son of Dushyanta, among performers of sacrifice. He will be foremost among archers and equal to the two Arjunas. He will be as irresistible as fire and as difficult to cross as the ocean. He will be as courageous as a lion, as worthy of taking shelter of as the Himalayas, as patient as the earth, and as tolerant as his parents. In impartiality he will resemble his grandfather, and in graciousness he will be like Lord Shiva. Like Bhagavan, the shelter of Sri Rama, he will give shelter to all living beings. Possessing the greatness of every noble quality, he will be devoted to Krishna, generous like Rantideva, religious like Yayati, steadfast like Bali, and firmly devoted to Krishna like Prahlada."

Parikshit also became renowned throughout the world by subduing Kali during his conquest of kings in all directions. On the eastern bank of the Sarasvati at Kurukshetra, Kali had assumed the form of a degraded man and was attacking the cow and bull who embodied the earth and dharma. By restraining him, Parikshit limited the spread of Kali's influence and thereby attained supreme fame. The splendour of his kingdom was "wondrous" because its many forms of prosperity, entirely free from disturbance, filled the mind with amazement.

Yet after Parikshit had attained such royal opulence, Sri Krishna caused the brahmana Shringi, the son of the sage Shamika, to pronounce the curse, "On the seventh day, Takshaka will bite him." Otherwise, it would have been impossible for such a young sage to curse a king like Parikshit, or for Parikshit to commit such an offence against a sage like Shamika. Moreover, Sri Krishna could easily have reversed the curse through His mercy and power. Thus, it was Krishna who caused the curse to be given and thereby made Parikshit detached from royal life.

Parikshit himself says in the First Canto: "To me, a sinful man whose mind was continually attached to household life, the Lord of both the higher and lower beings has appeared in the form of a brahmana's curse, which has become the cause of my detachment. When a person remains attached to household life, fear quickly arises within him." The meaning is that Sri Krishna, the Lord of all beings, assumed the form of the brahmana's curse in order to bring Parikshit, whose mind had been absorbed in household affairs, to Himself. Such a curse produces fear in someone attached to home and thereby awakens detachment. Since Parikshit needed to attain vairagya, and fear could become the cause of that vairagya, Sri Krishna arranged for the brahmana's curse to be pronounced.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 30
तच्छिष्यरूपेण च मत्प्रियं तं संश्राव्य शापं निलयान्धकूपात् ।
श्रीवासुदेवेन विकृष्य नीतः प्रायोपवेशाय मतिं द्युनद्याम् ॥३०॥
tac-chishya-rupena ca mat-priyam tam
samshravya shapam nilayandha-kupat ।
sri-vasudevena vikrishya nitah
prayopaveshaya matim dyu-nadyam ।।30।।

Through Shamika's disciple, Sri Vasudeva caused me to hear that welcome curse, dragged me from the blind well of household life, and directed my mind toward fasting until death beside the celestial river Ganga.

Dig-darshini

Sri Vasudeva caused Parikshit to hear of the curse through a disciple of Shamika. Had Parikshit remained unaware of it, he would not have undertaken his fast until death beside the Ganga. Even upon hearing about the curse, however, no fear arose within him; rather, he felt joy, because he had himself prayed for such a consequence. He had said in the First Canto: "Because I have offended a brahmana, some insurmountable calamity will certainly befall me before long. Let it come as I desire, as atonement for my sin, so that I may never commit such an offence again." The words "before long" mean that he desired the consequence to come very soon, and he wished it to fall directly upon himself, not indirectly through his sons or others. The home itself is compared to a blind well because one who has fallen into it is unable to climb out by his own power. Sri Vasudeva therefore dragged Parikshit from that blind well and brought him to the celestial river, Sri Ganga. There He directed Parikshit's mind toward prayopavesha, the vow of completely abstaining from food and drink until death. Here Sri Vasudeva may mean the indwelling Lord who presides over the mind. As the Antaryami, He caused Parikshit to undertake these actions and prevented him from attempting to counteract the curse or from remaining at home to perform sacrifices and other rites. Alternatively, Sri Vasudeva

means Sri Krishna, the son of Vasudeva, indicating the abundance of His natural, sweet compassion. All the results He arranged for Parikshit was therefore entirely appropriate.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 31
मुनीन्द्रगोष्ठ्यामुपदेश्य तत्त्वं शुकात्मना येन भयं निरस्य।
प्रमोद्य च स्वप्रियसङ्गदानात् कथामृतं सम्प्रति च प्रापय्ये ॥३१॥
munindra-goshthyam upadeshya tattvam
shukatmana yena bhayam nirasya ।
pramodya ca sva-priya-sanga-danat
kathamritam samprati ca prapayye ।।31।।

Appearing in the form of Sri Sukadev, He taught the Supreme Truth within the assembly of the greatest sages, dispelled my fear, and filled me with joy. And now, by giving me the association of someone dear to Him, He is causing me to drink the nectar of His divine narrations.

Dig-darshini

The foremost sages included Vasistha, Parasara, Vyasa, Narada, and others. Sri Sukadev taught the Supreme Truth within their assembly when they were engaged in a debate among themselves. The Hari-bhakti-sudhodaya describes such a discussion: "When they were asked about the true nature of the supreme object of worship, those brahmanas, each learned in different scriptures, entered into debate, mutually refuting one another's methods of spiritual practice. Some declared, 'Hari is the Supreme Lord'; others, 'Shiva is the Supreme Lord'; and others, 'The sun is the Supreme Lord.' Still others separately maintained that time, inherent nature, or karma alone is supreme." Alternatively, the word goshthi simply means an assembly. Sri Sukadev's teaching within that assembly indicates that what he taught was accepted by everyone and constituted the highest and most conclusive determination of Truth. Sri Krishna, appearing in the form of Sri Sukadev, the son of Vyasa, taught Parikshit the Supreme Truth. By teaching the distinction between the body, the self, and other fundamental principles, he removed Parikshit's fear of the bite of Takshaka and of the recurring birth and death of material existence. By teaching the glory of bhakti for Sri Bhagavan and other devotional truths, he filled Parikshit with joy. Even now, although Sri Gurudeva has disappeared and Parikshit's final moment is very near, Sri Krishna has given him the association of one dear to Himself. That is, He has given him the company of Uttara, a supreme Vaishnavi, and through her He is causing Parikshit to drink deeply the nectar of His own divine narrations. Association with those dear to Bhagavan and drinking the nectar of His narrations in their company constitute the very essence of all spiritual attainments.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 32
कृष्णं प्रणम्य निरुपाधिकृपाकरं तं संवर्ध्य विप्रवचनादरतो गृहीतम् ।
स्वस्यान्तकालमिदमेकमना ब्रुवे ते प्रश्नोत्तरं सकलवैष्णवशास्त्रसारम् ॥३२॥
krishnam pranamya nirupadhi-kripa-karam
tam samvardhya vipra-vacanadarato grihitam ।
svasyanta-kalam idam eka-mana bruve te
prashnottaram sakala-vaishnava-shastra-saram ।।32।।

Bowing to Sri Krishna, the source of unconditional mercy, I shall greatly extend this final period of my life, which I have accepted out of reverence for the words of a brahmana, and with one-pointed attention I shall answer your question. This answer is the essence of knowledge contained in all the Vaishnava scriptures.

Dig-darshini

One might object that it is highly improper for a great person to describe his own qualities and achievements. Parikshit therefore bows to Sri Krishna, who bestows mercy without any condition and without requiring any quality in its recipient that would make him deserving of mercy. Or, it may be said that Sri Krishna is the source of unconditional mercy. Whenever unconditional compassion is seen in anyone else, it is merely a minute particle of the ocean of His causeless mercy. Thus, although Parikshit has his faults and lacks good qualities, every excellence found within him exists solely because of Sri Krishna's greatness. Consequently, Parikshit's description of his own qualities ultimately culminates in glorification of Krishna and His mercy alone. It is therefore not a fault but a virtue. Parikshit accepted the time appointed for his death because of his reverence for the brahmana's words. He now proposes to use that final period properly, causing this last day of his life to extend over what will seem like a long span of time. He will remain one-pointed, fixing his mind solely upon answering Uttara's question, without becoming disturbed by thoughts of yoga or any duties ordinarily undertaken at the time of death. The answer he will give through this narration either contains the essence of the Vaishnava scriptures or is itself the essential summation of all those scriptures.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verses 33–34
श्रुतिस्मृतीनां वाक्यानि साक्षात्तात्पर्यतोऽप्यहम् ।
व्याख्याय बोधयित्वैतत्त्वां सन्तोषयितुं क्षमः ॥३३॥
तथापि स्वगुरोः प्राप्तं प्रसादात् संशयच्छिदम् ।
अत्रेतिहासमादौ ते व्यक्तार्थं कथयाम्यमुम् ॥३४॥
shruti-smritinam vakyani sakshat-tatparyato 'py aham ।
vyakhyaya bodhayitvaitat tvam santoshayitum kshamah ।।33।।
tathapi sva-guroh praptam prasadat samshaya-cchidam ।
atretihasam adau te vyaktartham kathayamy amum ।।34।।

I am capable of explaining the statements of the Srutis and Smritis, both according to their direct meaning and their ultimate intention,

and thereby making you understand the answer to this question and become satisfied. Nevertheless, I shall first narrate a clear and comprehensible history that I learned about by the mercy of my guru, that will remove all your doubts.

Dig-darshini

Although Parikshit is capable of satisfying Uttara by explaining the statements of the Srutis and Smritis, he chooses another method. Some scriptural statements can be explained according to their direct and immediately apparent meaning, while others must be explained according to their ultimate intention and the final conclusion to which their meaning leads. By interpreting those statements and clearly revealing their meaning, Parikshit could make Uttara understand the answer to her question and thereby satisfy her. Nevertheless, he will first narrate an historical account that he learned by the mercy of his guru, Sri Sukadev. This history will destroy Uttara's doubts, and its meaning and subject matter are clear and easily understood. Alternatively, the word "clearly" may describe the manner in which Parikshit will narrate it: he will relate the history in such a way that it clearly reveals the meaning of relevant scriptural statements. By saying that he will narrate this history "first," Parikshit also indicates that he will afterwards cite statements of scripture.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verses 35–37

विप्रो निष्किञ्चनः कश्चित् पुरा प्राग्ज्योतिषे पुरे ।
वसन्नज्ञातशास्त्रार्थो बहुद्रविणकाम्यया ॥३५॥
तत्रत्यदेवीं कामाख्यां श्रद्धयानुदिनं भजन् ।
तस्याः सकाशातुष्टायाः स्वप्ने मन्त्रं दशाक्षरम् ॥३६॥
लेभे मदनगोपालचरणाम्भोजदैवतम् ।
तद्ध्यानादिविधानाढ्यं साक्षादिव महानिधिम् ॥३७॥

vipro nishkincanah kashcit pura pragjyotishe pure ।
vasann ajnata-shastrartho bahu-dravina-kamyaya ।।35।।
tatratya-devim kamakhyam shraddhayanudinam bhajan ।
tasyah sakashat tushtayah svapne mantram dashaksharam ।।36।।
lebhe madana-gopala-caranambhoja-daivatam ।
tad-dhyanadi-vidhanadhyam sakshad iva maha-nidhim ।।37।।

Long ago, a poor brahmana lived in the city of Pragjyotisha. Unaware of the real meaning taught in the literature of the Veda, he desired to amass great wealth and faithfully worshipped the goddess Kamakhya Devi every day. The goddess became pleased with him. In a dream she gave him a ten-syllable mantra whose worshipful Deity is Madana-gopala, Lord Krishna. The mantra he received was accompanied by a little knowledge of the procedures for meditation and worship, and seemed to him to be a treasure mystically revealed by a supernatural being, which he felt he would eventually perceive directly by uttering that mantra repeatedly.

Dig-darshini

A brahmana lived in the city called Pragjyotisha, in the Kamarupa region (Assam), and it was there he received this mantra. He was nishkincana, destitute and without possessions. He had never learned the meaning of scripture through study or hearing and therefore did not understand how to perform his prescribed duties or conduct himself according to dharma. In this sense, he was extremely foolish. The fact that such a person was nevertheless able to attain every perfection demonstrates the supreme power of this mantra. Desiring great wealth, he worshipped and served the goddess Kamakhya, who remains as a constant presence in the city of Pragjyotisha. When the goddess became pleased with him, she instructed him in a dream and gave him the ten-syllable mantra. This ten-syllable mantra (*gopijana-vallabhaya svaha*) is identified in the Krama-dipika as a coded description of Krishna by its component syllables. The lotus feet of Sri Madana-gopala were the Deity and object of worship revealed within that mantra. It was accompanied by prescribed methods for meditating upon Sri Madana-gopala, as well as procedures for nyasa, mudras, formal worship, and other devotional practices. One might wonder how the brahmana's material desire could be transformed when he had approached the goddess only for wealth. The words "like a directly manifest great treasure" provide the answer. Simply by receiving this mantra, every goal of life, including attainments far beyond what he had originally desired, would be fulfilled of its own accord.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 38
देव्यादेशेन तं मन्त्रं विविक्ते सततं जपन्।
धनेच्छया निवृत्तोऽभूल्लेभे च हृदि निर्वृतिम् ॥३८॥
devy-adeshena tam mantram vivikte satatam japan ।
dhanecchaya nivritto 'bhul lebhe ca hridi nirvritim ।।38।।

Following the goddess's command, he constantly chanted that mantra in a secluded place. His desire for wealth disappeared, and he attained deep contentment within his heart.

Dig-darshini

Although he had received the mantra in this mystical experience, he initially did not begin chanting it, thinking that the experience might merely have been a dream. The goddess therefore appeared to him again in a dream and commanded him to chant it. It was by this renewed instruction from the goddess that he began constantly chanting the mantra in solitude.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 39
वस्तुतत्त्वानभिज्ञोऽन्यत् स किञ्चित् पारलौकिकम्।
साधनं किल साध्यं च वर्तमानममन्यत ॥३९॥
vastu-tattvanabhijno 'nyat sa kincit para-laukikam ।
sadhanam kila sadhyam ca vartamanam amanyata ।।39।।

Unaware of the true nature of the ultimate spiritual reality, he supposed that there must be some further method of spiritual practice besides that mantra, and some other goal beyond perfect meditation upon the Deity of the mantra.

Dig-darshini

He did not understand the true nature of chanting that mantra, nor did he understand the nature of what should be accepted or rejected in spiritual life. Being ignorant of genuine divine knowledge, he assumed that there must be some other spiritual practice besides that mantra and some other transcendental goal besides meditation upon its Deity. Previously, he had felt no concern at all for anything connected with the next world. Now, however, through the power of chanting the mantra, that concern awakened within him. Because the goddess had not explained the result of chanting the mantra or its greatness, he did not understand its full glory. He therefore became eager to discover some other spiritual means and goal beyond it. This too reveals the extraordinary power of the mantra, for even without faith or proper understanding it began to produce initial spiritual results within him. Similar indications should also be understood in what follows.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 40
गृहादिकं परित्यज्य भ्रमंस्तीर्थेषु भिक्षया।
गतो निर्वाहयन् देहं गङ्गासागरसङ्गमम् ॥४०॥
grihadikam parityajya bhramams tirtheshu bhikshaya ।
gato nirvahayan deham ganga-sagara-sangamam ।।40।।

Abandoning his home and possessions, he wandered through holy places, maintaining his body by begging, and eventually arrived at the juncture of the Ganga and the ocean.

Dig-darshini

He maintained only what was necessary to sustain his body by living upon alms. By no longer accepting excessive gifts at holy places, he became free from sin and vairagya arose within him. In this way, he travelled until he reached the confluence of the Ganga and the ocean.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 41
विप्रान् गङ्गातटेऽपश्यत् सर्वविद्याविशारदान्।
स्वधर्माचारनिरतान् प्रायशो गृहिणो बहुन् ॥४१॥
vipran ganga-tate 'pashyat sarva-vidya-visharadan ।
sva-dharmacara-niratan prayasho grihino bahun ।।41।।

Along the bank of the Ganga, he saw many brahmanas, most of them householders, who were expert in all branches of learning and deeply devoted to the proper conduct of their scripturally-prescribed duties.

Dig-darshini

While travelling along the bank of the Ganga, he saw many Gauda brahmanas who were expert in all branches of knowledge. The Vishnu Purana enumerates fourteen such branches: "The six limbs of the Vedas, the four Vedas, Mimamsa, the extensive science of logic, Dharma-sastra, and the Puranas—these are the fourteen branches of knowledge." Those Bengali brahmanas were deeply attached to proper conduct within their respective duties, or to the faithful performance of their own prescribed dharma. Most of them belonged to the household ashram.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 42
तैर्वर्ण्यमानमाचारं नित्यनैमित्तिकादिकम् ।
आवश्यकं तथा काम्यं स्वर्गं शुश्राव तत्फलम् ॥४२॥
tair varnyamanam acaram nitya-naimittikadikam ।
avashyakam tatha kamyam svargam shushrava tat-phalam ।।42।।

He heard those brahmanas explaining obligatory daily and occasional rites, together with other required and desire-motivated practices, and teaching that attaining heaven was the cumulative result of all these practices.

Dig-darshini

The daily duties included rites such as the agnihotra (fire sacrifice ritual), while occasional duties included ceremonies such as sraddha performed at the proper lunar junctures. The word adi also includes such practices as awaking during brahma-muhurta and other forms of conduct described in the Vishnu Purana and similar scriptures. The brahmanas said these duties are indispensable and explained desire-motivated observances such as vows. They praised this form of conduct with statements such as, "Dharma arises from proper conduct, and Achyuta is the Lord of dharma," and, "A person who follows proper conduct conquers both this world and the next." He also heard them describe heaven and the happiness enjoyed there as the direct result of those practices, saying: "The happiness of the residents of heaven is free from suffering, is not immediately consumed by suffering, and arises in accord with their individual desires."

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 43
नानासङ्कल्पवाक्यैश्च तदनुष्ठाननिष्ठताम् ।
दृष्ट्वा तत्रोदितश्रद्धः प्रवृत्तः शिक्षितः स तैः ॥४३॥
nana-sankalpa-vakyaish ca tad-anushthana-nishthatam ।
drishtva tatrodita-shraddhah pravrittah shikshitah sa taih ।।43।।

Seeing their firm dedication to performing rites, expressed through the many vows and declarations they made, faith in karma and practicing dharma arose within him. Instructed by the ritualist brahmanas, he began to practise those rites.

Dig-darshini

He did not merely hear their words; he also saw their earnest dedication to performing rites. They made many formal vows, many declarations of intention concerning bathing in the Ganga and other observances, supporting those declarations with scriptural statements glorifying the Ganga and with appropriate reasoning. Seeing their firm commitment to this dharma, the brahmana developed faith and affection for that path and began to follow it. Since he was extremely ignorant and would not have known how to perform those rites by himself, the brahmanas living on the bank of the Ganga taught him the proper procedures.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 44

देव्याज्ञादरतो मन्त्रमपि नित्यं रहो जपन् ।
तत्प्रभावान्न लेभेऽन्तःसन्तोषं तेषु कर्मसु ॥४४॥

devy-ajnadarato mantram api nityam raho japan ।
tat-prabhavan na lebhe 'ntah-santosham teshu karmasu ।।44।।

Out of reverence for the goddess's command, in moments of solitude he continued to chant the mantra daily. Through the power and joy of that chanting, however, he never found satisfaction in the performance of any tedious ritual activities he had been taught.

Dig-darshini

Although he practised those rites, attachment to them did not arise within him because of the power of worshipping Bhagavan. This was one effect of chanting the mantra.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 45

स निर्विद्य गतः काशीं ददर्श बहुदेशजान् ।
यतिप्रायान् जनांस्तत्राद्वैतव्याख्याविवादिनः ॥४५॥

sa nirvidya gatah kashim dadarsha bahu-desha-jan ।
yati-prayan janams tatrAdwaita-vyakhya-vivadinah ।।45।।

Becoming dissatisfied there, the brahmana went to Kashi (Varanasi). There he saw people who had come from many different lands, most of whom were renunciants engaged in debates about their individual interpretations of the philosophy of Adwaita.

Dig-darshini

Becoming dissatisfied with those ritual practices and detached from them, the brahmana went to Kashi. There he saw many people, most of whom were sannyasis who had come from various regions. They were habitually engaged in disputation, arguing different interpretations of Brahman according to the doctrine of Adwaita.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 46

विश्वेश्वरं प्रणम्यादौ गत्वा प्रतिमठं यतीन् ।
नत्वा सम्भाष्य विश्रामं तेषां पार्श्वे चकार सः ॥४६॥

vishveshvaram pranamyadau gatva prati-matham yatin ।
natva sambhashya vishramam tesham parshve cakara sah ।।46।।

First offering obeisance to Visveshwara, he visited each monastery, bowed to the ascetics, talked with them, and rested in their company.

Dig-darshini

He first offered obeisance to Mahadev Shiva, known as Visveshwara, the presiding deity of the sacred city of Kashi. He then went from monastery to monastery, offering respect to the renunciants, conversing with them, and remaining near them.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 47
वादेषु शुद्धबुद्धीनां तेषां पाणितलस्थवत् ।
मोक्षं बोधयतां वाक्यैः सारं मेने स तन्मतम् ॥४७॥
vadeshu shuddha-buddhinam tesham pani-tala-sthavat ।
moksham bodhayatam vakyaih saram mene sa tan-matam ।।47।।

Hearing the thoughts of those whose thinking seemed decisive in debate, who described liberation as though it rested in the palms of their hands, he considered their doctrine to be the essence of truth.

Dig-darshini

Through the statements of those renunciants, the brahmana came to regard their teaching of sannyasa and related practices for attaining liberation as the highest and most worthy path. They spoke of moksha as though it were something they held in the palms of their hands. Their intellect seemed brilliant in debate and verbal argument, though not necessarily in their realization of the Truth.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verses 48–49
शृण्वन्नविरतं न्यासमोक्षोत्कर्षपराणि सः ।
तेभ्यो वेदान्तवाक्यानि मणिकर्ण्यां समाचरन् ॥४८॥
स्नानं विश्वेश्वरं पश्यंस्तेषां सङ्गेऽप्रयासतः ।
मिष्टेष्टभोगान् भुञ्जानः संन्यासं कर्तुमिष्टवान् ॥४९॥
shrinvann aviratam nyasa-mokshotkarsha-parani sah ।
tebhyo vedanta-vakyani manikarnyam samacaran ।।48।।
snanam vishveshvaram pashyams tesham sange 'prayasatah ।
mishteshta-bhogan bhunjanah sannyasam kartum ishtavan ।।49।।

Constantly hearing statements of Vedanta from them, proclaiming the excellence of renunciation and the quest for liberation, he bathed at Manikarnika, visited Visveshwara, and lived effortlessly in their association, enjoying agreeable food and comforts. He therefore desired to accept sannyasa.

Dig-darshini

The brahmana continually heard statements of the Vedanta from those renunciants glorifying the supreme benefit of sannyasa and moksha, and thus he desired to become a sannyasi. Three

circumstances encouraged that desire. He regularly bathed at Manikarnika, the particular stretch of the Ganga situated within Kashi; he beheld Visveshwara; and, while living in the association of those renunciants, he effortlessly enjoyed pleasing food and other comforts. The expression "without effort" should be understood in connection with all these circumstances.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 50
स्वजप्यं गौरवाद् देव्यास्तथान्तःसुखलाभतः ।
अत्यजन्नेकदा स्वप्नेऽपश्यत्तन्मन्त्रदेवताम् ॥५०॥
sva-japyam gauravad devyas tathantah-sukha-labhatah ।
atyajann ekada svapne 'pashyat tan-mantra-devatam ।।50।।

Yet out of reverence for the goddess, and because it brought him inner happiness, he did not abandon the chanting of his mantra. Then one night he saw the Deity of that mantra in a dream.

Dig-darshini

The text now reveals the greatness of worshipping Bhagavan and explains why the brahmana did not take sannyasa. Although his faith and understanding were deficient, he continued his practice of chanting his mantra. He did not abandon it because of his reverence for the goddess Kamakhya, whether from faith in her greatness or respect for her command. One might ask how he could fail to give complete attention to the statements of the Vedanta. The answer is that hearing those statements did not satisfy his mind, whereas chanting his mantra produced happiness in him. Then one night he saw Sri Madana-gopala, the Deity of that mantra, within a dream. Without such a vision, his desire for liberation could not have disappeared. Alternatively, this vision itself demonstrates the glory of the mantra, for by chanting it in that manner he attained a dream vision of his worshipful Lord. His lack of desire for liberation, however, arose from the intrinsic nature of his devotion and was not simply the result of seeing Bhagavan in a dream.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 51
तन्महारम्यताकृष्टः परमानन्दगोचरः ।
तज्जपान्यप्रवृत्तौ हि न लेभे स मनोबलम् ॥५१॥
tan-maha-ramyatakrishtah paramananda-gocarah ।
taj-japanya-pravrittau hi na lebhe sa mano-balam ।।51।।

His heart was captivated by the extraordinary beauty of that Deity, and he came near to the experience of bliss. Thereafter, he could find no inner strength or enthusiasm for any activity other than chanting that mantra.

Dig-darshini

His heart was conquered and brought completely under control by the extraordinary loveliness and supreme beauty of the Deity of the

mantra. He became the recipient of supreme bliss, or became filled with supreme bliss. Consequently, he could no longer summon any strength or enthusiasm of mind for pursuits other than chanting the mantra, whether accepting sannyasa, bathing at sacred places, or performing other practices.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 52
इतिकर्तव्यतामूढो दीनः सन् स्वप्नमागतः।
तया देव्या सहागत्य तत्रादिष्टः शिवेन सः॥५२॥
iti-kartavyata-mudho dinah san svapnam agatah ।
taya devya sahagatya tatradishtah shivena sah ।।52।।

Confused about what he ought to do and feeling helpless, he fell asleep. Then Shiva appeared within his dream together with the goddess and gave him instructions.

Dig-darshini

He was bewildered regarding his proper course of action and could not decide whether to accept sannyasa or exclusively devote himself to chanting his mantra. Because of his constant association with sannyasis, his repeated hearing of their teachings, and the resulting unsteadiness of his mind, he became unable to determine his actual duty. He felt helpless. While he slept, Sri Shiva appeared within his dream together with the same goddess who had first given him the mantra and had later commanded him to chant it. She accompanied Shiva so that the brahmana would have faith in the instruction the man was about to receive.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 53
मा मूर्ख कुरु संन्यासं द्रुतं श्रीमथुरां व्रज।
तत्र वृन्दावनेऽवश्यं पूर्णार्थस्त्वं भविष्यसि॥५३॥
ma murkha kuru sannyasam drutam sri-mathuram Braja ।
tatra vrindavane 'vashyam purnarthas tvam bhavishyasi ।।53।।

"O fool, do not accept sannyasa. Go to Sri Mathura, quickly. There in Brindaban you will certainly attain complete fulfilment."

Dig-darshini

Sri Shiva's instruction was: "O fool, do not accept sannyasa. Go immediately to Sri Mathura. There, in the indescribable realm of Brindaban within Mathura-mandala, all your purposes and every possible fruit of life will certainly be fulfilled."

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 54
सोत्कण्ठो मथुरां गन्तुं मुहुस्तां कीर्तयंस्ततः।
स तद्देशदिशं गच्छन् प्रयागं प्राप वर्त्मनि॥५४॥
sotkantho mathuram gantum muhus tam kirtayams tatah ।
sa tad-desha-disham gacchan prayagam prapa vartmani ।।54।।

Filled with longing to reach Mathura, he repeatedly uttered her name (Mathura's name). Leaving Kashi and travelling westward toward that region, he reached Prayaga along the way.

Dig-darshini

Filled with longing to go to Mathura, he repeatedly and affectionately cried, "Mathura! Mathura!" Departing from Kashi, the brahmana travelled westward in the direction of the lands surrounding Mathura, such as Surasena. On the road leading to Mathura, he reached Prayaga.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 55

तस्मिन् लसन्माधवपादपद्मे
गङ्गाश्रितश्रीयमुनामनोज्ञे ।
स्नानाय माघोषसि तीर्थराजे
प्राप्तान् स साधून् शतशो ददर्श ॥५५॥

tasmin lasan-madhava-pada-padme
gangashrita-sri-yamuna-manojne ।
snanaya maghoshasi tirtha-raje
praptan sa sadhun shatasho dadarsha ।।55।।

At that king of holy places, radiant with the touch of the lotus feet of Sri Madhava, and made beautiful by virtue of being the confluence of the Ganga river and Sri Yamuna, he saw hundreds of sadhus who had come there to bathe at dawn during the month of Magha.

Dig-darshini

Prayaga is called the king of holy places because it is the foremost among all sacred places and a land in which bhakti for Bhagavan is especially manifest. Therefore, during the month of Magha, the brahmana saw hundreds of sadhus and Vaishnavas who had come there to bathe at dawn. The first two lines reveal why Prayaga is the king of holy places: the radiant lotus feet of Sri Madhava are present there, and the place is beautified by the glorious Yamuna, who joins and embraces the Ganga with feelings of devotion.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 56

तेषां सदा गीतनतिस्तवादिभिः
श्रीविष्णुपूजोत्सवमैक्षताभितः ।
तन्नामसङ्कीर्तनवाद्यनर्तनैः
प्रेम्णार्तनादैरुदितैश्च शोभितम् ॥५६॥

tesham sada gita-nati-stavadibhih
sri-vishnu-pujotsavam aikshatabhitah ।
tan-nama-sankirtan-vadya-nartanaih
premnarta-nadair uditaish ca shobhitam ।।56।।

Everywhere he beheld the festival of worshipping Vishnu, adorned with songs, obeisances, prayers, and other offerings, with sankirtan of His names, music, dancing, and loud cries arising from prema.

Dig-darshini

In every direction the brahmana saw the Vaishnavas celebrating a great festival of worshipping Sri Vishnu through songs, obeisances, recitation of prayers, and other devotional activities. The word "and so forth" includes offerings of food and many other varied services. Their worship was made beautiful by the sankirtan of Bhagavan's names, by musical instruments, dancing, and loud, anguished cries arising from the devotee's prema.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verses 57–59

सोऽबुधो विस्मयं प्राप्तो वैष्णवान् पृच्छति स्म तान् ।
हे गायकाः वन्दिनो रे दण्डवत्पातिनो भुवि ॥५७॥
भो वादका नर्तका रे रामकृष्णेतिवादिनः ।
रोदका रम्यतिलकाश्चारुमालाधरा नराः ॥५८॥
भवतैकं क्षणं स्वस्थाः न कोलाहलमर्हथ ।
वदतेदं विधध्वे किं कं वार्चयथ सादरम् ॥५९॥

so 'budho vismayam prapto vaishnavan pricchati sma tan ।
he gayaka vandino re dandavat-patino bhuvi ।।57।।
bho vadaka nartaka re rama-krishneti-vadinah ।
rodaka ramya-tilakash caru-mala-dhara narah ।।58।।
bhavataikam kshanam svastha na kolahalam arhatha ।
vadatedam vidhaddhve kim kam varcayatha sadaram ।।59।।

Being ignorant of the greatness of devotional activities, the astonished brahmana asked the Vaishnavas: "O singers! O reciters of praises! You who fall flat upon the ground! O musicians and dancers! O you who call out, 'Rama! Krishna!' You who weep, who wear beautiful tilaka and lovely garlands! Please become calm for just a moment. Respectable men should not make this uproar. Tell me, what is this activity you perform, and whom are you worshipping with your reverence?"

Dig-darshini

Because the brahmana had never previously seen or heard of devotional activities (sadhana bhakti), he knew nothing about them and was filled with amazement. He therefore questioned the Vaishnavas absorbed in singing and the other devotional practices.

Being ignorant of their glory, he addressed them in nine different ways merely according to the external activities he observed. He called those who sang "singers" and those who recited prayers "reciters of praises," comparing them to professional bards. He addressed those who repeatedly fell upon the earth like rods as "you who fall flat upon the ground," and those who played instruments as "musicians." Since he did not understand that the words Rama and Krishna are names of Bhagavan, he merely imitated the sounds they were uttering. Their tilaka markings were beautiful because they indicated that their bodies were temples of Hari.

He then asked them to remain calm for a moment. Because he did not understand the true nature of their songs and prayers to Bhagavan, he heard only a tumult, a noise. Seeing that the respectable devotees were wearing excellent clothing and ornaments, he considered the commotion unworthy of respectable people. Fearing that they might ignore his question and continue their activities, he urged them to stop and answer him: "What exactly is this activity you are performing? Perhaps it is not merely entertainment but worship of a deity. If so, which deity are you worshipping with such reverence?"

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 60
तच्छ्रुत्वोपहसन्ति स्म केचित्तं केचिदब्रुवन्।
रे मूढ तूष्णीं तिष्ठेति केऽप्यूचुर्दीनवत्सलाः ॥६०॥
tac chrutvopahasanti sma kecit tam kecid abruvan ।
re mudha tushnim tishtheti ke 'py ucur dina-vatsalah ।।60।।

Hearing his words, some laughed at him. Others said, "O fool, be silent." And then others, being compassionate toward the ignorant and helpless, spoke to him kindly.

Dig-darshini

Among those Vaishnavas, some newer devotees (kanistha) laughed at him, saying sarcastically, "O great sage! O foremost scholar! Yes, indeed, we are the disturbed ones, and this is certainly nothing but an uproar!" Some intermediate devotees (madhyam adhikari), deeply attached to the worship of Bhagavan, could not tolerate such remarks about His worship and angrily said, "O fool, be silent!" Others, who were uttama-bhaktas, advanced devotees who maintained feelings of affection toward the helpless, spoke to him compassionately. Alternatively, some other people present there may have mocked him and others may have ordered him to remain silent, while the Vaishnavas themselves, being supremely merciful, spoke the words beginning with "O brahmana" in the following verse. This is supported by the next passage, which specifically introduces their reply with the words, "The Sri Vaishnavas said."

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 61
श्रीवैष्णवा ऊचुः—
अये विप्रज जानासि न किञ्चिद् बत मूढधीः।
विष्णुभक्तान् पुनर्मैवं सम्बोधय न जल्प च ॥६१॥
sri-vaishnava ucuh—
aye vipraja janasi na kincid bata mudha-dhih ।
vishnu-bhaktan punar maivam sambodhaya na jalpa ca ।।61।।

The Sri Vaishnavas said: O brahmana by birth, alas, you know nothing, and behave like that of a fool. Never again address the devotees of Vishnu in this manner or speak to them this way.

Dig-darshini

The word vipraja means, "O you who have obtained birth as a brahmana." The word bata expresses sorrow at his condition, because his intelligence resembled that of a fool. Out of mercy, they revealed his ignorance and instructed him: "Never again address the devotees of Vishnu as mere singers, professional reciters of praise, and people who fall upon the ground. Nor should you again tell them to be calm or accuse them of creating an uproar."

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 62
भगवन्तमिमे विष्णुं नित्यं वयमुपास्महे ।
गुरोर्गृहीतदीक्षका यथामन्त्रं यथाविधि ॥६२॥
bhagavantam ime vishnum nityam vayam upasmahe ।
guror grihita-dikshaka yatha-mantram yatha-vidhi ।।62।।

All of us perpetually worship Bhagavan Vishnu, having received initiation from a guru, each according to his mantra and its prescribed method of worship.

Dig-darshini

Anticipating the question, "How are you devotees of Vishnu?" they answer that they all worship Vishnu, the Supreme Lord. Each worships Him according to the particular mantra he has received and according to the procedures prescribed for that mantra, such as nyasa and other acts of worship. By saying that they had received initiation from a guru, they imply that because the brahmana had not received his mantra through proper initiation, knowledge and other spiritual fruits had not quickly arisen within him despite his chanting.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 63
श्रीनृसिंहतनुं केचिद् रघुनाथं तथापरे ।
एके गोपालमित्येवं नानारूपं द्विजोत्तम ॥६३॥
sri-nrisimha-tanum kecid raghunatham tathapare ।
eke gopalam ity evam nana-rupam dvijottama ।।63।।

Some worship Vishnu in the form of Sri Nrisimha, others as Sri Raghunatha, and others as Gopala. In this way, O best of brahmanas, we worship Him in many different forms.

Dig-darshini

Because their mantras were of many kinds, their worshipful Lord also appeared in many different forms. Some worshipped Sri Nrisimha, some Sri Raghunatha, and others Sri Gopala. The words "many different forms" also include Vishnu's four-armed form and His forms as Matsya, Kurma, Varaha, Vamana, and others. Thus they worshipped the one Lord Vishnu in His many divine manifestations.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 64
श्रीपरीक्षिदुवाच—
ततोऽसौ लज्जितो विप्रोऽपृच्छत् सप्रश्रयं मुदा।
कुतो वसति कीदृक् स कं वार्थं दातुमीश्वरः ॥६४॥
sri-parikshid uvaca—
tato 'sau lajjito vipro 'pricchat sa-prashrayam muda ।
kuto vasati kidrik sa kam vartham datum ishvarah ।।64।।

Sri Parikshit said: The brahmana then became ashamed and joyfully asked them with great humility, "Where does this Lord Vishnu whom you worship reside? What is He like, and what treasure or boon is He capable of giving?"

Dig-darshini

The word prashraya means humility. Thus, after becoming ashamed, the brahmana respectfully asked, "Where is this person named Vishnu you worship living? In what village, city, or other place does He reside? What is His appearance, and to whom or to what may He be compared? What kind of wealth or special treasure is He able to give?" The ability to bestow extraordinary wealth would indicate the greatness of His power and lordship. Alternatively, the word artha may refer broadly to any desired object or goal. He therefore asked what Vishnu, as the Supreme Lord, had the power to bestow.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 65
श्रीवैष्णवा ऊचुः—
सदा सर्वत्र वसति बहिश्चान्तश्च स प्रभुः।
कश्चिेन्न सदृशस्तेन कथञ्चिद् विद्यते क्वचित् ॥६५॥
sri-vaishnava ucuh—
sada sarvatra vasati bahish cantash ca sa prabhuh ।
kashcin na sadrishas tena kathancid vidyate kvacit ।।65।।

The Sri Vaishnavas said: That Supreme Lord eternally resides everywhere, both outside and within everything. No one anywhere is comparable to Him.

Dig-darshini

In response to the question, "Where does He live?" they explain that He exists eternally and everywhere, both within and beyond everything. He is all-pervading and transcends the three limitations of time, place, and bodily form. In response to the question, "What is He like?" they declare that no one resembles Him in any way whatsoever—not in appearance or in any other quality—either anywhere within the material cosmos or beyond it.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 66
सर्वान्तरात्मा जगदीश्वरेश्वरो
यः सच्चिदानन्दघनो मनोरमः।

वैकुण्ठलोके प्रकटः सदा वसेद्
यः सेवकेभ्यः स्वमपि प्रयच्छति ॥६६॥
sarvantaratma jagad-ishvareshvaro
yah sat-chit-ananda-ghano manorama ।
vaikuntha-loke prakatah sada vased
yah sevakebhyah svam api prayacchati ।।66।।

He is the indwelling Self of all beings and the Supreme Lord even of those gods who govern the universe. His enchanting form is concentrated existence, consciousness, and bliss. He eternally resides in Vaikuntha, where He is fully manifest, and He gives even His own self to His servants.

Dig-darshini

One might ask how devotion to Vishnu can arise without specific knowledge of His divine nature. The Vaishnavas therefore explain that He is the indwelling Self of all living beings, residing within the heart of every creature. Having described this manifestation of Him, they also describe His external majesty: He is the Lord and controller even of Brahma and all the other gods of the universe, but His greatness and opulence infinitely surpass theirs.

The words sat, chit, and ananda describe His essential nature: He possesses a concentrated form of Parabrahman, composed entirely of eternal existence, spiritual consciousness, and bliss. The word manorama reveals His supreme qualities, beauty, sweetness, and all-attractive nature. One might then ask how such opulence and beauty can belong to the indwelling Lord, who ordinarily remains hidden in the heart, or where devotees may always behold Him clearly and completely. They therefore explain that He is fully manifest in Vaikuntha. Having identified His transcendental abode and extraordinary characteristics, they answer the question of what He can give: He gives even His own self to His servants. What then need be said of His ability to bestow dharma, wealth, enjoyment, liberation, bhakti, entry into Vaikuntha, or any other attainment? The prefix pra in prayacchati suggests that Bhagavan gives Himself without restriction, producing an uninterrupted abundance of mutual bliss between Himself and His servants.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verses 67–68
श्रुतिस्मृतिस्तूयमानः केनास्य महिमोच्यताम् ।
तदत्र वाच्यमानानि पुराणानि मुहुः शृणु ॥६७॥
माधवं नम चालोक्य प्रतिरूपं जगत्प्रभोः ।
ततोऽचिरादिदं सर्वं परं च ज्ञास्यसि स्वयम् ॥६८॥
shruti-smriti-stuyamanah kenasya mahimocyatam ।
tad atra vacyamanani puranani muhuh shrinu ।।67।।
madhavam nama calokya prati-rupam jagat-prabhoh ।
tato 'cirad idam sarvam param ca jnasyasi svayam ।।68।।

His glory is praised throughout the Sruti scriptures and Smritis, so who could adequately describe it? Therefore, repeatedly hear the Puranas being recited here in the temple of Madhava. Behold Lord Madhava, the Lord of the universe, and bow before Him. Then, before long, you too will understand for yourself all that we have told you — and much more besides.

Dig-darshini

One might ask the Vaishnavas to describe more fully Vishnu's character, activities, and other glories. They reply that His greatness is praised throughout the Srutis and Smritis, and therefore no ordinary person could possibly describe it completely. If the brahmana then asks how he is to understand that greatness, they instruct him to hear repeatedly the Puranas being recited there at Prayaga, the king of holy places. He should also behold Sri Madhava, whose form resembles and represents the Lord of the universe, Sri Vaikunthanatha, and repeatedly bow before Him.

Through hearing, reflection, and seeing the Lord's form—or through hearing from those Vaishnavas—one will soon understand for oneself everything they have said, together with the many further glories they have not described.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 69
श्रीपरीक्षिदुवाच—
ततः श्रीमाधवं वीक्ष्य नमंस्तस्मिन् व्यचष्ट सः।
सारूप्यं स्वजपे चिन्त्यमानदेवस्य किञ्चन ॥६९॥
sri-parikshid uvaca—
tatah sri-madhavam vikshya namams tasmin vyacashta sah ।
sarupyam sva-jape cintyamana-devasya kincana ।।69।।

Sri Parikshit said: Following their instruction, the brahmana entered the temple and beheld Sri Madhava, and bowed before Him. In that form he perceived some resemblance to the Deity upon whom he meditated while chanting his mantra.

Dig-darshini

Following the words of those Vaishnavas, the brahmana looked upon Sri Madhava and saw in Him a certain resemblance to Sri Madana-gopala, the Deity he meditated upon during his mantra-japa. This resemblance was visible in some features of the face, eyes, and other parts of the divine form.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 70
तत्र किञ्चित् पुराणं स शृणोति सह वैष्णवैः।
तैरर्च्यमाना विविधा विष्णुमूर्तीश्च पश्यति ॥७०॥
tatra kincit puranam sa shrinoti saha vaishnavaih ।
tair arcyamana vividha vishnu-murtish ca pashyati ।।70।।

There, together with the Vaishnavas, he listened to the recitation of a Purana and saw the many forms of Vishnu being worshipped by them.

Dig-darshini

Near Sri Madhava, or elsewhere within Prayaga, he heard portions of a Purana, perhaps passages describing the glory of the month of Magha. The words "together with the Vaishnavas" indicate that faith and spiritual joy arose within him through hearing such narrations in their association. He also observed the many different forms of Vishnu they worshipped.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 71
तथापि प्रत्यभिज्ञेयं तस्य न स्यादचेतसः।
मद्देवो जगदीशोऽयं माधवोऽपि सतां प्रभुः ॥७१॥
tathapi pratyabhijneyam tasya na syad acetasah ।
mad-devo jagad-isho 'yam madhavo 'pi satam prabhuh ।।71।।

Even so, because his understanding was undeveloped, recognition of the Lord did not arise within him: "My worshipful Deity is this Lord of the universe here, this Madhava, the Lord of the devotees."

Dig-darshini

Although the resemblance between Sri Madhava and his own worshipful Deity could have led him to understand that his Lord was the ruler of the universe, that recognition did not arise in him. He could not connect his previous experience with what he now saw, "The Deity I worship is the Lord of the universe. He is this Madhava, the worshipful Lord of these devotees. They are one and the same person." This was because he was acetasa—foolish, inattentive, or lacking the capacity for careful reflection.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 72
इदं स विमृशत्येषामुपास्यो जगदीश्वरः।
स एव माधवश्चायं मयान्यः कोऽप्युपास्यते ॥७२॥
idam sa vimrishaty esham upasyo jagad-ishvarah ।
sa eva madhavash cayam mayanyah ko 'py upasyate ।।72।।

Instead, he reasoned: "The Lord worshipped by these devotees is the ruler of the universe, this He is this Madhava before me. But I worship another Deity."

Dig-darshini

The brahmana's reasoning is described from this verse through verse 78. He thought, "The Deity worshipped by these saintly souls is the Lord of the universe. On the authority of their words, this visible form of Madhava is that same Lord. But the Deity I worship must be someone else."

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 73
शङ्खचक्रगदापद्मविभूषितचतुर्भुजः ।
न मद्देवस्ततः कस्मात् प्रतीयेत स माधवः ॥७३॥
shankha-cakra-gada-padma-vibhushita-catur-bhujah ।
na mad-devas tatah kasmat pratiyeta sa madhavah ।।73।।

"My Deity is not four-armed and adorned with a conch, discus, mace, and lotus. Why should I think He is this Madhava?"

Dig-darshini

The brahmana now gives reasons for his conclusion. His own worshipful Deity was not four-armed and did not hold the conch, discus, mace, and lotus, whereas Sri Madhava possessed four arms and carried those four emblems. The traditional description of Sri Madhava's form states: "He who bears the mace, conch, discus, and lotus is called Madhava." Because of this difference in appearance, the brahmana reasoned, "Why should I understand my Deity to be Madhava? There is no reason for me to recognise them as the same."

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 74
नायं नरार्धसिंहार्धरूपधारी च मत्प्रभुः ।
न वामनोऽप्यसौ मीनकूर्मकोलादिरूपवान् ॥७४॥
nayam narardha-simhardha-rupa-dhari ca mat-prabhuh ।
na vamano 'py asau mina-kurma-koladi-rupavan ।।74।।

"Nor does my Lord possess a form that is half man and half lion. He is not Vamana, nor does He possess the forms of a fish, tortoise, boar, or any of the others."

Dig-darshini

One might suggest that even if the brahmana's Deity did not resemble Sri Madhava, He could still be the Lord of the universe because He might resemble one of the other forms worshipped by those Vaishnavas. The brahmana rejects this possibility. His Lord did not look like Sri Nrisimha, with the lower portion resembling a human being and the upper portion resembling a lion. Therefore, he thought, the form of Nrisimha worshipped as the Lord of the universe could not be his own Deity. Nor did his Lord resemble Vamana, Matsya, Kurma, Varaha, or any other divine forms of Vishnu, for there was no similarity in their appearances.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 75
नापि कोदण्डपाणिः स्याद् राघवो राजलक्षणः ।
केषाञ्चिदेषां पूज्येन गोपालेनास्तु वा सदृक् ॥७५॥
napi kodanda-panih syad raghavo raja-lakshanah ।
keshancid esham pujyena gopalenastu va sadrik ।।75।।

"Nor is He Raghava, who bears the Kodanda bow and possesses the insignia of a king. Perhaps He resembles the Gopala worshipped by some of these devotees."

Dig-darshini

One might suggest that the brahmana's Deity is Sri Raghunatha because of some similarity in Their appearance. The brahmana therefore replies that his Lord does not hold the Kodanda bow and does not possess royal emblems such as a white parasol, chamaras, and a throne. One might then suggest that his Deity is the Lord of the universe because He resembles the Gopala worshipped by some of these Vaishnavas, particularly by some of their foremost members. The brahmana provisionally concedes that his Deity may resemble Gopala in form, dress, and other features. The word va, "perhaps," expresses his uncertainty and inability to reach a clear conclusion.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 76
मन्येऽथापि मदीयोऽयं न भवेज्जगदीश्वरः।
नास्ति तल्लक्षणं माघमाहात्म्यादौ श्रुतं हि यत् ॥७६॥
manye 'thapi madiyo 'yam na bhavej jagad-ishvarah ।
nasti tal-lakshanam magha-mahatmyadau shrutam hi yat ।।76।।

"Even so, I do not think that this Deity of mine can be the Lord of the universe, for He does not possess the characteristics of that Lord which I heard described in the Magha-mahatmya and other scriptures."

Dig-darshini

The brahmana thought, "Even if my Deity resembles the Gopala worshipped by some of these Vaishnavas, He still cannot be the Lord of the universe, because He does not display the characteristics of the Lord described in the Magha-mahatmya and similar works." In the account of Devadyuti found in the Magha-mahatmya of the Uttara-khanda of the Padma Purana, the Lord is described: "He appeared mounted upon Garuda, with the complexion of a fresh rain cloud, four arms, large eyes, and a form adorned with every ornament." The same account also states: "Brahma and all the devas, the yogis headed by Sanaka, and the siddhas headed by Kapila, all desire to behold You directly." The word adi includes similar descriptions of the glories of Prayaga and other holy places found in the Skanda Purana and related scriptures.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 77
गोपार्भवर्गैः सखिभिर्वने स गाः
वंशीमुखो रक्षति वन्यभूषणः।
गोपाङ्गनावर्गविलासलम्पटो
धर्मं सतां लङ्घयतीतरो यथा ॥७७॥
goparbha-vargaih sakhibhir vane sa gah
vamshi-mukho rakshati vanya-bhushanah ।
gopangana-varga-vilasa-lampato
dharmam satam langhayatitaro yatha ।।77।।

"My Lord grazes cows in the forest with groups of cowherd boys who are His friends. He always holds a flute to His lips and wears ornaments made of items gathered from the forest. Delighting in romantic pastimes with cowherd women, He appears to transgress the moral conduct of respectable people, as if He were an ordinary man."

Dig-darshini

Having said his Deity lacks the characteristics attributed to the Lord of the universe, the brahmana now describes the apparently contrary features that he experiences during meditation upon his own worshipful Lord. His Deity grazes cows in the forest together with His cowherd friends. He always holds a flute to His lips because He is constantly absorbed in playing it. His ornaments are gathered from the forest and include a crown of peacock feathers, gunja earrings, garlands of kadamba flowers, and tilaka made from coloured minerals. He also delights in playful exchanges with the cowherd women and appears, like an ordinary person, to disregard conventional moral restraints. The brahmana therefore reasons that His friendship with cowherd boys and other activities do not accord with the role of the Lord of the universe. He might admit that the Gopala worshipped by those Vaishnavas could be the universal Lord because He also carries a flute, but he considers the forest pastimes of grazing cows, and especially His apparent transgression of conventional dharma, incompatible with supreme lordship. This is the brahmana's mistaken conclusion.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 78
देव्याः प्रभावादानन्दमस्याप्याराधने लभे।
तन्न जह्यां कदाप्येनमेतन्मन्त्रजपं न च ॥७८॥
devyah prabhavad anandam asyapy aradhane labhe ।
tan na jahyam kadapy enam etan mantra-japam na ca ।।78।।

"Through the power of the goddess, I nevertheless experience bliss while worshipping this Deity. Therefore, I shall never abandon Him or the chanting of His mantra."

Dig-darshini

One might object that the profound inner bliss he experiences could not arise from worshipping someone other than the Supreme Lord. The brahmana replies that even though his Deity does not appear to possess the characteristics of the Lord of the universe, the happiness he experiences worshipping Him must arise from the power of the goddess Kamakhya. Yet because he respects the goddess's command and receives tremendous happiness from chanting, he resolves never to abandon either his Deity or the chanting of His mantra.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 79
एवं स पूर्ववन्मन्त्रं तं जपन्निर्जने निजम्।
देवं साक्षादिवेक्षेत सतां सङ्गप्रभावतः ॥७९॥

evam sa purvavan mantram tam japan nirjane nijam ।
devam sakshad iveksheta satam sanga-prabhavatah ।।79।।

Reasoning in this way, he continued as before to chant that mantra in solitude. Through the influence of association with the devotees, he began to behold his own Deity almost as if seeing Him directly.

Dig-darshini

Having reasoned in this way, the brahmana continued chanting in seclusion the famous ten-syllable mantra of Sri Madana-gopala, the most excellent of all mantras. Alternatively, the word tam may refer to his indescribable Lord, Sri Nanda-kishora, the crown jewel of all objects of worship. As his heart became purified and his meditation deepened, he began to see Him almost directly. One might ask how such an experience could arise when the brahmana still lacked mature faith and proper understanding. It became possible through the power of association with Vaishnavas.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 80
वस्तुस्वभावादानन्दमूर्च्छामाप्नोति कर्हिचित् ।
व्युत्थाय जपकालापगममालक्ष्य शोचति ॥८०॥
vastu-svabhavad ananda-murcham apnoti karhicit ।
vyutthaya japa-kalapagamam alakshya shocati ।।80।।

Sometimes, by the inherent nature of the divine object of his meditation, he fell unconscious in bliss. Returning to external awareness and noticing that the time for chanting had passed, he lamented.

Dig-darshini

On certain occasions, the brahmana entered a state of blissful unconsciousness in which all outward functions of the senses ceased, resembling a form of samadhi. This occurred solely because beholding his all-blissful Lord produced this joyful experience, not because the brahmana had understood the Lord's true identity or carefully contemplated His tattva. When he later regained external awareness, he noticed from the darkness of evening and other signs that the appointed time for his japa, or perhaps the entire daylight period, had passed. He then began to lament.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 81
उपद्रवोऽयं को मेऽनुजातो विघ्नो महान् किल ।
न समाप्तो जपो मेऽद्यतनो रात्रिरियमागता ॥८१॥
upadravo 'yam ko me 'nujato vighno mahan kila ।
na samapto japo me 'dyatano ratrir iyam agata ।।81।।

"What is this calamity that has befallen me? It is certainly a great obstacle. My quota of chanting meant to be done today remains unfinished, and now the night has come."

Dig-darshini

The brahmana laments. He regards the experience as an upadrava, a disturbing occurrence and a cause of suffering. Indeed, he considers it not merely an inconvenience but a severe obstacle, because the prescribed amount of mantra-japa he was meant to complete that day remained unfinished even though night had already arrived.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 82
किं निद्राभिभवोऽयं मे किं भूताभिभवोऽथवा।
अहो मद्दुःस्वभावो यच्छोकस्थानेऽपि हृत्सुखम् ॥८२॥
kim nidrabhibhavo 'yam me kim bhutabhibhavo 'thava ।
aho mad-duhsvabhavo yac choka-sthane 'pi hrit-sukham ।।82।।

"Was I overcome by sleep, or was I possessed by some spirit? Alas, how perverse my nature must be, for even when I have cause to grieve, my heart still feels happiness."

Dig-darshini

The brahmana tries to determine the cause of this apparent obstacle. He first wonders whether he was overcome by sleep and whether, as in deep sleep, the functions of all his senses had ceased. Remembering that he had not experienced ordinary drowsiness or fatigue, he considers another possibility: perhaps some spirit or invisible being had possessed him. He then exclaims "Alas!" in sorrow, judging his own nature to be defective because, although the failure to complete his japa should have caused him grief, his heart felt full of happiness.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 83
एकदा तु तथैवासौ शोचन्नकृतभोजनः।
निद्राणो माधवेनेदं समादिष्टः ससान्त्वनम् ॥८३॥
ekada tu tathaivasau shocann akrita-bhojanah ।
nidrano madhavenedam samadishtah sa-santvanam ।।83।।

One day, after the same thing happened again, he lamented as before and did not eat. When he fell asleep, Sri Madhava appeared and compassionately gave him the following instruction.

Dig-darshini

On that occasion, the brahmana again fell unconscious in bliss and failed to complete his chanting. Lamenting as before, he became so distressed that he did not take any food. He then finally fell asleep, Sri Madhava appeared to him and spoke consoling words. The Lord's reassurance may be understood as: "Why do you grieve without cause? Why do you torment both yourself and Me through unnecessary fasting and distress? Know that all your desires will soon attain their fulfilment." Alternatively, the consoling words are the sweet instructions spoken directly in the following verses.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verses 84–85
विप्र विश्वेश्वरस्यानुस्मर वाक्यमुमापतेः ।
यमुनातीरमार्गेण तच्छ्रीवृन्दावनं व्रज ॥८४॥
तत्रासाधारणं हर्षं लप्स्यसे मत्प्रसादतः ।
विलम्बं पथि कुत्रापि मा कुरुष्व कथञ्चन ॥८५॥
vipra vishveshvarasyanusmara vakyam uma-pateh ।
yamuna-tira-margena tac chri-Brindabanm Braja ।।84।।
tatrasadharanam harsham lapsyase mat-prasadatah ।
vilambam pathi kutrapi ma kurushva kathancana ।।85।।

"O brahmana, remember the instruction of Visveshwara, the husband of Uma. Travel along the bank of the Yamuna and go to Sri Brindaban. There, by My mercy, you will attain incomparable joy. Do not delay at any place along the way for any reason."

Dig-darshini

Uma is the goddess Kamakhya whom the brahmana had worshipped and from whom he had received his mantra. Since Visveshwara is her husband, it would be improper for him to disregard Shiva's command. Sri Madhava therefore reminds him of that instruction and personally repeats it: "Travel by the road following the bank of the Yamuna and go to that indescribable Sri Brindaban which Visveshwara directed you to seek." There he will obtain an extraordinary and incomparable happiness surpassing even the fulfilment of dharma, artha, kama, and moksha.

Sri Madhava warns him not to delay either by becoming absorbed in paths such as jnana or by stopping unnecessarily at any place along the physical road to Brindaban. The Lord says that this attainment will arise through His mercy alone, not through the independent grace of anyone else. Nevertheless, special manifestations of His mercy appear through particular holy places, favourable times, saintly association, and other spiritually powerful circumstances.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 86
ततः स प्रातरुत्थाय हृष्टः सन् प्रस्थितः क्रमात् ।
श्रीमन्मधुपुरीं प्राप्तः स्नातो विश्रान्ततीर्थके ॥८६॥
tatah sa pratar utthaya hrishtah san prasthitah kramat ।
sriman-madhu-purim praptah snato visranta-tirthake ।।86।।

The next morning, he arose joyfully and continued his journey. In due course he reached the glorious city of Mathura and bathed at Visranta-tirtha.

Dig-darshini

Following Sri Madhava's command, the brahmana arose in the morning and set out joyfully. Travelling stage by stage along the road, he eventually reached the glorious city of Mathura.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 87
गतो वृन्दावनं तत्र ध्यायमानं निजे जपे।
तं तं परिकरं प्रायो वीक्ष्याभीक्ष्णं ननन्द सः ॥८७॥
gato Brindabanm tatra dhyayamanam nije jape ।
tam tam parikaram prayo vikshyabhikshnam nananda sah ।।87।।

Then he went on to Brindaban. There he saw, everywhere, all the same surroundings and companions that he had meditated upon during his practice of mantra-japa, and because of this he rejoiced.

Dig-darshini

He repeatedly saw the indescribably glorious and often discussed surroundings where his Lord engages in pastimes, upon which he had meditated during his chanting. These included beautiful cows, cowherd boys, groups of kadamba trees, and the many other associates, ornaments, and features belonging to the divine abode of his Deity.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 88
तस्मिन् गोभूषितेऽपश्यन् कमप्येतस्ततो भ्रमन्।
केशितीर्थस्य पूर्वस्यां दिशि शुश्राव रोदनम् ॥८८॥
tasmin go-bhushite 'pashyan kam apy etas tato bhraman ।
keshi-tirthasya purvasyam dishi shushrava rodanam ।।88।।

Wandering here and there through that land adorned with cows, he saw no human being anywhere. Then, from the direction east of Keshi-tirtha, he heard someone weeping.

Dig-darshini

Within Sri Brindaban, he saw no human being as he wandered here and there. The description of the land as "adorned with cows" indicates why he did not readily encounter people. Keshi-tirtha is the sacred place where the demon Keshi was slain. The Mathura-mahatmya of the Varaha Purana states: "The place where Keshi fell is said to be one hundred times more sacred than the Ganga, and the place where Hari rested is said to be one hundred times more sacred than Keshi-tirtha."

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 89
तद्दिग्भागं गतः प्रेम्णा नामसङ्कीर्तनैर्युतम्।
तदाकर्ण्य मुहुस्तत्र तं मनुष्यममार्गयत् ॥८९॥
tad-dig-bhagam gatah premna nama-sankirtanir yutam ।
tad akarnya muhus tatra tam manushyam amargayat ।।89।।

Going in that direction, he heard weeping joined with a loving sankirtan of Bhagavan's names. Again and again he searched for the person making those sounds.

Dig-darshini

At first he only heard the distant sound of weeping. As he went on he heard that the weeping was joined with a sankirtan of Bhagavan's names, sung in a prolonged and plaintive voice with profound love

and tenderness. He searched and searched for the person weeping and chanting in that manner.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 90
घनान्धकारारण्यान्तः सोऽपश्यन् कञ्चिदुन्मुखः।
निर्धार्य तद्ध्वनिस्थानं यमुनातीरमव्रजत् ॥९०॥
ghananandhakararanyantah so 'pashyan kancid unmukhah ।
nirdharya tad-dhvani-sthanam yamuna-tiram avrajat ।।90।।

Unable to see anyone in the dense and dark forest, he listened intently, then determined the direction of the sound, and went to the bank of the Yamuna.

Dig-darshini

The forest was exceedingly dense and therefore filled with darkness. Alternatively, it may have been the forest known as Andhakara, or a woodland so thick that the rays of the sun could not enter it. Seeing no one, the brahmana became intent upon discovering where the sound was coming from. Listening carefully, he determined the exact source of the sankirtan and concluded that it came from the bank of the Yamuna. He therefore went there.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 91
तत्र नीपनिकुञ्जान्तर्गोपवेशपरिच्छदम्।
किशोरं सुकुमाराङ्गं सुन्दरं तमुदैक्षत ॥९१॥
tatra nipa-nikunjantar gopa-vesha-paricchadam ।
kishoram sukumarangam sundaram tam udaikshata ।।91।।

There, within a bower of kadamba trees, he caught sight of a beautiful adolescent boy with tender limbs, dressed and carrying the paraphenalia of a cowherd.

Dig-darshini

On the bank of the Yamuna, the brahmana caught sight of the person who had been absorbed in such sankirtan. The boy was dressed like a cowherd, wearing ornaments such as a crown of peacock feathers, and he carried cowherd articles such as a flute, horn, and herding stick. The word "beautiful" indicates the exquisite harmony and perfection of all his bodily features.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 92
निजेष्टदेवताभ्रान्त्या गोपालेति महामुदा।
समाह्वयन् प्रणामाय पपात भुवि दण्डवत् ॥९२॥
nija-ishta-devata-bhrantya gopaleti maha-muda ।
samahvayan pranamaya papata bhuvi dandavat ।।92।।

Mistaking him for his own worshipful Deity, the brahmana joyfully called out, "O Gopala!" and fell flat upon the ground to offer obeisance.

Dig-darshini

The brahmana fell on the earth like a rod to offer full obeisance to the cowherd boy. He did this because the boy's ornaments and features resembled those of Sri Madana-gopala, his worshipful Deity. He therefore mistakenly thought, "This is surely Gopala." Filled with joy, he sweetly called out in a loud voice, "O Gopala!" Alternatively, he sang out the three syllables of the name Go-pa-la in a sweet voice, chanting them as an earnest call to the Lord.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verses 93–94

ततो जातबहिर्दृष्टिः स सर्वज्ञशिरोमणिः ।
ज्ञात्वा तं माथुरं विप्रं कामाख्यादेशवासिनम् ॥९३॥
श्रीमन्मदनगोपालोपासकं च समागतम् ।
निःसृत्य कुञ्जादुत्थाप्य नत्वालिङ्ग्य न्यवेशयत् ॥९४॥

tato jata-bahir-drishtih sa sarvajna-siromanih ।
jnatva tam mathuram vipram kamakhya-desa-vasinam ।।93।।
sriman-madana-gopalopasakam ca samagatam ।
nihsritya kunjad utthapya natvalingya nyaveshayat ।।94।।

At that moment, the cowherd boy Sarupa, the all-knowing crest-jewel amongst all the gem-like liberated souls, became externally aware of the mortal world once more. Seeing the visitor — the brahmin coming from Mathura, who had been living under the guidance of goddess Kamakhya — Sarupa understood he was a worshipper of Madan Gopal. He knew in an instant how this pious pilgrim had reached the Lord's abode after a long journey. Emerging from the kadamba grove Sarupa lifted up the brahmin, bowed to him, embraced him affectionately, then seated him.

Dig-darshini

Awakened to external awareness by the brahmana's voice and offering of obeisance, the cowherd boy turned his attention toward him. Being the crown jewel amongst the siddhas who know all things, he understood that the visitor was a Mathura brahmana—either one born in a particular brahmana lineage connected with Mathura or one whose ancestral origin was there—who had lived for a long time in Kamarupa, the land presided over by the goddess Kamakhya, worshipping her and following her instructions. He knew that the brahmana had travelled from that distant country and persevered in his quest through many different circumstances, and that he was a worshipper of the feet of glorious Sri Madana-gopala. He also understood that the brahmana had now properly arrived at his destination—that he had properly arrived at the true Brindaban. Alternatively, the boy knew that this was the very person for whose sake he had personally come to that bower in the early morning by the command of Sri Radha. The cowherd boy therefore emerged from the bower, bowed before the brahmana, raised him from the ground, embraced him, and seated him.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 95
अथातिथ्येन सन्तोष्य विश्वासोत्पादनाय सः ।
किञ्चित्तेनानुभूतं यद् व्यञ्जयामास सस्मितम् ॥९५॥
athatithyena santoshya vishvasotpadanaya sah ।
kincit tenanubhutam yad vyanjayam asa sa-smitam ।।95।।

After satisfying him with proper hospitality, Gopa Kumara the cowherd boy smiled and revealed some of what the brahmana had experienced, thereby awakening his confidence.

Dig-darshini

The cowherd boy first welcomed and satisfied the brahmana with hospitality appropriate to that place and time. He then briefly revealed some of what the brahmana had experienced, beginning with his worship of the goddess and continuing through his arrival in Brindaban. By his words, gestures, and other indications, he skilfully disclosed matters hidden within the brahmana's heart. He did this to awaken the brahmana's confidence in what he would soon tell him, for without such trust the brahmana would have been unable to believe the extraordinarily wonderful truths he was about to learn.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 96
बुद्ध्वा गोपकुमारं तं लब्ध्वेवात्मप्रियं मुदा ।
विश्वस्तोऽकथयत्तस्मिन् स्ववृत्तं ब्राह्मणोऽखिलम् ॥९६॥
buddhva gopa-kumaram tam labdhvevatma-priyam muda ।
vishvasto 'kathayat tasmin sva-vrittam brahmano 'khilam ।।96।।

Understanding him to be a cowherd boy and feeling as though he had found his dearest friend, the brahmana became joyful and, full of trust, he told him the complete account of his life.

Dig-darshini

The brahmana understood, "This is a cowherd boy endowed with every noble quality and a perfectly spiritual and beautiful form; but he is not my worshipful Deity." Yet upon meeting the cowherd child, the man at once saw the boy as though he were his own dearest friend. Filled with joy and complete confidence in the boy, the brahmana related everything that had happened to him.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 97
सकार्पण्यमिदं चासौ प्राश्रितः पुनरब्रवीत् ।
तं सर्वज्ञवरं मत्वा सत्तमं गोपनन्दनम् ॥९७॥
sa-karpanyam idam casau prashritah punar abravit ।
tam sarvajna-varam matva sattamam gopa-nandanam ।।97।।

Then, with great humility and submission, the brahmana spoke the following words, considering that cowherd boy the foremost of the all-knowing, saintly sages.

Dig-darshini

The word karpanya means a profound sense of humility and helplessness (sharanagati). Thus, in the mood of a surrendered disciple, the brahmana spoke five verses beginning with "Having heard of many different goals" and ending with "Please deliver me." He spoke in this way because he regarded the cowherd boy as the greatest amongst all those saintly beings who know everything, the truly awakened saintly sages.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 98

श्रीब्राह्मण उवाच—
श्रुत्वा बहुविधं साध्यं साधनं च ततस्ततः ।
प्राप्यं कृत्यं च निर्णेतुं न किञ्चिच्छक्यते मया ॥९८॥

sri-brahmana uvaca—
shrutva bahu-vidham sadhyam sadhanam ca tatas tatah ।
prapyam krityam ca nirnetum na kincic chakyate maya ।।98।।

The brahmana said: Having heard in many different places of numerous goals and numerous means of attaining them, I am unable to determine what should be attained or what practice should be performed.

Dig-darshini

The many proposed 'goals of life' I heard about included heaven, liberation, and other attainments, while the many proposed means included karma, jnana, and the various practices said to produce those results. The brahmana had heard these teachings in different places, such as along the bank of the Ganga and in Kashi. Because he had encountered so many conflicting doctrines, he could not conclusively determine which is the best goal to be attained through spiritual endeavour, or which practice must necessarily be performed to attain it.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 99

यच्च देव्याज्ञया किञ्चिदनुतिष्ठामि नित्यशः ।
तस्यापि किं फलं तच्च कतमं कर्म वेद्मि न ॥९९॥

yac ca devy-ajnaya kincid anutishthami nityashah ।
tasyapi kim phalam tac ca katamam karma vedmi na ।।99।।

Nor do I understand the result of the small practice I perform daily by the command of the goddess, or even what kind of spiritual activity it truly is.

Dig-darshini

One might ask why he continued chanting the mantra if he remained so uncertain. He therefore explains that, compared with the elaborate duties of householders and renunciants, his mantra practice seemed very small and simple. He performed it only out of reverence for the goddess's command, not because he understood

its true nature. He did not know what result it would produce or whether it belonged to dharma, jnana, bhakti, or some other category of spiritual practice. Because he lacked proper faith and understanding, the practice seemed to him to be almost as if it were not a substantial practice at all.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 100
तेनेदं विफलं जन्म मन्वानः कामये मृतिम् ।
परं जीवामि कृपया शिवयोर्माधवस्य च ॥१००॥
tenedam viphalam janma manvanah kamaye mritim ।
param jivami kripaya shivayor madhavasya ca ।।100।।

Considering this life of mine fruitless because of my profound feelings of uncertainty, I want to die. Yet I continue living by the mercy of the goddess, Lord Shiva, and Madhava.

Dig-darshini

Because he remained unable to determine either the true goal of his quest or the means of attaining it, and therefore seemingly deprived of the attainment of both, the brahmana felt his life was useless and desired to die. One might ask how he could continue living under the weight of such sorrow and despondency. He replies that he remained alive only through the strength of the instructions and consoling assurances given to him by the two referred to as Shiva—the goddess Kamakhya and Sri Visveshwara—and by Sri Madhava.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 101
तयैवात्राद्य सर्वज्ञं दयालुं त्वं स्वदेववत् ।
प्राप्य हृष्टः प्रपन्नोऽस्मि कृपणं मां समुद्धर ॥१०१॥
tayaivatradya sarvajnam dayalum tvam sva-devavat ।
prapya hrishtah prapanno 'smi kripanam mam samuddhara ।।101।।

By their mercy, I have now found you here—omniscient, compassionate, and resembling my own worshipful Deity. Filled with joy, I surrender to you. Please deliver this helpless person.

Dig-darshini

The brahmana now explains that he had experienced a further sign of their mercy that very day. By their grace alone, he had met the cowherd boy, who was all-knowing and compassionate and whose features resemble Sri Madana-gopala, his own worshipful Lord. Therefore, filled with joy, he surrendered to him and prayed, "Please rescue me, who am distressed and helpless. Carry me across this ocean of doubts concerning the goal and the means, and through thoughtful instructions about the Supreme Truth, deliver me from the ocean of material existence."

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 102
श्रीपरीक्षिदुवाच—
निशम्य सादरं तस्य वचनं स व्यचिन्तयत् ।
एतस्य कृतकृत्यस्य जाता पूर्णार्थता किल ॥१०२॥
sri-parikshid uvaca—
nishamya sadaram tasya vacanam sa vyacintayat ।
etasya krita-krityasya jata purnarthata kila ।।102।।

Sri Parikshit said: Hearing the brahmana's words with affection and deep regard, the cowherd boy reflected, "Surely this man has already accomplished everything that must be accomplished on the path to perfection, and attained the complete fulfilment of all purposes, as is evident in his mood of sincere surrender to Bhagavan."

Dig-darshini

The cowherd boy listened to the brahmana's words with great respect and affection. He then began the reflection expressed from this verse through to verse 108. He thought, "This Mathura brahmana who worships Sri Madana-gopala has already accomplished all that must be accomplished. Surely the complete fulfilment of every purpose has already arisen for him." The word kila may express firm certainty or thoughtful consideration.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 103
केवलं तत्पदाम्भोजसाक्षादीक्षावशिष्यते ।
तज्जपेऽर्हति नासक्तिं किन्तु तन्नामकीर्तने ॥१०३॥
kevalam tat-padambhoja-sakshad-ikshavashishyate ।
taj-jape 'rhati nasaktim kintu tan-nama-kirtane ।।103।।

"Only direct vision of the lotus feet of Sri Madana-gopala remains to be attained. He should no longer remain attached just to mantra-japa, but be fully absorbed in the ecstatic kirtan of His Names."

Dig-darshini

The only attainment still remaining for the brahmana was the direct vision of Sri Madana-gopala, or more specifically, of His two lotus feet. Therefore, he should now become deeply absorbed in the kirtan of Sri Madana-gopala's names rather than remaining exclusively attached to mantra-japa, for through nama-kirtan that direct realization would be attained.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verses 104–105
श्रीमन्मदनगोपालपादाब्जोपासनात् परम् ।
नामसङ्कीर्तनप्रायाद् वाञ्छातीतफलप्रदात् ॥१०४॥
तल्लीलास्थलपालीणां श्रद्धासन्दर्शनादरैः ।
सम्पाद्यमानान्नितरां किञ्चिन्नास्त्येव साधनम् ॥१०५॥
sriman-madana-gopala-padabjopasanat param ।
nama-sankirtan-prayad vanchatita-phala-pradat ।।104।।

tal-lila-sthala-palinam shraddha-sandarshandaraih ।
sampadyamanan nitaram kincin nasty eva sadhanam ।।105।।

"There is no spiritual practice superior to the worship of the glorious lotus feet of Sri Madana-gopala, performed chiefly through nama-sankirtan, which bestows fruits surpassing all desire, and greatly nourished through faith in, direct vision of, and loving regard for the many places of His pastimes."

Dig-darshini

The cowherd boy now identifies the supreme spiritual practice and the supreme goal, whose near attainment establishes that the brahmana has already fulfilled every purpose. There is no practice superior to worshipping the two glorious feet of Sri Madana-gopala, which are adorned with the extraordinary beauty of innumerable varieties of service. That worship grants everything one desires, everything one does not consciously desire, and even fruits so exalted that they lie beyond the reach of the mind and cannot be conceived beforehand. This worship consists chiefly of nama-sankirtan—the loud and sweet chanting of names such as "Sri Krishna," "Krishna," "Govinda," and "Gopala." It is greatly intensified through faithful adoration of the places where Sri Madana-gopala performs His pastimes, by wandering through them and seeing them directly, and by cultivating affection and reverence for them.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 106
सञ्जातप्रेमकाच्चास्माच्चतुर्वर्गविडम्बकात् ।
तत्पादाब्जवशीकारादन्यत् साध्यं न किञ्चन ॥१०६॥
sanjata-premakac casmac catur-varga-vidambakat ।
tat-padabja-vashikarad anyat sadhyam na kincana ।।106।।

"No higher goal exists beyond this worship in which prema has awakened, which makes the four goals of life seem contemptible, and which brings His lotus feet into full view of His devotee's love."

Dig-darshini

There is no goal superior to the worship of Sri Madana-gopala's lotus feet as already described, when prema has fully awakened within it. Such prema ridicules dharma, artha, kama, and moksha by revealing their utter insignificance. Through it, the lotus feet of Sri Madana-gopala are brought under the devotee's loving control. Thus, this prema-filled worship acts like an irresistible power of enchantment by which the Lord voluntarily becomes subordinate to His devotee.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 107
इति बोधयितुं चास्य सर्वसंशयनोदनम् ।
स्ववृत्तमेव निखिलं नूनं प्राक् प्रतिपादये ॥१०७॥

iti bodhayitum casya sarva-samshaya-nodanam ।
sva-vrittam eva nikhilam nunam prak pratipadaye ।।107।।

"To make him understand this and remove all his doubts, I should first relate the complete account of my own life."

Dig-darshini

One might suggest that the cowherd boy should immediately explain the true goal and the true means of attaining it, thereby removing the brahmana's doubts.

He instead thinks, "To make him understand that this is the supreme practice and the supreme goal, I should first narrate everything I have personally experienced, beginning with the time I received my mantra and continuing until the present day." That account would remove all the brahmana's doubts concerning spiritual practice, the goal of life, and related subjects. The word nunam indicates his thoughtful conclusion. If he were to explain the truths of the supreme means and goal immediately, those teachings would not become fully manifest within the brahmana's heart, because his mind would remain obstructed by doubts and disbelief. By drinking the nectar of narrations concerning Bhagavan, and especially by understanding the trustworthy account of what the cowherd boy had personally experienced, the brahmana's heart would become thoroughly purified. Proper realization of those truths would then arise within him naturally.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 108
स्वयमेव स्वमाहात्म्यं कथ्यते यन्न तत् सताम्।
सम्मतं स्यात् तथाप्यस्य नान्याख्यानाद्धितं भवेत्॥१०८॥
svayam eva sva-mahatmyam kathyate yan na tat satam ।
sammatam syat tathapy asya nanyakhyanad dhitam bhavet ।।108।।

"Saintly persons do not approve of anyone personally describing his own greatness. Nevertheless, this brahmana cannot receive the supreme benefit from any other narration."

Dig-darshini

One might object that by narrating his own history, the cowherd boy would necessarily disclose the mercy Bhagavan had bestowed upon him and thereby appear to describe his own greatness, which would be improper. Saintly persons do not approve of self-glorification, for it is said, "Self-praise is certain death." Although narrating his own life might therefore seem unsuitable, he decides to do so because no other account could produce the same benefit for this brahmana by removing all his doubts and bringing him to direct realization of the truth. The brahmana had complete confidence in the cowherd boy, and by hearing what he had personally experienced, recognising the similarities to his own life,

and seeing that those direct experiences had removed every one of the cowherd boy's doubts, he would quickly attain the highest benefit. At the same time, the cowherd boy would promptly fulfil the command given to him by Sri Radha. Thus, what might ordinarily appear to be a fault would become a great virtue.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 109
एवं विनिश्चित्य महानुभावो
गोपात्मजोऽसाववधाप्य विप्रम् ।
आत्मानुभूतं गदितुं प्रवृत्तः
पौराणिको यद्वदृषिः पुराणम् ॥१०९॥
evam vinishcitya mahanubhavo
gopatmajo 'sav avadhapya vipram ।
atmanubhutam gaditum pravrittah
pauraniko yadvad rishih puranam ।।109।।

Having resolved in this way, that exalted cowherd boy asked the brahmana to listen attentively, then began to relate what he had personally experienced, just as a learned speaker of the Puranas narrates an ancient sacred history revealed by a rishi.

Dig-darshini

The cowherd boy first made the brahmana attentive, either by saying, "Listen carefully to this," or by otherwise directing his mind with faith and concentration toward the narration. He then began to describe what he had personally experienced.

He spoke just as a pauranika, an authorised narrator of the Puranas, recites sacred works such as the Brahma Purana and Padma Purana, or as a rishi speaks the ancient revelation he directly perceived. A rishi is described as someone who preserves his vital power, performs severe austerities, eats sparingly, controls himself, possesses the power both to curse and to bless, and remains firmly committed to the truth. By comparing the cowherd boy's personal account to a Purana, the text indicates that his narration is accepted by all scripture and is worthy of the brahmana's deepest faith.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 110
श्रीगोपकुमार उवाच—
अत्रेतिहासा बहवो विद्यन्तेऽथापि कथ्यते ।
स्ववृत्तमेवानुस्मृत्य मोहादावपि सङ्गतम् ॥११०॥
sri-gopa-kumara uvaca—
atretihasa bahavo vidyante 'thapi kathyate ।
sva-vrittam evanusmritya mohadav api sangatam ।।110।।

Sri Gopa-kumar said: Many historical accounts concerning this topic might be described. Nevertheless, I shall narrate the story of my own life, recollecting even what occurred during my times of bewilderment and other similar experiences.

Dig-darshini

Many historical accounts assist in explaining the truth about the goal of life and the means of attaining it. An itihasa is defined as a narration of past events that gives instruction concerning dharma, artha, kama, and moksha. Nevertheless, Gopa-kumar will narrate the events of his own life. Because they were personally experienced by him, and because direct experience is foremost among the various forms of evidence, everything he relates deserves complete faith. Here moha refers to the extraordinary loss of external awareness that sometimes arose when an overwhelming abundance of prema manifested within him. Although he could not consciously perceive what occurred during those states, he can now recollect and connect those events through the power of spiritual wisdom. This also indicates the extraordinary strength of his knowledge. The word adi includes the impropriety he might feel in revealing supremely confidential matters to another person, together with the embarrassment and other emotions arising from doing so. Nevertheless, for the brahmana's benefit and because such revelations are necessary to the narration, he will disclose even those matters. In the Seventh Chapter, he will himself say: "See how I have told you everything that happened to me, and to those other devotees connected with Him, even though what I say is most confidential in every respect."

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verses 111–112

गोपालवृत्तेर्वैश्यस्य गोवर्धनविलासिनः ।
पुत्रोऽहमीदृशो बालः पुरा गाश्चारयन् निजाः ॥१११॥
तस्मिन् गोवर्धने कृष्णातीरे वृन्दावनेऽत्र च ।
माथुरे मण्डले बालैः समं विप्रवर स्थितः ॥११२॥

gopala-vritter vaishyasya Govardhan-vilasinah ।
putro 'ham idrisho balah pura gash carayan nijah ।।111।।
tasmin govardhane krishna-tire vrindavane 'tra ca ।
mathure mandale balaih samam vipra-vara sthitah ।।112।।

Long ago, I was the son of a vaisya who lived happily at Govardhan, and whose livelihood was tending cows. Appearing as the same kind of boy you see before you now, I grazed our cows together with other boys at Govardhan, along the bank of the dark Yamuna river, here in Brindaban, and throughout Mathura-mandala, O best of brahmanas.

Dig-darshini

Among the four occupations of the vaisyas—agriculture, trade, cow protection, and lending money—Gopa-kumar's father maintained his livelihood solely by protecting and serving cows. Thus, Gopa-kumar was the son of a cowherd. The two verses connect as follows: "Long ago, appearing as a boy just as I do now, I lived at Govardhan and the other places, grazing cows with the other boys." His words "just as I am now" indicate that his body and

youthful condition have never changed. He will later repeat the blessing given by his guru: "By the power of this mantra, may you live for a very long time, always retaining this form of a cowherd boy, and possessing a mind qualified to attain its goal." The words "our own cows" indicate that the cows belonged to his family and suggest their independence and prosperity. "That Govardhan" refers to the world-famous sacred hill, or indicates that his family lived at that very place. He says "here in Brindaban" because he is narrating his history while seated within Brindaban. Mathura-mandala is the circular region extending for twenty yojanas and includes Mahavana and other sacred places. Alternatively, "throughout Mathura-mandala" concludes the description, since Govardhan, the Yamuna's bank and Brindaban all extend within that region, beyond which no land is more beautiful or beneficial to the cows. He addresses the listener as "O best of brahmanas" because he belongs to a brahmana family of Mathura.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verses 113–116

वनमध्ये च पश्यामो नित्यमेकं द्विजोत्तमम् ।
दिव्यमूर्तिं विरक्ताढ्यं पर्यटन्तमितस्ततः ॥११३॥
कीर्तयन्तं मुहुः कृष्णं जपध्यानरतं क्वचित् ।
नृत्यन्तं क्वापि गायन्तं क्वापि हासपरं क्वचित् ॥११४॥
विक्रोशन्तं क्वचिद् भूमौ स्खलन्तं क्वापि मत्तवत् ।
लुण्ठन्तं भुवि कुत्रापि रुदन्तं क्वचिदुच्चकैः ॥११५॥
विसंज्ञं पतितं क्वापि श्लेषलालाश्रुधारया ।
पङ्कयन्तं गवां वर्त्मरजांसि मृतवत् क्वचित् ॥११६॥

vana-madhye ca pashyamo nityam ekam dvijottamam ।
divya-murtim viraktadhyam paryatantam itas tatah ।।113।।
kirtayantam muhuh krishnam japa-dhyana-ratam kvacit ।
nrityantam kvapi gayantam kvapi hasa-param kvacit ।।114।।
vikroshantam kvacid bhumau skhalantam kvapi mattavat ।
lunthantam bhuvi kutrapi rudantam kvacid uccakaih ।।115।।
visamjnam patitam kvapi shlesha-lalashru-dharaya ।
pankayantam gavam vartma-rajamsi mritavat kvacit ।।116।।

Within the forest we regularly saw an exalted brahmana whose divine appearance was filled with intense vairagya and who constantly wandered to and fro. He chanted "Krishna, Krishna," and was sometimes absorbed in japa and meditation. At other times he danced, sang, laughed, cried out loudly, stumbling about like a drunken man, rolling on the earth, or weeping out loud. Sometimes he fell unconscious and streams of mucus, saliva, and his flowing tears turned the dust of the cow paths to mud. At other times he lay perfectly motionless on the ground, like a dead man.

Dig-darshini

Although Gopa-kumar speaks of past events, he uses the present tense because they continued for a long time and occurred repeatedly.

The man was the best among brahmanas. His body appeared divine and extraordinary because of its lovely golden complexion and other features, and he possessed a great abundance of vairagya. He wandered continually through the forest. He repeatedly performed kirtan of Bhagavan through varied sweet names and songs, or he simply repeated the two syllables "Krishna." Sometimes he became absorbed in japa and meditation. Even someone who has attained perfection in mantra-japa may continue that practice to avoid ingratitude toward the mantra, and in obedience to the prescribed rule. Thus, the Tantra states: "Even one whose mantra is perfected and whose heart is pure should worship the Deity at the three junctions of the day, or at least once daily, and should chant the mantra one hundred and eight times." Alternatively, he continued from the force of long practice. Or, when prema arose and his outward functions became withdrawn, his stillness resembled absorption in japa and meditation. At times he fell unconscious on the earth. Streams of mucus, saliva, and tears flowed from his mouth and eyes and moistened the dust of the paths used by cows, turning it into mud. At other times even these bodily signs disappeared, and he lay completely motionless like a corpse.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verses 117–118
कौतूकेन वयं बाला यामोऽमुं वीक्षितुं सदा।
स तु गोपकुमारान् नो लब्ध्वा नमति भक्तितः ॥११७॥
गाढमाश्लिष्यति प्रेम्णा सर्वाङ्गेषु सचुम्बनम्।
परित्यक्तुं न शक्नोति मादृशान् प्रियबन्धुवत् ॥११८॥
kautukena vayam bala yamo 'mum vikshitum sada ।
sa tu gopa-kumaran no labdhva namati bhaktitah ।।117।।
gadham aslishyati premna sarvangeshu sa-cumbanam ।
parityaktum na shaknoti madrishan priya-bandhuvat ।।118।।

Out of curiosity, we boys regularly went to see him. Whenever he encountered us cowherd boys, he would bow before us with devotion, embrace us tightly with prema, kiss us all over, and remain unable to let us go, as though we were his dearest relatives.

Dig-darshini

The boys went to see him merely out of curiosity, not from devotion. This detail further reveals the greatness of the brahmana's mercy toward them. When he encountered Gopa-kumar and the other cowherd boys, he bowed before them with great reverence. The expression "boys like me" may mean Gopa-kumar and his companions, or specifically boys resembling Gopa-kumar. The latter meaning may hint that Gopa-kumar's appearance resembled that of Bhagavan. The brahmana treated them like relatives, such as a father meeting his child, or an elder brother who, after a long separation, finds a dear younger brother and embraces and kisses him repeatedly. Alternatively, he treated them as he would

a supremely beloved companion, the foremost of Bhagavatas, or even Sri Bhagavan Himself.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 119
मया गोरसदानादिसेवयासौ प्रसादितः।
एकदा यमुनातीरे प्राप्यालिङ्ग्य जगाद माम् ॥११९॥
maya go-rasa-danadi-sevayasau prasaditah ।
ekada yamuna-tire prapyalingya jagada mam ।।119।।

By serving him with gifts of milk, yoghurt, and other products of the cows, I pleased him. One day, meeting me on the bank of the Yamuna, he embraced me and spoke to me.

Dig-darshini

Go-rasa refers to products of the cows such as milk and yoghurt. The word adi includes services such as bringing him a vessel of water, remaining nearby to assist him, and performing other similar acts. Through that service, Gopa-kumar pleased that supremely exalted brahmana and made him especially inclined to bestow his mercy.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 120
वत्स त्वं सकलाभीष्टसिद्धिमिच्छसि चेदिमम्।
प्रसादं जगदीशस्य स्नात्वा केश्यां गृहाण मत् ॥१२०॥
vatsa tvam sakalabhishta-siddhim icchasi ced imam ।
prasadam jagad-ishasya snatva keshyam grihana mat ।।120।।

"My child, if you desire the fulfilment of all your cherished wishes, bathe at Keshi-tirtha and then receive the prashad of the Lord of the universe from me."

Dig-darshini

The brahmana's instruction was: "My child, if you desire the complete fulfilment of every cherished wish, then bathe at Keshi-tirtha and receive from me this directly present prashad of the Lord of the universe." The word imam, "this," indicates something immediately before them and directly available. The words "receive it from me" mean that Gopa-kumar should accept and possess it as tangibly as though it were being placed within the palm of his hand.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 121
एवमेतं भवन्मन्त्रं स्नातायोपादिदेश मे।
पूर्णकामोऽनपेक्ष्योऽपि स दयालुशिरोमणिः ॥१२१॥
evam etam bhavan-mantram snatayopadidesha me ।
purna-kamo 'napekshyo 'pi sa dayalu-shiromanih ।।121।।

After I had bathed, he thus instructed me in this same mantra you also worship. Although all his desires were completely fulfilled and he depended upon nothing, he was the crown jewel of the compassionate brahmanas.

Dig-darshini

By saying, "this mantra which you worship," Gopa-kumar refers to the ten-syllable mantra and gives the brahmana a reason to develop exceptional faith in it. He also indicates the special friendship between them arising from their worship of the same mantra. One should not think that this instruction was merely payment for Gopa-kumar's service of offering milk products and other things. That great soul had every desire completely fulfilled and felt free from all forms of debt, being entirely independent of everything. Why, then, did he give the mantra? Because he was the jewel amongst all compassionate souls.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 122
पूजाविधिं शिक्षयितुं ध्येयमुच्चारयन् जपे।
प्रेमाकुलो गतो मोहं रुदन् विरहिणीव सः ॥१२२॥
puja-vidhim shikshayitum dhyeyam uccarayan jape ।
premakulo gato moham rudan virahiniva sah ।।122।।

To teach me the procedure of worship, he began to describe the form upon which I should meditate during japa. With that thought in mind he became overwhelmed by prema. He wept like a woman anguished by separation from her beloved and became unconscious.

Dig-darshini

He began to teach the procedures of worship, including nyasa, meditation, and the other prescribed practices. As he brought the form of Sri Madana-gopala, the object of meditation during japa, to the tip of his tongue and began to describe Him, he became overwhelmed by prema. Just as a woman suffering separation from her beloved becomes utterly distraught when some special remembrance of him arises, the brahmana began to weep and fell unconscious.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 123
संज्ञां प्राप्तोऽथ किञ्चिन्न प्रष्टुं शक्तो मया भिया।
उत्थाय विमनस्कोऽगात् क्वापि प्राप्तः पुनर्न सः ॥१२३॥
samjnam prapto 'tha kincin na prashtum shakto maya bhiya ।
utthaya vimanas ko 'gat kvapi praptah punar na sah ।।123।।

When he regained external awareness I was too afraid to ask him anything. He arose in a state with his mind overwhelmed, then went away somewhere. I never found him again.

Dig-darshini

Although he subsequently regained external consciousness, Gopa-kumar was unable to ask him anything because of fear and reverence. He may have feared that he had committed some offence upon seeing the brahmana's anguish and weeping, or that a question might again bring him into the same condition. One might ask why the brahmana did not himself resume his instruction out of mercy, as before. His heart had become distressed through the overwhelming manifestation of

prema, and he had lost awareness of his external purpose. Because he had no fixed residence, he arose and went away somewhere. For that reason, Gopa-kumar could never find or see him again.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 124
मया तु किमिदं लब्धं किमस्य फलमेव वा।
मन्त्रः कथं साधनीय इति ज्ञातं न किञ्चन ॥१२४॥
maya tu kim idam labdham kim asya phalam eva va ।
mantrah katham sadhaniya iti jnatam na kincana ।।124।।

I did not understand what I had received, what its result might be, or how the mantra was to be practised and perfected.

Dig-darshini

Gopa-kumar did not know what this ten-syllable formula was called—whether it was a mantra, a song, or something else—or what its defining characteristics were. If it was indeed a mantra, he did not know how it should be practised, whether through japa, kirtan, or some other method. Nor did he know what fruit the perfected mantra would naturally bestow. His guru had said, "If you desire the fulfilment of all your cherished wishes," and had thereby indicated that its result would be the attainment of everything he desired. Nevertheless, Gopa-kumar had been unable to determine precisely what that meant, or he no longer remembered it clearly, and therefore continued to wonder about the mantra's fruit.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 125
तद्वाक्यगौरवेणैव मन्त्रं तं केवलं मुखे।
केनाप्यलक्षितोऽजस्रं जपेयं कौतुकादिव ॥१२५॥
tad-vakya-gauravenaiva mantram tam kevalam mukhe ।
kenapy alakshito 'jasram japeyam kautukad iva ।।125।।

Out of reverence for his words, I continually repeated that mantra under my breath, unnoticed by anyone, almost as though from curiosity.

Dig-darshini

Although Gopa-kumar possessed no proper understanding of the mantra, he continually repeated it softly merely out of reverence for that exalted person. Because he did not know its true nature, he avoided the embarrassment of being seen by others and chanted without anyone noticing. He did so almost from curiosity, inner amazement, or a growing eagerness to discover what it might produce.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 126
तन्महापुरुषस्यैव प्रभावात्तादृशेन च।
जपेन चित्तशुद्धिर्मे तत्र श्रद्धाप्यजायत ॥१२६॥
tan maha-purushasyaiva prabhavat tadrishena ca ।
japena chitta-shuddhir me tatra shraddhapy ajayata ।।126।।

By the power of that great soul, and even through chanting performed in such an imperfect manner, my heart became purified and faith in the mantra rose up within me.

Dig-darshini

Through the influence of that great personality, even such chanting—performed without knowledge of the mantra's true nature and without proper faith—purified Gopa-kumar's heart of impurities such as lust and anger. Faith then arose within him, either in the mantra itself or in the practice of chanting it. The word ca, "also," emphasises that these results appeared despite the deficient manner in which he chanted.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 127

तद्वाक्यं चानुसन्धाय जगदीश्वरसाधकम् ।
तं मन्त्रं मन्यमानोऽहं तुष्यञ्जपपरोऽभवम् ॥१२७॥

tad-vakyam canusandhaya jagad-ishvara-sadhakam ।
tam mantram manyamano 'ham tushyan japa-paro 'bhavam ।।127।।

Remembering his words, I came to believe that the mantra would bring me to meet the Lord of the universe. Feeling increasingly satisfied, I became devoted to its constant recitation.

Dig-darshini

Gopa-kumar remembered and carefully reflected upon his guru's statement, "Receive from me this prashad of the Lord of the universe." He therefore concluded that the mantra was a means of attaining the Lord of the universe, or of receiving His mercy. As this understanding arose, he experienced increasing satisfaction and became fully devoted to japa.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 128

कीदृशो जगदीशोऽसौ कदा वा दृश्यतां मया ।
तदेकलालसो हित्वा गृहादीन् जाह्नवीमगाम् ॥१२८॥

kidrisho jagad-isho 'sau kada va drishyatam maya ।
tad-eka-lalaso hitva grihadin jahnavim agam ।।128।।

"What is that Lord of the universe like, and when shall I behold Him?" Longing exclusively for Him and for His vision, I abandoned my home and everything connected with it and went to the Ganga.

Dig-darshini

Gopa-kumar wondered, "What is the form of the Lord of the universe? To whom can His form and qualities be compared? When shall I see Him?" Developing one overwhelming desire—to attain that Lord or behold Him directly—he abandoned his home and possessions and travelled to the sacred Ganga.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 129
दूराच्छङ्खध्वनिं श्रुत्वा तत्पदं पुलिनं गतः ।
विप्रं वीक्ष्यानमं तत्र शालग्रामशिलार्चकम् ॥१२९॥
durac chankha-dhvanim shrutva tat-padam pulinam gatah ।
vipram vikshyanamam tatra shalagrama-shilarcakam ।।129।।

Hearing the sound of a conch from a distance, I went to the source of that sound, a place upon the sandy riverbank. There I saw a brahmana worshipping a Salagrama-sila and bowed before him.

Dig-darshini

After hearing the sound of a conch, Gopa-kumar went to the place from which it arose, a sandy bank of the Ganga. There he saw a brahmana engaged in worshipping a Salagrama-sila and respectfully offered obeisance to him.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 130
कमिमं यजसि स्वामिन्निति पृष्टो मया हसन् ।
सोऽवदत् किं न जानासि बालायं जगदीश्वरः ॥१३०॥
kam imam yajasi svaminn iti prishto maya hasan ।
so 'vadat kim na janasi balay am jagad-ishvarah ।।130।।

When I asked, "My lord, whom are you worshipping here?" the brahmana laughed and said, "Don't know, child? This is the Lord of the universe."

Dig-darshini

Gopa-kumar asked the brahmana, "My lord, whom are you worshipping?" The brahmana laughingly replied, "What? Do you not know Him?" His question expresses amazement, for he considered ignorance of this Deity impossible because the Lord was so widely known. Yet, realising that Gopa-kumar might genuinely be ignorant because he was a child, the brahmana explained directly, "O child, this person before you is the Lord of all the worlds."

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 131
तच्छ्रुत्वाहं सुसम्प्राप्तो निधिं लब्ध्वेव निर्धनः ।
नष्टं वा बान्धवो बन्धुं परमां मुदमाप्तवान् ॥१३१॥
tac chrutvaham susamprapto nidhim labdhveva nirdhanah ।
nashtam va bandhavo bandhum paramam mudam aptavan ।।131।।

Hearing this, I felt that I had fully attained my goal and experienced tremendous joy, like a poor man who has discovered a treasure or a person who has recovered a long-lost relative.

Dig-darshini

Two examples illustrate the supreme joy Gopa-kumar experienced. He felt like a destitute person who suddenly discovers a great treasure, or like someone who unexpectedly recovers a beloved relative who had been lost, presumed dead, or unseen for a very long time.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 132
जगदीशं मुहुः पश्यन् दण्डवच्छ्रद्धयानमम् ।
पादोदकं सनिर्माल्यं विप्रस्य कृपयाप्नुवम् ॥१३२॥
jagad-isham muhuh pashyan dandavac chraddhayanamam ।
padodakam sa-nirmalyam viprasya kripayapnuvam ।।132।।

Again and again I gazed upon the Lord of the universe and faithfully fell before Him like a rod. By the brahmana's mercy, I received a taste of the water that had bathed His feet, together with His prashad, the remnants of offerings to the Deity.

Dig-darshini

Gopa-kumar repeatedly gazed upon the Lord of the universe in the form of the Salagrama-sila and bowed before Him with faith and affection. By the brahmana's mercy, he received the water that had bathed the Lord and His nirmalya, the tulasi leaves and other articles that had been offered to Him.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 133
उद्यतेन गृहं गन्तुं करण्डे तेन शायितम् ।
जगदीशं विलोक्यार्तो व्यलपं साश्रमिदृशम् ॥१३३॥
udyatena griham gantum karande tena shayitam ।
jagad-isham vilokyarto vyalapam sasram idrisham ।।133।।

When the brahmana prepared to return home and placeed the Lord of the universe within a small box, I became distressed upon seeing this and tearfully lamented as follows.

Dig-darshini

As the brahmana prepared to return to his home, he placed the Deity within a karanda, a particular kind of container used for carrying or keeping a worshipful Deity. Seeing the Lord of the universe laid inside it, Gopa-kumar became deeply distressed and began to lament with tears.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 134
हा हा धृतः करण्डान्तरस्थाने परमेश्वरः ।
किमप्यसौ न चाभुङ्क्ते निद्रा तु क्षुधया कथम् ॥१३४॥
ha ha dhritah karandantar asthane parameshvarah ।
kim apy asau na cabhunkte nidra tu kshudhaya katham ।।134।।

"Alas! Alas! The Supreme Lord has been placed inside a container, in a place unfit for Him. He has eaten nothing at all. How can He possibly sleep while remaining hungry?"

Dig-darshini

Gopa-kumar cried, "The Supreme Lord has been placed within a container, an entirely unsuitable place for Him." One might reply that after worship it is proper to return the Deity to His appointed resting place. Gopa-kumar therefore adds that the Lord had not

eaten anything. Judging by his own needs, and having seen no substantial offering capable of satisfying hunger, he wondered how the Lord could possibly sleep while remaining hungry.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 135
प्रकृत्यैव न जानामि मथुराब्राह्मणोत्तम।
अस्माद्विलक्षणः कश्चित् क्वाप्यस्ति जगदीश्वरः ॥१३५॥
prakrityaiva na janami mathura-brahmanottama ।
asmad vilakshanah kashcit kvapy asti jagad-ishvarah ।।135।।

O best of the brahmanas of Mathura, through my previous nature and knowledge I did not know that there might be another form of the Lord of the universe different from this one.

Dig-darshini

One might ask why Gopa-kumar lamented in this way, since the Lord of the universe exists in many forms and places and accepts many varieties of offerings. Gopa-kumar explains that, because of his simple nature, he did not know that there might be any form of the Lord of the universe distinct from the Salagrama-sila directly before him.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 136
इत्यकृत्रिमसन्तापं विलापातुरमब्रवीत्।
ब्राह्मणः सान्त्वयित्वा मां ह्रीणवद् विनयान्वितः ॥१३६॥
ity akritrima-santapam vilapaturam abravit ।
brahmanah santvayitva mam hrinavad vinayanvitah ।।136।।

Seeing that my sorrow was entirely sincere and that I was troubled by lamentation, the brahmana consoled me then spoke to me with embarrassment and humility.

Dig-darshini

Gopa-kumar's distress was natural and sincere, not artificially produced through pretence. He was overwhelmed by lamentations such as, "The Lord of the universe has eaten nothing." The brahmana first consoled him and then spoke with humility, appearing ashamed because his poverty prevented him from offering the Lord even the kind of meal ordinarily given to a human being. In truth, it was extremely difficult for him to arrange opulent offerings in that place. Alternatively, he became humble and embarrassed upon seeing the extraordinary prema revealed by Gopa-kumar's concern for the Lord.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 137
नववैष्णव किं कर्तुं दरिद्रः शक्नुयां परम्।
अर्पयामि स्वभोग्यं हि जगदीशाय केवलम् ॥१३७॥
nava-vaishnava kim kartum daridrah shaknuyam param ।
arpayami sva-bhogyam hi jagad-ishaya kevalam ।।137।।

"O new Vaishnava, what more can a poor man like me do? I offer the Lord of the universe only the food that I myself have to eat."

Dig-darshini

By addressing him as "O new Vaishnava," the brahmana suggests, "Have you never previously seen people like me worshipping a Salagrama-sila in some other place?" Being poor, he could do nothing more than he was already doing. He offered the Lord only the simple food available for his own maintenance.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verses 138–140

यदि पूजोत्सवं तस्य वैभवं च दिदृक्षसे ।
तदैतद्देशराजस्य विष्णुपूजानुरागिणः ॥१३८॥
महासाधोः पुरीं याहि वर्तमानमदूरतः ।
तत्र साक्षात् समीक्षस्व दुर्दर्शं जगदीश्वरम् ॥१३९॥
हृत्पूरकं महानन्दं सर्वथानुभविष्यसि ।
इदानीमेत्य मद्गेहे भुङ्क्ष्व विष्णुनिवेदितम् ॥१४०॥

yadi pujotsavam tasya vaibhavam ca didrikshase ।
tadaitad-desha-rajasya vishnu-pujanuraginah ।।138।।
maha-sadhoh purim yahi vartamanam aduratah ।
tatra sakshat samikshasva durdarsham jagad-ishvaram ।।139।।
hrit-purakam mahanandam sarvathanubhavishyasi ।
idanim etya mad-gehe bhunkshva vishnu-niveditam ।।140।।

"If you desire to behold the splendid festival of God's worship and His royal opulence, then go to the nearby capital of the king of this region, a great sadhu deeply devoted to the worship of Vishnu. There you may directly behold the rarely seen Lord of the universe and experience in every way a great joy that will completely fill your heart. For now, however, come to my home and eat prashad offered to Vishnu."

Dig-darshini

The worship of the Lord of the universe is itself a festival, a supremely auspicious and joyful celebration. His opulence includes a private chamber, a splendid bed, and the many other articles used in royal service. The king mentioned here ruled the region along that bank of the Ganga and was deeply attached to the worship of Vishnu. He was a maha-sadhu, foremost among saintly souls, surpassing those people who are devoted merely to karma, jnana, and other paths. The brahmana therefore tells Gopa-kumar to visit the king's nearby capital and see the Lord of the universe, who is otherwise difficult to see. The word sakshat may indicate that the Lord would be directly and easily visible there, or that, in contrast with the Salagrama-sila, He would appear almost personally present with the full beauty of all His limbs openly manifest. Gopa-kumar would experience great joy in many ways: by beholding the beauty of the Lord's feet and other limbs, seeing the varied offerings, His bed and other royal articles, hearing songs and prayers, and honouring the food offered to Him. This joy would completely fill his heart. The brahmana's intended meaning is: "Although this Salagrama-

sila is certainly the Lord of the universe, His complete bodily beauty is not visibly manifest here, and because of my poverty I cannot celebrate an opulent festival of worship, so a prema-bhakta like you may feel unsatisfied. But at the king's palace your desire will surely be fulfilled." He tells Gopa-kumar that he may go there afterwards, but should first come to his home and eat some rice or other food offered to Vishnu.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 141
तद्वाचानन्दितोऽगत्वा क्षुधितोऽपि तदालयम् ।
तं प्रणम्य तदुद्दिष्टवर्त्मना तां पुरीमगाम् ॥१४१॥
tad-vacanandito 'gatva kshudhito 'pi tad-alayam ।
tam pranamya tad-uddishta-vartmana tam purim agam ।।141।।

Delighted by his words, although I was hungry, I did not go to his home. After bowing before him, I followed the road he indicated and went to that city.

Dig-darshini

Gopa-kumar did not go to the brahmana's house because the brahmana's words had filled him with such joy that he became eager to depart immediately. He first bowed deeply before him, perhaps repeatedly falling flat on the ground like a stick, either to seek forgiveness for disregarding his invitation or to obtain auspicious blessings for his journey. He then followed the road to the city that the brahmana had shown him.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 142
अन्तःपुरे देवकुले जगदीशार्चनध्वनिम् ।
अपूर्वं तुमुलं दूराच्छ्रुत्वापृच्छममुं जनान् ॥१४२॥
antah-pure deva-kule jagad-isharcana-dhvanim ।
apurvam tumulam durac chrutvapriccham amum janan ।।142।।

From a distance I heard an unprecedented tumultuous sound arising from the worship of the Lord of the universe in a temple in the heart of the city, and I questioned the people I saw about it.

Dig-darshini

The temple stood within the inner part of the capital. The sound was unprecedented and astonishing because Gopa-kumar had never experienced anything like it before. It was loud, varied, and tumultuous because, during the offering of arati, many kinds of singing and the music of instruments were sounding simultaneously. He asked the people either, "Where is the Lord of the universe?" or, "What is this sound, and where is it coming from?"

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verses 143–145
विज्ञाय तत्र जगदीश्वरमीक्षितुं तं
केनाप्यवारितगतिः सजवं प्रविश्य ।

शङ्खारिपङ्कजगदाविलसत्कराब्जं
श्रीमच्चतुर्भुजमपश्यमहं समक्षम् ॥१४३॥
सर्वाङ्गसुन्दरतरं नवमेघकान्तिं
कौशेयपीतवसनं वनमालयाढ्यम् ।
सौवर्णभूषणमवर्ण्यकिशोरमूर्तिं
पूर्णेन्दुवक्त्रममृतस्मितमब्जनेत्रम् ॥१४४॥
सम्पूजितं विविधदुर्लभवस्तुवर्गैः
सेवानुषक्तपरिचारकवृन्दजुष्टम् ।
नृत्यादिकं च पुरतोऽनुभवन्तमारात्
तिष्ठन्तमासनवरे सुपरिच्छदौघम् ॥१४५॥

vijnaya tatra jagad-ishvaram ikshitum tam
kenapy avarita-gatih sa-javam pravishya ।
shankhari-pankaja-gada-vilasat-karabjam
srimac-caturbhujam apashyam aham samaksham ।।143।।
sarvanga-sundararataram nava-megha-kantim
kausheya-pita-vasanam vana-malayadhyam ।
sauvarna-bhushanam avarnya-kishora-murtim
purnendu-vaktram amrita-smitam abja-netram ।।144।।
sampujitam vividha-durlabha-vastu-vargaih
sevanu shakta-paricaraka-vrinda-jushtam ।
nrityadikam ca purato 'nubhavantam arat
tishthantam asana-vare supariccchadaugham ।।145।।

Learning that the Lord of the universe was there in the temple, I rushed inside to behold Him, and no one prevented my entrance. Directly before me I saw the glorious four-armed Lord, His lotus hands radiant with the conch, discus, lotus, and mace. Every limb of His body was gorgeous. His complexion resembled a fresh rain cloud, He wore fine yellow silk and a rich vana-mala, and He was adorned with golden ornaments. His indescribable adolescent form had a face like the full moon, a nectar-like smile, and lotus eyes. He was being worshipped with varieties of rare and precious articles and attended by groups of servants deeply committed to His service. Seated on a splendid throne amid an abundance of magnificent royal furnishings, the Deity watched the dancing and other festivities being performed before Him.

Dig-darshini

Having learned either the cause of the sound or that the Lord of the universe Himself was present within the temple, Gopa-kumar rushed inside to meet the Lord he had long desired to see. No person, gatekeeper, or other attendant obstructed his entrance. There he directly saw the glorious four-armed Lord whose lotus hands shone while holding the conch, discus, lotus, and mace. All His limbs—His face, eyes, and every other feature—were most beautiful and captivating. His ornaments, including His crown and earrings, were made of gold or appeared almost entirely golden. His adolescent form was impossible to describe adequately. Although His beauty and sweetness had already been indicated, Gopa-kumar's eagerness

compelled him to describe in particular His full-moon face, nectar-like smile, and lotus eyes. The Lord was properly worshipped with many kinds of exceedingly rare and excellent offerings. Groups of attendants, lovingly and eagerly absorbed in services such as waving chamaras and offering tambula, surrounded Him. Before Him, dancers and others performed a great festival, which He personally accepted by gazing upon everything without blinking. He remained seated on an excellent throne rather than merely coming to the temple for a temporary appearance. Around Him were splendid canopies, parasols, and other royal treasures, together with every other item appropriate for His residence in the temple, and worship.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 146
परमानन्दपूर्णोऽहं प्रणमन् दण्डवन्मुहुः ।
व्यचिन्तयमिदं स्वस्यापश्यमद्य दिदृक्षितम् ॥१४६॥
paramananda-purno 'ham pranaman dandavan muhuh ।
vyacintayam idam svasyapashyam adya didrikshitam ।।146।।

Filled with bliss, I repeatedly fell before Him like a rod and thought, "Today I have finally seen what I have always desired to behold."

Dig-darshini

Gopa-kumar's thought was: "Today I have seen the Lord I so greatly desired to see." Filled with bliss, he repeatedly offered full prostrated obeisance.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 147
सम्प्राप्तो जन्मसाफल्यं न गमिष्याम्यतः क्वचित् ।
वैष्णवानां च कृपया तत्रैव न्यवसं सुखम् ॥१४७॥
samprapto janma-saphalyam na gamishyamy atah kvacit ।
vaishnavanam ca kripaya tatraiva nyavasam sukham ।।147।।

"I have attained the complete success of my birth. I shall never go anywhere else from here." By the mercy of the Vaishnavas, I therefore remained there in happiness.

Dig-darshini

Gopa-kumar thought, "I have fully attained the final fruit, the perfection of my reason for my birth. The goal, for which I left my home and wandered amongst holy places has been fulfilled here, so I shall never leave this place." One might wonder how a penniless foreigner could remain within the royal inner quarters and obtain food and other necessities. It was through the mercy of Vaishnavas serving the Lord, who gave him prashad, reassured him, and cared for him, that he lived happily within the temple.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 148
भुञ्जानो विष्णुनैवेद्यं पश्यन् पूजामहोत्सवम् ।
शृण्वन् पूजादिमाहात्म्यं यत्नान्मन्त्रं रहो जपन् ॥१४८॥

bhunjano vishnu-naivedyam pashyan puja-mahotsavam ।
shrinvan pujadi-mahatmyam yatnan mantram raho japan ।।148।।

I ate food offered to Vishnu, witnessed the great festivals of His worship, heard the glories of His worship and related practices, and carefully continued chanting my mantra in solitude.

Dig-darshini

Gopa-kumar now describes the happiness of his life there. He ate food offered to Vishnu, beheld magnificent festivals of worship, and heard explanations that no duty was superior to Hari's worship, together with instructions concerning its various procedures. The word adi includes honouring the Lord's offered food and hearing its glory. It is said: "In Kali-yuga, one who eats even a grain of food offered to Vishnu obtains the fruit that arises from fasting for six months." Even while hearing these scriptures and teachings, Gopa-kumar did not become attracted to heavenly enjoyment or other lesser results. He continued carefully chanting his mantra in seclusion.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 149
अस्यास्तु व्रजभूमेः श्रीर्गोपक्रीडासुखं च तत् ।
कदाचिदपि मे ब्रह्मन् हृदयान्नापसर्पति ॥१४९॥
asyas tu vraja-bhumeh srir gopa-krida-sukham ca tat ।
kadacid api me brahman hridayan napasarpati ।।149।।

Yet, O brahmana, the beauty of this land of Braja and the happiness of my cowherd pastimes in Mathura-mandala never departed from my heart.

Dig-darshini

As though revealing a sign of the growing perfection of his mantra-japa, Gopa-kumar indicates that the happiness he had experienced while wandering through Braja was greater than even the splendid festivals of worship he now witnessed. The word tu emphasises Braja's superiority over everything else. Its sri means its beauty and splendour, or the indescribable glory that Gopa-kumar had personally experienced there. Neither that beauty nor the happiness of his cowherd life ever left his heart—whether he was awake or dreaming, or even while he was beholding the Lord's magnificent festivals of worship.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 150
एवं दिनानि कतिचित् सानन्दं तत्र तिष्ठतः ।
तादृक्पूजाविधाने मे परमा ललसाजनि ॥१५०॥
evam dinani katicit sanandam tatra tishthatah ।
tadrik-puja-vidhane me parama lalasajani ।।150।।

I remained there happily for several days, then an intense longing arose within me to worship the Lord in that magnificent manner.

Dig-darshini

Gopa-kumar now begins to describe the fulfilment of his desire as a further demonstration of the power of his mantra-japa. After being there for several days, he developed an intense longing to perform worship of Bhagavan with the same kind of opulence and elaborate arrangements he had observed in the royal temple.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 151
अथापुत्रः स राजा मां वैदेशिकमपि प्रियात्।
सुशीलं वीक्ष्य पुत्रत्वे परिकल्प्याचिरान्मृतः ॥१५१॥
athaputrah sa raja mam vaideshikam api priyat ।
sushilam vikshya putratve parikalpyaciran mritah ।।151।।

The king had no son. Although I was a foreigner, he became affectionate toward me, and recognising my good character he adopted me as his son. Soon afterwards he died.

Dig-darshini

After several days, the childless king saw how Gopa-kumar possessed excellent character. Although he was a foreigner, the king became deeply affectionate toward him, formally accepted him as his son, and then soon after died.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 152
मया च लब्ध्वा तद्राज्यं विष्णुपूजामुदाधिका।
प्रवर्तिता तदन्नैश्च भोज्यन्ते साधवोऽन्वहम् ॥१५२॥
maya ca labdhva tad-rajyam vishnu-puja-mudadhika ।
pravartita tad-annaish ca bhojyante sadhavo 'nvaham ।।152।।

After obtaining that kingdom, I greatly increased the joyful worship of Vishnu, and every day I had sadhus fed with food offered to Him.

Dig-darshini

The worship of Vishnu was increased many times beyond its previous extent. The sadhus were fed daily with food that had been prepared for the worship of Vishnu and offered to Him.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 153
स्वयं च क्वचिदासक्तिमकृत्वा पूर्ववद् वसन्।
जपं निर्वाहयन् भुञ्जे प्रसादान्नं प्रभोः परम् ॥१५३॥
svayam ca kvacid asaktim akritva purvavad vasan ।
japam nirvahayan bhunje prasadanam prabhoh param ।।153।।

Without becoming attached to anything, I continued living as before, faithfully maintaining my mantra-japa, and eating only the food that was the prashad of the Lord.

Dig-darshini

Gopa-kumar explains that even his connection with royal power produced no change within him because of the influence of his

mantra. He remained unattached to every kind of wealth and possession and lived just as he had before obtaining the kingdom, when he had possessed nothing. He continued performing his mantra-japa every day and accepted only the remnants of the Lord of the universe as prashad, merely to maintain his body.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 154
राज्ञोऽस्य परिवारेभ्यः प्रदं राज्यं विभज्य तत् ।
तथापि राज्यसम्बन्धाद् दुःखं मे बहुधोद्भवत् ॥१५४॥
rajno 'sya parivarebhyah pradam rajyam vibhajya tat ।
tathapi rajya-sambandhad duhkham me bahudhodbhavat ।।154।।

I divided the kingdom among the deceased king's relatives and entrusted its administration to them. Nevertheless, my connection with royal rule gave rise to many forms of suffering.

Dig-darshini

One might ask how the affairs of the kingdom could continue without the king's personal direction. Gopa-kumar therefore explains that he divided the kingdom appropriately among the deceased king's relatives, friends, ministers, and other associates, and fully entrusted them with authority to administer their respective portions. He now begins to describe the causes of his detachment from royal life, showing that even owning a kingdom cannot bring happiness to a discerning Vaishnava.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 155
कदापि पररष्ट्राद् भीः कदाचिच्चक्रवर्तिनः ।
विविधादेशसन्दोहपालनेनास्वतन्त्रता ॥१५५॥
kadapi para-rashtrad bhih kadacic cakravartinah ।
vividhadesha-sandoha-palanenasvatantrata ।।155।।

Sometimes there was fear of neighbouring kingdoms, and at other times I lost my independence by having to obey the many commands of the emperor.

Dig-darshini

Gopa-kumar describes some of the sufferings arising from royal power. At times there was fear of hostile kings and of people in neighbouring territories. At other times, because a local king remained subordinate to the chakravarti, the emperor who rules over a host of regional kings, he had to obey numerous commands, such as, "This must be done," or, "This must not be done." Consequently, he possessed no real independence.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 156
जगदीश्वरनैवेद्यं स्पृष्टमन्येन केनचित् ।
नीतं बहिर्वा सन्दिग्धो न भुङ्क्ते कोऽपि सज्जनः ॥१५६॥

jagad-ishvara-naivedyam sprishtam anyena kenacit ।
nitam bahir va sandigdho na bhunkte ko 'pi sajjanah ।।156।।

If the food offered to the Lord of the universe had been touched by an unauthorised person or carried outside the purified area, some sadhus became doubtful and would not eat it.

Dig-darshini

One might argue that saintly persons should willingly endure hardship for the sake of serving the Lord of the universe. Gopa-kumar replies that if the Lord's naivedya was touched by anyone other than the authorised brahmanas, or if it was taken outside the purified place where the worship was performed, some sadhus would refuse to eat it because of doubts concerning its purity. Even if someone occasionally ate it, he generally did so only after being urged, while remaining troubled by doubt, since the usual standards of sadachara does not recognise the eating of such food in the same manner as the maha-prashad of Sri Jagannatha.

Seeing the sadhus behave in this way caused Gopa-kumar pain and therefore properly awakened in him a feeling of detachment from living in proximity to the sadhus in that kingdom. The Brihad Vishnu Purana and other scriptures declare: "Regarding the food, drink, and other articles offered to the Lord of the universe, no consideration of what may or may not ordinarily be eaten applies, O brahmana. That prashad is unchanging like Brahman, for as Vishnu is transcendental, so too is what has been offered to Him. Those who deliberate over whether it may be eaten fall from their spiritual position. Afflicted by leprosy, deprived of wife and children, they go to a hell from which they may never return."

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 157
मर्मशल्येन चैतेन निर्वेदो मे महानभूत् ।
नेशे दिदृक्षितं साक्षात्प्राप्तं त्यक्तुं च तत्प्रभुम् ॥१५७॥
marma-shalyena caitena nirvedo me mahan abhut ।
neshe didrikshitam sakshat-praptam tyaktum ca tat-prabhum ।।157।।

This pierced my heart like a thorn and awakened profound detachment within me. Yet I could not abandon that Lord whom I had long desired to behold, and had now attained directly.

Dig-darshini

The refusal of saintly individuals to honour the Lord's prashad became like a thorn lodged within Gopa-kumar's vital organs and caused him intense suffering. It therefore produced profound vairagya toward that kingdom. Why, then, did he not immediately abandon it? The Lord of the universe whom he had long desired to see had now been directly attained there. By leaving the kingdom,

he would also lose the opportunity to behold Him, and therefore he could not suddenly bring himself to depart.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 158
एतस्मिन्नेव समये तत्र दक्षिणदेशतः।
समागतैः साधुवरैः कथितं तैर्थिकैरिदम् ॥१५८॥
etasminn eva samaye tatra dakshina-deshatah ।
samagataih sadhu-varaih kathitam tairthikair idam ।।158।।

At that very time, some excellent sadhus who came from the south spoke to me, telling me as follows.

Dig-darshini

At that time, some foremost sadhus devoted to Vishnu arrived in Gopa-kumar's city from the southern regions. One might wonder why these devotees had left Sri Purushottama-ksetra. They were tairthikas, pilgrims who travelled from one sacred place to another to behold the forms of Sri Vishnu and meet Vaishnavas, who are most readily found at holy places. They spoke the account beginning with the description of Jagannatha as Daru-brahma and continuing through the description of the fruit attained there.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 159
दारुब्रह्म जगन्नाथो भगवान् पुरुषोत्तमे।
क्षेत्रे नीलाचले क्षारार्णवतीरे विराजते ॥१५९॥
daru-brahma jagannatho bhagavan purushottame ।
kshetre nilacale ksharnarnava-tire virajate ।।159।।

Bhagavan Jagannatha, Daru-brahma, resides in glory at Nilacala in the sacred land of Purushottama, beside the shore of the salt ocean.

Dig-darshini

Because He cuts apart all the sufferings of material existence, the Supreme Brahman has manifested a divine form of wood and is renowned as Jagannatha, the Supreme Lord. He resides in the sacred land called Purushottama-ksetra, upon Nilacala, beside the shore of the salt ocean. The Padma Purana states: "On the northern shore of the ocean, within glorious Purushottama-ksetra, the Brahman composed entirely of perfect bliss resides, assuming the outward appearance of a wooden body." The Brihad Vishnu Purana similarly declares: "Upon Niladri in the land of Utkala, within Sri Purushottama-ksetra, the highest spiritual bliss has been installed in an apparently wooden Deity form called Jagannatha."

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 160
महाविभूतिमान् राज्यमौत्कलं पालयन् स्वयम्।
व्यञ्जयन् निजमाहात्म्यं सदा सेवकवत्सलः ॥१६०॥
maha-vibhutiman rajyam autkalam palayan svayam ।
vyanjayan nija-mahatmyam sada sevaka-vatsalah ।।160।।

Possessing immense divine opulence, He personally rules the kingdom of Utkala, continually revealing His own glory and always showing tenderness and affection for His servants.

Dig-darshini

Jagannatha possesses extraordinary and supreme majesty. He personally protects and governs the kingdom of Utkala, the land also known as Odisha, by issuing His own commands and establishing ordinances. The Tattva-yamala states: "Within Bharata, in the land of Utkala, at the earthly heaven of Purushottama, Jagannatha appears in a wooden form and grants fearlessness to His devotees. Assuming activities resembling those of a human being, He resides there as the sole bestower of liberation." He openly reveals His glory, especially His affection for the helpless and lowly. He is tender toward His servants and does not easily notice their offences.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 161
तस्यान्नं पाचितं लक्ष्म्या स्वयं भुक्त्वा दयालुना।
दत्तं तेन स्वभक्तेभ्यो लभ्यते देवदुर्लभम् ॥१६१॥
tasyannam pacitam lakshmya svayam bhuktva dayaluna ।
dattam tena sva-bhaktebhyo labhyate deva-durlabham ।।161।।

His food, personally cooked by Lakshmi, is first eaten by the merciful Lord and then given by Him to His devotees. That prashad, difficult for even the devas to obtain, is freely available there.

Dig-darshini

The food of Sri Jagannatha, although difficult for even the devas to obtain, is available to ordinary people. What is that food like? It is personally cooked by Lakshmi, the Supreme Goddess, eaten by the Lord Himself, and then given by Him to His devotees. One might ask how anything could remain after the Lord has eaten it. This is so because He is supremely compassionate by nature, and He first eats a portion of each preparation for the happiness of His servants, thereby transforming it into His remnants. Alternatively, He may consume everything completely and then restore it to its former fullness before giving it to His servants.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 162
महाप्रसादसंज्ञं च तत् स्पृष्टं येन केनचित्।
यत्र कुत्रापि वा नीतमविचारेण भुज्यते ॥१६२॥
maha-prashad-samjnam ca tat sprishtam yena kenacit ।
yatra kutrapi va nitam avicarena bhujyate ।।162।।

It is known as maha-prashad. Even when touched by anyone whatsoever, or even if carried to another place, it is eaten without any consideration of purity or impurity.

Dig-darshini

Its being difficult for even the devas to obtain is further revealed by its name, maha-prashad, which it receives through contact with the nectar of Sri Jagannatha's lips. For this reason, even if that food has been touched by anyone, including people ordinarily regarded as untouchable or socially degraded, or has been carried to an impure place or a distant land, everyone may eat it. It is honoured without deliberating upon the literal or implied meaning of ritual rules, purity or impurity, the proper or improper time, or any similar consideration. It is therefore stated: "The food cooked by Lakshmi and eaten by Purushottama should never be considered touched or untouched. As Vishnu Himself is transcendental, so too is that prashad." The Skanda Purana states: "Even if it has remained for a long time, become completely dry, or been carried from a distant land, whenever it is eaten it removes all sins." The Bhavishya Purana declares: "Even when the food of the Lord of the universe has been touched by persons of the lowest social groups, those of degraded status, or those born from mixed caste, eating it destroys every sin." The Tattva-yamala states: "O King, there is no consideration there of touched or untouched, for by its mere contact impure things themselves become pure." The Garuda Purana similarly says: "There is no restriction of time for eating it, as there is in a Chandrayana vow. One who desires liberation should eat it as soon as it is received."

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 163

अहो तत्क्षेत्रमाहात्म्यं गर्दभोऽपि चतुर्भुजः ।
यत्र प्रवेशमात्रेण न कस्यापि पुनर्भवः ॥१६३॥

aho tat-kshetra-mahatmyam gardabho 'pi catur-bhujah ।
yatra pravesha-matrena na kasyapi punar-bhavah ।।163।।

How great is the glory of that sacred land! Even a donkey there becomes four-armed upon death, and merely by entering that place no living being need ever take birth in material existence again.

Dig-darshini

What need be said of the glory of Sri Jagannatha or His maha-prashad? Even the greatness of His sacred land is incomparably wonderful. The exclamation aho expresses amazement. Even a donkey residing within that kshetra—a creature regarded as extremely stupid and low-born—becomes four-armed by attaining a form like that of Sri Bhagavan. Sri Brahma states in the Brahma Purana: "How astonishing is the glory of that sacred land, extending ten yojanas in every direction! The devas dwelling in heaven see every person there as four-armed." Veda-vyasa similarly states in the Garuda Purana: "All the people residing there are seen holding conch, discus, and lotus. The devas in heaven behold them and are repeatedly bewildered." Sri Narada also declares in the Bahvrica-parisista: "All the residents of that place are seen to possess four

arms." Moreover, merely by entering that kshetra, any living being who has come from any place becomes free from rebirth and material existence. Sri Veda-vyasa states in the Garuda Purana: "By merely touching that sacred land, human beings attain liberation, for there the Supreme Brahman shines directly while performing pastimes in a wooden form. Even one who has been devoted to sinful conduct for hundreds of births attains a form like Vishnu merely by coming into contact with this kshetra."

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 164
प्रफुल्लपुण्डरीकाक्षे तस्मिन्नेवेक्षिते जनेः ।
फलं स्यादेवमाश्रौषमाश्चर्यं पूर्वमश्रुतम् ॥१६४॥
praphulla-pundarikakshe tasmin eveksite janeh ।
phalam syad evam ashrausham ashcaryam purvam ashrutam ।।164।।

I also heard the astonishing and previously unknown teaching that merely by beholding that Lord, whose eyes resemble fully blossomed lotuses, one attains the complete fruit of human birth.

Dig-darshini

One might ask whether the Lord of the universe is as directly present there as He was in Gopa-kumar's royal temple. The pilgrims reply by describing Sri Jagannatha as having eyes like fully blossomed lotuses. This indicates the extraordinary beauty and sweetness of His vision, which removes every suffering merely by being seen. The full fruit of one's birth is attained simply by beholding Him. Sri Narada states to Sri Prahlada in the Padma Purana: "That divine splendour which can somehow be perceived through hearing and other spiritual practices shines upon the summit of Niladri, visible to everyone's eyes. Those human beings who behold that Paramatma attain the abode of Vishnu. What then need be said of persons such as you?" Gopa-kumar heard this and many similar teachings, none of which he had ever heard before. Although Sri Jagannatha is the same Bhagavan he had already seen, Jagannatha is the source from whom the many avataras manifest. Therefore, beholding the source of the avataras produces a greater result than beholding a particular avatara, especially when He is seen at His uniquely glorious abode. Although Gopa-kumar had ruled his kingdom for some time, he had not previously heard these truths, either because of his complete absorption in his own worship or because the influence of his guru and mantra arranged for him to hear them only at the proper time. This will become clearer later.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 165
तद्दिदृक्षाभिभूतोऽहं सर्वं सन्त्यज्य तत्क्षणे ।
सङ्कीर्तयन् जगन्नाथमौढ्रदेशदिशं श्रितः ॥१६५॥
tad-didrikshabhibhuto 'ham sarvam santyajya tat-kshane ।
sankirtayan jagannatham audhra-desha-disham shritah ।।165।।

Overwhelmed by the desire to behold Sri Jagannatha, I immediately abandoned everything and set out toward the land of Odisha, loudly performing sankirtan of His name.

Dig-darshini

Completely overcome by a longing to see Jagannatha, Gopa-kumar instantly abandoned his kingdom and everything connected with it, both outwardly and inwardly. With his mind fully absorbed, he loudly and repeatedly chanted the four syllables Ja-gan-na-tha and travelled southeast toward the land of Odisha to reach Sri Purushottama-ksetra.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 166

तत्क्षेत्रमचिरात् प्राप्तस्तत्रत्यान् दण्डवन्नमन्।
अन्तःपुरं प्रविष्टोऽहं तेषां करुणया सताम् ॥१६६॥

tat-kshetram acirat praptas tatratyan dandavan naman ।
antah-puram pravishto 'ham tesham karunaya satam ।।166।।

Before long I reached that sacred land. Offering full prostrated obeisance to its residents, I entered the inner temple by the mercy of the saintly souls there.

Dig-darshini

Gopa-kumar offered prostrated obeisance to the people of the sacred land whom he encountered along the road. One might wonder how a foreigner, unfamiliar with the local customs and temple procedures, could enter the inner part of the temple immediately upon arriving. This became possible through the mercy of the saintly residents, who were top-most Vaishnavas. The words "by the mercy of those saintly persons" may also be understood in connection with the events described in the following verse.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 167

दूरादददर्शि पुरुषोत्तमवक्त्रचन्द्रो
भ्राजद्विशालनयनो मणिपुण्ड्रभालः।
स्निग्धाभ्रकान्तिररुणाधरदीप्तिरम्योऽ
शेषप्रसादविकसत्स्मितचन्द्रिकाढ्यः ॥१६७॥

durad adarshi purushottama-vaktra-candro
bhrajad-vishala-nayano mani-pundra-bhalah ।
snigdhabhra-kantir arunadhara-dipti-ramyo
'shesha-prasada-vikasat-smita-candrikadhyah ।।167।।

From a distance I beheld the moon of Sri Purushottama's face. His great radiant eyes shone brilliantly, His forehead was adorned with a jewelled tilaka, His complexion resembled a soft dark cloud, and the glow of His reddish lips was enchanting. He was filled with the moonlight of a smile blossoming from His unlimited grace toward everyone.



Dig-darshini

From a distance, Gopa-kumar first beheld the moonlike face of Sri Purushottama, Sri Jagannatha. His face is compared to the moon because it delights everyone and because, when viewed from afar, it shines as a perfectly complete and radiant circle. His large eyes gleamed brilliantly, and His forehead bore a tilaka formed of jewels. His soft and lustrous complexion resembled a dark rain cloud, while the radiance of His reddish lips was supremely charming. His smile expanded like moonlight from the complete and boundless favour and constant graciousness He extends toward every living being. Since Gopa-kumar's vision first leapt toward the Lord's radiant face from a great distance, the commentary initially describes the large eyes and other features clearly visible within that face.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 168

अत्राग्रतो गन्तुमनाश्च नेशे
प्रेम्णा ततो वेपथुभिर्निरुद्धः ।
रोमाञ्चभिन्नोऽश्रुविलुप्तदृष्टिः
स्तम्भं सुपर्णस्य कथञ्चिदाप्तः ॥१६८॥

atragrato gantum anash ca neshe
premna tato vepathubhir niruddhah ।
romanca-bhinno 'shru-vilupta-drishtih
stambham suparnasya kathancid aptah ।।168।।

Although I desired to advance further within the temple, I could not. Prema restrained me with violent trembling, my body was covered with horripilation, and my sight was obscured by tears. Somehow I reached the pillar of Garuda.

Dig-darshini

Although Gopa-kumar wished to proceed farther within the temple, he was unable to move. Prema had made his heart utterly helpless, his body was obstructed by trembling, and it was covered with raised hairs, producing a state of physical rigidity. His eyes were closed or his power of vision was entirely obscured by tears. Somehow he reached the pillar upon which Garuda stands before Sri Jagannatha. The word "somehow" indicates that he did not reach it by any conscious effort or special knowledge of his own, but solely through the mercy of Bhagavan.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verses 169–170

दिव्याम्बरालङ्करणस्रगावली-
व्याप्तं मनोलोचनहर्षवर्धनम् ।
सिंहासनस्योपरि लीलया स्थितं
भुक्त्वा महाभोगगणान् मनोहरान् ॥१६९॥
प्रणामनृत्यस्तुतिवाद्यगीत-
परांस्तु सप्रेम विलोकयन्तम् ।
महामहिम्नां पदमीक्षमाणोऽ
पतं जगन्नाथमहं विमुह्य ॥१७०॥

divyambaralankarana-srag-avali-
vyaptam mano-locana-harsha-vardhanam ।
simhasanasyopari lilaya sthitam
bhuktva maha-bhoga-ganan manoharan ।।169।।
pranama-nritya-stuti-vadya-gita-
params tu sa-prema vilokayantam ।
maha-mahimnam padam ikshamano
'patam jagannatham aham vimuhya ।।170।।

I beheld Sri Jagannatha covered with arrays of divine garments, ornaments, and garlands, increasing the delight of both the mind and eyes. Having enjoyed many magnificent and enchanting offerings, He sat playfully upon His throne and lovingly gazed upon those absorbed in offering obeisance, dancing, prayers, music, and song.

As I beheld Jagannatha, the resting place of immeasurable divine glories, I became overwhelmed and fell unconscious to the ground.

Dig-darshini

After somehow approaching more closely and obtaining a clearer vision of Sri Jagannatha, Gopa-kumar became unconscious in bliss. The Lord was covered and beautifully adorned with rows of divine and astonishing garments, ornaments, and garlands. His appearance continually increased the joy of the mind and eyes, indicating the extraordinary beauty of His entire form. After enjoying many magnificent and enchanting offerings, embodying every excellent quality, He sat playfully upon a splendid throne. With prema He gazed intently upon the devotees standing before Him absorbed in offering prostrate obeisances, dancing, reciting prayers, playing musical instruments, and singing. He was the resting place and object of immeasurable glories, revealing His endlessly varied and supreme opulence. While beholding Him in this way, Gopa-kumar became completely overwhelmed. He lost external awareness and fell to the ground.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 171
संज्ञां लब्ध्वा समुन्मील्य लोचने लोकयन् पुनः ।
उन्मत्त इव तं धर्तुं सवेगोऽधावमग्रतः ॥१७१॥
samjnam labdhva samunmilya locane lokayan punah ।
unmatta iva tam dhartum sa-vego 'dhavam agratah ।।171।।

Regaining consciousness, I opened my eyes and saw Him again. Then, like a madman I quickly rushed forward to embrace Him.

Dig-darshini

Having regained external consciousness, Gopa-kumar opened his eyes and again stared at Sri Jagannatha. Like a madman, he rushed forward, either directly before Sri Jagannatha or from his position before the Garuda pillar, intending to take hold of the Lord.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 172
चिराद् दिदृक्षितो दृष्टो जीवितं जीवितं मया ।
प्राप्तोऽद्य जगदीशोऽयं निजप्रभुरिति ब्रुवन् ॥१७२॥
cirad didrikshito drishto jivitam jivitam maya ।
prapto 'dya jagad-isho 'yam nija-prabhur iti bruvan ।।172।।

I cried, "After so long, I have seen He whom I desired to behold! Today I have attained life—life itself! This Lord of the universe, my own master, I have now attained at last!"

Dig-darshini

As he ran forward, Gopa-kumar exclaimed these words. The word "today" should be connected with each part of his declaration: "After desiring to see Him for so long, today I have finally seen

Him. Today I have attained the true fruit of life." Alternatively, without seeing the Lord, his life had always seemed to end only in death, whereas now he had attained life itself. The repetition of "life" expresses his overwhelming joy. Nor had he merely seen the Lord; he felt that he had now attained Him and made Him his own. Gopa-kumar thought that only today had he truly attained the Lord of the universe, because all the characteristics of universal sovereignty were fully manifest in Sri Jagannatha.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 173
सवेत्रघातं प्रतिहारिभिस्तदा
निवारितो जातविचारलज्जितः।
प्रभोः कृपां तामनुमान्य निर्गतो
महाप्रसादान्नमथाप्नुवं बहिः ॥१७३॥
sa-vetra-ghatam pratiharibhis tada
nivarito jata-vicara-lajjitah ।
prabhoh kripam tam anumanya nirgato
maha-prashadnnam athapnuvam bahih ।।173।।

The gatekeepers struck me with their staffs and prevented me from advancing. When reflection on my own actions arose within me, I felt ashamed. Recognising their restraint as the Lord's mercy, I left the temple and then received some maha-prashad outside.

Dig-darshini

As Gopa-kumar rushed forward, the gatekeepers and temple servants stopped him, striking him with staffs they held. Reflection then arose within him: "Alas! I am only a poor foreigner. What have I done? How could I attempt such an audacious act?"

Becoming ashamed, he left the temple. Yet the beating and restraint caused him no sorrow; rather, he felt joy, recognising that they had occurred through the Lord's mercy. Otherwise, in his madness he might have tried to seize Sri Jagannatha and thereby committed a grave offence. After leaving the temple, he repeatedly reflected upon this mercy. Then some compassionate resident gave him food that was Sri Jagannatha's maha-prashad.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verses 174–175
तद् भुक्त्वा सत्वरं ब्रह्मन् भगवन्मन्दिरं पुनः।
प्रविश्याश्चर्यजातं यन्मया दृष्टं मुदां पदम् ॥१७४॥
हृदि कर्तुं न शक्येत तत् कथं क्रियतां मुखे।
एवं तत्र दिवा पूर्णं स्थित्वानन्दोऽनुभूयते ॥१७५॥
tad bhuktva satvaram brahman bhagavan-mandiram punah ।
pravishyashcarya-jatam yan maya drishtam mudam padam ।।174।।
hridi kartum na shakyeta tat katham kriyatam mukhe ।
evam tatra diva purnam sthitvanando 'nubhuyate ।।175।।

After eating the maha-prashad, O brahmana, I soon re-entered Bhagavan's temple. The succession of wonders I beheld there was

the shelter of every kind of joy. Those wonders could not even be contained within my heart, so how could they possibly be expressed by my mouth? Remaining there the entire day, I experienced boundless bliss.

Dig-darshini

The "succession of wonders" means the many astonishing sights and experiences that filled the mind with amazement. They were the resting place and treasury of an abundance of joy. Those wonders were limitless and inconceivable so Gopa-kumar could not fully grasp or contain them even in his mind. How, then, could he possibly express them through speech, whose power is far more limited than powers of the mind? Thus, beholding one supremely astonishing wonder after another, he remained inside the temple for the whole day experiencing extraordinary bliss.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 176
रात्रौ महोत्सवे वृत्ते बृहच्छृङ्गारसम्भवे।
निर्गम्यते तु निर्वृत्ते पुष्पाञ्जलिमहोत्सवे ॥१७६॥
ratrau mahotsave vritte brihac-chringara-sambhave ।
nirgamyate tu nirvritte pushpanjali-mahotsave ।।176।।

At night I would leave only after the great festival of the Lord's magnificent evening adornment had taken place, and the festival of offering flowers was concluded.

Dig-darshini

One might ask when Gopa-kumar left the temple at night. The brihac-chringara was a special occasion occurring after the first quarter of the night, when the Lord was offered extraordinarily beautiful garments, ornaments, food, and other services. Even after that great festival had taken place, Gopa-kumar would not leave until the later festival of pushpanjali, in which flowers were scattered and offered all around the Lord, had been completed.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 177
नेत्थं ज्ञातः सतां सङ्गे कालो नवनवोत्सवैः।
तदैवास्या व्रजभुवः शोको मे निरगादिव ॥१७७॥
nettham jnatah satam sange kalo nava-navotsavaih ।
tadaivasyah vraja-bhuvah shoko me niragad iva ।।177।।

Living in the association of devotees and surrounded by ever-fresh festivals, I no longer noticed the passing of time. My sorrow of separation from this land of Braja seemed to depart from me.

Dig-darshini

While remaining in the association of saints, Gopa-kumar did not perceive the passing of time because of the continuously fresh festivals. They were "new" because he had never experienced them

before, or because every repetition appeared fresh at each moment and continually brought new happiness. In that atmosphere of saintly association and ever-renewed celebration, his grief arising from separation from Sri Brindaban and the other regions of Braja seemed to leave him. The word "seemed" indicates that this sorrow had not been completely uprooted.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 178
श्रीजगन्नाथदेवस्य सेवकेषु कृपोत्तमा।
विविधाज्ञा च सर्वत्र श्रूयतेऽप्यनुभूयते॥१७८॥
sri-jagannatha-devasya sevakeshu kripottama |
vividhajna ca sarvatra shruyate 'py anubhuyate ||178||

Everywhere one hears of Sri Jagannatha Deva's extraordinary mercy toward His servants and of the many commands He gives them. These things are directly experienced by Jagannatha's servants.

Dig-darshini

Sri Jagannatha's exceptional and varied mercy toward His servants includes fulfilling their desires and caring for them in many ways. His many commands instruct them regarding the services they should perform and other duties. Accounts of His mercy and instructions are heard everywhere throughout Purushottama-ksetra. These are not mere rumours, for their effects and results are often directly seen and personally experienced.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 179
नान्यत् किमपि रोचेत जगन्नाथस्य दर्शनात्।
पुराणतोऽस्य माहात्म्यशुश्रूषापि निवर्तते॥१७९॥
nanyat kim api roceta jagannathasya darshant |
puranato 'sya mahatmya-shushrushapi nivartate ||179||

Nothing apart from seeing Jagannatha gave me pleasure. Even my wish to hear His glories from the Puranas occasionally disappeared.

Dig-darshini

One might ask what particular attainment Gopa-kumar most desired there. Nothing other than the direct vision of Sri Jagannatha pleased him. What need be said of other desires? Even his wish to hear the Lord's greatness recited from the Brahma Purana and other scriptures would be overcome by his attachment to directly beholding Jagannatha. Sometimes, when speakers recited the Puranas within the temple, a desire would arise within him to hear in full the previously unknown glories of the Lord. Yet as soon as he gazed upon Sri Jagannatha-Deva's face, that desire to hear was displaced by absorption in seeing Him. This also explains how Gopa-kumar could remain ignorant of heaven and other destinations mentioned later: his absorption in seeing Jagannatha prevented him from attending fully to recitations of the scriptures.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 180
शारीरं मानसं वा स्यात् किञ्चिद् दुःखं कदाचन।
तच्च श्रीपुण्डरीकाक्षे दृष्टे सद्यो विनश्यति ॥१८०॥
shariram manasam va syat kincid duhkham kadacana ।
tac ca sri-pundarikakshe drishte sadyo vinashyati ।।180।।

If any bodily or mental suffering ever arose, it immediately disappeared when I beheld the glorious lotus-eyed Lord.

Dig-darshini

One might wonder whether the natural conditions of embodied life disturbed Gopa-kumar's happiness when he was having darshan of Jagannatha's face. Bodily suffering might arise from illness and physical causes, while mental suffering might arise from desire and similar disturbances. The grammatical construction indicates that suffering might possibly arise, though ordinarily it did not. If some slight bodily or mental distress occasionally appeared, it vanished at once when Gopa-kumar beheld the lotus-eyed Lord. The bliss of that vision caused him to forget every affliction, or the suffering itself was removed completely by the Lord's presence.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 181
फलं लब्धं जपस्येति मत्वोदासे स्म तत्र च।
एवं चिरदिनं तत्र न्यवसं परमैः सुखैः ॥१८१॥
phalam labdham japasyeti matvodase sma tatra ca ।
evam cira-dinam tatra nyavasam paramaih sukhaih ।।181।।

Thinking that I had already attained the fruit of my mantra-japa, I became indifferent to chanting it. In this way, I remained there for a long time, experiencing the highest varieties of happiness.

Dig-darshini

Gopa-kumar concluded that the fruit of his mantra-japa—especially the vision of Sri Jagannatha and the other blessings he enjoyed there—had already been attained. He therefore became indifferent to japa and abandoned his former attachment to it. He continued residing at Purushottama-ksetra for a long time in the midst of many exalted and varied forms of happiness.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 182
अथ तस्यान्तरीणायां सेवायां कर्हिचित् प्रभोः।
जाता रुचिर्मे ततोऽपि तस्या अघटनान्महान् ॥१८२॥
atha tasyantarinyayam sevayam karhicit prabhoh ।
jata rucir me tato 'pi tasya aghatanan mahan ।।182।।

Then, at a certain time, a longing arose within me to render intimate service to the Lord within the sanctum of the temple. Because I was not qualified to render that service, great distress arose in me.

Dig-darshini

Having described the general happiness of residing there, Gopa-kumar now introduces a more specific happiness arising from intimate service and explains how he came to attain it. Antarina-seva means service performed freely and personally within the inner temple, near Sri Jagannatha, by those who had authorised access. Although obtaining this service appeared as impossible as grasping the moon in the sky, a longing for it nevertheless arose because the Lord is capable of making everything possible. Since that service could not yet be attained, an intense pain also appeared within Gopa-kumar's heart.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verses 183–184

यश्चक्रवर्ती तत्रत्यः स प्रभोर्मुख्यसेवकः।
श्रीमुखं वीक्षितुं क्षेत्रे यदा यातो महोत्सवे ॥१८३॥
सज्जनोपद्रवोद्यानभङ्गादौ वारितोऽप्यथ।
मादृशोऽकिञ्चनाः स्वैरं प्रभुं द्रष्टुं न शक्नुयुः ॥१८४॥

yash cakravarti tatratyah sa prabhor mukhya-sevakah ।
sri-mukham vikshitum kshetre yada yato mahotsave ।।183।।
saj-janopadravodyana-bhangadau varito 'py atha ।
madrisho 'kincanah svairam prabhum drashtum na shaknuyuh ।।184।।

The emperor of that region was the chief servant of the Lord. Whenever he came to Purushottama-ksetra during a great festival to behold Sri Jagannatha's beautiful face, poor and insignificant souls like me could no longer freely approach the Lord. Although attempts were made to prevent the disturbance of saintly souls, the destruction of gardens, and similar troubles, such difficulties still arose at festival time.

Dig-darshini

The ruler of that land had attained imperial power through Sri Jagannatha's grace, or he may himself have been an emperor born within that region. As the chief servant and overseer of the Lord's attendants, he came to Purushottama-ksetra—especially to Jagannatha Puri—during festivals such as Ratha-yatra to behold Sri Jagannatha's face. At such times, penniless persons like Gopa-kumar, who appeared poor because they possessed nothing, could not approach the Lord freely. One might object that causing this kind of difficulty was improper for a saintly king. Yet even when efforts were made to prevent obstruction to devotees, damage to flower gardens by elephants and horses, pollution of water, and similar disturbances, the congestion produced by the king's vast army remained unavoidable. Gopa-kumar also suffered because the peaceful solitude of his residence was disturbed.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 185

एवमुद्भूतहृद्रोगोऽद्राक्षं स्वगुरुमेकदा।
श्रीजगन्नाथदेवाग्रे परमप्रेमविह्वलम् ॥१८५॥

evam udbhuta-hrid-rogo 'draksham sva-gurum ekada ।
sri-jagannatha-devagre parama-prema-vihvalam ।।185।।

While suffering from this pain in my heart, I once saw my guru standing before Jagannatha Deva, completely overwhelmed by prema.

Dig-darshini

In this way, deep pain arose within Gopa-kumar's heart because he could not obtain intimate service and sometimes could see the Lord freely. One time, he saw the same exalted guru who had given him the mantra at Brindaban standing before Jagannatha. His guru was so overwhelmed by prema that he had little awareness of anything external.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 186
न स सम्भाषितुं शक्तो मया तर्हि गतः क्वचित्।
अलक्षितो जगन्नाथश्रीमुखाकृष्टचेतसा ॥१८६॥
na sa sambhashitum shakto maya tarhi gatah kvacit ।
alakshito jagannatha-sri-mukhakrishta-cetasa ।।186।।

At that time he was unable to speak with me. Then he went away somewhere without my noticing, as my heart had been drawn entirely to darshan of Sri Jagannatha's beautiful face.

Dig-darshini

Because his guru was overwhelmed by prema, he could not converse with Gopa-kumar at that time. He soon went away somewhere. One might ask why Gopa-kumar did not follow his guru. This was because he did not notice him leaving, since his mind felt completely captivated by the sight of Jagannatha's face. Therefore, no offence was committed through neglect of his guru.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 187
इतस्ततोऽमृग्यतासौ दिनेऽन्यस्मिंस्तटेऽम्बुधेः।
नामसङ्कीर्तनानन्दैर्नृत्यन् लब्धो मयैकलः ॥१८७॥
itas tato 'mrigyatasau dine 'nyasmims tate 'mbudheh ।
nama-sankirtannandair nrityan labdho mayaikalah ।।187।।

On another day, after searching everywhere for him, I found him alone at the shore of the ocean. He was dancing in the bliss that arises from nama-sankirtan.

Dig-darshini

Gopa-kumar searched everywhere for his guru and found him on another day dancing on the sands beside the shore of the salt ocean. The guru was alone, dancing in the many kinds of bliss produced by his own sweet singing of Bhagavan's names, or dancing while those ecstasies took visible form through his nama-sankirtan.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 188

दण्डवत् प्रणमन्तं मां दृष्ट्वाशीर्वादपूर्वकम् ।
आश्लिष्याज्ञापयामास सर्वज्ञोऽनुग्रहादिदम् ॥१८८॥

dandavat pranamantam mam drishtvashirvada-purvakam ।
ashlishyajnapayam asa sarvajno 'nugrahad idam ।।188।।

Seeing me offer prostrated obeisance, that all-knowing guru blessed me, embraced me, and mercifully gave me an instruction.

Dig-darshini

Gopa-kumar's guru knew everything within his heart, including all his desires and his recent indifference toward japa. Seeing him fall like a rod in obeisance, the guru blessed and embraced him, and then, out of special mercy, spoke the instructions contained in the following three verses.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verses 189–191

यद्यत् सङ्कल्प्य भो वत्स निजं मन्त्रं जपिष्यसि ।
तत्प्रभावेण तत्सर्वं वाञ्छातीतं च सेत्स्यति ॥१८९॥
श्रीजगन्नाथदेवस्य सेवारूपं च विद्धि तम् ।
एवं मत्वा च विश्वस्य न कदाचिज्जपं त्यजेः ॥१९०॥
त्वमेतस्य प्रभावेण चिरजीवी भवान्वहम् ।
ईदृग्गोपार्भरूपश्च तत्फलाप्त्यर्हमानसः ॥१९१॥

yad yat sankalpya bho vatsa nijam mantram japishyasi ।
tat-prabhavena tat sarvam vanchatitam ca setsyati ।।189।।
sri-jagannatha-devasya seva-rupam ca viddhi tam ।
evam matva ca vishvasya na kadacij japam tyajeh ।।190।।
tvam etasya prabhavena cira-jivi bhavanv aham ।
idrig-goparbha-rupash ca tat-phalapty-arha-manasah ।।191।।

"My dear child, whatever you resolve to attain by chanting your mantra will be fulfilled through the mantra's power, and the results will surpass even your desires. Understand that this mantra-japa is itself a form of service to Sri Jagannatha Deva. Have faith in my words, and never abandon your mantra-chanting. By the power of this mantra, may you live for a very long time. You will always retain this form of a cowherd boy, and possess a heart fully qualified to attain its ultimate perfection."

Dig-darshini

The guru instructs Gopa-kumar to form a clear intention in his mind and speech before chanting. Through the power of the mantra and its japa, everything he resolves to attain will be perfectly fulfilled, together with fruits beyond anything he could desire or imagine. If Gopa-kumar replies that he wants nothing except intimate service to Sri Jagannatha, the guru explains that his mantra-japa is itself a direct form of service to Jagannatha. He should first act with faith in the guru's words; later he will personally realise this truth. Being all-knowing, the guru understood both Gopa-kumar's desire for

service and his abandonment of japa, and therefore corrected him so that his desire could be fulfilled. Although Gopa-kumar had previously obtained a kingdom without making any formal resolve, the far greater fruit of intimate service to Jagannatha required this resolute chanting accompanied by deliberate sankalpa. The guru then considers that the many attainments produced by the mantra may require a very long time. To ensure that Gopa-kumar can experience them all within the same life, he blesses him with great longevity through the power of japa. He further blesses him to remain forever in the same youthful form of a cowherd boy, without the bodily changes of ageing. This blessing explains how he will later remain unchanged even during long residences in Brahmaloka and other realms, and even after attaining Vaikuntha. Finally, the guru blesses him with a mind eternally fit to attain the mantra's indescribable ultimate fruit: direct vision of Sri Madana-gopala, intimate association with Him, and joyful participation in His pastimes. Thus, despite attaining kingdoms, the position of Indra, and many other forms of splendour, no desire opposed to that supreme goal will ever arise within his heart.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 192
मां द्रक्ष्यसि कदाप्यत्र वृन्दारण्ये कदाचन।
एवं स मामनुज्ञाप्य कुत्रापि सहसागमत् ॥१९२॥
mam drakshyasi kadapy atra vrindaranye kadacana ।
evam sa mam anujnapya kutrapi sahasagamat ।।192।।

"You will see me again sometime here and sometime within the forest of Brindaban." Having given me permission to depart, he suddenly went away somewhere.

Dig-darshini

One might expect Gopa-kumar to ask his guru to teach him the complete procedure for practising the mantra, which had not been explained earlier. The guru therefore indicates that this was not the proper place or time for that lesson. Gopa-kumar would certainly meet him again, either there in Purushottama-ksetra or within Brindaban, and at the proper place and time the guru would teach him everything necessary. Through this proper instruction, the mantra's fruit would soon become fully manifest. The guru then departed so suddenly and unexpectedly that Gopa-kumar could not understand how or where he had gone.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 193
तद्वियोगेन दीनः सन् श्रीजगन्नाथमीक्षितुम्।
गतः शक्तिमहं प्राप्तो यत्नं चाकरवं जपे ॥१९३॥
tad-viyogena dinah san sri-jagannatham ikshitum ।
gatah shaktim aham prapto yatnam cakaravam jape ।।193।।

Distressed by separation from my guru, I went for darshan of Sri Jagannatha. By seeing Him I regained my strength, and I again applied myself earnestly to mantra-japa.

Dig-darshini

Grieved by separation from his guru, Gopa-kumar entered the temple for darshan. This indicates that for one afflicted by sorrow, there is no shelter more effective than beholding Sri Jagannatha, and no other means of relief or happiness is equal to seeing Him. Through the Lord's darshan, Gopa-kumar regained his inner strength and began carefully performing his mantra-japa according to Sri-guru's command.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verses 194–195

यदास्य दर्शनोत्कण्ठा व्रजभूमेरभूत्तराम् ।
तदा तु श्रीजगन्नाथमहिम्ना स्फुरति स्म मे ॥१९४॥
तत्क्षेत्रोपवनश्रेणिर्वृन्दारण्यतयार्णवः ।
यमुनात्वेन नीलाद्रिभागो गोवर्धनात्मना ॥१९५॥

yadasya darshanotkantha vraja-bhumer abhut taram ।
tada tu sri-jagannatha-mahimna sphurati sma me ।।194।।
tat-kshetropavana-shrenir vrindaranyatayarnavah ।
yamunatvena niladri-bhago Govardhantmana ।।195।।

Whenever my longing to see this land of Braja became exceedingly intense, then, by the glory of Sri Jagannatha, the groves of Purushottama-ksetra appeared to me as the forest of Brindaban, the ocean as the Yamuna, and a portion of Niladri seemed to be Govardhan Hill.

Dig-darshini

Gopa-kumar now begins to describe the fruit of his renewed japa by first revealing Sri Jagannatha's special compassion. Whenever his longing to behold Braja became overwhelming, the Lord caused the sacred land of Purushottama to appear to him in the forms of Braja. The rows of gardens and groves within the ksetra shone before him as Brindaban, the salt ocean appeared as the Yamuna, and a certain part of Niladri situated west of Sri Jagannatha's temple appeared as Govardhan Hill. Thus, the sorrow arising from his inability to see Braja could no longer overpower him.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 196

एवं वसन् सुखं तत्र भगवद्दर्शनादनु ।
गुरुपादाज्ञया नित्यं जपामि स्वेष्टसिद्धये ॥१९६॥

evam vasan sukham tatra bhagavad-darshand anu ।
guru-padajnaya nityam japami sveshta-siddhaye ।।196।।

Living there happily in this way, every day after darshan of Bhagavan I chanted my mantra according to my guru's command, seeking the fulfilment of my cherished desire.

Dig-darshini

Gopa-kumar first entered the temple and beheld Sri Jagannatha. Afterwards he returned to his residence and did his mantra-japa. He chanted with a deliberate resolve to attain his cherished goal, namely a particular form of intimate service to Sri Jagannatha. His statement that he acted by the command of his guru shows that there was no fault in turning his attention from exclusive absorption in darshan toward japa. It also reveals his exceptional devotion to his guru and firm faith that uttering the mantra would accomplish the desired result.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verses 197–198
अथ तस्मिन् महाराजे कालं प्राप्तेऽस्य सूनुना।
ज्येष्ठेनातिविरक्तेन राज्यमङ्गीकृतं न तत् ॥१९७॥
तत्राभिषिक्तः पृष्टस्यानुज्ञया जगदीशितुः।
सम्परीक्ष्य महाराजचिह्नानि सचिवैरहम् ॥१९८॥
atha tasmin maharaje kalam prapte 'sya sununa ।
jyeshthenativiraktena rajyam angikritam na tat ।।197।।
tatrabhishiktah prishtasyanujnaya jagad-ishituh ।
samparikshya maha-raja-cihnani sacivair aham ।।198।।

Then the emperor died. His eldest son, being deeply detached, refused to accept the imperial throne. The ministers therefore consulted the Lord of the universe and by His command, after carefully examining me and finding the signs of a great emperor, they installed me on the throne.

Dig-darshini

Gopa-kumar now explains how his desired service was soon attained, beginning with his accession to imperial rule. When the emperor died, his eldest son refused the kingdom because of profound vairagya. The prefix ati suggests that he was detached not only from sovereignty but even from services other than beholding Sri Jagannatha's beautiful face. The ministers then approached Sri Jagannatha and asked whom they should crown, explaining that the eldest son would not accept the throne, the younger sons lacked eligibility while he remained alive, and the other relatives did not possess the marks of an emperor. Since the earth could not remain even briefly without a sovereign, they sought the Lord's command.

Jagannatha may have directly instructed them, "Crown My devotee Gopa-kumar, who has come here from Govardhan," or He may have said, "Crown the person in whom the signs of a great emperor are visible." To avoid appearing to reject the royal family unfairly, the supremely compassionate and skilful Lord arranged for ministers to examine Gopa-kumar thoroughly. They found on him the marks of an emperor, such as a discus upon the right hand and lotus-like signs on the feet, and therefore installed him as the sovereign.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verses 199–200
विविधा वर्धितास्तस्य मया पूजामहोत्सवाः ।
विशेषतो महायात्रा द्वादशात्रापि गुण्डिचा ॥१९९॥
पृथिव्याः साधवः सर्वे मिलिता यत्र वर्गशः ।
प्रेम्णोन्मत्ता इवेक्ष्यन्ते नृत्यगीतादितत्पराः ॥२००॥
vividha vardhitas tasya maya puja-mahotsavah ।
visheshato maha-yatra dvadashatrapi gundica ।।199।।
prithivyah sadhavah sarve milita yatra vargashah ।
premnonmatta ivekshyante nritya-gitaditat-parah ।।200।।

I expanded the festivals of Jagannatha, especially the twelve great annual celebrations, foremost among which was the Gundicha festival. At that festival, all the sadhus of the earth assemble in their respective groups and appear maddened by prema as they became absorbed in dancing, singing, and other devotional activities.

Dig-darshini

Gopa-kumar used his imperial position to increase the scale and splendour of the festivals beyond anything done previously. Especially prominent were the twelve great celebrations held throughout the twelve months, including the festivals of Dola, Damanaka, Candana, water bathing, and Ratha-yatra, during which people from throughout the world came to Purushottama-ksetra. Foremost among all these was the Gundicha-yatra, when Sri Jagannatha-Deva mounted His chariot and travelled to the Gundicha temple. All the saintly devotees living throughout the earth assembled there in large groups, each according to his own sampradaya and devotional community. Absorbed in dancing, singing, and other expressions of bhakti, they appeared to ordinary observers like persons driven mad by prema.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 201
राज्यं राजोपभोग्यं च जगन्नाथपदाब्जयोः ।
समार्प्याकिञ्चनत्वेन सेवां कुर्वे निजेच्छया ॥२०१॥
rajyam rajopabhogyam ca jagannatha-padabjayoh ।
samarpya akincanatvena sevam kurve nijecchaya ।।201।।

I offered the kingdom and everything meant for royal enjoyment at the lotus feet of Jagannatha. Remaining as one who possessed nothing, I served Him freely according to my own desire.

Dig-darshini

One might ask how Gopa-kumar could attain the intimate service he desired while burdened by an empire and its vast resources. He therefore explains that he offered the entire kingdom and all royal enjoyments at Jagannatha's lotus feet. He continued living as before, like a destitute pauper, having abandoned every sense of ownership and prestige. Yet because his imperial authority made him the overseer of all the Lord's servants, he could perform whichever service he desired, whenever and however he wished.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verses 202–203
निजैः प्रियतमैर्नित्यसेवकैः सह स प्रभुः।
नर्मगोष्ठीं वितनुते प्रेमक्रीडां च कर्हिचित् ॥२०२॥
यदा वा लीलया स्थाणुभावं भजति कौतुकी।
प्रीणन्त्यथापि साश्चर्यास्ते तल्लीलानुसारिणः ॥२०३॥
nijaih priyatamair nitya-sevakaih saha sa prabhuh ।
narma-gosthim vitanute prema-kridam ca karhicit ।।202।।
yada va lilaya sthanu-bhavam bhajati kautuki ।
prinanty athapi sashcaryas te tal-lilanusarinah ।।203।।

With His own most beloved servants with hereditary roles, the Lord sometimes engages in affectionate joking conversations and loving pastimes. At other times, being fond of playful wonders, He assumes a state of complete stillness. Even then, the servants remain delighted and amazed, responding in harmony with whatever pastime He reveals.

Dig-darshini

Gopa-kumar now explains the dissatisfaction that eventually moved him, by Sri Jagannatha's will, to leave Purushottama-ksetra and return to Brindaban. The Lord's most beloved servants were those who had served Him from birth through hereditary lineages. With them He sometimes exchanged intimate humour and performed loving pastimes, yet He did not display those activities constantly. At other times, for the delight of His intimate servants, He playfully appeared silent, motionless, and inactive, like an immovable pillar. Even then the servants remained joyful, marvelling that the Lord who had only moments before displayed childlike restlessness and varied play, who now revealed profound stillness. Whatever pastime He manifested, they adapted their service accordingly, finding tremendous happiness in following His desire.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verses 204–205
ममापि तत्र तत्राशा स्यादथागन्तुकोऽस्म्यहम्।
तदेकनिष्ठो नापि स्यां कथं तत्तत्प्रसादभाक् ॥२०४॥
तथाप्युत्कलभक्तानां तत्तत्सौभाग्यभावनैः।
सञ्जन्यमानया तत्तदाशयाधिः किलोद्भवेत् ॥२०५॥
mamapi tatra tatrasha syad athagantuko 'smy aham ।
tad-eka-nishtho napi syam katham tat-tat-prasada-bhak ।।204।।
tathapy utkala-bhaktanam tat-tat-saubhagya-bhavanaih ।
sanjanyamanaya tat-tad-ashayadhih kilodbhavet ।।205।।

I too developed hopes of receiving intimate favours. Yet I was only a newcomer, not one of His lifelong servants, nor was my heart devoted exclusively to Him alone. How, then, could I become the recipient of the Lord's mercy? Nevertheless, as I contemplated the exceptional fortune of the devotees of Utkala, hopes for those same blessings rose up within me producing anguish in my heart.

Dig-darshini

Strictly considered, Gopa-kumar knew he was unqualified even to hope for participation in Sri Jagannatha's intimate conversations and pastimes. Nevertheless, his hopes arose through a kind of devotional envy. He had arrived only recently and was not one of the Lord's hereditary servants. Moreover, he was not exclusively fixed in Sri Jagannatha alone, because his heart remained deeply attached to Brindaban and the land of Braja. He therefore wondered how he could receive those indescribable favours. Yet the more he contemplated the intimate good fortune enjoyed by the devotees of Utkala, the more he desired the same mercy, and those unfulfilled hopes produced pain in his heart.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 206

नामसङ्कीर्तनस्तोत्रगीतानि भगवत्पुरः।
श्रूयमाणानि दुन्वन्ति मथुरास्मारकाणि माम् ॥२०६॥

nama-sankirtan-stotra-gitani bhagavat-purah ।
shruyamanani dunvanti mathura-smarakani mam ।।206।।

The nama-sankirtan, prayers, and songs performed before Bhagavan reminded me of Mathura and caused me pain.

Dig-darshini

The devotees performed sankirtan of names such as Mathuranatha, Brindaban-Chandra, and Govardhanoddharana. They also recited prayers from the Puranas and from more recent poets, and sang compositions arranged with melody and rhythm. Hearing these performances presented in front of Jagannatha reminded Gopa-kumar of Mathura and Braja, intensified his longing to return there, and awakening the sorrow of separation.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verses 207–209

साधुसङ्गबलाद् गत्वा दृष्टे राजीवलोचने।
सर्वः शोको विलीयेत न स्याज्जिगमिषा क्वचित् ॥२०७॥
तथापि मम साम्राज्यसम्पर्केण हृदि स्वतः।
भगवद्दर्शनानन्दः साम्यान्नोदेति पूर्ववत् ॥२०८॥
यात्रामहोत्सवांश्चाहमावृतो राजमण्डलैः।
सुखं कलयितुं नेशे स्वेच्छया बहुधा भजन् ॥२०९॥

sadhu-sanga-balad gatva drishte rajiva-locane ।
sarvah shoko viliyeta na syaj jigamisha kvacit ।।207।।
tathapi mama samrajya-samparkena hridi svatah ।
bhagavad-darshannandah samyan nodeti purvavat ।।208।।
yatra-mahotsavams caham avrto raja-mandalaih ।
sukham kalayitum neshe svecchaya bahudha bhajan ।।209।।

Through the strength of association with sadhus, I would go and behold the lotus-eyed Lord. Then all my sorrow dissolved, and I no longer wished to go anywhere else. Nevertheless, because of my connection with an imperial role, the joy of beholding Bhagavan no longer arose naturally and completely within my heart as it

had before. During great festivals, surrounded by assemblies of kings and their attendants, I could not freely relish happiness, even though I served the Lord in many ways according to my desire.

Dig-darshini

At times Gopa-kumar became so weakened by sorrow that he could not even go to the temple by his own strength. Yet through the influence of sadhu-sanga he would reach Sri Jagannatha and behold His lotus eyes. That vision dissolved every grief and removed all desire to travel elsewhere. Even so, his connection with imperial authority prevented the joy of darshan from arising fully and spontaneously as it had before. Since he had offered the empire to Jagannatha, only a nominal connection with it remained, yet even that was an obstacle. During the great festivals he was surrounded by kings and their entourages. Although he freely performed many services, from sweeping the Lord's road to cleansing His face and offering tambula, the royal commotion prevented him from quietly and deeply relishing the happiness of service.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verses 210–212

राज्ञोऽपत्येष्वमात्येषु बन्धुष्वपि समर्प्य तम् ।
राजाभारं स्वयं प्राग्वदुदासीनतया स्थितः ॥२१०॥
सुखं रहो जपं कुर्वन् जगन्नाथपदाब्जयोः ।
समीपे स्वेच्छया सेवामाचरन्नवसं ततः ॥२११॥
तथापि लोकसम्मानादरतस्तादृशं सुखम् ।
न लभेय विनिर्विण्णमनास्तत्राभवं स्थितौ ॥२१२॥

rajno 'patyeshv amatyeshu bandhushv api samarpya tam ।
rajabharam svayam pragvad udasinataya sthitah ।।210।।
sukham raho japam kurvan jagannatha-padabjayoh ।
samipe svecchaya sevam acarann avasam tatah ।।211।।
tathapi loka-sammanadaratas tadrisham sukham ।
na labheya vinirvinna-manas tatrabhavam sthitau ।।212।।

I therefore entrusted the burden of government to the former king's sons, ministers, and relatives, and once again lived in complete detachment. I happily performed japa in solitude and remained near Jagannatha's lotus feet, serving Him freely according to my desire. Nevertheless, because people continued to honour and revere me, I could not feel the happiness I had known before. I therefore became disheartened and dissatisfied with being there.

Dig-darshini

Gopa-kumar completely relinquished imperial administration by entrusting it to the former king's sons, ministers, and relatives. He himself returned to his previous condition of detachment, free from all worldly involvement. Having cast off the burden of sovereignty, he could once again chant happily in solitude and serve near Lord Jagannatha's lotus feet according to his own desire. Yet the

people still recognised him as the former emperor and continued to honour him even when he tried to avoid their respect. Because of their reverence, he could not attain the same indescribable happiness he had experienced before becoming emperor. His mind therefore became detached and troubled by his continued residence in Purushottama-ksetra.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 213
गन्तुं वृन्दावनं प्रातर् आज्ञार्थं पुरतः प्रभोः ।
गतः श्रीमन्मुखं पश्यन् सर्वं तद् विस्मराम्यहो ॥२१३॥
gantum Brindabanm pratar ajnartham puratah prabhoh ।
gatah sriman-mukham pashyan sarvam tad vismaramy aho ।।213।।

One morning I went before the Lord to seek His permission to return to Brindaban. But as soon as I beheld His beautiful face, I forgot everything. How astonishing!

Dig-darshini

One might ask why Gopa-kumar did not simply return to his beloved land of Braja. He reflected that the Lord of the universe, for whose vision he had originally left Braja, had now been directly attained in Purushottama-ksetra. How could he abandon Him? At the same time, Jagannatha Himself had awakened dissatisfaction within his heart, apparently intending to bring him to the Lord's most joyful playground, Brindaban. Gopa-kumar therefore felt that it would be improper to go anywhere without first obtaining the Lord's direct permission. Yet whenever he stood before Sri Jagannatha and saw His radiant face, he immediately forgot his sorrow, its causes, his wish to depart, and even his purpose in coming before the Lord.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verses 214–215
एवं संवत्सरे जाते मया तत्रैकदा श्रुतम् ।
मथुरायाः प्रयातेभ्योऽत्रत्यवृत्तं विशेषतः ॥२१४॥
शोकदुःखातुरं रात्रौ शयानं मां महाप्रभुः ।
इदमाज्ञापयामास परदुःखेन कातरः ॥२१५॥
evam samvatsare jate maya tatraikada shrutam ।
mathurayah prayatebhyo 'tratyavrittam visheshatah ।।214।।
shoka-duhkhaturam ratrau shayanam mam maha-prabhuh ।
idam ajnapayam asa para-duhkhena katarah ।।215।।

After a year had passed in this way, I one day heard detailed news of Brindaban from travellers who came from Mathura. Overwhelmed by the pain of separation, I lay down that night in great sorrow. Then Mahaprabhu, distressed by my suffering, gave me His command.

Dig-darshini

The travellers described in detail the condition and extraordinary beauty of Mathura, especially the regions of Brindaban and Govardhan, together with the cows, cowherds, deer, birds, trees,

and every other feature of Braja. Hearing these reports awakened such intense separation that Gopa-kumar lay down at night overcome by grief. Sri Jagannatha, who cannot tolerate the suffering even of another person or even an enemy, became distressed by His devotee's sorrow and personally gave His instruction to him.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verses 216–218
भो गोपनन्दन क्षेत्रमिदं मम यथा प्रियम्।
तथा श्रीमथुराथासौ जन्मभूमिर्विशेषतः ॥२१६॥
बाल्यलीलास्थलीभिश्च ताभिस्ताभिरलङ्कृता।
निवसामि यथात्राहं तथा तत्रापि विभ्रमन् ॥२१७॥
यदा दोलायमानात्मा कथं तदनुतप्यसे।
तत्रैव गच्छ काले मां तद्रूपं द्रक्ष्यसि ध्रुवम् ॥२१८॥
bho gopa-nandana kshetram idam mama yatha priyam ।
tatha sri-mathurathasau janma-bhumir visheshatah ।।216।।
balya-lila-sthalibhis ca tabhis tabhir alankrita ।
nivasami yathatraham tatha tatrapi vibhraman ।।217।।
yada dolayamanatma katham tad anutapyase ।
tatraiva gaccha kale mam tad rupam drakshyasi dhruvam ।।218।।

"O son of a cowherd, just as this sacred land is dear to Me, so too is glorious Mathura; indeed, it is especially dear because it is My birthplace. It is adorned with the many places of My childhood pastimes. Just as I reside here, I also reside there, wandering freely throughout that land. Why, then, do you torment yourself with a heart wavering between remaining here and going there? Go directly to Mathura. At the proper time you will without doubt behold Me there in that form."

Dig-darshini

By addressing Gopa-kumar as "O son of a cowherd," Sri Jagannatha indicates that residence in Braja is especially appropriate for him. The Lord explains that although Purushottama-ksetra is extremely dear to Him, Mathura is even more intimately dear because it is His birthplace and is adorned with the countless places of His childhood pastimes. Here "childhood" includes His kaumara, pauganda, and kishora ages, since human life is commonly divided into childhood, youth, and old age.

One might object that the Lord is visibly manifest in Purushottama-ksetra but not in the same way in Mathura. Sri Jagannatha therefore declares that He resides there just as He resides in Puri, and even wanders throughout Braja performing His pastimes. Gopa-kumar should no longer waver between remaining and leaving, nor repeatedly torment himself with uncertainty. He should go directly to Mathura, where, at the proper time, he would certainly envision the Lord in His most special form of Sri Madana-gopala. The word dhruvam may also indicate that the Lord is eternally and

immovably present there. Thus, no incompleteness or future cause of sorrow would remain.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 1, Verse 219
आज्ञामालां प्रातरादाय पूजाविप्रैर्वासे मे समागत्य दत्ताम् ।
कण्ठे बद्ध्वा प्रस्थितो वीक्ष्य चक्रं नत्वाथाप्तो माथुरं देशमेतम् ॥२१९॥
इति श्रीबृहद्भागवतामृते श्रीगोलोकमाहात्म्यखण्डे
वैराग्यं नाम प्रथमोऽध्यायः ॥
ajna-malam pratar adaya puja-
viprair vase me samagatya dattam ।
kanthe baddhva prasthito vikshya cakram
natvathapto mathuram desham etam ।।219।।
iti sri-brihad-bhagavatamrite sri-goloka-mahatmya-khande
vairagyam nama prathamo 'dhyayah ।

The next morning, the brahmanas engaged in Sri Jagannatha's worship came to my house and gave me His garland signifying His command. I placed it around my neck and departed. After gazing upon the Sudarshan chakra above the temple and bowing before it, I set off and eventually reached Mathura.

Thus ends the First Chapter, "Vairagya," within the Goloka-mahatmya section of Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam.

Dig-darshini

One might wonder how Gopa-kumar could abandon Purushottama-ksetra merely because of an instruction received in a dream, which might have been illusory. The next morning, the brahmanas authorised to worship Sri Jagannatha came to his residence carrying the Lord's ajna-mala, the garland that confirmed and embodied His command to travel to Mathura. By Sri Jagannatha's order, they had taken it from His neck and brought it personally to Gopa-kumar. This external confirmation removed every possibility that the dream had been false.

Gopa-kumar placed the garland around his neck and set out. Because the garland had been delivered at his residence, he did not enter the inner temple again for darshan. Instead, from a distance he gazed upon, and bowed to, the Sudarshan chakra situated atop Sri Jagannatha's temple. He then travelled stage by stage until he reached the sacred region of Mathura, which includes Sri Brindaban.

अध्याय द्वितीयः
ज्ञानम् — ज्ञान
परमेश्वराय श्रीकृष्णाय नमः
श्रीराधिकानन्दाय

Chapter Two:
Jnana — Knowledge

**Obeisance to Sri Krishna the Supreme Lord,
the delight of Sri Radhika**

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verses 1–2
श्रीगोपकुमार उवाच—
श्रीमथुरोत्तम विश्रान्तौ स्नात्वा वृन्दावनं गतः।
अत्र गोवर्धनादौ च यथाकामं परिभ्रमन्॥१॥
पिबंश्च गोरसं पूर्वबान्धवैस्तैर्लक्षितः।
भजन् स्वजप्यमनयं दिनानि कतिचित् सुखम्॥२॥
sri-gopa-kumara uvaca—
sri-mathurottama vishrantau snatva Brindabanm gatah।
atra Govardhandau ca yatha-kamam paribhraman ।।1।।
pibamsh ca gorasam purva-bandhavais tair alakshitah।
bhajan sva-japyam anayam dinani katicit sukham ।।2।।

Sri Gopa-kumar said: O best of the brahmanas of Mathura, after bathing at Visranta-tirtha I went to Brindaban. There I wandered freely according to my desire through Govardhan and the other places of Braja. Drinking the milk of the cows, unrecognised by my former friends, I spent several days happily chanting my mantra.

Dig-darshini

The second chapter describes, in ascending order, the glories of Swarga and the higher worlds, the superiority of samadhi to external perception, and the superiority of bhakti to mukti. Gopa-kumar addresses his listener as "O best among the people of Mathura." He first bathed at Visranta, the principal sacred bathing place in Sri Mathura, and then came here to Sri Brindaban. The word "and so forth" includes such places as the banks of the Yamuna, Bhandiravana, Talavana, Mahavana, and the other regions of Braja. His former relatives and friends residing at Govardhan did not recognise him because he now appeared to be a traveller from a distant land. This also indicates his freedom from worldly attachment. While wandering in this way, he drank milk, yoghurt, and other products of the cows of Braja and continued worshipping his own mantra by chanting it with bhakti.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 3
अथ सन्दर्शनोत्कण्ठा जगदीशस्य साजनि।
ययेदं शून्यवद् वीक्ष्य पुरुषोत्तममस्मरम् ॥३॥
atha sandarshanotkantha jagad-ishasya sajani ।
yayedam shunyavad vikshya purushottamam asmaram ।।3।।

Then an intense longing arose within me to behold the Lord of the universe. Because of that longing, everything here appeared as though empty, and I remembered Purushottama-ksetra.

Dig-darshini

Such an intense longing for the vision of the Lord of the universe arose within Gopa-kumar that the entire forest of Brindaban—or even the whole of Mathura-mandala—appeared to him to be empty. The expression "as though empty" is significant: Braja was not actually devoid of Bhagavan. The word "as though" indicates that the Lord is eternally present there. Thus, Srimad Bhagavatam states, "Sacred Madhuvana is the place where Hari is present eternally" (4.8.42), and again, "Mathura is the place where Bhagavan Hari is ever-present" (10.1.28). Similarly, the women of Mathura declare: "How blessed is the land of Braja where the primeval Supreme Person, concealed as a human being adorned with forest garlands, tending the cows with Balarama and playing His flute, continually wanders in His pastimes—He whose feet are worshipped by Shiva and Lakshmi" (10.44.13). The use of the present tense, "He wanders," indicates that these pastimes are eternal.

Yet because Sri Bhagavan's special mercy had not at that time fully arisen within Gopa-kumar, he could not yet experience the unique rasa of Sri Mathura and Braja. He therefore remembered Purushottama-ksetra and considered being there to be preferable, since Sri Jagannatha was visibly manifest before him at all times. This explains why the desire to leave Braja arose in him. By wandering successively through many realms, directly experiencing the truth of each and then leaving it behind, he would eventually understand that the fulfilment of his deepest desire could be found nowhere other than Braja. At that time he would return and remain here permanently, established in unwavering prema.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 4
आर्तस्तत्र जगन्नाथं द्रष्टुमोद्ध्रान् पुनर्व्रजन्।
पथि गङ्गातटेऽपश्यं धर्माचारपरान् द्विजान् ॥४॥
artas tatra jagannatham drashtum odhran punar vrajan ।
pathi ganga-tate 'pashyam dharmacara-paran dvijan ।।4।।

Distressed by separation and longing to behold Jagannatha again, I set out once more toward the land of Odisha. Along the way, on the bank of the Ganga, I saw brahmanas devoted to dharma who were engaged in proper conduct.

Dig-darshini

Gopa-kumar was distressed because he had left Sri Jagannatha, so he therefore travelled again toward Orissa, intending to return to Purushottama-ksetra and behold Him. On the way, along the bank of the Ganga, he encountered brahmanas devoted to dharma and acara. Here dharma refers especially to obligatory and occasional religious duties, while acara means the proper conduct observed by saints that go beyond those formal duties. Alternatively, the phrase simply means that these brahmanas were thoroughly devoted to the proper performance of their dharma.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 5

विचित्रशास्त्रविज्ञेभ्यस्तेभ्यश्चाश्रौषमद्भुतम् ।
स्वर्गनामोर्ध्वदेशेऽस्ति देवलोकोऽन्तरीक्षितः ॥५॥

vicitra-shastra-vijnebhyas tebhyash cashrausham adbhutam ।
svarga-namordhva-deshe 'sti deva-loko 'ntarikshitah ।।5।।

From those learned brahmanas, with expert knowledge of many scriptures, I heard something astonishing that I had never heard before: high above this world is a celestial realm called Swarga, the dwelling place of the devas, suspended in the sky.

Dig-darshini

Those brahmanas were deeply learned in the many varieties of knowledge, including the Srutis, Smritis, philosophical systems, Puranas, and Itihasas. From these well-versed scholars Gopa-kumar heard something surprising. They said that above this earthly region there is a radiant realm called Swarga, the residence of the devas. It exists within the celestial sky and does not depend upon the earth or any similar material for its support.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 6

विमानावलिभिः श्रीमान् निर्भयो दुःखवर्जितः ।
जरामरणरोगादिदोषवर्गबहिष्कृतः ॥६॥

vimanavalibhih sriman nirbhayo duhkha-varjitah ।
jara-marana-rogadi-dosha-varga-bahishkritah ।।6।।

It is splendid place, the world of gods going back and forth in radiant celestial vehicles. It is a place free from fear and suffering, a realm far removed from the defects of old age, death, disease, and the like.

Dig-darshini

One might wonder how residing there could be so pleasant. Swarga possesses extraordinary beauty and opulence because it is filled with glowing, divine vehicles moving through the air in rows. Its inhabitants are free from fear and suffering because they are removed from the ordinary defects of earthly existence, such as old age, death, disease, and similar afflictions. Alternatively, the

expression may indicate that these defects remain far distant from that celestial realm.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 7
महासुखमयो लभ्यः पुण्यैरत्रोत्तमैः कृतैः।
यस्य शक्रोऽधिपो ज्यायान् भ्राता श्रीजगदीशितुः ॥७॥
maha-sukhamayo labhyah punyair atrottamaih kritaih ।
yasya shakro 'dhipo jyayan bhrata sri-jagad-ishituh ।।7।।

That realm is filled with immense happiness and can be attained only through the highest pious acts performed here in Bharata. Its ruler is Sakra, Indra, the elder brother of Sri Jagadisha in His form as Vamana.

Dig-darshini

Swarga is not merely free from suffering; it is also filled with exceptionally great happiness. Its exalted position is further indicated by the difficulty of attaining it: one reaches it only through highly purified and excellent acts of punya performed here in Bharata-varsha. Having described its greatness both by its own qualities and by the means required to attain it, the brahmanas further glorify Swarga by identifying its ruler. Its sovereign is Mahendra, or Sakra, who is the elder brother of Sri Vishnu when the Lord appears as Vamana. Thus Swarga is distinguished by being ruled by one who stands in such an intimate relationship with the Lord of the universe.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verses 8–9
यद्याप्यस्ति बिलस्वर्गो विष्णुशेषाद्यलङ्कृतः।
भौमस्वर्गश्च तद्द्वीपवर्षादिषु पदे पदे ॥८॥
विचित्ररूपश्रीकृष्णपूजोत्सवविराजितः।
तथाप्यूर्ध्वतरो लोको दिव्यस्ताभ्यां विशिष्यते ॥९॥
yadyapy asti bila-svargo vishnu-sheshady-alankritah ।
bhauma-svargash ca tad-dvipa-varshadishu pade pade ।।8।।
vicitra-rupa-sri-krishna-pujotsava-virajitah ।
tathapy urdhvataro loko divyas tabhyam vishishyate ।।9।।

Although there is also a subterranean heaven adorned by Vishnu, Sesha, and other divine manifestations, and earthly heavens are found throughout the various islands, regions, and other parts of the world, splendid with festivals of worship for Sri Krishna in His many forms, the celestial realm above them is nevertheless superior to both.

Dig-darshini

One might object that heavenly regions also exist upon the earth and within the subterranean worlds, and that those places are likewise adorned by the worship and presence of Bhagavan. Why, then, should Swarga alone receive such special praise? The subterranean heaven is beautified by divine manifestations such as Vishnu, who

stands as Bali Maharaja's gatekeeper and presides over Sutala, and Sesha, who presides over the seventh subterranean region, Patala. The word adi also includes Sri Kapila, described in the Ramayana as residing in Atala and destroying Ravana's pride, as well as Sri Rudra in Vitala and other divine personalities.

There are likewise earthly heavens throughout the various islands and regions of the terrestrial world, such as Jambudvipa and its divisions including Bharata-varsha, and the word adi may also include places such as the Milk Ocean. In these many regions Sri Krishna, Bhagavan, is worshipped in diverse manifestations—for example, as forms associated with Surya and other deities in Plaksha-dvipa and elsewhere, as Sankarshan in Ilavrita-varsha, as Hayashirsha in Bhadrashva-varsha, and in many other forms. The Fifth Canto of Srimad Bhagavatam gives detailed accounts of these forms of Bhagavan and their worship in the various islands and regions.

Nevertheless, the celestial world called Swarga is superior to both the subterranean and earthly heavens. It lies above them like a crown, and it is divya, belonging specifically to the devas. By describing this higher celestial realm as superior, the text also removes any desire Gopa-kumar might otherwise have developed to visit the various earthly or subterranean heavens.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 10
यस्मिन् श्रीजगदीशोऽस्ति साक्षाददितिनन्दनः ।
तस्योपेन्द्रस्य वार्ता च श्रीविष्णोरद्भुता श्रुता ॥१०॥
yasmin sri-jagad-isho 'sti sakshad aditi-nandanah ।
tasyopendrasya varta ca sri-vishnor adbhuta shruta ।।10।।

In that celestial Swarga, Sri Jagadisha Himself resides as the son of Aditi. I also heard astonishing accounts of that Sri Vishnu, known as Upendra.

Dig-darshini

Moreover, within that divine Swarga resides Sri Vishnu Himself as the son of Aditi, known as Upendra because He is the younger brother of Indra. Alternatively, He is called Upendra because He stands above Indra in supreme greatness. Thus Indra himself says in the Harivamsa: "O Krishna, just as I have been established as Indra, You have been placed above me by the cows as their Lord. Therefore the devas in heaven will glorify You as Upendra." The reports concerning this Upendra, Sri Vishnu, were extraordinary and unlike anything Gopa-kumar had previously heard.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 11
आरुह्य पक्षीन्द्रमितस्ततोऽसौ
क्रीडन् विनिघ्नन्नसुरान् मनोज्ञैः ।

लीलावचोभी रमयन्नजस्रं
देवान् निजभ्रातृतयार्च्यते तैः ॥११॥
aruhya pakshindram itas tato 'sau
kridan vinighnann asuran manojnaih ।
lila-vacobhi ramayann ajasram
devan nija-bhratritay arcyate taih ।।11।।

Mounted upon Garuda, the king of birds, He moves here and there in play, slaying the asuras and constantly delighting the devas with His charming pastimes and words. Because they regard Him as their own brother, they worship Him with great affection.

Dig-darshini

Sri Vishnu rides upon Garuda and moves freely throughout the celestial realm. While sporting in this way, He destroys the asuras and continually delights Indra, Varuna, and the other devas through His enchanting pastimes and playful speech. Because they relate to Him as their own brother, the devas worship Him with particular intimacy. These features were all unlike what Gopa-kumar had experienced previously, and the same principle should be understood in the descriptions that follow.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 12
तद्दर्शने जातमनोरथाकुलः
सङ्कल्पपूर्वं स्वजपं समाचरन् ।
स्वल्पेन कालेन विमानमागतं
मुदाहमारुह्य गतस्त्रिपिष्टपम् ॥१२॥
tad-darshane jata-manorathakulah
sankalpa-purvam sva-japam samacaran ।
svalpena kalena vimanam agatam
mudaham aruhya gatas tripishtapam ।।12।।

Overwhelmed by the desire to behold Sri Vishnu there, I performed my mantra-japa with a deliberate resolve to attain that vision. Before long, a celestial vehicle arrived. Joyfully boarding it, I travelled to Tripishtapa, the heavenly realm.

Dig-darshini

An intense desire arose within Gopa-kumar to behold Sri Vishnu in Swarga, and that longing left him completely restless. He therefore formed a definite sankalpa—either to reach Swarga or specifically to behold Upendra there—and then performed his own mantra-japa with firm observance of its rules and disciplines. Through the power of that chanting, a celestial vehicle arrived after only a short time. Filled with joy, Gopa-kumar mounted it and travelled to Tripishtapa, the realm of the devas.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 13
पूर्वं गङ्गातटनृपगृहे यस्य दृष्टा प्रतिष्ठा
तं श्रीविष्णुं सुरगणवृतं सच्चिदानन्दसान्द्रम् ।
तत्रापश्यं रुचिरगरुडस्कन्धसिंहासनस्थं
वीणागीतं मधुरमधुरं नारदस्यार्चयन्तम् ॥१३॥
purvam ganga-tata-nripa-grihe yasya drishta pratishtha
tam sri-vishnum sura-gana-vritam sat-chit-ananda-sandram ।
tatrapashyam rucira-garuda-skandha-simhasana-stham
vina-gitam madhura-madhuram naradasyarcayantam ।।13।।

There I beheld Sri Vishnu, whose installed form I had previously seen in the palace of the king on the bank of the Ganga. Surrounded by hosts of devas, He was the concentrated embodiment of eternal existence, consciousness, and bliss. Seated upon the beautiful shoulders of Garuda as upon a royal throne, He listened with appreciation to Narada's exceedingly sweet singing accompanied by the vina.

Dig-darshini

By saying that Gopa-kumar had previously seen an installed Deity of Sri Vishnu in the palace of the king on the bank of the Ganga,it is indicated that the Lord now seen in Swarga possessed beauty, sweetness, and other excellences surpassing what Gopa-kumar had experienced there. The conch, discus, and other emblems, His four beautiful lotus hands and arms, dark complexion, youthful appearance, ornaments, and the other features described previously should also be understood as present here. Having indicated some similarity of form, Gopa-kumar now describes the Lord's distinctive glory. Sri Vishnu was surrounded by hosts of devas and was sat-chit-ananda: eternal existence itself is the substance of His consciousness, and that consciousness itself is the supreme bliss; and indeed, these are present in Him in a concentrated form, like the condensed brilliance of the sun. Thus the nature of His divine vigraha is described as concentrated Para Brahman. In Tripishtapa, the beautiful shoulders of Garuda served as His royal throne. Sri Narada sang while playing his vina, and Sri Vishnu honoured and appreciated that exceedingly sweet music with praise and other expressions of delight.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verses 14–16
प्राप्य प्राप्यं द्रष्टुमिष्टं च
दृष्ट्वा तत्रात्मानं मन्यमानः कृतार्थम् ।
दूराद् भूयो दण्डवद् वन्दमानस्
तेनाहुतोऽनुग्रहस्निग्धवाचा ॥१४॥
दिष्ट्या दिष्ट्या गतोऽसि त्वमत्र श्रीगोपनन्दन ।
अलं दण्डप्रणामैर्मे निकटेऽनुसराभयम् ॥१५॥
तस्याज्ञया महेन्द्रेण प्रेरितैस्त्रिदशैरहम् ।
अग्रतः सादरं नीत्वा प्रयत्नादुपवेशितः ॥१६॥

prapya prapyam drashtum ishtam ca
drishtva tatratmanam manyamanah kritartham ।
durad bhuyo dandavad vandamanas
tenahuto 'nugraha-snigdha-vaca ।।14।।
dishtya dishtya gato 'si tvam atra sri-gopa-nandana ।
alam danda-pranamair me nikate 'nusarabhayam ।।15।।
tasyajnaya mahendrena preritais tridashair aham ।
agratah sadaram nitva prayatnad upaveshitah ।।16।।

Having attained what was worthy of attainment and beheld what I had long desired to see, I considered myself completely fulfilled. Again and again I offered prostrated obeisance from a distance. Then Sri Vishnu called to me in a voice softened by mercy: "How fortunate! How fortunate that you have come here, O son of a cowherd! Enough of these prostrated obeisances. Come near Me without fear." By His command, the devas sent by Mahendra respectfully brought me forward and, with considerable effort, persuaded me to sit down.

Dig-darshini

Gopa-kumar had now attained what was truly worthy of attainment and had seen the Lord whom he desired to behold. He therefore considered every purpose of his life fulfilled and repeatedly offered dandavat pranama from a distance. Sri Vishnu then personally called him near, speaking in a tender voice moistened by mercy. His repetition, "How fortunate! How fortunate!" expresses extraordinary joy at Gopa-kumar's arrival in Swarga and presence beside Him. Addressing him as "O son of a cowherd," the Lord told him that there was no need for further prostrated obeisances and instructed him to approach without fear or intimidation arising from reverence for His majesty. Sri Vishnu then ordered Indra to have Gopa-kumar respectfully brought near, seated despite his reluctance born of reverence, honoured with articles suitable for the devas, and given a residence in Nandana-vana. Mahendra therefore sent devas who led Gopa-kumar forward with great respect and, because he hesitated to sit before the Lord, made considerable effort to persuade him to take his seat.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verses 17–18

दिव्यैर्द्रव्यैस्तर्पितो नन्दनाख्ये
ऽरण्ये वासं प्रापितोऽगां प्रहर्षम् ।
वीक्षे काचित् तत्र भीर्नास्ति शोको
रोगो मृत्युर्ग्लानिरार्तिर्जरा च ॥१७॥
सन्तु वा कतिचिद् दोषास्तानहं गणयामि न ।
तादृशं जगदीशस्य सन्दर्शनसुखं भजन् ॥१८॥

divyair dravyais tarpito nandanakhye
'ranye vasam prapito 'gam praharsham ।
vikshe kacit tatra bhir nasti shoko
rogo mrityur glanir artir jara ca ।।17।।

santu va katicid doshas tan aham ganayami na ।
tadrisham jagad-ishasya sandarshan-sukham bhajan ।।18।।

I was satisfied with celestial foods and other provisions and given a residence in the forest named Nandana. There I attained tremendous happiness. I observed that there was no fear, sorrow, disease, death, exhaustion, distress, or old age. And even if there were a few faults there, I took no account of them, for I was experiencing such extraordinary happiness in beholding the Lord of the universe.

Dig-darshini

Gopa-kumar was honoured with celestial substances such as amrita and was given a residence in Nandana-vana. He thereby attained exceptional happiness. After remaining in Swarga for some days, he observed its condition over an extended period and saw that fear, grief, disease, death, physical decline, distress, old age, and the other familiar sufferings of earthly existence were absent there. Even if certain defects, such as rivalry and competition among the devas, were present, he did not consider them significant. The reason was that he was directly relishing the indescribable happiness of beholding Sri Jagadisha in that extraordinary form.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 19
महेन्द्रेणार्च्यते स्वर्गविभूतिभिरसौ प्रभुः ।
भ्रातृत्वेनेश्वरत्वेन शरणत्वेन चान्वहम् ॥१९॥
mahendrenarcyate svarga-vibhutibhir asau prabhuh ।
bhratritveneshvaratvena sharanatvena canvaham ।।19।।

Every day, Mahendra worships that Lord with the opulences of Swarga, approaching Him as his brother, as his Supreme Lord, and as his ultimate shelter.

Dig-darshini

Gopa-kumar now describes the extraordinary splendour of Sri Vishnu's worship in Swarga. Every day Indra worships Him with the opulences of heaven, such as amrita, parijata flowers, and the many other celestial treasures. By worshipping Him as his brother, Indra expresses exceptional affection; by worshipping Him as the Supreme Lord, he expresses profound reverence; and by approaching Him as his shelter, he reveals a special sense of dependence and trust.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verses 20–21
मनस्यकरवं चैतदहो धन्यः शतक्रतुः ।
यो हि श्रीविष्णुना दत्तं साधयित्वा निराकुलम् ॥२०॥
त्रैलोक्यैश्वर्यमासाद्य भगवन्तमिमं मुदा ।
उपहारचयैर्दिव्यैर्गृह्यमाणैः स्वयं यजेत् ॥२१॥
manasy akaravam caitad aho dhanyah shatakratuh ।
yo hi sri-vishnuna dattam sadhayitva nirakulam ।।20।।

trailokyaishvaryam asadya bhagavantam imam muda ।
upahara-cayair divyair grihyamanaih svayam yajet ।।21।।

I reflected within myself, "How fortunate indeed is Shatakratu, Indra! By subduing the asuras and thus securing the sovereignty of the three worlds that Sri Vishnu has bestowed upon him, he now enjoys that dominion without disturbance and joyfully worships Bhagavan with heaps of celestial offerings which the Lord personally accepts."

Dig-darshini

Gopa-kumar now begins to admire Indra's great fortune, and from that admiration a desire to attain Indra's position gradually arises. Indra is supremely fortunate because Sri Vishnu has granted him sovereignty over the three worlds. By conquering the asuras and other enemies, he has made that sovereignty peaceful and free from disturbance. With the immense wealth and opulence of the three worlds, he joyfully worships Sri Vishnu with divine offerings. The Lord Himself accepts those offerings directly, extending His lotus hands and otherwise visibly receiving them.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 22
एवं ममापि भगवानयं किं कृपयिष्यति।
इति तत्रावसं कुर्वन् स्वसङ्कल्पं निजं जपम् ॥२२॥
evam mamapi bhagavan ayam kim kripayishyati ।
iti tatravasam kurvan sva-sankalpam nijam japam ।।22।।

Thinking, "Will this Bhagavan also show such mercy to me?" I remained there, performing my own mantra-japa with that desire as my sankalpa.

Dig-darshini

Gopa-kumar wondered whether Sri Vishnu, who possesses inconceivable opulence and is supremely compassionate, might also bestow upon him the means to worship Him with the vast splendour of sovereignty over the three worlds. With this desire in his heart, he continued residing in Swarga and performed his mantra-japa with that specific intention.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 23
अथैकस्य मुनीन्द्रस्य दूषयित्वा प्रियां बलात्।
लज्जया शापभीत्या च शक्रः कुत्राप्यलीयत ॥२३॥
athaikasya munindrasya dushayitva priyam balat ।
lajjaya shapa-bhitya ca shakrah kutrapy aliyata ।।23।।

Then Indra forcibly violated the beloved wife of a great sage. Overcome by shame and fearing the sage's curse, he hid himself somewhere.

Dig-darshini

Soon Gopa-kumar's desired result began to manifest. Indra had approached by stealth and violated the beloved wife of a great

sage, someone comparable to Devasarma, Gautama, or another exalted rishi. Ashamed of what he had done and afraid of being cursed, Indra concealed himself in a secret place, perhaps within the fibres of a lotus stalk in Manasa-sarovara or some similarly hidden refuge.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verses 24–25
देवैरन्विष्य बहुधा स न प्राप्तो यदा ततः ।
अराजकत्वात् त्रैलोक्यमभिभूतमुपद्रवैः ॥२४॥
श्रीविष्णोराज्ञया देवैर्गुरुणा प्रेरितैरथ ।
ऐन्द्रे पदेऽभिषिक्तोऽहमदित्याद्यनुमोदितः ॥२५॥
devair anvishya bahudha sa na prapto yada tatah ।
arajakatvat trailokyam abhibhutam upadravaih ।।24।।
sri-vishnor ajnaya devair guruna preritair atha ।
aindre pade 'bhishikto 'ham adity-ady-anumoditah ।।25।।

The devas searched for him in many ways but could not find him. Because the three worlds were left without a ruler, they became overwhelmed by disturbances. Then, by the command of Sri Vishnu, the devas, directed by their guru Brihaspati, installed me in Indra's position, with the approval of Aditi and the others.

Dig-darshini

The devas searched extensively for Indra, but when they were unable to discover where he had hidden himself, the three worlds were left without a king and became afflicted by disturbances caused by daityas and others. Because of this crisis, Sri Vishnu ordered that Gopa-kumar be placed upon Indra's throne. Acting under the direction of Brihaspati, the guru of the devas, they therefore installed him as Indra. One might wonder how Aditi, Indra's mother, Saci, his wife, and his other relatives and friends could have accepted this. The answer is that Aditi and the others themselves approved Gopa-kumar's installation, because it had been commanded by Sri Vishnu.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 26
ततोऽदितिं शचीं जीवं ब्राह्मणानपि मानयन् ।
त्रैलोक्ये वैष्णवीं भक्तिं पूर्णां प्रावर्तयं सदा ॥२६॥
tato 'ditim shacim jivam brahmanan api manayan ।
trailokye vaishnavim bhaktim purnam pravartayam sada ।।26।।

Thereafter, while honouring Aditi, Saci, Brihaspati, and the brahmanas, I continually caused complete Vaishnava bhakti to flourish throughout the three worlds.

Dig-darshini

Although Gopa-kumar had attained sovereignty over the three worlds, he did not become proud like Nahusha and others, nor did he disrespect anyone. Rather, he honoured Aditi, Saci, Jiva—

that is, Brihaspati, the guru of the devas—and brahmanas such as Agastya and Gautama, while spreading bhakti to Sri Bhagavan everywhere. "Complete" bhakti may mean bhakti consisting of all nine processes, or bhakti practised without obstruction. This suggests that Gopa-kumar's position was in one respect even more glorious than that of Purandara, the son of Aditi.

Although these events cannot belong to the Vaivasvata-manvantara of the Varaha-kalpa if compared chronologically with the cosmic dissolution and Bhagavan's reclining upon the causal waters that Gopa-kumar will later witness from Brahmaloka, there is no contradiction. These events may belong to an earlier kalpa. In successive creations, personalities such as Aditi and the other cosmic officeholders, together with their families and associates, appear again at the appropriate times in forms much like those of previous kalpas. Thus the Vishnu Purana states: "O best of sages, in every yuga personalities such as Daksha appear again and again and are again withdrawn. One who understands this is not bewildered." The Hari-bhakti-sudhodaya likewise says: "In every kalpa creation, maintenance, and destruction occur in this same manner."

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 27
स्वयं तस्याः प्रभावेण स्वाराज्येऽपि यथा पुरा।
सदाकिञ्चनरूपोऽहं न्यवसं नन्दने वने ॥२७॥
svayam tasyah prabhavena svarajye 'pi yatha pura ।
sadakincana-rupo 'ham nyavasam nandane vane ।।27।।

By the power of that bhakti, even while ruling Swarga I personally remained, just as before, like one who possessed nothing, and continued living in Nandana-vana.

Dig-darshini

One might wonder how Gopa-kumar could remain happy while occupying such an exalted position without becoming burdened by immense pride. By the influence of bhakti, even though he ruled the heavenly kingdom, he remained as free from possessiveness and false prestige as he had been previously. For this reason he continued residing in Nandana-vana rather than taking up residence in Indra's city, royal palace, Sudharma assembly hall, or other places of imperial splendour.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 28
अत्यजंश्च जपं स्वीयमकृतज्ञत्वशङ्कया।
विस्मर्तुं नैव शक्नोमि व्रजभूमिमिमां क्वचित् ॥२८॥
atyajamsh ca japam sviyam akritajnatva-shankaya ।
vismartum naiva shaknomi vraja-bhumim imam kvacit ।।28।।

I also did not abandon my own mantra-japa, fearing that to do so would be ungrateful. And at no time could I forget this land of Braja.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verses 29–30
तच्छोकदुःखैरनुतप्यमानः शुष्काननोऽहं जगदीश्वरेण।
संलक्ष्य तोष्येय मुहुः कराब्जस्पर्शेन चित्रैर्वचनामृतैश्च ॥२९॥
ज्येष्ठसोदरसम्बन्धमिव पालयता स्वयम्।
मत्तोषणाय मद्दत्तं भोग्यमादाय भुज्यते ॥३०॥
tac-choka-duhkhair anutapyamanah shushkanano 'ham jagad-ishvarena ।
samlakshya toshyeya muhuh karabja-sparshena citrair vacanamritaish ca ।।29।।
jyeshtha-sodara-sambandham iva palayata svayam ।
mat-toshanaya mad-dattam bhogyam adaya bhujyate ।।30।।

Seeing me tormented by the pain of that separation, my face withered with sorrow, the Lord of the universe would repeatedly console and delight me with the touch of His lotus hand and with His wonderful nectar-like words. Personally maintaining toward me a relationship like that of an elder brother, He would accept and eat the food I offered Him, simply to please me.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 31
प्रीणयन् स्नेहभावात् तं लालयेयं कनिष्ठवत् ॥३१॥
prinayan sneha-bhavat tam lalayeyam kanishthavat ।।31।।

Filled with affection, I would delight Him and fondly caress Him as though He were my younger brother.

Dig-darshini

Through the touch of His hand and other affectionate gestures, Gopa-kumar would forget the pain arising from separation from Braja. Then, with the disposition described here, he would fondly treat Sri Jagadisha as though He were his younger brother, touching Him with his hands, embracing Him, and showing Him other forms of affectionate tenderness. Such behaviour should not be considered improper, because it arose from sneha. For those whose hearts are overwhelmed by powerful affection, nothing arising naturally from that love is unbecoming.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 32
एवं मां स्वास्थ्यामापाद्य स्वस्थाने कुत्रचिद् गतः।
उपेन्द्रो वसति श्रीमान् न लभ्येत सदेक्षितुम् ॥३२॥
evam mam svasthyam apadya sva-sthane kutracid gatah ।
upendro vasati sriman na labhyeta sadekshitum ।।32।।

Having thus restored me to happiness, glorious Upendra would depart to His own abode somewhere, and I could no longer behold Him constantly.

Dig-darshini

Gopa-kumar now explains the dissatisfaction that arose in Swarga and eventually impelled him toward a still higher attainment of Bhagavan's mercy. Sri Vishnu had restored him to complete inner

well-being in many ways: by enabling him to worship through the immense opulence of sovereignty over the three worlds, by expanding bhakti throughout those worlds, by preventing pride from arising within him, and by removing his sorrows and increasing his happiness through the touch of His lotus hands and other expressions of affection. Upendra would then depart for His own abode—perhaps Swetadwip, Dhruvaloka, or some other Vaikuntha realm. Gopa-kumar says "somewhere" because he did not know precisely where the Lord went. The word sriman indicates that Lakshmi accompanied Him, so Gopa-kumar could no longer behold her either.

One might ask how Sri Vishnu, whose sat-chit-ananda-ghana form is all-pervading, could ever become unavailable. The meaning is that He was no longer directly visible to Gopa-kumar. The word "constantly" implies that the Lord could still sometimes be seen, but not continuously.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 33
ततो यो जायते शोकस्तेन नीलाचलप्रभुम् ।
अचलाश्रितवात्सल्यं द्रष्टुमिच्छेयमेत्य तम् ॥३३॥
tato yo jayate shokas tena nilacala-prabhum ।
acalashrita-vatsalyam drashtum iccheyam etya tam ।।33।।

The sorrow arising from being unable to see Him made me desire to return and behold the Lord of Nilacala, whose affection for those who take shelter of Him is unwavering.

Dig-darshini

Because Upendra was no longer continuously visible, sorrow arose within Gopa-kumar. To relieve that pain, he began to desire once again the vision of Sri Jagannatha, the Lord of Nilacala, whose indescribable glory he had previously experienced. He thought of returning from Swarga to earth—or specifically of going again to Nilacala—to behold Him. Sri Jagannatha's vatsalya toward those who take shelter of Him is acala, immovable and unfailing, because He remains perpetually manifest there and continuously shows exceptional affection toward His servants. The same pattern should be understood whenever similar situations arise later in Gopa-kumar's journey.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 34
प्रादुर्भूतस्य विष्णोस्तु तस्य तादृक्कृपाभरैः ।
आधिः सर्वो विलीयेत पाश्चात्योऽपि तदाशया ॥३४॥
pradurbhutasya vishnos tu tasya tadrik-kripa-bharaih ।
adhih sarvo viliyeta pashcatyo 'pi tad-ashaya ।।34।।

Yet whenever that Sri Vishnu again appeared, the abundance of His extraordinary mercy dissolved all my anguish. Even the sorrow that

followed His departure disappeared through the hope of receiving such mercy again.

Dig-darshini

Whenever Sri Vishnu, whose greatness is indescribable, again manifested before Gopa-kumar, the overflowing abundance of His mercy removed every kind of mental suffering—the pain caused by His previous disappearance, the sorrow of separation from Braja, and every other distress. That special mercy included the sweetness with which He personally accepted Gopa-kumar's offerings, the many playful exchanges He revealed, the nectar of His consoling words, and other intimate expressions of affection.

One might ask whether the same sorrow would not simply return when Sri Vishnu disappeared again. It did arise, but even that later pain was dissolved by Gopa-kumar's absorption in the hope that he would again receive those same overflowing expressions of the Lord's mercy. Alternatively, his intense desire to experience such mercy again itself relieved the suffering of separation.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 35
एवं निवसता तत्र शक्रत्वमधिकुर्वता।
ब्रह्मन् संवत्सरो दिव्यो मयैको गमितः सुखम् ॥३५॥
evam nivasata tatra shakratvam adhikurvata ।
brahman samvatsaro divyo mayaiko gamitah sukham ।।35।।

O brahmana, while living there in this way and carrying out the duties of Indra, I happily passed one full celestial year.

Dig-darshini

Gopa-kumar remained in Swarga in the manner already described while exercising the authority of Indra. He governed the three worlds through such functions as sending rain and promoting the performance of yajna and other prescribed duties. In this way he passed one complete year according to the reckoning of the devas.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 36
अकस्मादागतास्तत्र भृगुमुख्या महर्षयः।
पद्भ्यां पावयितुं यान्तस्तीर्थानि कृपया भुवि ॥३६॥
akasmad agatas tatra bhrigu-mukhya maharshayah ।
padbhyam pavayitum yantas tirthani kripaya bhuvi ।।36।।

Then, unexpectedly, great rishis headed by Bhrigu arrived there while travelling to the earth, compassionately intending to purify the holy places with the touch of their feet.

Dig-darshini

The greatness of the residents of Maharloka is now introduced, preparing the way for Gopa-kumar's journey there. The sages

arrived in Swarga unexpectedly, with no obvious external reason for their visit, or at least Gopa-kumar did not yet understand the reason. They included Marici, Atri, Angira, Pulastya, Pulaha, and others, with Bhrigu described as foremost among them. Although Marici might be regarded as senior by age, Bhrigu is counted first because he is the father of Lakshmi and an exceptionally exalted Vaishnava, included among Bhagavan's own manifestations of splendour. Thus Bhagavad Gita states, "Among the great rishis, I am Bhrigu," and Srimad Bhagavatam likewise speaks of "Bhrigu and the others" ascending from Maharloka to Janaloka at the time of cosmic devastation. Bhrigu's devotion was so intense that he could not tolerate even the slightest uncertainty regarding Bhagavan's supreme greatness, and for the sake of revealing that greatness he performed extraordinary acts that might otherwise appear improper.

One might ask why sages who reside above Swarga were travelling downward. They were going to the earth to purify the sacred tirthas with the touch of their feet, removing the contamination accumulated through contact with great sinners. One might further ask why they needed to travel at all, since their words alone could accomplish this. The answer is compassion: by personally giving their darshan and touch, they also bestowed direct benefit upon the people of the world.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 37
ससम्भ्रमं सुरैः सर्वैरृषिभिर्गुरुणा स्वयम्।
विष्णुना चार्च्यमानास्ते मया दृष्टाः सविस्मयम् ॥३७॥
sa-sambhramam suraih sarvair rishibhir guruna svayam ।
vishnuna carcya-manas te maya drishtah sa-vismayam ।।37।।

I saw those sages being worshipped with great reverence by all the devas, by the rishis, by Brihaspati, and even by Sri Vishnu Himself. Beholding this, I was filled with astonishment.

Dig-darshini

The great rishis were honoured with profound respect by all the devas, by sages such as Narada, by Brihaspati, the guru of the devas, and even by Sri Vishnu Himself, who is especially devoted to the brahmanas. Seeing Bhrigu and the other maharshis receive worship from Sri Vishnu personally filled Gopa-kumar with extraordinary amazement.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 38
अहं चाभिनवो विष्णुसेवानन्दहृतान्तरः।
न जाने तानथ स्वीयैः प्रेरितस्तैरपूजयम् ॥३८॥
aham cabhinavo vishnu-sevananda-hritantarah ।
na jane tan atha sviyaih preritas tair apujayam ।।38।।

Being newly arrived there, and my heart completely absorbed in the bliss of serving Sri Vishnu, I did not know who those sages were. Then, prompted by my own associates, I worshipped them.

Dig-darshini

One might ask why Gopa-kumar, who now occupied Indra's position and was therefore responsible for receiving exalted guests, did not worship them immediately. He explains that he was still a newcomer and did not recognise them. He did not know whether they were devas residing in Swarga, devarshis, or exalted personalities from some other realm.

Although he had already spent a celestial year there, his heart had been so completely carried away by the bliss of serving Sri Vishnu that he had developed no curiosity about other matters and therefore had learned very little about the surrounding worlds and personalities. One might think that the power of Bhagavan's service should itself have awakened knowledge automatically, but the deeper reason why this did not happen will be explained later by Narada near the end of the Fifth Chapter. It is ultimately connected with the special blessing of Gopa-kumar's guru. When his own associates, including Brihaspati and the others, informed him who the sages were and urged him to honour them, he then worshipped them properly.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 39
अभिनन्द्य शुभाशीर्भिर्मां तेऽगच्छन् यथासुखम्।
तिरोऽभवदुपेन्द्रोऽपि मया पृष्टास्तदामराः ॥३९॥
abhinandya shubhashirbhir mam te 'gacchan yatha-sukham ।
tiro 'bhavad upendro 'pi maya prishtas tadamarah ।।39।।

After blessing and praising me with auspicious words, those sages continued on their way as they pleased. Upendra also disappeared from sight, and I then questioned the devas.

Dig-darshini

No offence arose from Gopa-kumar's initial failure to recognise the sages. They graciously accepted his worship, blessed him with auspicious words, and then continued on their journey.

Sri Vishnu also disappeared from sight at that time. This is significant, because while Bhagavan was directly present before Gopa-kumar, conversation about unrelated subjects would have been inappropriate and, indeed, could hardly have arisen while he was absorbed in the bliss of seeing Him. Nor could a desire to go somewhere else have appeared while Upendra remained visibly present. Only after the Lord disappeared did Gopa-kumar turn to the devas and begin asking them about the remarkable sages he had just seen.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 40
पूज्या देवा नृणां पूज्या देवानामप्यमी तु के ।
किंमाहात्म्या महातेजोमयाः कुत्र वसन्ति वा ॥४०॥
pujya deva nrinam pujya devanam apy ami tu ke ।
kim-mahatmya maha-tejo-mayah kutra vasanti va ।।40।।

"The devas are worshipful for human beings, yet these sages are worshipful even for the devas. Who, then, are they? What is their extraordinary greatness? They are filled with immense spiritual brilliance. Where do they reside?"

Dig-darshini

What did Gopa-kumar ask the devas? He wondered, "The devas themselves are worshipped by human beings, yet these sages are worshipped even by the devas. Who exactly are they?" His question arose from amazement, since ordinarily one who is worshipful does not become the worshipper of another. One might object that persons worthy of worship, such as parents, themselves worship those senior to them, such as grandparents. Gopa-kumar therefore asks about the special greatness that makes these sages worshipful even to the devas. Their extraordinary brilliance already indicated that they possessed some exceptional glory. Concluding that they could not be ordinary residents of Swarga but must belong to some still higher realm, he therefore asked where they lived. His intention was that, once he learned their abode, he might go there and behold the exalted Lord worshipped by those who were themselves worshipped by the devas.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 41
महाभिमानिभिर्देवैर्मत्सराक्रान्तमानसैः ।
लज्जयेव न तद्वृत्तमुक्तं गुरुरथाब्रवीत् ॥४१॥
mahabhimanibhir devair matsarakranta-manasaih ।
lajjayeva na tad-vrittam uktam gurur athabravit ।।41।।

The devas, being very proud and their minds touched by envy, seemed too embarrassed to speak about those sages. Then their guru spoke.

Dig-darshini

The devas were afflicted by matsara, an inability to tolerate the superiority of others. One might still ask why they could not at least identify the sages. The answer is that their great pride made even the mere narration of Bhrigu and the others' natural superiority seem to diminish their own status, and so, as though from embarrassment, they remained silent. The word "as though" may indicate that this is a figurative explanation according to ordinary worldly behaviour rather than a literal accusation. Brihaspati, however, was their guru, and a guru is obliged to answer the sincere question of his disciple. He therefore spoke.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 42
श्रीबृहस्पतिरुवाच—
अत ऊर्ध्वं महर्लोको राजते कर्मभिः शुभैः ।
महद्भिर्यो नश्येत् त्रैलोक्यप्रलयेऽपि न ॥४२॥
sri-brihaspatir uvaca—
ata urdhvam mahar-loko rajate karmabhih shubhaih ।
mahadbhir yo nashyet trailokya-pralaye 'pi na ।।42।।

Sri Brihaspati said: Above this Swarga shines Maharloka, attainable through extraordinarily pure and exalted spiritual practices. Even when the three worlds are destroyed, that realm does not perish.

Dig-darshini

Maharloka lies above Swarga. It is attained through auspicious and purified practices far superior to those pious acts that lead merely to heaven, such as great yajnas, yoga, and other exalted disciplines. Even when the three worlds—Bhuh, Bhuvah, and Svah—are dissolved, Maharloka is not destroyed. This is because its inhabitants are generally qualified for liberation and remain for a duration comparable to that of Brahma.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 43
यथा हि कोटिगुणितं साम्राज्यात् सुखमैन्द्रकम् ।
तत्कोटिगुणितं तत्र प्राजापत्यं सुखं मतम् ॥४३॥
yatha hi koti-gunitam samrajyat sukham aindrakam ।
tat-koti-gunitam tatra prajapatyam sukham matam ।।43।।

Just as the happiness of Indra is considered millions of times greater than that of an earthly emperor, so the happiness of the Prajapatis in Maharloka is considered millions of times greater than the happiness of Indra.

Dig-darshini

Gopa-kumar had found that the happiness of Swarga far surpassed the pleasures of the mortal world. Brihaspati now explains the happiness of Maharloka. As the happiness enjoyed by Indra exceeds that of a universal earthly emperor by millions of times, so the happiness of the Prajapatis such as Bhrigu in Maharloka exceeds even Indra's happiness by millions of times. This is the considered conclusion of those who understand the gradations among these realms.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 44
तेनामि सेवितास्तत्र निवसन्ति महासुखैः ।
यज्ञेश्वरं प्रभुं साक्षात् पूजयन्तः पदे पदे ॥४४॥
tenami sevitas tatra nivasanti maha-sukhaih ।
yajneshvaram prabhum sakshat pujayantah pade pade ।।44।।

Enjoying that exalted happiness, those great sages reside in Maharloka, where at every place they directly worship their Lord, Yajnesvara, visibly manifest before them.

Dig-darshini

Supported and surrounded by such happiness, Bhrigu and the other maharshis normally remain in Maharloka and leave it only occasionally for some particular purpose. Their true happiness lies especially in worshipping Yajnesvara, the Lord of sacrifice, the presiding deity and bestower of the fruits of yajna, whom they accept as their own master. Through immense sacrifices far greater than those performed in the three worlds, they worship Him everywhere in Maharloka, where He appears directly and visibly before them.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 45

श्रीगोपकुमार उवाच—
तच्छ्रुत्वेन्द्रपदे सद्यो निर्विद्यैच्छं तमीक्षितुम् ।
पूज्यपूज्यैर्महद्भिस्तैः पूज्यमानं महाप्रभुम् ॥४५॥

sri-gopa-kumara uvaca—
tac chrutvendra-pade sadyo nirvidyaiccham tam ikshitum ।
pujya-pujyair mahadbhis taih pujyamanam maha-prabhum ।।45।।

Sri Gopa-kumar said: Hearing this, I immediately became detached from Indra's position and desired to behold that Mahaprabhu who was worshipped by those exalted sages who themselves were worshipped by the worshipful devas.

Dig-darshini

As soon as Gopa-kumar heard Brihaspati's words, he lost interest in the sovereignty of Swarga and developed an intense desire to behold Yajnesvara. One might ask why he should seek another manifestation of Bhagavan, since Sri Vishnu, the Lord he had originally desired to see, was already directly manifest in Swarga. Gopa-kumar reasoned that the sages of Maharloka were worshipped even by the devas, who themselves were objects of worship. Therefore, the Bhagavan worshipped by such exalted sages must possess some still greater manifestation of glory.

The underlying thought is this: just as Gopa-kumar had seen that the same Bhagavan worshipped in Swarga manifested a sweetness and opulence surpassing what he had seen on earth, so he expected that Bhagavan worshipped in Maharloka must reveal some further and still greater excellence. Therefore he felt compelled to go there and behold Him personally.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 46

तत् सङ्कल्प्य जपं कुर्वन्नचिरादूर्ध्वमुत्थितः ।
व्योमयानेन तं प्राप्तो लोकं तत्र व्यलोकयम् ॥४६॥

tat sankalpya japam kurvann acirad urdhvam utthitah ।
vyoma-yanena tam prapto lokam tatra vyalokayam ।।46।।

Forming the resolve to behold Him there, I performed my mantra-japa. Before long I rose upward in a celestial vehicle, reached Maharloka, and began to observe that realm.

Dig-darshini

Gopa-kumar formed the deliberate sankalpa of going to Maharloka and beholding Yajnesvara there, and then performed his mantra-japa. Before long he ascended in a celestial vehicle and reached the realm called Mahah. According to what follows, he apparently first went to the residence of Sri Bhrigu, the foremost inhabitant there. By that time Bhrigu and the other sages had also returned from their pilgrimage to the sacred places of the earth.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 47
त्रैलोक्ये यत् सुखं नास्ति वैभवं भजनं तथा।
निर्दोषं तत्र तत् सर्वमस्त्यनिर्वच्यमाशु तत् ॥४७॥
trailokye yat sukham nasti vaibhavam bhajanam tatha ।
nirdosham tatra tat sarvam asty anirvacyam ashu tat ।।47।।

There I found happiness, opulence, and bhajana unlike anything existing within the three worlds. All of it was completely free from defect and beyond description.

Dig-darshini

What did Gopa-kumar see in Maharloka? He found happiness, opulence, and worship of Bhagavan surpassing everything within the three worlds. All of these were free from defects. The happiness there was faultless because even at the approach of Brahma's night there was no fear of destruction, and because rivalry and similar causes of suffering were absent. Its opulence was flawless because there was no troublesome inequality, excess, or deficiency. Its bhajana was also free from defects because it was not motivated by selfish aims or ulterior causes.

One might ask for these qualities to be described in detail, but Gopa-kumar says that the happiness, splendour, and bhajana of Maharloka were anirvacya—impossible to express adequately in words.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 48
वितायमानेषु महामखेषु तैर्
महर्षिभिर्भक्तिपरैः सहस्रशः।
मखाग्निमध्ये प्रभुरुत्थितः स्फुरन्
मखेश्वरः क्रीडति यज्ञभागभुक् ॥४८॥
vitayamaneshu maha-makheshu tair
maharshibhir bhakti-paraih sahasrashah ।
makhagni-madhye prabhur utthitah sphuran
makeshvarah kridati yajna-bhaga-bhuk ।।48।।

In the thousands of great sacrifices performed by those maharshis, who were wholly devoted to bhakti, the Lord of sacrifice would arise directly from the sacrificial fire. Radiant within the flames, Yajnesvara would play there while personally accepting His portions of the offerings.

Dig-darshini

Although the glories of Maharloka are ultimately indescribable, Gopa-kumar's eagerness moves him to describe something especially attractive. Bhrigu and the other maharshis performed thousands of immense yajnas, yet they were bhakti-para—wholly devoted to bhakti. This indicates both that their worship was free from selfish desire and that they had no goal other than Bhagavan. Yajnesvara Himself arose directly from the sacrificial fire and remained manifest there, shining with a brilliance greater even than the fire itself. As the Lord of sacrifice, He personally accepted the portions offered to Him and joyfully performed His pastimes in their midst.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 49

स यज्ञमूर्ती रविकोटितेजा
जगन्मनोहारिमहाप्रतीकः।
प्रसार्य हस्तांश्चारुमाददानो
वरान् प्रियान् यच्छति याजकेभ्यः॥४९॥

sa yajna-murti ravi-koti-teja
jagan-mano-hari-maha-pratikah ।
prasarya hastamsh carum adadano
varan priyan yacchati yajakebhyah ।।49।।

That Lord is the very embodiment of yajna, radiant like millions of suns, with a majestic form that captivates the minds of all beings. Extending His hands, He personally accepts the caru and grants cherished benedictions to those performing the sacrifice.

Dig-darshini

Having described Yajnesvara generally, Gopa-kumar now gives a more particular account of His form and activities. He is called yajna-murti because the sacrifice itself constitutes His form, or because, adorned with the implements of sacrifice such as the sruk and sruva, He appears as yajna personified. Alternatively, the expression means that His divine vigraha is characterised by the various components of sacrifice. This should be understood in the light of Srimad Bhagavatam's description of Yajna-varaha: "O Lord, this form of Yours, which is the embodiment of sacrifice, is difficult for the sinful to behold. The Vedic metres are Your skin, kusa grass Your bodily hair, clarified butter Your eyes, and the four kinds of priests Your feet. The sruk is Your snout, the sruva Your nostrils, the ida Your belly, the camasa vessels Your ears, the prasitra Your mouth, the grahas Your throat, and Your chewing is the Agnihotra."

His great bodily features—His head, face, neck, chest, arms, thighs, feet, and other limbs—captivate the minds of all beings. The word caru refers to a particular preparation offered in sacrifice. Yajnesvara personally extends His hands to receive such offerings and grants the sacrificers the very boons they desire. From this and the preceding verse, one should understand the special excellence of this manifestation in comparison with Upendra in Swarga.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 50
तद्दर्शनोज्जृम्भितसम्भ्रमाय
हर्षान्नमस्कारपराय मह्यम् ।
दत्तो निजोच्छिष्टमहाप्रसादस्
तेन स्वहस्तेन दयार्द्रवाचा ॥५०॥
tad-darshanojjrimbhita-sambhramaya
harshan namaskara-paraya mahyam ।
datto nijocchishta-maha-prashads
tena sva-hastena dayardra-vaca ।।50।।

Seeing me overwhelmed with reverence by His darshan and absorbed only in bowing before Him out of joy, Yajnesvara personally gave me His own remnants as maha-prashad, with His own hand, while speaking words softened by compassion.

Dig-darshini

Gopa-kumar now describes the Lord's special mercy toward him. The sight of Yajnesvara caused such intense reverential excitement that Gopa-kumar could think of nothing else he should do and simply remained absorbed in offering obeisance out of joy. Yajnesvara then personally gave him His own ucchishta as maha-prashad with His own hand. His speech was softened and moistened by compassion, with words such as, "O Gopa-kumar, come forward and accept My hospitality."

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 51
अपूर्वलब्धमानन्दं परमं प्राप्नुवंस्ततः ।
कारुण्यातिशयात् तस्य संसिद्धाशेषवाञ्छितः ॥५१॥
apurva-labdham anandam paramam prapnuvams tatah ।
karunyatishayat tasya samsiddhashesha-vanchitah ।।51।।

Through that extraordinary mercy of Yajnesvara, I attained a supreme happiness unlike anything I had ever experienced before, and all my desires were completely fulfilled.

Dig-darshini

Because of Yajnesvara's exceptional compassion, Gopa-kumar attained a supreme bliss he had never previously known. This establishes the superiority of Maharloka over both the earthly realm and Swarga. Through the Lord's direct vision and the

extraordinary mercy he received there, every one of Gopa-kumar's desires became completely fulfilled.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 52
दयालूनां महर्षीणां सङ्गत्येतस्ततो भ्रमन्।
प्रत्यावसं तथैवाहमद्राक्षं जगदीश्वरम् ॥५२॥
dayalunam maharshinam sangatyetas tato bhraman ।
pratyavasam tathaivaham adraksham jagad-ishvaram ।।52।।

In the association of those compassionate maharshis, I wandered here and there throughout that realm, and at every residence I beheld the Lord of the universe manifest in the same way.

Dig-darshini

This reveals another superiority of Maharloka over Swarga. In the company of the compassionate maharshis, Gopa-kumar travelled from place to place throughout that world. Wherever he went, he saw Jagadisha appearing just as before—manifest within the sacrificial fire and personally accepting His portions of the yajna. Thus the Lord's direct manifestation was not restricted to only one place.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 53
ततः कृतार्थतानिष्ठां मन्वानः स्वस्य सर्वथा।
सानन्दं निवसंस्तत्र प्रोक्तोऽहं तैर्महर्षिभिः ॥५३॥
tatah kritarthata-nishtham manvanah svasya sarvatha ।
sanandam nivasams tatra prokto 'ham tair maharshibhih ।।53।।

Seeing the Lord of the universe manifest in so many places, I considered that I had attained the complete perfection of all my purposes. I therefore lived there joyfully, until those maharshis spoke to me.

Dig-darshini

Because Gopa-kumar repeatedly beheld Jagadisha in so many manifestations and received His exceptional mercy, he considered that his attainment had reached complete maturity. In every respect—the direct vision of the Lord, the abundance of His compassion, and the fulfilment of the purpose of his birth and mantra-japa—he thought himself completely successful. He therefore remained happily in Maharloka. Then Bhrigu and the other great sages addressed him.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verses 54–55
श्रीमहार्षय ऊचुः—
भो गोपवैश्यपुत्र त्वमेतल्लोकस्वभावजम्।
प्रदीयमानमस्माभिर्विप्रत्वं स्वीकुरु द्रुतम् ॥५४॥
महर्षीणामेकतमो भूत्वा त्वमपि पूजय।
जगदीशमिमं यज्ञैश्चिरमात्मदिदृक्षितम् ॥५५॥

sri-maharshaya ucuh—
bho gopa-vaishya-putra tvam etal-loka-svabhava-jam ।
pradiyamanam asmabhir vipratvam svikuru drutam ।।54।।
maharshinam ekatamo bhutva tvam api pujaya ।
jagad-isham imam yajnaish ciram atma-didrikshitam ।।55।।

The great rishis said: "O son of a cowherd vaisya, quickly accept the brahminical status we are bestowing upon you, which arises naturally from residence in this realm. Become one among the maharshis and, like us, worship through yajnas this Lord of the universe whom you have long desired to behold."

Dig-darshini

By addressing him as "O son of a cowherd vaisya," the sages subtly indicate that Gopa-kumar already belongs by birth to one of the twice-born classes and therefore possesses a natural eligibility for elevation to brahminical status. They tell him, "Accept vipratva and become a brahmana."

One might ask how the son of a vaisya could attain such a position. The sages answer that this brahminical status is being directly bestowed by maharshis such as themselves. Moreover, it arises naturally from the very character of Maharloka, so little more than the external formalities of brahminical conduct would need to be completed. Otherwise, his residence among the sages of that realm would appear incongruous.

What would follow from accepting that status? Gopa-kumar could become one among the maharshis and personally worship through great yajnas the very Jagadisha whom he had desired for so long to see.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 56
श्रीगोपकुमार उवाच—
तच्छ्रुत्वाचिन्तयं ब्रह्मन् वैश्यत्वे स्यात् सुखं महत्।
प्रभोरेषां च विप्राणां तद्भक्तानामुपासनात्॥५६॥
sri-gopa-kumara uvaca—
tac chrutvacintayam brahman vaishyatve syat sukham mahat ।
prabhor esham ca vipranam tad-bhaktanam upasanat ।।56।।

Sri Gopa-kumar said: O brahmana, hearing their proposal, I reflected, "If I remain a vaisya, I will attain even greater happiness by serving both this Lord and these brahmanas, His devotees."

Dig-darshini

Gopa-kumar now explains his reasoning. The "Lord" is Jagadisha in His form as Yajnesvara, and "these brahmanas" are His devotees, the great rishis of Maharloka. Gopa-kumar thought that if he became a brahmana himself, it would no longer be as natural for him to

serve these brahmanas in the mood of a servant. By remaining a vaisya, however, he could continue serving both the Vaishnavas and Yajnesvara. He therefore considered that his happiness would be even greater than theirs.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 57
एषां यज्ञैकनिष्ठानामैक्येनावश्यके निजे जपे च।
सद्गुरूद्दिष्टे मान्द्यं स्याद् दृष्टसत्फले ॥५७॥
esham yajnaika-nishthanam aikyenavashyake nije jape ca ।
sad-guruddiste mandyam syad drishta-sat-phale ।।57।।

"Moreover, by becoming one with these sages, who are exclusively devoted to yajna, I might become negligent in my own indispensable japa, which was prescribed by my true guru and whose excellent results I have directly experienced."

Dig-darshini

Gopa-kumar had another reason for declining their proposal. If he became identified with these maharshis, whose exclusive practice was yajna, he feared that he too would become wholly absorbed in sacrifice and that his own mantra-japa would consequently become weakened or neglected. Such negligence would be improper, because his japa was indispensable: it had been personally instructed by his exalted guru. Moreover, Gopa-kumar had already directly witnessed its extraordinary fruits, including the attainment of imperial sovereignty, the kingdom of Swarga, Maharloka, and the successive manifestations of Bhagavan he had been permitted to behold.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 58
ततस्ताननुमान्याहमनङ्गीकृत्य विप्रताम्।
तत्रावसं स्वतोजातप्राजापत्यमहासुखैः ॥५८॥
tatas tan anumanyaham anangikritya vipratam ।
tatravasam svato jata-prajapatya-maha-sukhaih ।।58।।

After respectfully satisfying those sages, I declined brahminical status and continued living there, naturally experiencing the immense happiness enjoyed by the Prajapatis.

Dig-darshini

Having reached this conclusion, Gopa-kumar did not accept vipratva and therefore did not become a brahmana. Yet he did not disregard the words of those exalted sages and thereby commit an offence. He respectfully pleased them and gained their approval before declining their offer. Nor did his refusal to become a brahmana deprive him of the natural happiness of Maharloka. The immense forms of happiness belonging to the Prajapatis arose spontaneously for him. The plural "happinesses" indicates either their immense abundance or their many varieties.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 59
न दोषास्तत्र शोको वा शङ्का वा कापि विद्यते।
नान्यच्च किञ्चिद् यज्ञेशप्रीत्यै यज्ञोत्सवानृते ॥५९॥
na doshas tatra shoko va shanka va kapi vidyate ।
nanyac ca kincid yajnesha-prityai yajnotsavan rite ।।59।।

There were no faults there, no sorrow, nor any kind of fear. Indeed, apart from the festivals of yajna performed for the pleasure of Yajnesvara, there was virtually nothing else.

Dig-darshini

Gopa-kumar now describes another way in which Maharloka surpassed Swarga and explains the source of its extraordinary happiness. Defects such as rivalry, envy, lust, anger, and pride were absent there. Nor was there grief caused by defeat at the hands of enemies, or anxiety arising from fear that the world might be destroyed or that one might fall from one's position.

Because the inhabitants were free from such defects and fears, they had no attachment to anything apart from bhajana of Bhagavan. Other than the great festivals of sacrifice performed solely for the pleasure of Yajnesvara, there was practically no activity devoted to material enjoyment or any independent purpose. Whatever other activities existed were integrated with His worship.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 60
किन्तु यज्ञसमाप्तौ स्याद् दुःखमन्तर्हिते प्रभौ।
वृत्ते यज्ञान्तरे चास्य प्रादुर्भावात् पुनः सुखम् ॥६०॥
kintu yajna-samaptau syad duhkham antarhite prabhau ।
vritte yajnantare casya pradurbhavat punah sukham ।।60।।

Yet when a yajna ended and the Lord disappeared, sorrow arose. Then, when another sacrifice was performed and He appeared again, happiness returned.

Dig-darshini

Gopa-kumar now begins to describe the causes of dissatisfaction with residence in Maharloka, which would eventually impel him toward a still higher destination. When a sacrifice concluded, Yajnesvara disappeared from sight, and this caused sorrow. Yet because the Lord is responsive to His servants, His absence was never prolonged indefinitely. As soon as another yajna was performed, He appeared again, and Gopa-kumar's happiness returned. Thus even in Maharloka there were intervals in which his mind suffered from separation.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verses 61–62
चतुर्युगसहस्रस्य तत्रत्यैकदिनस्य हि।
अन्ते त्रैलोक्यदाहेन जनलोकोऽधिगम्यते ॥६१॥

रजन्यामिव जातायां यज्ञाभावेन तत्र तु।
यज्ञेशादर्शनेन स्याद् दाहस्तद्दहतोऽधिकः ॥६२॥
catur-yuga-sahasrasya tatratyaika-dinasya hi ।
ante trailokya-dahena jana-loko 'dhigamyate ।।61।।
rajanyam iva jatayam yajnabhavena tatra tu ।
yajneshadarshanena syad dahas tad-dahato 'dhikah ।।62।।

At the end of a single day there, lasting one thousand cycles of the four yugas, the three worlds are consumed by fire, and the residents of Maharloka ascend to Janaloka. Then, when what is called night arrives, sacrifices cease, and because Yajnesvara can no longer be seen, the burning pain of separation is greater than the heat of the fire that consumes the three worlds.

Dig-darshini

One day in Maharloka lasts for one thousand cycles of the four yugas. Maharloka and the higher realms endure for a duration comparable to Brahmaloka. At the end of that day, when the three lower worlds are consumed by fire, the residents of Maharloka are afflicted by the heat and therefore ascend to Janaloka, the realm immediately above.

There, during what is called the night, Brahma rests while Bhagavan lies upon the single cosmic ocean. The word "as though night" is appropriate because Janaloka does not actually become dark in the ordinary sense. Nevertheless, yajnas are not performed during that period, and consequently Yajnesvara does not manifest Himself before them through the sacrificial fire. For Gopa-kumar, the burning pain caused by being unable to see the Lord was even more intense than the scorching heat produced by the fire from Sankarshan's mouth that consumes the three worlds.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 63
ततोऽक्षयवटच्छाये क्षेत्रे श्रीपुरुषोत्तमे।
आगत्य श्रीजगन्नाथं पश्येयमिति रोचते ॥६३॥
tato 'kshaya-vata-cchaye kshetre sri-purushottame ।
agatya sri-jagannatham pashyeyam iti rocate ।।63।।

At such times I would think, "I should return to Sri Purushottama-ksetra, beneath the shelter of the imperishable banyan tree, and behold Sri Jagannatha there."

Dig-darshini

Because of that burning separation, Gopa-kumar felt drawn toward Purushottama-ksetra. The Akshaya-vata there is called "imperishable" because it is not destroyed even at the time of cosmic dissolution. This indicates the extraordinary nature of Purushottama-ksetra itself: it continues to exist even during the pralaya, and Sri Jagannatha therefore remains perpetually available there for darshan.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 64
महर्लोके गतेऽप्यात्मजपाद् रहसि पूर्ववत् ।
सम्पद्यमानाच्छोकः स्यादस्याः भूमेर्दिदृक्षया ॥६४॥
mahar-loke gate 'py atma-japad rahasi purvavat ।
sampadyamanac chokah syad asyah bhumer didrikshaya ।।64।।

Even while living in Maharloka and continuing my own mantra-japa privately as before, sorrow would arise within me from my longing to see this land of Braja.

Dig-darshini

One might argue that after the cosmic night had ended Gopa-kumar would soon return to Maharloka and again enjoy the vision of Yajnesvara, and therefore the hope of that future happiness should have satisfied him even during His absence. Yet another sorrow continued to arise within him: while privately performing his own mantra-japa just as before, he longed intensely to behold this land—Sri Brindaban.

This reveals the incomparable and captivating greatness of Sri Braja-bhumi, the beloved playground of Bhagavan, and similarly the extraordinary attraction of Sri Nilacala and its Lord. Above all, Mathura and Sri Braja possessed a sweetness capable of drawing Gopa-kumar's heart even while he enjoyed the exalted splendour and direct darshan of Yajnesvara in Maharloka.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verses 65–66
प्रादुर्भूतोऽथ भगवानिज्यमानो दयानिधिः ।
यदा मामाह्वयेत् प्रीत्या मन्नीतं लीलयात्ति च ॥६५॥
तदानीयेत सर्वार्तिस्तमः सूर्योदये यथा ।
रात्रावपि तदेकाशाबद्धो नेशे क्वचिद् गतौ ॥६६॥
pradurbhuto 'tha bhagavan ijyamano daya-nidhih ।
yada mam ahvayet pritya man-nitam lilayatti ca ।।65।।
tadaniyeta sarvartis tamah suryodaye yatha ।
ratrav api tad-ekasha-baddho neshe kvacid gatau ।।66।।

But whenever Bhagavan, the ocean of mercy, appeared during the sacrifice, lovingly called me near, and playfully ate the offering I had brought, all my suffering immediately disappeared, just as darkness vanishes at sunrise. Even during the cosmic night, I remained bound by the single hope of again receiving such mercy from Him and could not bring myself to go anywhere else.

Dig-darshini

One might then wonder how Gopa-kumar could have described Maharloka as a place of such extraordinary happiness despite these periods of separation. Whenever Yajnesvara manifested before him, the Lord personally called him near with affection and playfully accepted the food Gopa-kumar had brought for Him. The resulting

experience of Yajnesvara's darshan, the festivals of His worship, and the abundance of His compassion immediately destroyed every distress, just as the rising sun dispels darkness.

During the day, the happiness produced by Yajnesvara's direct presence, His worship, and His exceptional mercy left Gopa-kumar with neither the ability nor the desire to go anywhere else. Even during the cosmic night, when the Lord was no longer visibly present, he remained as though bound by a rope to the uninterrupted hope that he would again behold Yajnesvara, worship Him, and receive that same special mercy. Because of this hope he could not leave for Purushottama or any other place. Alternatively, "I could not go anywhere else" may mean that he could not even turn his mind toward anything apart from Yajnesvara. His expectation of again attaining that supreme happiness prevented the pain of separation from fully taking possession of his heart.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 67
तत्रैकदा महातेजःपुञ्जरूपो दिगम्बरः ।
पाञ्चषाब्दिकबालाभः कोऽप्यगादूर्ध्वलोकतः ॥६७॥
tatraikada maha-tejah-punja-rupo dig-ambarah ।
panca-shabdika-balabhah ko 'py agad urdhva-lokatah ।।67।।
Once, while I was there, someone descended from a higher world. He appeared as a mass of immense spiritual brilliance, was unclothed, and looked like a boy only five or six years old.

Dig-darshini
Because the residents of Maharloka ascend to Janaloka at the time of cosmic devastation, the two realms are here treated as being almost of one status. Whatever superiority Janaloka possesses—such as freedom from the scorching heat and the need to flee from it—Gopa-kumar had already experienced by going there. Gopa-kumar therefore now introduces the greatness of the residents of Tapoloka, preparing to describe the ascent to that still higher realm.

One day in Maharloka, an extraordinary person arrived from an upper world. That world is not yet named because Gopa-kumar did not know where the visitor had come from. The visitor appeared to be a child of five or six years, and therefore went unclothed. Yet his form was like a concentrated mass of overwhelming spiritual brilliance.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 68
विहाय यज्ञकर्माणि भक्त्योत्थाय महर्षिभिः ।
प्रणम्य ध्याननिष्ठोऽसौ यज्ञेश्वरवदर्चितः ॥६८॥
vihaya yajna-karmani bhaktyotthaya maharshibhih ।
pranamya dhyana-nishtho 'sau yajneshvaravad arcitah ।।68।।
The maharshis immediately abandoned their sacrificial duties, rose with devotion, bowed before him, and worshipped him just as they

worshipped Yajnesvara. Yet he remained completely absorbed in meditation.

Dig-darshini

Bhrigu and the other maharshis rose to honour this youthful sage and worshipped him with great devotion. They even set aside their sacrificial activities in order to receive him, honouring him in a manner comparable to their worship of Yajnesvara. Because he remained fixed in meditation, with his awareness turned completely within, one should understand that he engaged in little or no conversation with them.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 69
यथाकामं गते तस्मिन् मया पृष्टा महर्षयः ।
कुत्रत्यः कतमो वायं भवद्भिर्वार्चितः कथम् ॥६९॥
yatha-kamam gate tasmin maya prishta maharshayah ।
kutratyah katamo vayam bhavadbhir varcitah katham ।।69।।

When that person departed as freely as he had come, I asked the maharshis, "Where does he live? Who is he? And why did all of you worship him in this way?"

Dig-darshini

The youthful sage moved entirely according to his own will, his movement unobstructed anywhere. After he had departed, Gopa-kumar questioned the maharshis. He wanted to know from which realm this person had come, who he actually was, and why such exalted sages had honoured him so greatly.

Gopa-kumar found this especially astonishing because these maharshis were themselves worshipped by the devas, occupied a position above them, and continually celebrated magnificent festivals of direct worship of Sri Yajnesvara. How then could there be someone whom they considered worthy of such reverence that they would even interrupt Bhagavan's worship to receive him?

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 70
सनत्कुमारनामायं ज्येष्ठोऽस्माकं महत्तमः ।
आत्मारामाप्तकामानामाद्याचार्यो बृहद्व्रतः ॥७०॥
sanat-kumara-namayam jyeshtho 'smakam mahattamah ।
atmaramapta-kamanam adyacaryo brihad-vratah ।।70।।

"This is Sanat-kumara. He is our elder brother and exceedingly exalted. He is the original acarya of those who are self-satisfied and whose every desire is fulfilled, and he is firmly established in the great vow of perpetual brahmacarya."

Dig-darshini

The maharshis answered that Sanat-kumara was the eldest among them, the sons of Brahma, and therefore their elder brother. But

his greatness was not merely a matter of seniority. In every respect he was extraordinarily exalted. He was the foremost and original acarya of the atmaramas, those who are fully satisfied within themselves, and of the apta-kamas, those whose desires are already completely fulfilled. He was also steadfast in the great vow of lifelong brahmacarya.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 71
इत ऊर्ध्वतरे लोके तपःसंज्ञे वसत्यसौ।
भ्रातृभिस्त्रिभिरन्यैश्च योगीन्द्रैः स्वसमैः सह ॥७१॥
ita urdhvatare loke tapah-samjne vasaty asau ।
bhratribis tribhir anyaish ca yogindraih sva-samaih saha ।।71।।
"He resides in a still higher realm called Tapoloka, together with his three brothers and with other great masters of yoga equal to himself."

Dig-darshini
Sanat-kumara resides in Tapoloka, which is above Maharloka and even above Janaloka. He does not live there alone. His three brothers, Sanaka, Sanandana, and Sanatana, reside with him, and they are equal to him in spiritual attainment. Other great yogis of comparable stature also reside there, including Kavi, Havi, Antariksha, Prabuddha, Pippalayana, and other exalted yogis.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 72
बृहद्व्रतैकलभ्यो यः क्षेमं यस्मिन् सदा सुखम्।
प्राजापत्यात् सुखात् कोटिगुणितं चोर्ध्वरेतसाम् ॥७२॥
brihad-vrataika-labhyo yah kshemam yasmin sada sukham ।
prajapatyat sukhat koti-gunitam cordhva-retasam ।।72।।
"That realm is attainable only through the great vow of lifelong brahmacarya. There complete well-being prevails perpetually, and the happiness experienced by the urdhva-retas sages is millions of times greater than the happiness of the Prajapatis."

Dig-darshini
To establish the greatness of Sanat-kumara and the other residents of Tapoloka, the maharshis now describe the greatness of their realm. Tapoloka is attained specifically through the great vow of perpetual brahmacarya. This itself distinguishes it from Maharloka and Janaloka.

There, kshema—uninterrupted well-being—always prevails. In Maharloka there is the distress of scorching heat and the need to flee upward during cosmic devastation, and in Janaloka there is distress at witnessing the burning of the three worlds. Tapoloka is free from such disturbances and remains perpetually auspicious. The happiness suitable for and experienced by the urdhva-retas,

those who preserve their vital energy through perfect celibacy, is said to be millions of times greater than the happiness enjoyed by the Prajapatis in Maharloka.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 73
यथा यज्ञेश्वरः पूज्यस्तथायं च विशेषतः।
गृहस्थानामिवास्माकं स्वकृत्यत्यागतोऽपि च ॥७३॥
yatha yajneshvarah pujyas tathayam ca visheshatah ।
grihasthanam ivasmakam sva-kritya-tyagato 'pi ca ।।73।।
"Just as Yajnesvara is worshipful for us, so is Sanat-kumara, and in a special way. We honour him even by setting aside our own obligatory duties, just as householders must honour an exalted guest."

Dig-darshini
The sages now explain why they worshipped Sanat-kumara so reverentially. Like Yajnesvara, he is worthy of honour from everyone because an exalted guest is to be regarded as representing Bhagavan. More than this, Sanat-kumara is himself an avatara of Bhagavan and a supremely exalted Bhagavata.

He is especially worshipful for these maharshis, to the extent that they set aside even their own required duties to honour him. Their position is compared to that of householders, for whom the service of an honoured guest is obligatory. Moreover, lifelong brahmacarya is superior to household life. The word "as though" is significant, however, because these sages, being wholly absorbed in Bhagavan and yajna, are not actually attached to household possessions or domestic life.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 74
श्रीगोपकुमार उवाच—
ततोऽकर्षमहं चित्ते तत्राहो कीदृशं सुखम्।
ईदृशः कति वान्ये स्युरेषां पूज्यश्च कीदृशः ॥७४॥
sri-gopa-kumara uvaca—
tato 'karsham aham citte tatraho kidrisham sukham ।
idrishah kati vanye syur esham pujyash ca kidrishah ।।74।।
Sri Gopa-kumar said: Hearing this, I began to wonder within myself, "Ah! What kind of happiness must exist in that realm? How many others like Sanat-kumara might reside there? And what must the Lord whom such personalities worship be like?"

Dig-darshini
After hearing the maharshis' description, Gopa-kumar resolved to go to Tapoloka. He wondered how many personalities like Sanat-kumara might be found there and what extraordinary happiness they enjoyed.

One might ask why someone whose sole desire was to behold Jagadisha should be attracted merely by the greatness of such sages. Gopa-kumar's deeper thought was this: if these personalities possessed such extraordinary spiritual greatness, then the Lord whom they themselves worshipped must necessarily possess an even greater and more extraordinary manifestation of glory. Therefore that Lord was surely worth going there to behold.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 75
एवं तांश्च दिदृक्षुः सन् समाहितमना जपन्।
भूत्वा परमतेजस्वी तं लोकं वेगतोऽगमम् ॥७५॥
evam tamsh ca didrikshuh san samahita-mana japan ।
bhutva parama-tejasvi tam lokam vegato 'gamam ।।75।।

Desiring in this way to behold both those sages and the Lord whom they worshipped, I concentrated my mind and performed my mantra-japa. Becoming filled with extraordinary spiritual brilliance, I swiftly reached Tapoloka.

Dig-darshini

Having reflected in this way, Gopa-kumar desired to see Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanatana, Sanat-kumara, and the other sages, as well as the Lord whom they worshipped. With that resolve he concentrated his mind entirely upon this goal and performed his own mantra-japa. Alternatively, because he had observed Sanat-kumara's complete absorption in meditation, Gopa-kumar understood samadhi itself to be the appropriate means for reaching that realm and therefore turned his vision inward. Through his japa he became extraordinarily radiant, acquiring the spiritual brilliance appropriate for entrance into Tapoloka, and quickly ascended there.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 76
तत्र दृष्टो मया श्रीमान् सनकोऽथ सनन्दनः।
असौ सनत्कुमारोऽपि चतुर्थश्च सनातनः ॥७६॥
tatra drishto maya sriman sanako 'tha sanandanah ।
asau sanat-kumaro 'pi caturthash ca sanatanah ।।76।।

There I saw the glorious Sanaka and Sanandana, as well as that same Sanat-kumara, and the fourth brother, Sanatana.

Dig-darshini

In Tapoloka Gopa-kumar saw all four Kumaras. The same Sanat-kumara whom he had previously seen in Maharloka had, moving freely according to his own will, returned to his own abode and was present there with Sanaka, Sanandana, and Sanatana.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 77
संमन्यमानास्तत्रत्यैस्तादृशैरेव ते मिथः।
सुखगोष्ठीं वितन्वानाः सन्त्यगम्यां हि मादृशैः ॥७७॥

sammanyamanas tatratyais tadrishair eva te mithah ।
sukha-goshthim vitanvanah santy agamyam hi madrishaih ।।77।।

They were greatly honoured by the other residents of that realm, who were of a similar nature, and among themselves they continually expanded delightful spiritual discussions whose meaning was beyond the understanding of someone like me.

Dig-darshini

The four Kumaras were deeply honoured by the other inhabitants of Tapoloka, who were themselves personalities of a similar spiritual stature. They were especially revered because they were recognised as avataras of Bhagavan.

Among themselves the Kumaras engaged in extensive and joyful spiritual conversation. Such exchanges are famously represented in the Tenth Canto of Srimad Bhagavatam in the discussion surrounding the prayers of the personified Vedas. Yet the nature of their conversation was inaccessible to persons like Gopa-kumar, whom he humbly describes as possessing little knowledge or as still being a newly developed Vaishnava. Their discussions were therefore beyond his comprehension, and at this stage he could not clearly understand the teachings concerning mukti, bhakti, and related spiritual truths being exchanged among them.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 78
भगवल्लक्षणं तेषु तादृङ् नास्ति तथाप्यभूत् ।
तेषां सन्दर्शनात् तत्र महान् मोदः मम स्वतः ॥७८॥
bhagaval-lakshanam teshu tadrin nasti tathapy abhut ।
tesham sandarshant tatra mahan modah mama svatah ।।78।।

Although those sages displayed none of the distinctive external characteristics of Bhagavan, simply seeing them there spontaneously filled me with tremendous joy.

Dig-darshini

One might ask what benefit Gopa-kumar, whose heart was intent upon beholding Jagadisha, could obtain from seeing anyone else. Ordinarily such a vision would not give him the happiness he sought. Yet in this case his joy arose precisely because these sages were connected with Bhagavan. Although Sanaka and the others, dressed as lifelong brahmacaris, did not display such unmistakable external signs of Bhagavan as a four-armed form or manifestations of supreme divine majesty and opulence, the sight of the four Kumaras nevertheless produced great happiness within Gopa-kumar. The word "spontaneously" indicates that, being avataras of Bhagavan, they possess by their very nature the power to bestow supreme joy. Significantly, Gopa-kumar experienced this particular happiness upon seeing them in Tapoloka, whereas he

had not experienced it to the same degree when he previously saw Sanat-kumara in Maharloka. This demonstrates the particular spiritual influence of Tapoloka itself. In the same way, one should understand throughout this account that special places, special times, and specially qualified persons each possess their own particular spiritual potency.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 79
यथास्थानं प्रयातेषु ध्याननिष्ठेषु तेष्वथ।
द्रष्टुं भ्रमामि सम्भाव्य पूर्ववज्जगदीश्वरम् ॥७९॥
yatha-sthanam prayateshu dhyana-nishtheshu teshv atha ।
drashtum bhramami sambhavya purvavaj jagad-ishvaram ।।79।।

Then, when all of them had returned to their respective places and become absorbed in meditation, I wandered throughout that realm, expecting that, as in the worlds I had previously visited, I would somewhere behold the Lord of the universe.

Dig-darshini

After the worshippers and those whom they worshipped had all returned to their respective residences, disappearing from one another's sight, Gopa-kumar began searching throughout Tapoloka for Jagadisha. He reasoned that, just as the Lord was present in Swarga and Maharloka, He must surely also be manifest somewhere in a hidden place within this higher realm.

Why did Gopa-kumar not simply ask the sages where Bhagavan could be found? During their assembly there had been no opportunity for a private question, because the great yogis of Tapoloka had gathered together and were engaged in their mutual discussions. Afterwards they returned to their respective places and became deeply absorbed in meditation. Gopa-kumar therefore found no suitable opportunity to ask.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 80
इतस्ततो न दृष्ट्वा तमपृच्छं तान् महामुनीन्।
न ते स्तुवन्तं मामग्रे नमन्तं लोकयन्त्यपि ॥८०॥
itas tato na drishtva tam apriccham tan maha-munin ।
na te stuvantam mam agre namantam lokayanty api ।।80।।

When I could not find Him anywhere, I approached those great sages and asked them, "Where is the Lord of the universe in this realm?" But although I stood before them, praised them, and bowed down to them, they did not even notice me.

Dig-darshini

After searching here and there without finding Jagadisha, Gopa-kumar approached the great sages and asked them where the Lord could be found. Yet they did not reply. Indeed, they did not even

look at him, although he stood directly before them, offered praises, and repeatedly bowed down.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 81
प्रायः सर्वे समाधिस्था नैष्ठिका ऊर्ध्वरेतसः।
स्वात्मारामाः पूर्णकामाः सेव्यमानाश्च सिद्धिभिः ॥८१॥
prayah sarve samadhi-stha naishthika urdhva-retasah ।
svatmaramah purna-kamah sevyamanash ca siddhibhih ।।81।।

Almost all of them remained absorbed in samadhi. They were lifelong brahmacaris, urdhva-retas, completely satisfied within the self, their every desire fulfilled, while the mystic siddhis themselves attended upon them.

Dig-darshini

This explains why the sages did not respond to Gopa-kumar. Nearly all of them remained absorbed in samadhi, emerging only occasionally for mutual spiritual discussion or for external acts of worship. They were naishthika-brahmacaris and urdhva-retas, firmly established in lifelong celibacy. They were svatmarama, finding complete satisfaction within the self and having no attraction elsewhere, because all their desires were already perfectly fulfilled. Consequently even the personified mystic perfections, such as anima and the other siddhis, stood ready to serve them.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 82
भगवद्दर्शनाशा च महती फलिता न मे।
उताभूद् विरमन्तीव तेषां सङ्गे स्वभावतः ॥८२॥
bhagavad-darshansha ca mahati phalita na me ।
utabhud viramantiva tesham sange svabhavatah ।।82।।

My long and powerful hope of beholding Bhagavan remained unfulfilled. Indeed, through association with those sages, that very longing seemed naturally to be diminishing.

Dig-darshini

Gopa-kumar's deep desire to behold Bhagavan had continued for a very long time, yet in Tapoloka it found no fulfilment because he could not obtain the Lord's direct darshan. More striking still, association with those self-satisfied sages exerted such a natural influence upon him that even his long-standing desire to see Bhagavan seemed gradually to be subsiding.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 83
तत्राथाप्यवसं तेषां प्रभावभरदर्शनात्।
गुरुवाग्गौरवाद् दृष्टफलत्वाच्चात्यजन् जपम् ॥८३॥
tatrathapy avasam tesham prabhava-bhara-darshant ।
guru-vag-gauravad drishta-phalatvac catyajan japam ।।83।।

Nevertheless, I continued living there because I directly witnessed the extraordinary power of those sages. And out of reverence for

my guru's instruction, and because I had already seen the excellent results of my mantra, I did not abandon my japa.

Dig-darshini

One might ask why Gopa-kumar did not simply return to Maharloka. Despite his inability to behold Bhagavan, he remained in Tapoloka because he had personally witnessed the immense spiritual power of its inhabitants, displayed through their extraordinary siddhis and other manifestations of potency.

Did association with these atmaramas cause him to abandon not only his desire to see Jagadisha but also the mantra-japa that nourished that desire? No. He remembered his guru's solemn instruction that he should never abandon his japa, and he regarded that command with profound reverence. Moreover, he had already directly experienced the mantra's excellent fruits. Therefore he never gave it up. Still, although the practice continued, at this stage it should be understood that the former intensity of his affection and eagerness in chanting had become somewhat diminished.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 84
स्थानस्वभावजाच्चित्तप्रसादानन्दतोऽधिकम्।
तेन सम्पद्यमानेन सा दिदृक्षा विवर्धिता ॥८४॥
sthana-svabhava-jac chitta-prasadanandato 'dhikam ।
tena sampadyamanena sa didriksha vivardhita ।।84।।

Yet through that japa an even greater joy and clarity of heart arose, surpassing the peaceful happiness naturally produced by residence in that realm, and my desire to behold Bhagavan grew stronger again.

Dig-darshini

One might then wonder how the special greatness attributed to Tapoloka can be reconciled with Gopa-kumar's experience there. Gopa-kumar therefore explains both the glory of that realm and how bhakti, in the form of mantra-japa, ultimately overcomes the tendency to become immersed in the paltry feeling of self-satisfaction enjoyed by atmarama sages. Tapoloka naturally produces a profound serenity and happiness within the heart. Yet through Gopa-kumar's continued mantra-japa, a still greater happiness arose spontaneously within him, surpassing even that peaceful satisfaction. As this deeper joy of bhakti manifested, his long-standing desire to behold Jagadisha, which had seemed to weaken through association with the atmarama sages, began instead to increase with renewed intensity.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 85
सदा नीलाचले राजज्जगन्नाथदिदृक्षया।
यियासुं तत्र संलक्ष्याब्रवीन् मां पिप्पलायनः ॥८५॥

sada nilacale rajaj-jagannatha-didrikshaya ।
yiyasum tatra samlakshyabravin mam pippalayanah ।।85।।

Longing to behold Sri Jagannatha, who remains perpetually manifest at Nilacala, I became intent upon going there. Seeing this, Pippalayana spoke to me.

Dig-darshini

Because Gopa-kumar could not behold Bhagavan in Tapoloka, his desire turned once more toward Sri Jagannatha, who remains perpetually visible and resplendent at Nilacala. The word "perpetually" is significant. In Swarga and Maharloka Bhagavan sometimes disappears from sight, whereas at Nilacala Sri Jagannatha remains continuously manifest. Remembering this, Gopa-kumar resolved to go there. Pippalayana recognised his intention, either from external and internal signs—his wandering restlessly here and there, the fading of his face, his sorrow, and similar symptoms—or simply through his own omniscient insight. Pippalayana was one of the nine exalted sons of Rishabhadeva, among whom Kavi was foremost.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 86
श्रीपिप्पलायन उवाच—
इदं महत्पदं हित्वा कथमन्यद् यियाससि ।
कथं वा भ्रमसि द्रष्टुं दृग्भ्यां तं परमेश्वरम् ॥८६॥
sri-pippalayana uvaca—
idam mahat-padam hitva katham anyad yiyassasi ।
katham va bhramasi drashtum drigbhyam tam parameshvaram ।।86।।

Sri Pippalayana said: "Why do you wish to leave this exalted realm and go somewhere else? And why do you wander about trying to behold that Parameshwar with your physical eyes?"

Dig-darshini

Tapoloka is called a great realm because it is the abode of the exalted urdhva-retas yogis, or because it is supremely excellent, being the resting place of happiness millions of times greater than the happiness of the Prajapatis. Pippalayana therefore asks why Gopa-kumar wishes to abandon such a place for another realm. More fundamentally, he questions why Gopa-kumar is wandering about in an attempt to see with his eyes that Supreme Lord who is beyond the range of the ordinary senses.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 87
समाधत्स्व मनः स्वीयं ततो द्रक्ष्यसि तं स्वतः ।
सर्वत्र बहिरन्तश्च सदा साक्षादिव स्थितम् ॥८७॥
samadhatsva manah sviyam tato drakshyasi tam svatah ।
sarvatra bahir antash ca sada sakshad iva sthitam ।।87।।

"Fix your own mind in samadhi. Then you will effortlessly behold Him everywhere, within and without, always present as though directly before you."

Dig-darshini

Pippalayana tells Gopa-kumar to turn the movements of his mind inward and become absorbed in samadhi. Then Bhagavan will reveal Himself spontaneously, just as one's face becomes visible of itself when a mirror has been properly cleaned.

One might ask whether Bhagavan should be sought here or somewhere else. Pippalayana answers that He is present everywhere, both within and without. The expression "as though directly present" is used because this vision is not actually produced by the physical eyes. Thus there is no reason to wander from place to place in an attempt to behold such a Lord through ordinary sight.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 88

परमात्मा वासुदेवः सच्चिदानन्दविग्रहः ।
नितान्तं शोधिते चित्ते स्फुरत्येष न चान्यतः ॥८८॥

paramatma vasudevah sat-chit-ananda-vigrahah ।
nitantam shodhite citte sphuraty esha na canyatah ।।88।।

"Paramatma, Vasudeva, whose form is eternal existence, consciousness, and bliss, manifests within a heart that has been completely purified. He does not reveal Himself elsewhere."

Dig-darshini

Pippalayana gives the reason. Vasudeva is the presiding Lord of consciousness and therefore manifests within the purified chitta. Thus Srimad Bhagavatam states, "Pure sattva is called vasudeva" (4.3.23).

The chitta (the heart of a person) must be purified to the highest degree, freed from the contamination produced by the manifestation of objects other than Bhagavan. The Lord does not reveal Himself elsewhere—that is, by some other means, or through an external sense such as the physical eye. Because His vigraha is sat-chit-ananda, the concentrated reality of Para Brahman, He is self-luminous and unlimited. A finite external sense cannot grasp Him.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 89

तदानीं च मनोवृत्त्यन्तराभावात् सुसिध्यति ।
चेतसा खलु यत् साक्षाच्चक्षुषा दर्शनं हरेः ॥८९॥

tadanim ca mano-vritty-antarabhavat susidhyati ।
cetasa khalu yat sakshac cakshusha darshanm hareh ।।89।।

"At that time, because no other movement of the mind remains, the direct vision of Hari that appears to occur through the eyes is in fact perfectly accomplished through consciousness itself."

Dig-darshini

One might object that this is merely meditation and not actual darshan, since direct vision should occur through the eyes. Pippalayana replies that what is called the direct visual perception of Hari is in truth accomplished by the chitta itself. At the moment Bhagavan manifests within consciousness, no mental movement remains apart from the awareness of His presence.

The meaning is that when the mind is wholly absorbed in Sri Bhagavan's form, one does not maintain a separate awareness such as, "I am seeing Bhagavan only with my mind and not with my eyes." The experience is direct vision itself, as though sight were occurring through the eyes. Indeed, the word su indicates that this inner vision can be even more complete, because the finite physical eye cannot simultaneously apprehend all the limbs of Bhagavan's form or fully perceive the particular beauty and sweetness manifested in each of them.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 90
मनःसुखेऽन्तर्भवति सर्वेन्द्रियसुखं स्वतः।
तद्वृत्तिष्वपि वाक्चक्षुःश्रुत्यादीन्द्रियवृत्तयः ॥९०॥
manah-sukhe 'ntarbhavati sarvendriya-sukham svatah ।
tad-vrittishv api vak-cakshuh-shruty-adindriya-vrittayah ।।90।।

"When the mind experiences happiness, the happiness of all the senses is naturally included within it. Likewise, within the activities of the mind are included the functions of speech, sight, hearing, and the other senses."

Dig-darshini

One might concede that Bhagavan can be perceived through the mind but still argue that seeing Him with the physical eyes must produce greater happiness. Pippalayana answers that when the mind is happy, not merely the pleasure of the eyes but the happiness of all the senses is included within that experience. This occurs naturally because all the senses depend upon the mind, just as watering the root of a tree automatically nourishes its branches and leaves.

One might further argue that the mind can accomplish remembrance, but not the distinct pleasures of kirtan, seeing, hearing, and the other activities of the senses. Pippalayana replies that the functions of speech, sight, hearing, and all the other senses are themselves included within the functions of the mind. Thus through the mind one may experience kirtan, darshan, hearing, and the other forms of engagement.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 91
मनोवृत्तिं विना सर्वेन्द्रियाणां वृत्तयोऽफलाः ।
कृतापीहाकृतैव स्यादात्मन्यनुपलब्धितः ॥९१॥
mano-vrittim vina sarvendriyanam vrittayo 'phalah ।
kritapiha kritaiva syad atmany anupalabdhitah ।।91।।

"Without the corresponding activity of the mind, the functions of all the senses bear no fruit. Even when the senses perform their actions, those actions are as good as not performed if the self does not become aware of them."

Dig-darshini

Having established the point positively, Pippalayana now demonstrates it by the opposite case. The fruit of each sense is the apprehension of its corresponding object. Without an accompanying movement of the mind, the senses cannot deliver that fruit. Though an external sense may perform the activity of contacting its object, that activity is effectively as though it had never occurred if the jiva does not experience the object through the mind.

A familiar example is hearing a beautiful hymn being recited while one's mind is elsewhere: the ears may receive the sound, yet one does not actually experience what has been heard. Thus Bhagavan's manifestation within a particular movement of a completely purified consciousness is itself true darshan. Direct vision is not fundamentally produced by the physical eyes, for Bhagavan lies beyond the scope of ordinary sensory activity.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 92
कदाचिद् भक्तवात्सल्याद् यातु चेद् दृश्यतां दृशोः ।
ज्ञानदृष्ट्यैव तज्जातमभिमानः परं दृशोः ॥९२॥
kadacid bhakta-vatsalyad yatu ced drishyatam drishoh ।
jnana-drishtyaiva taj jatam abhimanah param drishoh ।।92।।

"If, out of affection for His devotees, Bhagavan sometimes becomes visible to their eyes, even then that vision actually occurs through the spiritual faculty of perception. The devotee merely feels, 'I am seeing Him with my eyes.'"

Dig-darshini

One might object that Dhruva, Prahlada, and other great devotees are famous for having directly seen Bhagavan with their physical eyes. Pippalayana replies that Bhagavan may indeed become visibly manifest before the eyes because of His bhakta-vatsalya—His special affection for His devotees, by which He fulfils even their desire to make their eyes successful.

Nevertheless, the actual apprehension of Bhagavan still occurs through jnana-drishti, the spiritual faculty of awareness, rather

than through the material eyes themselves. A finite sense possessing limited qualities cannot independently apprehend the infinitely unlimited Supreme Lord.

Why, then, is such an experience commonly described as seeing Bhagavan with one's own eyes, and how does this demonstrate His affection for His devotee? Because the jiva genuinely experiences the conviction, "Bhagavan is directly visible before me; I am seeing Him with these very eyes." This experience itself reveals His bhakta-vatsalya. There is therefore no need to suppose that the material eye independently acquires the power to grasp an object completely beyond its natural capacity.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 93
तस्य कारुण्यशक्त्या वा दृश्योऽस्त्वपि बहिर्दृशोः ।
तथापि दर्शनानन्दः स्वयोनौ जायते हृदि ॥९३॥
tasya karunya-shaktya va drishyo 'stv api bahir-drishoh ।
tathapi darshannandah sva-yonau jayate hridi ।।93।।

"Or, by the power of His mercy, let Him indeed become visible even to the external eyes. Still, the bliss arising from that darshan is born within the heart, its proper source."

Dig-darshini

One might argue that nothing is impossible for Parameshwar. Pippalayana accepts this. By the extraordinary power of Bhagavan's compassion—the same divine influence described in the saying, "He makes the mute eloquent and enables the lame to cross mountains"—Bhagavan may indeed become visible to the physical eyes.

Alternatively, His mercy may invest those very eyes with a special power enabling them to perceive Him. Yet even granting this completely, the happiness arising from Bhagavan's darshan appears within the heart alone. The heart is the place in which such happiness becomes manifest, because sorrow, joy, suffering, and similar experiences belong to the mind.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 94
अनन्तरं च तत्रैव विलसन् पर्यवस्यति ।
मन एव महापात्रं तत्सुखग्रहणोचितम् ॥९४॥
anantaram ca tatraiva vilasan paryavasyati ।
mana eva maha-patram tat-sukha-grahanocitam ।।94।।

"Afterwards that bliss continues to shine within the heart and finally rests there. The mind alone is the great vessel truly capable of receiving the happiness of Bhagavan's darshan."

Dig-darshini

Even after Bhagavan has disappeared from external sight, the bliss of that vision continues to shine within the heart. The devotee repeatedly reflects, "Ah! With my own eyes I beheld Bhagavan in such a form, possessing such extraordinary beauty!" In this way the happiness of darshan continues to unfold in many forms and finally finds its lasting resting place within the heart.

Thus even the fruit of seeing Bhagavan with the eyes ultimately rests within the mind, and during the actual darshan the happiness itself also arises there. From Pippalayana's perspective, therefore, there is no necessity to insist upon physical sight as the essential means of beholding Bhagavan.

One might object that the eye is itself an organ of knowledge and therefore could be the vessel in which this happiness arises and remains. Pippalayana answers that the mind alone is considered by those versed in spiritual knowledge to be the maha-patra, the great and appropriate vessel for receiving the extraordinary happiness of Bhagavan's darshan. The expression also suggests the analogy of a great king's chief minister, who alone may be entrusted with some supremely precious treasure rather than an ordinary servant.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 95
तत्प्रसादोदयाद् यावत् सुखं वर्धेत मानसम्।
तावद् वर्धितुमीशिता न चान्यद् बाह्यमिन्द्रियम् ॥९५॥
tat-prasadodayad yavat sukham vardheta manasam ।
tavad vardhitum ishita na canyad bahyam indriyam ।।95।।

"As purity increases—or as Bhagavan's mercy arises—the happiness experienced by the mind can expand without limit accordingly. No external sense possesses such a capacity for expansion."

Dig-darshini

One might object that the mind also appears to be finite. Pippalayana replies that as the mind's prasada—its purity and clarity—increases, the happiness experienced within it can correspondingly expand. Alternatively, the word prashad refers to Bhagavan's favour: as His merciful disposition toward the devotee increasingly manifests, the mind becomes capable of receiving an ever greater measure of spiritual happiness.

A purified consciousness is subtle and therefore capable of becoming conformed to the nature of the self and expanding in its capacity for spiritual experience. No external sense can do the same, precisely because it remains an outward, limited instrument. Thus, in Pippalayana's reasoning, the purified heart is uniquely suited to receive the ever-expanding bliss of Bhagavan's revelation.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 96
अन्तर्ध्यानेन दृष्टोऽपि साक्षाद् दृष्ट इव प्रभुः।
कृपाविशेषांस्तनुते प्रमाणं तत्र पद्मजः ॥९६॥
antar-dhyanena drishto 'pi sakshad drishta iva prabhuh ।
kripa-vishesham tanute pramanam tatra padmajah ।।96।।

"Even when the Lord is seen only through inner meditation, He bestows special expressions of mercy just as though He had been directly seen before one's eyes. Brahma, the lotus-born, is the evidence of this."

Dig-darshini

One might concede that the happiness of seeing Bhagavan in meditation may surpass the happiness of external sight, but object that the extraordinary blessings associated with direct darshan—receiving boons, speaking with the Lord, being touched by Him, and so forth—are possible only when He appears externally. Pippalayana replies that this is not so. Even when Bhagavan is seen within through meditation, He can bestow all such special forms of mercy, because He is Prabhu, the all-powerful Lord.

The lotus-born Brahma provides the evidence. The name Padmaja indicates Brahma at the beginning of creation, when he appeared upon the lotus. As described in the Second Canto of Srimad Bhagavatam, after Brahma performed tapas and entered samadhi, Bhagavan revealed His own supreme abode to him: "The Lord showed him His own realm, beyond which there is nothing higher" (2.9.9), and Brahma there "beheld the Lord of all the Satvatas" (2.9.14). Overwhelmed with joy at that vision, Brahma bowed at the Lord's lotus feet, his body thrilled with prema and his eyes filled with tears. Bhagavan then spoke to him with affectionate words and touched him with His hand (2.9.17–18). He also instructed Brahma through the celebrated four essential Bhagavatam verses and granted him the blessings he desired. Afterwards Hari withdrew that form from Brahma's sight (2.9.37).

The Third Canto similarly describes how Brahma, after prolonged yoga, beheld within his own heart the Lord whom he had previously been unable to see, reclining upon Sesha. Brahma then offered prayers while absorbed in Him, and Bhagavan responded with words such as, "O Veda-garbha, do not become discouraged," and, "I am pleased with you; may all auspiciousness be yours." Thus the scriptures clearly establish that after Bhagavan is seen within meditation, He may grant boons, converse with the devotee, touch him, and display other forms of supreme mercy.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 97
साक्षाद् दर्शनमप्यस्य भक्तानामेव हर्षदम्।
कंसदुर्योधनादीनां भयदोषादिनोच्यते ॥९७॥

sakshad darshanm apy asya bhaktanam eva harshadam ।
kamsa-duryodhanadinam bhaya-doshadinocyate ।।97।।

"Even direct vision of Bhagavan gives joy only to His devotees. The cases of Kamsa, Duryodhana, and others demonstrate this, for seeing Him produced fear, hostility, and other painful reactions in them."

Dig-darshini

One might argue that direct perception of Bhagavan must itself be the highest blessing and the ultimate fruit even of meditation and other forms of bhakti. Pippalayana replies that direct vision of Hari gives true happiness only to His devotees, not merely to anyone who happens to see Him.

How is this known? The examples of Kamsa, Duryodhana, and others make it clear. Their direct sight of Bhagavan produced fear, anger, envy, grief, distress, and similar reactions rather than spiritual happiness. Therefore external vision by itself cannot be regarded as the cause of the bliss of Bhagavan's darshan.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verses 98–99

परानन्दघनं श्रीमत् सर्वेन्द्रियगुणाञ्जनम् ।
नारायणस्य रूपं तत् साक्षात् सम्पश्यतामपि ॥९८॥
मधुकैटभमुख्यानामसुराणां दुरात्मनाम् ।
न लीनो दुष्टभावोऽपि सर्वपीडाकरो हि यः ॥९९॥

parananda-ghanam srimat sarvendriya-gunanjanam ।
narayanasya rupam tat sakshat sampashyatam api ।।98।।
madhu-kaitabha-mukhyanam asuranam duratmanam ।
na lino dushta-bhavo 'pi sarva-pida-karo hi yah ।।99।।

"Although wicked asuras headed by Madhu and Kaitabha directly beheld Narayana's glorious form—the concentrated embodiment of supreme bliss, whose beauty and sweetness delight all the senses—even then their evil disposition, the source of all their suffering, did not disappear."

Dig-darshini

Pippalayana elaborates upon the previous point. Madhu, Kaitabha, and other asuras such as Maya, Taraka, and Kalanemi directly beheld the incomparable form of Narayana without any obstruction or limitation. Yet not only did supreme bliss fail to arise within them—their wicked disposition itself did not disappear.

That disposition was the cause of suffering for the world. Alternatively, the phrase may mean that it was the source of the entirety of their own misery, so that despite seeing Bhagavan directly, even their suffering was not removed. The reason was that they were duratmas: their consciousness remained impure because

they lacked bhakti; or, alternatively, they were wicked by nature, hostile toward Bhagavan and devoid of devotion.

Yet the form they saw was parananda-ghana, concentrated supreme bliss itself; srimat, endowed with limitless splendour and beauty; and sarvendriya-gunanjana, possessing qualities such as beauty and sweetness that delight all the senses. Alternatively, the expression means that His form brings to all the senses the happiness associated with their respective objects. Even though those asuras directly beheld such a form, their wicked disposition did not disappear.

The account of Kamsa, Duryodhana, and others has not been elaborated here. It should be understood that this is because, at that stage, Gopa-kumar was not yet qualified to hear accounts concerning Sri Krishna, through whom the ultimate summit of supreme greatness is to be revealed. Nevertheless, the point may be understood as follows. In the wrestling arena at Mathura, although Sri Nanda and the other devotees, who loved Sri Nanda-nandana alone, beheld His moonlike face and became increasingly immersed in the ocean of prema-rasa, Kamsa and his followers saw the very same Krishna and experienced no happiness. Instead, intense fear, anger, and other causes of torment arose within them.

Similarly, in the assembly of the Kauravas, Vidura, Bhishma, and the other devotees attained supreme happiness by beholding Bhagavan and drinking the nectar of His words. Yet Duryodhana and the others, although they were His relatives, born within the same extended royal lineage and connected with Bhagavan through conversation, sitting together, marriage alliances, and other relationships, experienced no happiness at all. More than that, even the disease within their hearts caused by their grave offences toward Bhagavan's dearest devotees was not relieved. Consequently, the great fire of anguish within them, continually fed by hundreds of faults such as anger, envy, and pride, did not cease even for a moment.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 100
आनन्दकस्वभावोऽपि भक्तिमाहात्म्यदर्शनात्।
भक्तान् हर्षयितुं कुर्याद् दुर्घटं च स ईश्वरः ॥१००॥
anandaka-svabhavo 'pi bhakti-mahatmya-darshant ।
bhaktan harshayitum kuryad durghatam ca sa ishvarah ।।100।।

"Although His very nature is to bestow bliss, that Supreme Lord can even accomplish what appears impossible, concealing that bliss-giving nature in order to reveal the greatness of bhakti and thereby bring joy to His devotees."

Dig-darshini

One might object: when the Supreme Reality is directly realized, how could any defect or suffering remain? Sri Bhagavan is the concentrated embodiment of Para Brahman. How, then, could even direct vision of Him fail to remove the faults and sufferings of those who behold Him?

The answer is that Sri Narayana Himself, although by nature the giver of bliss to the entire universe, can accomplish even what seems impossible. Just as it would ordinarily be impossible for fire to conceal its inherent heat, so it would seem impossible for Bhagavan to conceal His own natural power of bestowing bliss. Yet He does so in order to reveal the greatness of bhakti. The natural glory of bhakti is demonstrated by the fact that even Bhagavan's inherently bliss-giving presence is not experienced as bliss by those devoid of bhakti; indeed, they may experience precisely the opposite.

He does this to delight those devoted to the path of bhakti, for seeing the extraordinary greatness of bhakti inspires everyone to take shelter of it. For this reason some exalted devotees even approve of the fear and suffering experienced by wicked nondevotees when these ultimately serve that purpose. Thus Yudhishthira, speaking in the Seventh Canto concerning Sisupala and Dantavakra, says that "no leprosy appeared upon their tongues, nor did they enter the darkness of hell." The terrible fear and suffering experienced by those who hate and revile Bhagavan may itself serve as an atonement for those grave offences and eventually prepare the way for the supreme fruit, entrance into bhakti.

But how can Bhagavan conceal His own nature? Fire can never cease being hot. The answer is simply that He is Ishwara, endowed with inconceivable and astonishing powers beyond the reach of ordinary reasoning. Thus it is established that even when Bhagavan is directly seen, bliss arises only through bhakti and not otherwise.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 101
भक्तौ नवविधायां च मुख्यं स्मरणमेव हि।
तत् समग्रेन्द्रियश्रेष्ठमनोवृत्तिसमर्पणम् ॥१०१॥
bhaktau nava-vidhayam ca mukhyam smaranam eva hi |
tat samagrendriya-shreshtha-mano-vritti-samarpanam ||101||

"Among the nine forms of bhakti, smarana is the primary form, for it consists of offering to Bhagavan the movements of the mind, which is the foremost and most comprehensive of all the senses."

Dig-darshini

What relevance does all this have to the subject under discussion? Pippalayana now explains. Among the nine forms of bhakti,

smarana is especially important because it consists of completely offering and fixing upon Bhagavan the activities of the mind, which is the chief among all the senses and comprehends their functions.

In this way the superiority of smarana is established even in relation to kirtan and the other practices, which consist of offering the activities of speech and the other senses, all of which depend upon the mind.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 102
अन्तरङ्गान्तराङ्गं तु प्रेमभक्तिं यथारुचि ।
दातुमर्हत्यविश्रामं मन एव समाहितम् ॥१०२॥
antarangantarangam tu prema-bhaktim yatha-ruci ।
datum arhaty avishramam mana eva samahitam ।।102।।

"A mind firmly established in samadhi can continually bestow, according to one's particular taste, prema-bhakti, which is more intimate than even the most intimate means of attaining Sri Bhagavan."

Dig-darshini

Among the means that bring one near Sri Bhagavan, such as jnana and vairagya, bhakti is the most intimate; and prema-bhakti, devotion performed without calculation of motive and permeated by prema, is more intimate still. A mind made steady and concentrated is especially capable of knowing prema-bhakti according to one's particular spiritual taste.

This is because the mind governs all the senses and possesses the power to engage each of them in its respective activity. Moreover, bhajana performed within the mind is generally free from external impediments, and prema itself becomes manifest through deep absorption of the mind in Bhagavan.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verses 103–105
अशेषसाधनैः साध्यः समस्तार्थाधिकाधिकः ।
यो वशीकरणे गाढोपायो भगवतोऽद्वयः ॥१०३॥
तत्प्रसादैकलाभ्यो यस्तद्भक्तैकमहानिधिः ।
विचित्रपरमानन्दमाधुर्यभारपूरितः ॥१०४॥
महानिर्वच्यमाहात्म्यः पदार्थः प्रेमसंज्ञकः ।
परिणामविशेषे हि चेतोवृत्तेरुदेति सः ॥१०५॥
ashesha-sadhanaih sadhyah samastarthadhikadhikah ।
yo vashi-karane gadho-payo bhagavato 'dvayah ।।103।।
tat-prasadaika-labhyo yas tad-bhaktaika-maha-nidhih ।
vicitra-paramananda-madhurya-bhara-puritah ।।104।।
maha-nirvacya-mahatmyah padarthah prema-samjnakah ।
parinama-visheshe hi ceto-vritter udeti sah ।।105।।

"That reality called prema, sought through all spiritual practices, surpasses every other attainment, even engagement in worship of

Bhagavan. It is the one unfailing and powerful means of bringing Bhagavan under the loving control of His devotee. It can be obtained only by His mercy and is the supreme treasure of His devotees, filled with an extraordinary abundance of the sweetness of supreme bliss. Its greatness is vast and indescribable. Prema arises when the changed heart reaches a most exalted stage of transformation."

Dig-darshini

The reality called prema manifests when the movements of the heart undergo a particularly exalted transformation. This statement may also be understood as providing the reason for the preceding verse. Prema is described through seven characteristics. It is the goal sought through all forms of sadhana, including karma, jnana, vairagya, and the rest, because it is their supreme and principal fruit. It is greater than all other attainments, including dharma, artha, kama, and moksha, and even greater than the worship of Bhagavan when a devotee regards worship considered merely as sadhana – a means to an end – because prema is the fruit of worship. It is the one uniquely powerful means of bringing Bhagavan, the fuly independent Lord, under loving control. Like a strong chain around the foot of an intoxicated elephant, prema binds Bhagavan's lotus feet and makes Him a willing subordinate to His beloved devotee. Prema can be obtained only by Bhagavan's mercy; it cannot be produced by one's own strength or effort. It is the one supreme treasure of His devotees, because by its nature it bestows happiness and fulfils every genuine desire. It is filled with an extraordinary abundance of sweetness and supreme bliss, before which even the experience of brahmananda becomes insignificant. Its greatness is therefore vast, unlimited, and impossible to describe adequately. Although not explicitly stated here because of its profoundly confidential nature, one should also understand its power to manifest extraordinary, intimate pastimes with Sri Bhagavan, and other wonders. The full conclusion concerning this teaching Pippalayana is presently giving will later be revealed through the words of Bhagavan's own associates. These confidential matters are not appropriate for detailed discussion in Tapoloka, where samadhi is the predominant spiritual practice.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 106
मनसो हि समाधानं मन्यसे दुष्करं यदि।
चक्षुःसाफल्यकामो वा भगवन्तं दिदृक्षसे ॥१०६॥
manaso hi samadhanam manyase dushkaram yadi ।
cakshuh-saphalya-kamo va bhagavantam didrikshase ।।106।।

"If you consider concentration of the mind too difficult, or if you desire to make your eyes successful by beholding Bhagavan directly, then there is another course for you."

Dig-darshini

It has been explained that by concentrating the mind one may easily behold Bhagavan everywhere. But perhaps Gopa-kumar considers such concentration difficult. Or perhaps, because of the natural influence of Tapoloka or the power of his mantra-japa, concentration of the mind is already possible for him, yet he still longs to fulfil the purpose of his physical eyes, which remain unsatisfied because Bhagavan has not appeared before them.

If, therefore, he specifically desires to behold Bhagavan with his eyes, Pippalayana now tells him where to go.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verses 107–109

तद् गच्छ भारतं वर्षं तत्र नोऽत्रत्यमीश्वरम् ।
नारायणं नरसखं पश्याद्रौ गन्धमादने ॥१०७॥
अन्तर्बहिश्च पश्यामस्तं समाधिपरायणाः ।
नातो विच्छेददुःखं स्यादित्यगात् तत्र स प्रभुः ॥१०८॥
लोकशिक्षाहितार्थं तु कुर्वन्नास्ते महत् तपः ।
धनुर्विद्यागुरुर्ब्रह्मचारीवेशो जटाधरः ॥१०९॥

tad gaccha bharatam varsham tatra no 'tratyam ishvaram ।
narayanam nara-sakham pashyadrau gandhamadane ।।107।।
antar bahish ca pashyamas tam samadhi-parayanah ।
nato viccheda-duhkham syad ity agat tatra sa prabhuh ।।108।।
loka-shiksha-hitartham tu kurvann aste mahat tapah ।
dhanur-vidya-gurur brahmacari-vesho jatadharah ।।109।।

"Then go to Bharata-varsha. There, upon Mount Gandhamadana, you may behold Narayana, the friend of Nara, who is our Lord and the presiding deity of this realm. Because we are absorbed in samadhi, we behold Him both within and without, and therefore we suffer no pain of separation from Him. For this reason that Lord has gone there. For the welfare and instruction of the world He remains there performing great austerities, dressed as a brahmacari with matted hair, and He is the master of the science of archery."

Dig-darshini

Pippalayana tells Gopa-kumar to go to Bharata-varsha and there, upon Mount Gandhamadana, behold Narayana, the companion of Nara. This Narayana is their own Lord and the presiding deity of Tapoloka.

One might ask how the residents of Tapoloka can remain there without Him, and how Bhagavan, being affectionate to His devotees, could leave them and reside elsewhere. Pippalayana explains that because they are devoted to samadhi, they behold Him both within themselves and externally. Therefore they experience no suffering caused by separation from Him. For that very reason Sri Narayana has gone to Gandhamadana.

There He performs great tapas for the welfare and instruction of the people of the world, teaching them the path of austerity and spiritual discipline. He appears in the dress of a brahmacari, with matted hair, and as the preceptor of the science of archery. From this one should also understand that He bears a bow in His hand and displays the other features appropriate to that form.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 110
श्रीगोपकुमार उवाच—
तत्रैव गन्तुकामं मां चत्वारः सनकादयः।
पश्यात्रैव तमित्युक्त्वा बहुरूपाण्यदर्शयन् ॥११०॥
sri-gopa-kumara uvaca—
tatraiva gantu-kamam mam catvarah sanakadayah ।
pashyatraiva tam ity uktva bahu-rupany adarshayan ।।110।।
Sri Gopa-kumar said: Just as I was preparing to go there, the four Kumaras headed by Sanaka told me, "Behold Him right here." Then they revealed to me many forms of Sri Bhagavan.

Dig-darshini
As Gopa-kumar was preparing to depart specifically for Gandhamadana, the four brothers—Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanatana, and Sanat-kumara—said to him, "See Bhagavan here in this very realm, in this very place." They then caused many forms of Sri Bhagavan to become manifest before him.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 111
एको नारायणो वृत्तो विष्णुरूपोऽपरोऽभवत्।
अन्यो यज्ञेशरूपोऽभूत् परो विविधरूपवान् ॥१११॥
eko narayano vritto vishnu-rupo 'paro 'bhavat ।
anyo yajnesha-rupo 'bhut paro vividha-rupavan ।।111।।
One of them became a direct manifestation of Narayana, another appeared as Vishnu, another became like Yajnesvara, and the fourth manifested many different forms.

Dig-darshini
The manner in which these forms were revealed is now described. One of the four—perhaps Sanaka, the foremost among them—became Narayana, the supreme among men. Another assumed the form of Vishnu, either the very Upendra previously seen in Swarga or a form exactly like Him. Another manifested the form of Yajnesvara, whom Gopa-kumar had worshipped in Maharloka. The fourth successively manifested various forms such as Nrisimha, Vamana, and others.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 112
भयेन वेपमानस्तानवोचं साञ्जलिर्नमन्।
अपराद्धं मया बाढं क्षमध्वं दीनवत्सलाः ॥११२॥

bhayena vepamanas tan avocam sanjalir naman ।
aparaddham maya badham kshamadhvam dina-vatsalah ।।112।।

Trembling with fear, I bowed before them with folded hands and said, "I have certainly committed a grave offence. O you who are affectionate to the fallen, please forgive me."

Dig-darshini

Overcome with fear and trembling before Sanaka and the others, Gopa-kumar addressed them with folded hands: "I have indeed committed a serious offence. O you who are compassionate toward the lowly and distressed, please forgive my transgression."

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 113
स्पृष्टोऽहं तैर्मूर्ध्नि लब्ध्वा समाधिं
दृष्टानि प्राक् तानि रूपाण्यपश्यम्।
व्युत्थानेऽपि ध्यानवेगात् कदाचित्
प्रत्यक्षाणीवानुपश्येयमारात् ॥११३॥
sprishto 'ham tair murdhni labdhva samadhim
drishtani prak tani rupany apashyam ।
vyutthane 'pi dhyana-vegat kadacit
pratyakshanivanupashyeyam arat ।।113।।

They touched me upon the head, and I entered samadhi. Within that state I beheld those forms of Bhagavan that I had previously seen. Even after emerging from samadhi, through the intensity of meditation I would sometimes continue to behold them nearby as though directly present before me.

Dig-darshini

When Sanaka and the others touched Gopa-kumar upon the head, he attained samadhi, complete one-pointed concentration of consciousness. Within that samadhi he again beheld the forms he had previously seen in Maharloka and elsewhere—the forms of Sri Vishnu, Yajnesvara, and the others—and experienced them as though directly present. Later, even after emerging from samadhi and again becoming externally conscious, he would sometimes continue to perceive those forms nearby as though they stood visibly before him. This occurred through the extraordinary force and intensity of his meditation.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 114
ततो जपेऽपि मे निष्ठामविन्दत सुखं स्वतः।
किन्त्वस्या माधुरी भूमेर्व्याकुलीकुरुते मनः ॥११४॥
tato jape 'pi me nishtham avindata sukham svatah ।
kintv asya madhuri bhumer vyakuli-kurute manah ।।114।।

Thereafter my japa also reached a mature and steady state, bringing happiness spontaneously. Yet the sweetness of this land continued to agitate my heart with longing.

Dig-darshini

Through the concentration of his mind and the vision of Bhagavan's forms, Gopa-kumar's mantra-japa attained a mature and steady condition, and happiness arose from it naturally, without effort. In this way he experienced happiness in every respect within Tapoloka.

Nevertheless, the sweetness of this land—Sri Brindaban and the other places of Braja—continued to make his heart restless. Through the remembrance awakened by his japa, separation from Braja again produced sorrow within him. This became the first cause that would eventually impel him to leave Tapoloka and seek another destination.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 115
सुषुप्तिरिव काचिन्मे कदाचिज्जायते दशा।
तया जपेऽन्तरायः स्यात् तत्तद्रूपेक्षणे तथा ॥११५॥
sushuptir iva kacin me kadacij jayate dasha ।
taya jape 'ntarayah syat tat-tad-rupekshane tatha ।।115।।

Sometimes a certain condition would come upon me resembling deep sleep. Because of it, my japa was interrupted, and likewise my vision of those various forms of Bhagavan.

Dig-darshini

At times Gopa-kumar entered a condition of samadhi resembling deep sleep. In that state, the functions of all the senses and of the inner faculties ceased, producing an apparent emptiness like sushupti. This became an obstacle to his japa, because the activity of chanting could no longer continue. In the same way, it interrupted his vision of those indescribable forms of Sri Bhagavan.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 116
विलपामि ततो नीलाचलं जिगमिषामि च।
तत्रत्यैस्तैस्तु तद्वृत्तं पृच्छेयाहं ससान्त्वनम् ॥११६॥
vilapami tato nilacalam jigamishami ca ।
tatratyais tais tu tad-vrittam priccheyaham sa-santvanam ।।116।।

Because of this I would lament and desire to go to Nilacala. Yet I would ask the residents there about this condition of mine, and they would explain it while gently consoling me.

Dig-darshini

Distressed by this interruption, Gopa-kumar would lament: "Alas, how unfortunate I am! What unexpected disturbance has suddenly arisen?" He would then desire to go to Nilacala to behold Sri Jagannatha, where no such obstruction to His darshan existed.

At the same time, he would ask Pippalayana and the other residents of Tapoloka about the cause and nature of his distress. Alternatively,

he asked them for an explanation of that particular state resembling deep sleep. They responded while consoling him with gentle and reassuring words.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 117
सशोकं कथ्यमाना सा श्रुत्वामीभिः प्रशस्यते।
मया तथानुबुध्येत दुःखमेवानुमन्यते ॥११७॥
sa-shokam kathyamana sa shrutvamibhih prashasyate ।
maya tathanubudhyeta duhkham evanumanyate ।।117।।

Although I described that condition to them sorrowfully, they heard of it and praised it. Yet I could not understand it as they did, and I regarded it only as a cause of suffering.

Dig-darshini

Although Gopa-kumar spoke of this condition with grief, Sanaka and the others, or Pippalayana and the other residents of Tapoloka, praised it, saying, "How wonderful! In such a short time you have attained this exceptionally rare and completely pure state."

But Gopa-kumar could not understand why that condition deserved such praise, nor could he properly grasp the meaning of their appreciation. Whether because he did not understand its true nature or because of the inherent nature of his bhakti, he regarded the experience simply as suffering.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 118
अथाभ्यासबलेनान्तर्बहिश्च जगदीश्वरम्।
तत्तद्रूपेण पश्यामि प्रत्यक्षमिव सर्वतः ॥११८॥
athabhyasa-balenantar bahish ca jagad-ishvaram ।
tat-tad-rupena pashyami pratyaksham iva sarvatah ।।118।।

Then, through the power of repeated practice, I began to behold the Lord of the universe everywhere, both within and without, in all those various forms, as though directly present before me.

Dig-darshini

One might wonder how the special greatness previously attributed to Tapoloka was ultimately manifested. Through repeated practice—again and again beholding Bhagavan within meditation—Gopa-kumar acquired such strength of contemplation that he saw Jagadisha everywhere, both inwardly and externally, manifest in the various forms previously described, as though directly present before him.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 119
कदाचित् सनकादींश्च ध्याननिष्ठावशं गतान्।
विन्दतस्तानि रूपाणि दृष्ट्वाप्नोमि परं मुदम् ॥११९॥
kadacit sanakadimsh ca dhyana-nishtha-vasham gatan ।
vindatas tani rupani drishtvapnomi param mudam ।।119।।

Sometimes I also saw Sanaka and the others, through their complete absorption in meditation, themselves assuming those forms. Beholding this, I attained supreme delight.

Dig-darshini

At times Gopa-kumar saw Sanaka and the other sages attaining the very forms of Bhagavan described previously. They had become completely subject to the firmness of their meditation—their minds wholly absorbed in those divine forms and directed toward nothing else.

Through the extraordinary intensity of that meditation, they became like the forms upon which they meditated, just as a caterpillar is traditionally said to attain the form of the particular wasp upon which it remains intensely absorbed. Seeing this extraordinary transformation, Gopa-kumar experienced supreme joy.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 120
तत्तद्रहितकालेऽपि न सीदामि तदाशया।
इत्थं चिरदिनं तत्र सुखेनेवावसं सदा॥१२०॥
tat-tad-rahita-kale 'pi na sidami tad-ashaya ।
ittham cira-dinam tatra sukhenevavasam sada ।।120।।

Even during those times when I did not see such manifestations, I did not become despondent, because I remained sustained by the hope of seeing them again. In this way I lived there for a very long time, almost always happily.

Dig-darshini

Even during periods when Gopa-kumar did not receive those visions of Bhagavan's forms, whether directly or through their manifestation in the sages, he did not sink into despair, because he remained sustained by the hope that such darshan would appear again.

In this way he remained in Tapoloka for a very long time, apparently living continually in happiness. The word "as though," however, indicates that some degree of sorrow still occasionally arose. The principal causes of that sorrow have already been described.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 121
कदाचित् पुष्करद्वीपे स्वभक्तान् कृपयेक्षितुम्।
प्रस्थितो हंसमारूढस्तत्रायातश्चतुर्मुखः॥१२१॥
kadacit pushkara-dvipe sva-bhaktan kripayekshitum ।
prasthito hamsam arudhas tatrayatash catur-mukhah ।।121।।

Once, four-faced Brahma, mounted upon his swan, came there while travelling to Pushkara-dvipa to mercifully visit his devotees.

Dig-darshini

A particular cause is now introduced that will eventually lead Gopa-kumar to Satyaloka. In order to establish the special greatness of that realm, the extraordinary glory of its ruler, Sri Brahma, is first described through what Gopa-kumar personally witnessed.

On one occasion Brahma was travelling to Pushkara-dvipa in order to see his devotees residing there, and on his way he came to Tapoloka. Since Gopa-kumar did not yet understand Brahma's true identity, he simply describes him according to what he saw: he was four-faced and mounted upon a swan.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 122
परमैश्वर्यसम्पन्नः स वृद्धः सनकादिभिः ।
ससम्भ्रमं प्रणम्याभिपूजितो भक्तिनम्रितैः ॥१२२॥
paramaishvarya-sampannah sa vriddhah sanakadibhih ।
sa-sambhramam pranamyabhipujito bhakti-namritaih ।।122।।

Endowed with supreme opulence, that venerable elder was reverentially bowed to and worshipped by Sanaka and the others, who bent before him in devotion.

Dig-darshini

The four-faced Brahma possessed supreme aisvarya, surpassing all others in the splendour of his attendants, associates, and other manifestations of majesty. He appeared venerable and aged because he bore the characteristic long white beard of a supremely authoritative elder. This did not indicate that he was overcome by old age or bodily decline, for as an avatara of Bhagavan his form is composed of concentrated sat-chit-ananda.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 123
आशीर्भिर्वर्धयित्वा तान् स्नेहेनाघ्राय मूर्धसु ।
किञ्चित् समानुशिष्याऽसौ तं द्वीपं वेगतोऽगमत् ॥१२३॥
ashirbhih vardhayitva tan snehenaghraya murdhasu ।
kincit samanushishy asau tam dvipam vegato 'gamat ।।123।।

After blessing them, affectionately smelling their heads, and giving them some instruction, Brahma swiftly departed for that island.

Dig-darshini

Brahma blessed Sanaka and the others and affectionately smelled their heads, as a father does with his sons. He then gave them some instruction. Because Gopa-kumar could not determine precisely what was taught, it is referred to only generally as "some instruction"; it may be understood to have concerned confidential truths of bhakti to Bhagavan. After instructing them repeatedly, four-faced Brahma quickly continued on to Pushkara-dvipa.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 124
तत्तत्ववृत्तं सम्पृष्टा मयावोचन् विहस्य ते।
अत्रागत्याधुनापीमं गोपबालक वेत्सि न ॥१२४॥
tat-tattva-vrittam samprishta mayavocan vihasya te ।
atragatyadhunapimam gopa-balaka vetsi na ।।124।।

When I asked them about his true identity and circumstances, they laughed and said, "O cowherd boy! Even after coming here and remaining for so long, do you still not know who this famous personality is?"

Dig-darshini

Gopa-kumar asked Sanaka and the others to explain the true identity and position of four-faced Brahma. Laughing, they replied, "O cowherd boy! Even after reaching Tapoloka and remaining here for such a long time, do you still not know this supremely renowned person?" Their affectionate address to him as "cowherd boy" itself expresses their amusement.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 125
प्रजापतिपतिर्ब्रह्मा स्रष्टा विश्वस्य नः पिता।
स्वयम्भूः परमेष्ठ्येष जगत् पात्यनुशास्त्यपि ॥१२५॥
prajapati-patir brahma srashta vishvasya nah pita ।
svayambhuh parameshthy esha jagat paty anushasty api ।।125।।

"He is Brahma, the lord of the Prajapatis, creator of the universe, and our father. He is Svayambhu, the self-born, and Parameshthi, holder of the highest cosmic position. He maintains and governs the universe as well."

Dig-darshini

Brahma is the lord and protector even of the Prajapatis such as Bhrigu. He is the father of Sanaka and the others, and consequently also the father of the other descendants arising through them. Yet Brahma himself has no material father, and is therefore called Svayambhu, "self-born," because he appeared directly from the lotus growing from Bhagavan's navel.

He is called Parameshthi because he occupies the highest position within the universe. He protects the world by providing for its inhabitants and governs it by establishing the Vedas and instructing living beings in dharma and the other principles of life. Alternatively, after describing him as the creator of the universe, the two expressions "he protects" and "he governs" may indicate respectively his functions of maintenance and dissolution.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 126
तस्य लोकस्तु सत्याख्यः सर्वोपरि विराजते।
शतजन्मकृतैः शुद्धैः स्वधर्मैर्लभ्यते हि यः ॥१२६॥

tasya lokas tu satyakhyah sarvopari virajate ।
shata-janma-kritaih shuddhaih sva-dharmair labhyate hi yah ।।126।।

"His realm, called Satyaloka, shines above all the other worlds. It can be attained through the pure performance of one's prescribed dharma accumulated over one hundred births."

Dig-darshini

Satyaloka lies above all other worlds, at the highest boundary of the upper portion of the universe. It is attainable through pure performance of one's own prescribed dharma accumulated over one hundred births. Thus Sri Rudra states in the Fourth Canto of Srimad Bhagavatam: "A person firmly devoted to his own dharma for one hundred births attains the position of Virinchi, Brahma" (4.24.29).

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 127
तत्र वैकुण्ठलोकोऽस्ति यस्मिन् श्रीजगदीश्वरः ।
सहस्रशीर्षा वर्तेत स महापुरुषः सदा ॥१२७॥
tatra vaikuntha-loko 'sti yasmin sri-jagad-ishvarah ।
sahasra-shirsha varteta sa maha-purushah sada ।।127।।

"Within that Satyaloka there is a realm called Vaikuntha, where Sri Jagadishvara eternally resides as the thousand-headed Mahapurusha."

Dig-darshini

The sages now describe a special glory of Satyaloka with the intention of showing Gopa-kumar that the desire of his heart could be fulfilled there. Within Satyaloka itself is a particular realm known as Vaikuntha. There Sri Jagadishvara remains eternally manifest in His indescribably glorious form as the thousand-headed Mahapurusha.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 128
तस्य पुत्र इव ब्रह्मा श्रूयते न हि भिद्यते ।
ब्रह्मैव लीलया तत्र मूर्तिभ्यां भाति नो मतम् ॥१२८॥
tasya putra iva brahma shruyate na hi bhidyate ।
brahmaiva lilaya tatra murtibhyam bhati no matam ।।128।।

"Brahma is heard of as though he were the son of that Mahapurusha, yet in truth they are not different. Our understanding is that the same Brahman shines there in play through these two forms."

Dig-darshini

One might ask how Brahma can be described as the ruler of that realm and endowed with such greatness as the position of Parameshthi when Sri Jagadishvara Himself is directly present there. The answer is that Brahma is spoken of in the scriptures as though he were the son of that Mahapurusha. The word "as

though" is used because such a relationship is not understood in the ordinary worldly manner. We know this from scripture, but cannot comprehend its truth completely, because all of us appeared later than Brahma and were ourselves born through him.

One might further object that a son is plainly distinct from his father, as shown by their relationship of worshipper and worshipped. Our understanding, however, is that Brahman alone shines there in play through two forms: the four-faced form of Brahma and the thousand-headed form of the Mahapurusha. Because the characteristics of Jagadishvara are also perceived in Brahma, their essential non-difference is understood.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verses 129–130
श्रीगोपकुमार उवाच—
तच्छ्रुत्वा तत्र गत्वा तं महापुरुषमीक्षितुम् ।
जपं कुर्वंस्तपोलोके निविष्टोऽन्तःसमाधिना ॥१२९॥
मुहुर्तानन्तरं दृष्टी समुन्मील्य व्यलोकयम् ।
ब्रह्मलोकाप्तमात्मानं तं च श्रीजगदीश्वरम् ॥१३०॥
sri-gopa-kumara uvaca—
tac chrutva tatra gatva tam maha-purusham ikshitum ।
japam kurvams tapo-loke nivishto 'ntah-samadhina ।।129।।
muhurtanantaram drishti samunmilya vyalokayam ।
brahma-lokaptam atmanam tam ca sri-jagad-ishvaram ।।130।।

Sri Gopa-kumar said: Hearing this, I desired to go there and behold that Mahapurusha. Remaining seated in Tapoloka, I performed my japa and entered inward samadhi. After a short time I opened my eyes and found that I had reached Brahmaloka, where I also beheld Sri Jagadishvara.

Dig-darshini

Gopa-kumar desired to reach Satyaloka and behold the Mahapurusha residing there. While still seated in Tapoloka, he performed his mantra-japa and became absorbed in inward samadhi. After a short interval he opened his eyes and saw that he himself had arrived in Brahmaloka. There he also beheld Sri Jagadishvara in His form as the Mahapurusha.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 131
श्रीमत्सहस्रभुजशीर्षपदं महान्तं
नीलाम्बुदाभमनुरूपविभूषणाढ्यम् ।
तेजोनिधिं कमलनाभमनन्तभोग-
तल्पे शयानमखिलाक्षिमनोऽभिरामम् ॥१३१॥
srimat-sahasra-bhuja-shirsha-padam mahantam
nilambudabham anurupa-vibhushanadhyam ।
tejo-nidhim kamala-nabham ananta-bhoga-
talpe shayanam akhilakshi-mano 'bhiramam ।।131।।

I saw that magnificent Mahapurusha, immense in form, with countless splendid arms, heads, and feet. His complexion resembled a dark raincloud, and He was adorned with ornaments perfectly suited to every part of His body. He was a treasury of divine brilliance, with a lotus arising from His navel, reclining upon the coils of Ananta, and enchanting the eyes and minds of the entire universe.

Dig-darshini

His thousands of glorious arms, heads, and feet are to be understood as innumerable. His form was vast and immeasurable, and He was adorned with ornaments appropriate to each of His limbs. He was a reservoir of all splendour and bore the lotus upon His navel. The expanded coils of Ananta Sesha formed His couch, upon which He reclined. Though His form possessed countless arms, heads, feet, and other immense features, He was nevertheless supremely beautiful, captivating the eyes and minds of all beings.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 132
संवाह्यमानचरणं रमया सुपर्णे
बद्धाञ्जलौ कृतदृशं विधिनार्च्यमानम् ।
भूयोविभूतिभिरमुं बहु लालयन्तं
श्रीनारदप्रणयभक्तिषु दत्तचित्तम् ॥१३२॥
samvahyamana-caranam ramaya suparne
baddhanjalau krita-drisham vidhinarcyamanam ।
bhuyo-vibhutibhir amum bahu lalayantam
sri-narada-pranaya-bhaktishu datta-chittam ।।132।।

Lakshmi was massaging His lotus feet, while His gaze rested upon Garuda, who stood before Him with folded hands. Brahma worshipped Him with abundant opulence, and the Lord in turn showed Brahma great affection. At the same time, His heart was absorbed in Narada's loving devotional services.

Dig-darshini

Lakshmi was gently massaging His feet. Garuda stood nearby with folded hands, and the Lord cast His gracious glance upon him. Brahma worshipped Him with abundant manifestations of his own splendour and opulence, while the Lord affectionately honoured Brahma in return, touching him with His lotus hands and showing him other forms of loving favour.

At the same time, the Lord had given His heart to Sri Narada's services of bhakti, performed with intimate affection, such as singing, dancing, and other loving expressions of devotion.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 133
महारहस्यं निगमर्थतत्त्वं स्वभक्तिमार्गं कमलासनाय ।
शनैर्विवृत्योपदिशन्तमन्तर निजालयेन्द्रस्य विराजमानम् ॥१३३॥

maha-rahasyam nigamartha-tattvam
sva-bhakti-margam kamalasanaya ।
shanair vivrityopadishantam antar
nijalayendrasya virajamanam ।।133।।

Within the splendid palace of His own abode, the Lord was slowly and carefully revealing to Brahma, seated upon the lotus, the supremely confidential path of His own bhakti—the essential truth and ultimate meaning of the Vedas.

Dig-darshini

Brahma is called Kamalasana because the lotus arising from Bhagavan's navel serves as his seat. After completing his worship, Brahma had returned to his own seat, and the Lord then instructed him in the path of His own bhakti, or, alternatively, in the particular methods and forms of bhakti by which He is attained.

Because this teaching is supremely confidential, Bhagavan unfolded it gradually and carefully, perhaps speaking it softly into Brahma's ear. This path of bhakti is the essential truth and very substance of the meaning conveyed by the Vedas, and for that reason it is a profound secret. Sri Jagadishvara shone there within the innermost part of His magnificent palace.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 134
अथो तदाकर्ण्य चतुर्मुखं च
प्रमोदसम्पद्विवशीभवन्तम्।
अनूद्य नीचैरनुमोदमानं
मुहुस्तदङ्घ्रीनभिवन्दमानम्॥१३४॥
atho tad akarnya catur-mukham ca
pramoda-sampad-vivashi-bhavantam ।
anudya nicair anumodamanam
muhus tad-anghrin abhivandamanam ।।134।।

I then saw four-faced Brahma, who, upon hearing those teachings, became overwhelmed by an abundance of supreme joy. Softly repeating what he had heard and expressing his deep approval, he repeatedly bowed before the Lord's lotus feet.

Dig-darshini

After hearing that confidential truth, Brahma became overwhelmed by the wealth of supreme bliss it produced within him. He softly repeated the Lord's teaching to himself and joyfully affirmed it. Again and again he bowed before Sri Jagadishvara's lotus feet in devotion.

He may have offered those obeisances while remaining seated upon the lotus arising from the Lord's navel, bowing through words and folded hands; or he may have descended from the lotus and physically bowed with his head and body before the Lord.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 135
प्रमोदवेगात् पतितं विसंज्ञं
विलोक्य सा मामभिगम्य लक्ष्मीः ।
निनाय संज्ञां बहु लालयित्वा
स्वबालवत् पार्श्वमुत स्वभर्तुः ॥१३५॥
pramoda-vegat patitam visamjnam
vilokya sa mam abhigamya lakshmih ।
ninaya samjnam bahu lalayitva
sva-balavat parshvam uta sva-bhartuh ।।135।।

Overwhelmed by the force of joy, I fell unconscious. Seeing me in that condition, Lakshmi came toward me, tenderly cared for me as though I were her own child, restored me to consciousness, and then brought me to the side of her Lord.

Dig-darshini

Gopa-kumar now describes what happened to him personally. Overcome by the overwhelming force of joy, he fell to the ground and lost external consciousness. Seeing this, Lakshmi, whose heart is wholly devoted to Bhagavan, approached him.

She cared for him with great tenderness as though he were her own little child, reviving him by such acts as touching him with her cool hands and sprinkling him with water. Having restored him to consciousness, she then brought him close to her husband, Sri Jagadishvara.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 136
भगवन्तं मुहुः पश्यन् प्रणमन्नवदं मनः ।
निजेप्सितान्तमद्यागा निश्चलं त्वं मुदं भज ॥१३६॥
bhagavantam muhuh pashyan pranamann avadam manah ।
nijepsitantam adyaga nishcalam tvam mudam bhaja ।।136।।

Again and again beholding Bhagavan and bowing before Him, I addressed my own mind: "Today you have reached the very limit of everything you ever desired. Now remain steady and simply rejoice."

Dig-darshini

While repeatedly beholding Bhagavan and offering obeisance to Him, Gopa-kumar spoke inwardly to his own mind. "Today you have attained the ultimate boundary of all that you ever wished to obtain. Therefore now become completely steady and remain permanently established in happiness."

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 137
अशेषशोकसन्त्रासदुःखहीनमिदं पदम् ।
परमर्द्धिपरानन्दनिचितं जगदर्चितम् ॥१३७॥
ashesha-shoka-santrasa-duhkha-hinam idam padam ।
paramarddhi-parananda-nicitam jagad-arcitam ।।137।।

"This realm is completely free from every kind of sorrow, fear, and suffering. It is filled with supreme opulence and supreme bliss and is worshipped throughout the universe."

Dig-darshini

Why should Gopa-kumar's mind now remain fixed here? Satyaloka is entirely free from every form of grief, terror, and suffering. It is pervaded by the highest manifestations of divine opulence and supreme bliss. For this reason it is revered throughout the universe as the most exalted of all cosmic realms.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 138

यादृशः सम्भवेद् भ्रातर् जगदीशश्च तादृशः ।
भात्यशेषमहत्तायाः परां काष्ठां गतः स्फुटम् ॥१३८॥

yadrishah sambhaved bhratar jagad-ishash ca tadrishah ।
bhaty ashesha-mahattayah param kashtham gatah sphutam ।।138।।

"O brother, my mind, whatever the Lord of the universe ought to be, He is manifest here exactly in that way. Clearly He has reached the ultimate limit of every kind of greatness."

Dig-darshini

Gopa-kumar tells his mind that not only has everything it desired for so long now been attained, but Jagadisha Himself is manifest here exactly as the Lord of the universe ought to be. His form, beauty, qualities, opulence, and every other manifestation of greatness have clearly reached their supreme and ultimate limit. Therefore, he thinks, there can be no one anywhere who is greater than this Lord.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 139

स्नेहमन्वभवो लक्ष्म्या दृग्भ्यां पश्याधुना प्रभुम् ।
मथुराव्रजभूशोकं यियासां चान्यतो जहि ॥१३९॥

sneham anvabhavo lakshmya drigbhyam pashyadhuna prabhum ।
mathura-vraja-bhu-shokam yiyasham canyato jahi ।।139।।

"You have personally experienced Lakshmi's affection, and now you behold the Lord directly with your own eyes. Therefore give up your sorrow for Mathura and Braja-bhumi, and abandon the desire to go anywhere else."

Dig-darshini

Having described how this attainment surpassed his previous experiences, Gopa-kumar now considers another distinction unlike anything he had known before. He had personally received Lakshmi's affection when she restored him to consciousness and tenderly cared for him. And now, unlike in Tapoloka, he was beholding Jagadisha directly with his own eyes.

Therefore he tells his mind to relinquish the pain of separation from Mathura and Braja-bhumi and also to give up the desire to go elsewhere, such as Nilacala.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 140
जगदीशाद् विधातेव लालनं चेदभीप्ससि।
तन्महापुरुषादिष्टमन्त्रशक्त्या फलिष्यति ॥१४०॥
jagad-ishad vidhateva lalanam ced abhipsasi ।
tan-maha-purushadishta-mantra-shaktya phalishyati ।।140।।

"And if you desire to receive affectionate treatment from Jagadisha just as Brahma does, that desire too will be fulfilled by the power of the mantra given by that Mahapurusha."

Dig-darshini

If Gopa-kumar desires to receive from Jagadisha the same affectionate treatment enjoyed by Brahma, perhaps by attaining a position comparable to Brahma's, then this too can be accomplished. Through the power of his mantra-japa—the mantra originally bestowed by that indescribably glorious Mahapurusha—this desire will also eventually bear fruit.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 141
निद्रालीलां प्रभुर्भेजे लोकपद्मेऽस्य नाभिजे।
सृष्टिरीतिं विधिर्वीक्ष्य स्वकृत्यायाभवद् बहिः ॥१४१॥
nidra-lilam prabhur bheje loka-padme 'sya nabhije ।
srishti-ritim vidhir vikshya sva-krityayabhavad bahih ।।141।।

Then the Lord entered His pastime of sleep. Brahma observed within the universal lotus born from His navel the method by which creation was to proceed, and then went out to perform his own appointed work.

Dig-darshini

The Lord accepted a pastime resembling sleep. In reality, because His form is concentrated spiritual consciousness, actual unconscious sleep is impossible for Him.

Within the lotus arising from the Lord's navel—the cosmic lotus containing the fourteen worlds—Brahma observed the process by which the universe was to be created and thereby learned how the work should quickly be completed. Brahma then left Bhagavan's palace and returned to his own residence in order to perform his necessary duties concerning the administration and creation of the universe.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 142
पश्यन् प्रभो रूपमदो महाद्भुतं
तन्नाभिपद्मे युगपत् तथा जगत्।
गूढोपदेशश्रवणाच्चतुर्मुख-

प्रेमप्रवाहं च सुखं ततोऽवसम् ॥१४२॥
pashyan prabho rupam ado mahadbhutam
tan-nabhi-padme yugapat tatha jagat ।
gudhopadesha-shravanac catur-mukha-
prema-pravaham ca sukham tato 'vasam ।।142।।

Beholding that supremely astonishing form of the Lord, seeing at one and the same time the universe within the lotus arising from His navel, and witnessing the flood of prema that arose in four-faced Brahma upon hearing the Lord's confidential instruction, I thereafter lived there in great happiness.

Dig-darshini

That form of the Lord was renowned for its supreme greatness and was extraordinarily wonderful. At the same time, within the lotus arising from His navel, Gopa-kumar could behold in subtle form the entire universe consisting of the fourteen worlds.

He also witnessed the flood of prema in four-faced Brahma that arose from hearing Bhagavan's confidential instruction concerning the mysteries of bhakti. This may refer to streams of tears born of prema or to an abundant and continuous manifestation of the wealth of prema. Seeing all these wonders, Gopa-kumar lived happily in Brahmaloka. In this way his residence there surpassed even the happiness he had experienced in Swarga and the other realms.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 143
कृत्स्ने लोकत्रये नष्टे रात्रावेकर्णवे सति ।
शेषोपरि सुखं शेते भगवान् ब्रह्मणा समम् ॥१४३॥
kritsne loka-traye nashte ratrav ekarnave sati ।
sheshopari sukham shete bhagavan brahmana samam ।।143।।

At night, when all three worlds are destroyed and everything becomes a single cosmic ocean, Bhagavan reclines happily upon Sesha together with Brahma.

Dig-darshini

A further special glory of Brahmaloka is now described. The "night" referred to here begins at the conclusion of Brahma's day, which lasts for one thousand cycles of the four yugas. At that time the three lower worlds are destroyed and submerged within a single cosmic ocean. The thousand-headed Bhagavan then rests happily upon Sesha, with Brahma remaining there with Him.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 144
स्तूयते चित्रवाक्यैः स जनलोकादिवासिभिः ।
तन्महाकौतुकं वीक्ष्ये ब्रह्मलोकप्रभावतः ॥१४४॥
stuyate citra-vakyaih sa jana-lokadi-vasibhih ।
tan maha-kautukam vikshye brahma-loka-prabhavatah ।।144।।

The Lord is then praised with wonderful prayers by the residents of Janaloka and the higher worlds. By the special influence of Brahmaloka, I was able to behold that astonishing spectacle.

Dig-darshini

The Lord is glorified with extraordinary prayers by the residents of Janaloka and, by the word adi, also by those of Tapoloka and Satyaloka.

Gopa-kumar had previously been present in Janaloka and other higher realms, yet at that time, being newly arrived and absorbed in the particular duties and experiences of those places, he had not developed sufficient awareness of this special manifestation. Thus, although the event was occurring, he did not properly behold it or relish its happiness. By the particular greatness and influence of Brahmaloka, however, he now became able to witness this extraordinary wonder directly.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 145
अन्तर्धाय कदाचिच्चेत् कुत्रापि भगवान् व्रजेत्।
शोकः स्यादागते तस्मिन् समूलः क्षीयते स नः ॥१४५॥
antardhaya kadacic cet kutrapi bhagavan vrajet ।
shokah syad agate tasmin sa-mulah kshiyate sa nah ।।145।।

If Bhagavan sometimes disappeared and went somewhere else, sorrow would arise within us. But as soon as He returned, that sorrow vanished completely, together with its very root.

Dig-darshini

Thus, even when a cause of suffering arose in Brahmaloka, the suffering did not persist. Occasionally Bhagavan would disappear and go to some particular place. That place is not named here because Gopa-kumar did not yet know where the Lord went; this will later become clear from the words of Sri Narada. When Bhagavan returned, the sorrow disappeared together with its root. In other words, not only did the pain of separation vanish, but even the thought, "Bhagavan had gone somewhere else and was absent from here," ceased to remain in Gopa-kumar's consciousness.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verses 146–147
इत्थमह्नां कतिपये प्रयाते प्रातर् एकदा।
कौतुकाद् ब्रह्मणा स्पृष्टः फेनपुञ्जोऽसुरोऽभवत् ॥१४६॥
तद्भीत्यालीयत ब्रह्मा दैत्यो भगवता हतः।
भयाक्रान्तो विधिर्नैति तत्पदेऽयुङ्क्त मां प्रभुः ॥१४७॥
ittham ahnam katipaye prayate pratar ekada ।
kautukad brahmana sprishtah phena-punjo 'suro 'bhavat ।।146।।
tad-bhityaliyata brahma daityo bhagavata hatah ।
bhayakranto vidhir naiti tat-pade 'yunkta mam prabhuh ।।147।।

After several days of Brahma had passed in this way, one morning Brahma playfully touched a mass of foam, and it transformed into an asura. Terrified of that demon, Brahma concealed himself. Bhagavan slew the daitya, but when Brahma, still overcome with fear, did not return, the Lord appointed me to Brahma's position.

Dig-darshini

Gopa-kumar now explains how, through the power of his mantra-japa performed with his particular desire, he attained the position of Parameshthi itself. One morning, after several of Brahma's days had passed, Brahma touched a mass of foam out of curiosity, and that foam transformed into a mighty asura. Since the foam had arisen upon the ocean of the great cosmic dissolution, the enormous size and strength of the demon should be understood as corresponding to its extraordinary origin.

Frightened by the asura, Brahma disappeared and remained concealed in some hidden place. Sri Narayana then killed the demon. Yet Brahma, the creator of the universe, remained so overcome with fear that he did not return. Sri Jagadishvara therefore appointed Gopa-kumar to Brahma's position and entrusted him with the authority of that office.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 148
अहं तु वैष्णवान् एव सृजंस्तद्भक्तिवृद्धये।
न्ययुञ्जमधिकारेषु वैष्णवान् एव सर्वतः ॥१४८॥
aham tu vaishnavan eva srijams tad-bhakti-vriddhaye ।
nyayunjam adhikareshu vaishnavan eva sarvatah ।।148।।

For my part, I created only Vaishnavas, and in order to increase bhakti to Bhagavan, I appointed Vaishnavas everywhere to positions of authority.

Dig-darshini

Gopa-kumar used the authority of Brahma for the increase of bhakti to Bhagavan. He therefore created Vaishnavas and appointed Vaishnavas to the various offices throughout the universe, such as those of the Prajapatis, Indra, Chandra, Surya, and others.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 149
इतस्ततो महायज्ञैरश्वमेधादिभिर्विभुम्।
सम्पूजयन् मुदां पूरैर्ब्रह्माण्डं समपूरयम् ॥१४९॥
itas tato maha-yajnair ashvamedhadibhir vibhum ।
sampujayan mudam purair brahmandam samapurayam ।।149।।

Throughout the universe I worshipped the all-powerful Lord with great sacrifices such as the ashvamedha, and in doing so I filled the entire brahmanda with floods of joy.

Dig-darshini

Having described how he performed the work of Brahma by administering and protecting the universe, Gopa-kumar now describes another use he made of that position. Here and there throughout the cosmic realm he performed great yajnas such as the ashvamedha for the worship of Vibhu, Sri Jagadishvara. By these celebrations of Bhagavan's worship, he filled the entire universe with great waves of happiness.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verses 150–152

पारमेष्ठ्येन संरुद्धो वेदैर्मूर्तिधरैर्मखैः ।
पुराणैरितिहासैश्चागमैस्तीर्थैर्महर्षिभिः ॥१५०॥
ब्रह्मर्षिभिश्च बहुधा स्तूयमानो महामदैः ।
ग्रास्यमानोऽपि मुञ्चामि न स्माकिञ्चनतां निजाम् ॥१५१॥
तथापि ब्राह्म्यकृत्याब्धिभङ्गमग्नो न पूर्ववत् ।
लभे भगवतो भक्तिसुखं चिन्तातुरान्तरः ॥१५२॥

parameshthyena samruddho vedair murti-dharair makhaih ।
puranair itihasaish cagamas tirthair maharshibhih ।।150।।
brahmarshibhish ca bahudha stuyamano maha-madaih ।
grasyamano 'pi muncami na smakincanatam nijam ।।151।।
tathapi brahmya-krityabdhi-bhanga-magno na purvavat ।
labhe bhagavato bhakti-sukham cintaturantarah ।।152।।

I was surrounded by the immense opulence of the position of Parameshthi and was praised in countless ways by the personified Vedas and yajnas, by the Puranas, Itihasas, Agamas and sacred tirthas, and by maharshis and brahmarshis. Although great forms of pride continually threatened to swallow me, I never abandoned my own condition of akincanata. Nevertheless, immersed in the waves of the boundless ocean of Brahma's duties, with my heart agitated by innumerable concerns, I could no longer relish the happiness of bhakti to Bhagavan as I had before.

Dig-darshini

The causes of Gopa-kumar's eventual detachment from residence in Brahmaloka are now described, preparing him for attainment of a still higher destination. Although surrounded by causes of immense pride, he never abandoned his own akincanata, his inner condition of possessing nothing and claiming nothing as his own. Nevertheless, he could no longer obtain the happiness of bhakti as he had previously.

The causes of such overwhelming pride were extraordinary. He now occupied the position of Parameshthi, the highest office within the universe, and was surrounded by its supreme aisvarya. The Vedas themselves appeared in personified forms, as did the yajnas, Puranas, Itihasas, Agamas and sacred tirthas, while maharshis and brahmarshis glorified him in countless ways. All of this exposed him continually to powerful forms of pride.

Yet the principal reason he could no longer taste the former happiness of bhakti was the burden of Brahma's duties. The necessary responsibilities belonging to that office were like an immeasurably deep ocean, and their endless succession was like wave after wave upon its surface. Immersed in those responsibilities, his mind became disturbed by constant thought of everything requiring his attention. Consequently he could no longer relish the simple happiness of serving Bhagavan as he had before.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 153
द्विपरार्धायुषि स्वस्य श्रूयमानेऽपि कालतः ।
भयं स्यात् क्रियमाणे च जपे भूरियमार्तिदा ॥१५३॥
dvi-parardhayushi svasya shruyamane 'pi kalatah ।
bhayam syat kriyamane ca jape bhur iyam artida ।।153।।

Although my lifespan was said to extend for two parardhas, I still felt fear of Time. And when I performed my mantra-japa, this land of Braja caused me intense pain through my longing for it.

Dig-darshini

Even though the lifespan of Brahma is said to extend for two parardhas, the presence of Time still gave rise to fear. To dispel that fear and for his other purposes, Gopa-kumar continued performing his own mantra-japa. Yet whenever he did so, remembrance of this Braja-bhumi—Sri Brindaban and the other places of Braja—arose within him and caused him great anguish through separation.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 154
जगदीश्वरतः पुत्रलालनं तु महासुखम् ।
ममानुभवतश्चित्तवैकल्यं तद् विनश्यति ॥१५४॥
jagad-ishvaratah putra-lalanam tu maha-sukham ।
mamanubhavatas chitta-vaikalyam tad vinashyati ।।154।।

Yet when I experienced the immense happiness of being affectionately treated by Jagadishvara like His own son, all that disturbance of my heart disappeared.

Dig-darshini

Despite these causes of distress, the inherent nature of Brahmaloka prevented sorrow from gaining lasting power over Gopa-kumar. Sri Jagadishvara treated him with the tender affection shown to a son, just as described previously. When Gopa-kumar experienced that extraordinary happiness, all the disturbances of his heart disappeared, and the sufferings arising from them ceased to manifest.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verses 155–156
अत्यन्तसन्निकर्षेण पितृबुद्ध्या च सेवया ।
कदाप्यगांसि जातानि मृष्यन्ते प्रभुना मम ॥१५५॥
अथाप्यन्तर्महोद्वेगः स्यात् ततो व्यञ्जिते श्रिया ।

स्नेहे मात्रेव हृष्टः स्यामेवं तत्रावसं चिरम् ॥१५६॥
atyanta-sannikarshena pitri-buddhya ca sevaya ।
kadapy agamsi jatani mrishyante prabhuna mama ।।155।।
athapy antar-mahodvegah syat tato vyanjite shriya ।
snehe matreva hrishtah syam evam tatravasam ciram ।।156।।

Because I served Him in such extreme intimacy and regarded Him as my father, I would sometimes inadvertently commit offences; yet the Lord always forgave them. Even so, great anxiety would arise within my heart. Then Sri Lakshmi, seeing my distress, would reveal toward me the affection of a mother, and I would again become joyful. In this way I remained there for a very long time.

Dig-darshini

Even distress arising from offences committed in the service of Jagadishvara was removed by His mercy and by the affection of Maha-Lakshmi. Because Gopa-kumar lived in such extreme proximity to the Lord, that very familiarity could occasionally become a cause of insufficient reverence. Moreover, because he served Bhagavan with the understanding, "He is my father," the intimacy of that relationship prevented the arising of fear. Thus, from time to time, some fault might inadvertently enter his service. Yet Jagadishvara forgave whatever offences occurred.

Nevertheless, Gopa-kumar himself would become deeply disturbed within, reflecting that his service to the Lord had not been performed perfectly. Seeing this great inner anxiety, Sri Maha-Lakshmi would manifest toward him tender affection and consolation like that of a mother. Receiving her motherly love, he would again become joyful. Thus, although causes of distress occasionally arose, he continued to reside happily in Satyaloka for a very long time.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verses 157–158
एकदा मुक्तिमात्राप्तमेकं तल्लोकवासिभिः ।
संश्लाघ्यमानमाकर्ण्य तानपृच्छं तदद्भुतम् ॥१५७॥
मुक्तेः परममुत्कर्षं दौर्लभ्यं च निशम्य तान् ।
सर्वज्ञान् पुनरप्राक्षं तदुपायं तदीप्सया ॥१५८॥
ekada mukti-matraptam ekam tal-loka-vasibhih ।
samshlaghyamanam akarnya tan apriccham tad adbhutam ।।157।।
mukteh paramam utkarsham daurlabhyam ca nishamya tan ।
sarvajnan punar apraksham tad-upayam tad-ipsaya ।।158।।

One day I heard the residents of that realm greatly praising a certain jiva who had attained liberation here in Bharata-varsha. Finding this astonishing, I asked them about it. Hearing from them of the supreme greatness and extreme rarity of mukti, I then questioned those all-knowing residents again, asking by what means it could be attained, for I too developed a desire for liberation.

Dig-darshini

The cause that would eventually lead Gopa-kumar to leave Satyaloka is now introduced. A certain jiva had attained mukti in Bharata-varsha, and the residents of Satyaloka, including the brahmarshis and others, were praising him extensively, glorifying his bhakti and attainment. Since Gopa-kumar had never before heard such praise of liberation, he found this extraordinary and asked, "What exactly is mukti, and why is one who attains it praised so highly?"

From them he heard of the supreme excellence and great rarity of mukti. Desiring to obtain it himself, he then again questioned those all-knowing residents of Satyaloka, including the personified Vedas and other scriptures, asking for the means by which liberation could be attained.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 159

बहुलोपनिषद् देव्यः श्रुतिस्मृतिभिरन्विताः ।
ऊचुरेकेन साध्योऽसौ मोक्षो ज्ञानेन नान्यथा ॥१५९॥

bahulopanishad-devyah shruti-smritibhir anvitah ।
ucur ekena sadhyo 'sau moksho jnanena nanyatha ।।159।।

Many goddesses in the form of the Upanishads, accompanied by the Srutis and Smritis, declared, "That supremely exalted and exceedingly rare moksha is attained by jnana alone, and by no other means."

Dig-darshini

The many Upanishads, which constitute the essential portion of the Vedas, appeared there in personified forms as radiant goddesses. They were accompanied by the other Srutis and by the Smritis, including the dharma-shastras, Puranas, Agamas, and related scriptures. The Puranas, Agamas, and other bodies of scripture should likewise be understood as appearing there in personified forms.

They declared that this supremely exalted and extraordinarily rare moksha is attained by jnana alone and by no other means. Thus the Sruti states: "Knowing Him alone, one crosses beyond death; there is no other path for reaching that goal."

Here, however, the jnana that produces moksha is to be understood as arising exclusively from bhakti, indeed as being of the nature of bhakti itself, since no other kind of jnana can actually produce liberation. This will become explicit in what follows.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verses 160–161

कैश्चिदुक्तं सगाम्भीर्यं पुराणैरागमैरपि ।
जन्यते भगवद्भक्त्या सुखं ज्ञानं सुदुर्घटम् ॥१६०॥

किं वानुष्ठितया सम्यक् तयैव सुलभोऽस्ति सः ।
श्रुतिस्मृतीनां कासाञ्चित् सम्मतिस्तत्र लक्षिता ॥१६१॥

kaishcid uktam sa-gambhiryam puranair agamair api ।
janyate bhagavad-bhaktya sukham jnanam sudurghatam ।।160।।
kim vanushthitaya samyak tayaiva sulabho 'sti sah ।
shruti-smritinam kasancit sammatih tatra lakshita ।।161।।

Some Puranas and Agamas then spoke with gravity: "That jnana, though otherwise extremely difficult to attain, is easily generated by bhakti to Bhagavan. Or rather, moksha itself becomes easily attainable through bhakti alone when bhakti is properly performed." Certain Srutis and Smritis showed their agreement with this conclusion.

Dig-darshini

Some Puranas especially expert in establishing bhakti to Bhagavan, together with Agamas such as the Pancaratra, spoke with profound gravity. They accepted that moksha is attained through jnana, but added an essential qualification: the jnana required for liberation, though exceedingly difficult to generate by other means, arises easily through bhakti to Bhagavan.

They then offered another conclusion. When bhakti to Bhagavan is properly performed—free from selfish desire and complete in its essential limbs—moksha itself becomes easily attainable through that bhakti alone. The word "alone" indicates the independence of bhakti: it does not require the assistance of any other means.

Thus it is said in the Brihan-naradiya Purana: "For one whose bhakti to Janardana, the Lord of lords, has become firm, all auspicious attainments are accomplished. Therefore those possessed of bhakti are superior." And again: "Just as all living beings live by taking shelter of their mother, so all siddhis live by taking shelter of bhakti." Here siddhis include moksha and other attainments.

Bhagavad Gita similarly declares: "Only by exclusive bhakti can I be known in this form, truly seen, and entered into, O Arjuna." Entering into Bhagavan is commonly understood to culminate in moksha.

Certain Srutis and Smritis devoted particularly to Bhagavan indicated their agreement that liberation is easily attained through bhakti alone. Their assent was perceived as though through gestures such as nodding their heads. Their words do not always state this conclusion directly, but their ultimate intention supports it. Thus the Padma Purana declares: "Children, wealth, spouses, ornaments, palaces, horses, elephants, pleasures, Swarga, and moksha are not far from one who possesses bhakti to Hari." The intended meaning is that these attainments lie very near to bhakti.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 162
व्यक्तं तासां वचोऽश्रुत्वा क्रुद्धाः स्वैरागमादिभिः ।
महोपनिषदः काश्चिदन्वमोदन्त तत् स्फुटम् ॥१६२॥
vyaktam tasam vaco 'shrutva kruddhah svair agam-adibhih ।
mahopanishadah kashcid anvamodanta tat sphutam ।।162।।

When certain great Upanishads did not hear those Srutis and Smritis state this conclusion explicitly, they became displeased and, together with their own supporting Agamas and other scriptures, openly affirmed it in clear words.

Dig-darshini

Those Srutis and Smritis had inwardly agreed that moksha is easily attained through bhakti to Bhagavan alone, but they had not expressed that conclusion directly and explicitly. Certain great Upanishads devoted to proclaiming the glory of Bhagavan therefore became displeased and, together with Agamas, Puranas, and other scriptures that followed their teaching, openly confirmed the conclusion in unmistakable words. Thus the Brihan-naradiya Purana states: "O best of the twice-born, the four goals known as dharma, artha, kama, and moksha are certainly attained by those who are devoted to bhakti to Hari."

Similarly, in a prayer to Bhagavan, the Vishnu Purana declares: "What need has such a person for dharma, artha, and kama? Mukti itself rests in his hand, if firm bhakti to You, the root of all the worlds, is established within him." Thus the conclusion that moksha is readily attainable through bhakti to Bhagavan alone is here stated explicitly.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 163
गूढोपनिषदः काश्चित् कैश्चिद् गूढैर्महागमैः ।
समं महापुराणैश्च तूष्णीमासन् कृतस्मिताः ॥१६३॥
gudhopanishadah kashcit kaishcid gudhair mahagamaih ।
samam maha-puranaish ca tushnim asan krita-smitah ।।163।।

Certain deeply confidential Upanishads, together with some esoteric great Agamas and Mahapuranas, remained silent, smiling slightly.

Dig-darshini

Certain Upanishads devoted especially to bhakti to Sri Bhagavan are exceedingly rare and deeply confidential. Together with similarly esoteric great Agamas, such as the Vaishnava tantras including the Satvata-siddhanta, and with great Puranas such as Srimad Bhagavatam, they remained silent while smiling slightly. Their smile may have arisen from astonishment: "Ah, how extraordinary is the power of Bhagavan's maya! Even truths clearly revealed in scripture can remain difficult to understand even for those who

know everything." Or their smile may have expressed a certain disregard: "How remarkable that these others consider the mere fact that bhakti can bestow mukti to be such a great glorification of bhakti!"

They therefore remained silent, either because it was inappropriate to debate with those whose understanding was not equal to their own, or because such supremely confidential truths were not suitable for exposition in the midst of a public assembly. The essential principle here is this: karma, jnana, and moksha may be compared to steps upon the staircase ascending toward the lofty path of bhakti to Bhagavan. Consequently, even the greatness attributed to those attainments ultimately culminates in the greatness of bhakti itself. Nevertheless, in this particular discussion, where the excellence of those subordinate attainments is being examined, even scriptures whose true intention rests entirely upon bhakti do not directly proclaim the full greatness of bhakti. Such a revelation would be inappropriate in this setting.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verses 164–165
मोक्षो नु भगवन्मन्त्रजपमात्रात् सुसिध्यति ।
न वेति कैश्चिदाम्नायपुराणादिभिरुल्बणः ॥१६४॥
आगमानां विवादोऽभूत् तमसोढ्वा बहिर्गताः ।
ते पुराणागमाः कर्णौ पिधायोपनिषद्युताः ॥१६५॥
moksho nu bhagavan-mantra-japa-matrat susidhyati ।
na veti kaishcid amnaya-puranadibhir ulbanah ।।164।।
agamanam vivado 'bhut tam asodhva bahir gatah ।
te puranagamah karnau pidhayopanishad-yutah ।।165।।

A fierce dispute then arose between the Agamas and certain Vedas, Puranas, and other scriptures over the question: "Can moksha truly be attained simply by chanting a mantra of Bhagavan, or not?" Unable to tolerate even such a controversy, those confidential Puranas and Agamas, accompanied by the Upanishads, covered their ears and left the assembly.

Dig-darshini

A heated debate arose between the Agamas, including the Pancharatra tantras, and certain Vedas, Puranas, dharma-shastras, Itihasas, and other scriptures. The point under dispute was whether moksha can be perfectly attained merely through the chanting of a mantra of Bhagavan, without dependence upon anything else.

The disagreement became intense, taking the form of assertion and counter-assertion. Yet the confidential Mahapuranas and Agamas that had previously sat silently smiling, together with the similarly confidential Upanishads, could not tolerate even the existence of such a doubt concerning the greatness of bhakti. Covering their ears so as not to hear such questioning, they left the assembly.

The implication is that in these scriptures there is not even the slightest trace of doubt concerning the greatness of bhakti to Bhagavan. Earlier, when these texts sat silently, the confidential Upanishads were mentioned first and the great Puranas such as Srimad Bhagavatam were included with them in a secondary way. Here, however, because the inability to tolerate this controversy especially characterises Srimad Bhagavatam and similar texts, the great Puranas and Agamas are placed foremost, with the Upanishads accompanying them. The same principle should be understood in what follows.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 166
ततो महापुराणानां महोपनिषदां तथा।
माध्यस्थ्यादागमानां तु जयो जातो मम प्रियः ॥१६६॥
tato maha-puranam mahopanishadam tatha ।
madhyasthyad agamanam tu jayo jato mama priyah ।।166।।

Then, through the impartial judgement of the Mahapuranas and great Upanishads, the Agamas were victorious. Their conclusion—that moksha is perfectly attained simply by chanting Bhagavan's mantra—was very pleasing to me.

Dig-darshini

Because those great Puranas and Upanishads acted impartially, examining the meaning of both sides without partiality, the Agamas were declared victorious. Thus the conclusion was established that moksha can indeed be perfectly attained merely through the chanting of Bhagavan's mantra.

Thus the Vishnu Purana states: "The Moon, Sun, and the other devas disappear in the state of dissolution then reappear time and again, but those who meditate upon the twelve-syllable mantra of Bhagavan do not return to material existence."

It is also said in the Padmanabhiya: "When the deity is continually glorified through japa, He becomes pleased. Being pleased, He bestows abundant enjoyments and eternal liberation." This conclusion was especially dear to Gopa-kumar because his own spiritual life was centred entirely upon the chanting of the mantra of Bhagavan.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 167
मयाभिप्रेत्य तद्भावं ते पुराणागमादयः।
अनुनीय सभामध्यमानीताः स्तुतिपाटवैः ॥१६७॥
mayabhipretya tad-bhavam te puranagamadayah ।
anuniya sabha-madhyam anitah stuti-patavaih ।।167।।

Understanding their inner intention, I respectfully appeased those Puranas, Agamas, and other scriptures and, through skilful words of praise, persuaded them to return to the midst of the assembly.

Dig-darshini

Gopa-kumar understood the profound intention revealed through their slight smile, grave silence, and departure from the assembly. He therefore approached those personified scriptures—Srimad Bhagavatam, the Satvata-siddhanta, and the other confidential Puranas and Agamas—with humility and respectfully appeased them. By praising them with skilful and affectionate words, he won their favour and brought them back into the assembly.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 168
तत्तत्त्वं सादरं पृष्टास्ते श्रीभागवतादयः।
ऊचुः सात्वतसिद्धान्ताद्यागमाः श्रुतिमौलिभिः॥१६८॥
tat-tattvam sadaram prishtas te sri-bhagavatadayah ।
ucuh satvata-siddhantady-agamah shruti-maulibhih ।।168।।

When I respectfully questioned them about the true nature of moksha, Sri Bhagavatam and the other scriptures, together with the Agamas headed by the Satvata-siddhanta and the crown jewels of the Srutis, began to speak.

Dig-darshini

Gopa-kumar respectfully asked them to explain the true nature and reality of moksha. Alternatively, he asked why they had smiled, remained silent, covered their ears, and left the assembly. Those supremely steadfast and exalted scriptures that had now been brought back into the assembly—Sri Bhagavatam and other works devoted to bhakti to Bhagavan, together with Agamas such as the Satvata-siddhanta—then replied.

Alternatively, the meaning is that the Satvata-siddhanta and related Agamas, foremost among the Vaishnava scriptures and headed by Sri Bhagavatam, spoke together with the deeply confidential Upanishads, which are the crown jewels of all the Srutis.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 169
श्रीभक्तिशास्त्राण्यूचुः—
लब्धब्रह्माधिकारेदं महागोप्यं निधेरपि।
भवत्सद्गुणसन्दोहैराख्यामो मुखरीकृताः॥१६९॥
sri-bhakti-shastrany ucuh—
labdha-brahmadhikaredam maha-gopyam nidher api ।
bhavat-sad-guna-sandohair akhyamo mukhari-kritah ।।169।।

The scriptures of bhakti said: "O you who have attained the office of Brahma, what we are about to tell you is more carefully guarded than even a great treasure. Yet the abundance of your excellent qualities has compelled us to speak, and so we shall reveal it to you."

Dig-darshini

By addressing Gopa-kumar as one who has attained the position of Brahma, they indicate that he possesses the qualification to hear what follows. What they are about to reveal is exceedingly confidential, more carefully concealed even than a precious treasure. According to another reading, vidheh, it is a truth kept secret even from Brahma himself and ordinarily not disclosed to him.

One might therefore ask how it can properly be revealed to Gopa-kumar merely because he has temporarily attained Brahma's position. The answer is that the abundance of his excellent qualities, particularly his constant disposition toward bhajana of Bhagavan, has made these scriptures unable to remain silent. Moved by those qualities, they now speak.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 170

क्वचित् प्रस्तूयतेऽस्माभिर्भगवद्भक्तितत्परैः ।
मोक्षस्त्याजयितुं सम्यग् विनिन्द्य सपरिच्छदः ॥१७०॥

kvacit prastuyate 'smabhir bhagavad-bhakti-tat-paraih ।
mokshas tyajayitum samyag vinindya sa-paricchadah ।।170।।

"Although we are wholly devoted to bhakti to Bhagavan, we sometimes discuss moksha. But we do so only in order to condemn it thoroughly and induce people to abandon it, together with everything that supports it."

Dig-darshini

Although the discussion of moksha is generally unsuitable for scriptures devoted exclusively to bhakti to Bhagavan, there are circumstances in which it must nevertheless be explained. Thus, at certain times or in certain places, these bhakti-shastras describe liberation.

Their purpose, however, is to condemn it decisively and thereby cause aspirants to reject it as something unworthy of acceptance. For one cannot properly abandon something without understanding what it actually is. Moksha is therefore discussed together with its paricchada, its attendant means such as jnana and the other practices that lead toward it.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 171

निर्वक्तुं भक्तिमाहात्म्यं कथ्यतेऽस्यापि तत् क्वचित् ।
न तु साध्यफलत्वेन सुखगन्धोऽपि नास्ति यत् ॥१७१॥

nirvaktum bhakti-mahatmyam kathyate 'syapi tat kvacit ।
na tu sadhya-phalatvena sukha-gandho 'pi nasti yat ।।171।।

"When moksha is sometimes praised by us, this is only to demonstrate the greatness of bhakti. We never present moksha as the ultimate goal or fruit, for it does not contain even the faintest scent of true happiness."

Dig-darshini

One might ask why moksha is nevertheless praised in certain passages. Its greatness is sometimes described only for the sake of revealing the still greater glory of bhakti. Since there is no more suitable comparison, the point is made by saying that bhakti to Bhagavan contains happiness millions upon millions of times greater than the happiness attributed to even the most exalted liberation.

Such language follows the understanding of those who desire moksha. When the matter is examined according to its true nature, however, liberation contains not even the slightest trace of actual happiness. Therefore it is never presented by these bhakti-shastras as the ultimate attainment or desired fruit.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 172
यथारोग्ये सुषुप्तौ च सुखं मोक्षेऽपि कल्प्यते।
परं त्वज्ञानसंज्ञोऽयमनभिज्ञप्ररोचकः ॥१७२॥
yatharogye sushuptau ca sukham mokshe 'pi kalpyate ।
param tv ajnana-samjno 'yam anabhijna-prarocakah ।।172।।

"Just as happiness is imagined to exist in freedom from disease and in deep sleep, so happiness is imagined to exist in moksha. In reality, however, this conception is merely a product of ignorance, attractive only to those who do not understand its true nature."

Dig-darshini

The point is explained through examples. When a diseased person becomes healthy, what is called the "happiness of health" is really nothing more than the absence of the suffering caused by disease. Similarly, in the darkness of deep sleep there is no positive experience of happiness; yet because the agitation of the mind produced by desires, dreams, and other disturbances is absent, one later thinks, "I slept happily; I knew nothing."

In the same way, moksha, understood as a state empty of all worldly conditions, is called happiness merely because the sufferings of samsara—birth, death, and the rest—are absent there. In reality, no positive happiness exists in such a condition.

Why, then, was the person who attained liberation praised so highly by the inhabitants of Satyaloka? Such praise merely attracts those who do not know the true nature of moksha. Indeed, bondage and liberation themselves are designations born from ignorance rather than ultimate realities. Thus Brahma states in the Tenth Canto of Srimad Bhagavatam: "Bondage and liberation are two names arising from ignorance; in truth, for one established in knowledge, neither exists" (10.14.26).

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 173
कथञ्चिद् भगवन्नामाभासस्यापि स सिध्यति।
सकृदुच्चारमात्रेण किं वा कर्णप्रवेशतः ॥१७३॥
kathancid bhagavan-namabhasasyapi sa sidhyati ।
sakrid-uccara-matrena kim va karna-praveshatah ।।173।।

"Indeed, that moksha can somehow be attained even through a mere namabhasa of Bhagavan's name—simply by uttering it once, or even by somehow hearing it enter the ear."

Dig-darshini

If one nevertheless asks what means is required to attain such liberation, the greatness of bhakti is again demonstrated by showing how effortlessly moksha comes to those connected with Bhagavan.

What need is there even to speak of deliberate service to Bhagavan's Name? Moksha may arise through a mere namabhasa, a reflected or indirect semblance of Bhagavan's Name, even when it is uttered only once and in some incidental manner, such as jokingly or carelessly. Alternatively, liberation may arise simply because such a semblance of the Name somehow enters one's ears.

Thus the Sixth Canto of Srimad Bhagavatam states that the sinful Ajamila, while dying, called out the name Narayana to summon his son and thereby attained liberation (6.3.24).

Similarly, in the Varaha Purana, in the account of Satyatapa, a tiger came to devour a brahmana who was immersed in japa while standing in water. A hunter killed that tiger, and merely by unexpectedly hearing Bhagavan's Name, the animal attained liberation. Thus even such slight and indirect contact with the Name may bestow moksha.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 174
विचाराचातुरीरम्यो मोक्षोऽयमवधार्यताम्।
तेषां वेदपुराणादिशास्त्राणां हि यथामतम् ॥१७४॥
vicaracaturi-ramyo moksho 'yam avadharyatam ।
tesham veda-puranadi-shastranam hi yatha-matam ।।174।।

"Understand that this moksha appears attractive only through a lack of skill in proper discrimination. This may be established even according to the conclusions of those Vedas, Puranas, and other scriptures that proclaim its greatness."

Dig-darshini

One might ask why yogis undertake such great effort to attain liberation. The answer is that this moksha, which those desiring liberation proclaim as the supreme goal of life, appears pleasing only because of acaturi in discrimination—that is, because the

matter has not been examined with sufficient discernment. This should be understood with certainty.

Nor need this conclusion depend upon the testimony of scriptures opposed to moksha. It can be demonstrated precisely according to the views of those Vedas, Puranas, and other shastras that themselves praise its greatness. In other words, without departing from their own conclusions or contradicting their doctrines, it can still be established that moksha appears attractive only because of inadequate discrimination.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 175
सोऽशेषदुःखध्वंसो वाविद्याकर्मक्षयोऽथवा।
मायाकृतान्यथारूपत्यागात् स्वानुभवोऽपि वा॥१७५॥
so 'shesha-duhkha-dhvamso vavidya-karma-kshayo 'thava |
maya-kritanyatha-rupa-tyagat svanubhavo 'pi va ||175||

"According to different views, moksha may be described as the complete destruction of all suffering, as the destruction of avidya and karma, or as direct experience of one's own true self after abandoning the false condition imposed by maya."

Dig-darshini

The different scriptural conceptions of moksha are now presented. According to the Naiyayikas, liberation is simply the complete cessation of every kind of suffering. Thus they define mukti as "the absolute termination of suffering." According to certain Vedantins, liberation consists in the destruction of avidya and karma. The views of the Vaisheshikas, Mimamsakas, Sankhyas, and some other schools are not separately presented, because their own definitions of liberation already reveal how exceedingly insignificant their conception is. According to another position, principally that of Vedantins who uphold vivarta-vada, liberation consists in abandoning the condition falsely produced by maya—whether that means the state of being bound within samsara or the appearance of difference—and thereby directly experiencing one's own true nature as Brahman. Thus Srimad Bhagavatam states: "Mukti is the abandonment of an otherwise assumed form and establishment in one's own svarupa" (2.10.6).

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 176
जीवस्वरूपभूतस्य सच्चिदानन्दवस्तुनः।
साक्षादनुभवेनापि स्यात् तादृक् सुखमल्पकम्॥१७६॥
jiva-svarupa-bhutasya sat-chit-ananda-vastunah |
sakshad-anubhavenapi syat tadrik sukham alpakam ||176||

"Even through direct realization of the sat-chit-ananda reality that constitutes the true nature of the jiva, the happiness attained would be only slight."

Dig-darshini

According to the first two positions just described, liberation consists merely of the absence of suffering or the destruction of its causes. Thus, by the admission of those systems themselves, there is no positive happiness inherent in such moksha.

It will now be shown, over the following discussion, that even according to the vivarta-vada conception, the happiness obtained through realization of one's own spiritual nature is extremely insignificant. Such happiness consists only of experiencing the jiva's own svarupa and is therefore very small in comparison with the happiness of bhakti, which consists of experiencing the lotus feet of Sri Bhagavan, whose form is concentrated sat-chit-ananda.

Strictly speaking, there is no positive happiness in the moksha being discussed here; what is called happiness is merely the absence of suffering. Nevertheless, for the sake of argument, some happiness may provisionally be admitted in moksha. This concession is made only to reveal more clearly the immeasurable greatness of the happiness found in bhakti to Bhagavan.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 177

शुद्धात्मतत्त्वं यद् वस्तु तदेव ब्रह्म कथ्यते।
निर्गुणं तच्च निःसङ्गं निर्विकारं निरीहितम् ॥१७७॥

shuddhatma-tattvam yad vastu tad eva brahma kathyate ।
nirgunam tac ca nihsangam nirvikaram nirihitam ।।177।।

"That reality which is the pure nature of the self is called Brahman. It is described as nirguna, without qualities; nihsanga, without relationships; nirvikara, without transformation; and nirihita, without activity or endeavour."

Dig-darshini

One might argue that in moksha one realizes unlimited Brahman and therefore the resulting happiness should itself be unlimited. The reply is that the Brahman spoken of here is simply the reality of the pure self. The happiness arising from its realization must therefore correspond to the nature of that object.

This Brahman is described as nirguna, devoid of qualities such as compassion; nihsanga, without association with devotees; nirvikara, without transformations such as the melting of the heart, or without the varied manifestations of beautiful divine forms and opulences; and nirihita, without the manifold sweet activities and lilas found in Bhagavan.

Because such Brahman lacks the characteristics of Bhagavan and therefore does not possess the concentrated fullness of sat-chit-

ananda manifest in His personal form, the happiness arising from its realization must likewise be correspondingly limited.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 178
भगवांस्तु परं ब्रह्म परात्मा परमेश्वरः ।
सुसान्द्रसच्चिदानन्दविग्रहो महिमार्णवः ॥१७८॥
bhagavams tu param brahma paratma parameshvarah ।
susandra-sat-chit-ananda-vigraho mahimarnavah ।।178।।

"Bhagavan, however, is Para Brahman, the Supreme Self and Parameshwar. His very vigraha is the supremely concentrated fullness of eternal existence, consciousness, and bliss, and He is an unfathomable ocean of divine greatness."

Dig-darshini

How, then, can the experience of truly concentrated and profound happiness be attained? It is accomplished only through bhakti to Sri Bhagavan.

Bhagavan is Para Brahman. Precisely because He is Para Brahman, He is also Paratma, the Supreme Self, the indwelling Lord of all jivas and the presiding Lord of consciousness. He is therefore Parameshwar, the controller even of Brahma and the other cosmic rulers and the presiding Lord of Sri Vaikuntha. His vigraha is susandra-sat-chit-ananda: the supremely concentrated embodiment of eternal existence, consciousness, and bliss. For this reason He is an ocean of mahima, the limitless and unfathomable resting place of inconceivable, astonishing, and infinitely varied forms of greatness.

Accordingly, when Bhagavan is meant, the word Brahman is qualified by para. Thus Bhagavad Gita says, "You are Para Brahman, the supreme abode, the supreme purifier" (10.12), and other statements likewise speak of "Para Brahman in human form."

By contrast, when Brahman refers simply to the principle of the self, the unqualified word Brahman is used. Thus Srimad Bhagavatam asks: "O Brahman, how can the Srutis describe the indescribable Brahman, which is nirguna and beyond both cause and effect?" (10.87.1). Similarly, Bhagavad Gita says, "I am the basis of Brahman" (14.27).

If the word para is occasionally applied even to that Brahman, it should be understood comparatively—for example, to distinguish it from shabda-brahman or some other subordinate usage of the word.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 179
सगुणत्वागुणत्वादिविरोधाः प्रविशन्ति तम् ।
महाविभूतिर् ब्रह्मास्य प्रसिद्धेत्थं तयोर्भिदा ॥१७९॥

sa-gunatvagunatvadi-virodhah pravishanti tam |
maha-vibhutir brahmasya prasiddhettham tayor bhida ||179||

"In Him, apparent opposites such as possessing qualities and being beyond qualities are perfectly reconciled. Brahman is renowned as one of His great manifestations of splendour. Thus the distinction between Bhagavan and Brahman is established."

Dig-darshini

For this very reason, apparently contradictory attributes such as being saguna and nirguna enter into Bhagavan and are reconciled within Him, just as rivers enter the ocean and lose their mutual opposition. The word adi includes such pairs as being without association and yet associating with His devotees, being without transformation and yet manifesting varieties of spiritual emotion and form, being without endeavour and yet performing innumerable activities, being one and yet many, and being without distinctions and yet possessing unlimited particular features.

His nirguna nature is understood from His being Brahman, while His possession of qualities, relationships, and other particular features is understood from His being Paramatma and Parameshwar. Statements heard in scripture describing Him as nameless or formless have already been explained in the Vasudevadhyatma: "He is called nameless because His qualities are not known in the ordinary way, and He is called formless because His form is not material."

Nor should it be said, as the Mayavadis maintain, that Bhagavan's status as Parameshwar is itself produced by maya and that His qualities and personal features are therefore also illusory. His supreme aisvarya is eternal and real; it is not mayika like the material world. Sri Bhagavan is one reality. Like Brahman, He is nirguna because He is beyond the material gunas; yet unlike the material world, He is also saguna in the sense that He possesses innumerable real and particular transcendental qualities and features. These apparently opposing truths coexist within Him through His inconceivable, astonishing, and infinitely varied potency. For this reason He was previously described as an "ocean of greatness."

Thus the Moksha-dharma states: "Whatever embodied thing exists within this world is pervaded by the five elements produced through the intelligence of Ishwara. Ishwara Himself is the supreme reality, the Lord Narayana, the cosmic Person. He is to be known as the indwelling Self of all beings; He is both saguna and nirguna."

The Kurma Purana similarly declares: "He is neither gross nor minute, yet He is gross and minute everywhere. He is said to be

without colour, yet He is dark in complexion with reddish eyes. Because of His divine sovereignty Bhagavan is described through apparently contradictory attributes. Nevertheless, faults can never in any way be attributed to the Supreme; rather, even mutually opposing qualities may all be harmoniously present within Him."

The Vishnu-dharmottara likewise says: "Because of His supreme sovereignty, all qualities may properly exist in Purushottama, but faults can never exist in Him, for He is the Supreme. Some ignorant persons claim that both qualities and faults exist only through maya. But maya has no independent existence there, nor is the Lord Himself subject to maya. How then could those qualities belong to Him through maya? Therefore the unlimited possibilities of His supreme sovereignty are not products of maya. Ishwara is untouched by maya, and for this reason He is known as the Supreme."

This principle will be explained more fully later.

Some maintain that the nirguna form of Bhagavan, worshipped by yogis, is Brahman, while His saguna form with four arms and other features, worshipped by devotees, is something distinct. Even according to their position, however, that saguna form must be accepted as still more exalted, for they themselves admit that it is eternal and composed of pure spiritual sattva. Moreover, it is attained only by exclusive devotees, remains unseen even by those absorbed in Brahman, and possesses the great glory of expanding extraordinary varieties of supreme bliss.

This is evident in the Narayaniya section of the Moksha-dharma. At the sacrifice of Uparicara Vasu, Bhagavan personally appeared and accepted His share of the yajna, yet Brihaspati and others could not see Him. Likewise, when the great yogis Ekata, Dvita, and Trita, sons of Brahma, went to Swetadwip and undertook extraordinary efforts, they were still unable to attain Bhagavan's darshan.

An especially powerful demonstration is found in the experience of Sanaka and the other Kumaras. They were foremost among the atmaramas and were constantly absorbed in Brahman, yet they went to Sri Vaikuntha specifically to behold Bhagavan. Upon seeing Him there, they attained an entirely new wealth of bliss, accompanied by extraordinary transformations of heart and body. Thus Srimad Bhagavatam says:

"The breeze carrying the fragrance of tulasi mixed with the pollen from the lotus feet of the lotus-eyed Lord entered through their nostrils and produced a profound agitation in the minds and bodies

even of those sages who delighted in the imperishable Brahman" (3.15.43).

There is no need to extend the argument further.

For this reason Brahman, which is also spoken of in relation to the spiritual nature of the jiva, is renowned as a great vibhuti of Bhagavan. Thus great authorities have said, "Even Brahman, beyond the beyond, is among Your manifestations." Bhagavad Gita likewise says, while describing Bhagavan's vibhutis, "O Gudakesha, I am the Atma situated within the hearts of all beings" (10.20). In that same scripture Atma and Brahman are spoken of as nondifferent in this respect.

The Brahma-samhita also states:

"I worship Govinda, the original Person, whose effulgence is Brahman—indivisible, infinite, and unlimited—and within whose radiance innumerable universes, each filled with countless varieties of planets and opulences, appear" (5.40).

The meaning is that Brahman is the prabha, the effulgence or partial manifestation, of Bhagavan. The expressions "indivisible," "infinite," and "all-pervading" further describe the nature of that Brahman.

Scripture also strongly rejects the idea that the finite jiva and the Supreme indwelling Lord are absolutely identical. Statements expressing identity are to be understood in relation to the indwelling presence of Antaryami, not as the abolition of the distinction between jiva and Parameshwar. The jiva is dependent, bound, limited in knowledge and happiness, of limited potency, and subject to defects; the Supreme is not so. Therefore those who confuse statements concerning the indwelling Lord with declarations of absolute identity become bewildered by words whose true intention they have failed to understand.

Thus Brahman is a great manifestation of Bhagavan's splendour, while Bhagavan Himself is the complete possessor of inconceivable and mutually harmonised transcendental qualities. In this way the distinction between Brahman and Bhagavan is established.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 180
अतः सान्द्रसुखं तस्य श्रीमत्पादाम्बुजद्वयम् ।
भक्त्यानुभवतां सान्द्रं सुखं सम्पद्यते ध्रुवम् ॥१८०॥
atah sandra-sukham tasya srimat-padambuja-dvayam ।
bhaktyanubhavatam sandram sukham sampadyate dhruvam ।।180।।

"Therefore, for those who experience through bhakti His glorious lotus feet, which are concentrated bliss itself, an equally concentrated and profound happiness certainly arises."

Dig-darshini

The happiness of the devotees of Bhagavan is therefore far greater than the happiness of those who realize Brahman. Bhagavan's beautiful pair of lotus feet is itself concentrated bliss, or is the source from which such concentrated bliss arises. Consequently, one who experiences those lotus feet through bhakti necessarily attains a correspondingly concentrated happiness.

This conclusion is established by reason as well as scripture. Sri Parasara says: "Just as the radiance of a fire situated in one place spreads outward, so the potency of Para Brahman extends as this entire universe."

Bhagavad Gita likewise declares: "I am the basis of Brahman, of the imperishable and immortal" (14.27).

Bhagavan's lotus feet, composed of concentrated sat-chit-ananda, may therefore be compared to the dense luminous orb of the moon or sun itself. When those lotus feet are directly experienced through bhakti, the resulting happiness must also be concentrated and full.

By contrast, the sat-chit-ananda Brahman associated with the spiritual nature of the jiva may be compared to the moonlight or sunlight radiating from that concentrated orb. Happiness arising from realization of that Brahman is therefore correspondingly slight in comparison.

The material universe itself should not be identified with those rays. The particles of moonlight and sunlight may properly be regarded as portions of the moon's or sun's radiance because they share its illuminating nature and related qualities. The material world, however, does not possess the sat-chit-ananda nature of Para Brahman and therefore cannot in that sense be regarded as a portion of Brahman. For this reason it is described instead as His shakti.

Thus the Brahma-samhita again states:

"I worship Govinda, the original Person, whose effulgence is Brahman—indivisible, infinite, and unlimited—and within whose radiance innumerable universes, each filled with countless varieties of planets and opulences, appear" (5.40).

Here Brahman is described as the prabha, the effulgence or partial manifestation, of Bhagavan, while the words "indivisible," "infinite," and "all-pervading" describe the nature of that Brahman. Therefore the happiness arising from Brahman-realization, though spiritual, cannot compare with the concentrated happiness attained through bhakti by directly experiencing the lotus feet of Bhagavan.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 179
सगुणत्वागुणत्वादिविरोधाः प्रविशन्ति तम् ।
महाविभूतिर् ब्रह्मास्य प्रसिद्धेत्थं तयोर्भिदा ॥१७९॥
sa-gunatvagunatvadi-virodhah pravishanti tam ।
maha-vibhutir brahmasya prasiddhettham tayor bhida ।।179।।

"Within Him, apparent contradictions such as possessing qualities and being beyond qualities are perfectly reconciled. Brahman is renowned as one of His great vibhutis. In this way the distinction between Bhagavan and Brahman is established."

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 180
अतः सान्द्रसुखं तस्य श्रीमत्पादाम्बुजद्वयम् ।
भक्त्यानुभवतां सान्द्रं सुखं सम्पद्यते ध्रुवम् ॥१८०॥
atah sandra-sukham tasya srimat-padambuja-dvayam ।
bhaktyanubhavatam sandram sukham sampadyate dhruvam ।।180।।

"Therefore, those who experience through bhakti His beautiful lotus feet, which are concentrated bliss itself, certainly attain a correspondingly concentrated and profound happiness."

Dig-darshini

The happiness of Bhagavan's devotees is therefore vastly greater than that of those who experience Brahman. Bhagavan's glorious pair of lotus feet is concentrated bliss itself, or is the resting place of concentrated bliss. Consequently, those who experience His lotus feet through bhakti necessarily attain concentrated happiness.

This follows both by reasoning and from scripture. Sri Parasara states: "Just as the radiance of a fire situated in one place spreads outward, so the shakti of Para Brahman extends as this entire universe."

Bhagavad Gita likewise declares: "I am the basis of Brahman, of the imperishable and immortal" (14.27).

Bhagavan's lotus feet, composed of concentrated sat-chit-ananda, may therefore be compared to the concentrated luminous orb of the moon or sun itself. Through experiencing those lotus feet by bhakti, the resulting happiness must likewise be concentrated.

By comparison, the sat-chit-ananda Brahman associated with the spiritual nature of the jiva may be compared to the moonlight

or sunlight radiating from that concentrated orb. The happiness arising from realization of that Brahman is correspondingly slight.

The material world itself should not be identified with those rays. The particles of moonlight or sunlight may be regarded as portions of the moon or sun because they share its illuminating nature and related qualities. But the material world does not possess the sat-chit-ananda nature of Para Brahman and therefore cannot in that sense be called a portion of Brahman. For this reason it is described instead as His shakti.

Thus the Brahma-samhita again declares: "I worship Govinda, the original Person, whose effulgence is Brahman—indivisible, infinite, and unlimited—and within whose radiance innumerable universes, each containing innumerable planets and varieties of opulence, exist" (5.40). The meaning is that Brahman is the prabha, the radiance or partial manifestation, of Bhagavan; the words "indivisible," "infinite," and "all-pervading" describe that Brahman.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 181
सुखरूपं सुखाधारः शर्करापिण्डवन्मतम्।
श्रीकृष्णचरणद्वन्द्वं सुखं ब्रह्म तु केवलम्॥१८१॥
sukha-rupam sukhadharah sharkara-pindavan matam ।
sri-krishna-carana-dvandvam sukham brahma tu kevalam ।।181।।

"The two lotus feet of Sri Krishna are understood to be both bliss itself and the resting place of bliss, like a solid lump of sugar, which is itself sugar and at the same time contains sugar. Brahman, however, is simply bliss alone."

Dig-darshini

This point is now made still clearer. The two lotus feet of Sri Krishna are themselves the very form of happiness, and they are simultaneously the resting place of happiness, because they exist as concentrated bliss.

A suitable comparison is a solid lump of sugar. The lump is itself sugar, yet because it possesses the form of a lump it is also the resting place in which that sugar exists. In the same way, Sri Krishna's lotus feet are both bliss itself and the resting place of bliss.

Brahman, on the other hand, is simply happiness itself and cannot also be described as its resting place, for that would introduce a distinction within Brahman. In Bhagavan, however—whose greatness is deeper than millions upon millions of oceans—streams of astonishing apparent opposites such as difference and non-difference are perfectly reconciled, as has already been explained.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verses 182–188

जीवस्वरूपं यद् वस्तु परं ब्रह्म तदेव चेत् ।
तदेव सच्चिदानन्दघनं श्रीभगवांश्च तत् ॥१८२॥
तथापि जीवतत्त्वानि तस्यांशा एव सन्मताः ।
घनतेजःसमूहस्य तेजोजालं यथा रवेः ॥१८३॥
नित्यसिद्धास्ततो जीवा भिन्ना एव यथा रवेः ।
अंशवो विस्फुलिङ्गाश्च वह्नेर्भङ्गाश्च वारिधेः ॥१८४॥
अनादिसिद्धया शक्त्या चिद्विलासस्वरूपया ।
महायोगाख्यया तस्य सदा ते भेदितास्ततः ॥१८५॥
अतस्तस्मादभिन्नास्ते भिन्ना अपि सतां मताः ।
मुक्तौ सत्यमपि प्रायो भेदस्तिष्ठेदतो हि सः ॥१८६॥
सच्चिदानन्दरूपाणां जीवानां कृष्णमायया ।
अनाद्यविद्यया तत्त्वविस्मृत्या संसृतिर्भ्रमः ॥१८७॥
मुक्तौ स्वतत्त्वज्ञानेन मायापगमतो हि सः ।
निवर्तते घनानन्दब्रह्मांशानुभवो भवेत् ॥१८८॥

jiva-svarupam yad vastu param brahma tad eva cet ।
tad eva sat-chit-ananda-ghanam sri-bhagavamsh ca tat ।।182।।
tathapi jiva-tattvani tasyamsha eva san-matah ।
ghana-tejah-samuhasya tejo-jalam yatha raveh ।।183।।
nitya-siddhas tato jiva bhinna eva yatha raveh ।
amshavo visphulingash ca vahner bhangash ca varidheh ।।184।।
anadi-siddhaya shaktya cid-vilasa-svarupaya ।
maha-yogakhyaya tasya sada te bheditas tatah ।।185।।
atas tasmad abhinnas te bhinna api satam matah ।
muktau satyam api prayo bhedas tishthhed ato hi sah ।।186।।
sat-chit-ananda-rupanam jivanam krishna-mayaya ।
anady-avidyaya tattva-vismritya samsritir bhramah ।।187।।
muktau sva-tattva-jnanena mayapagamato hi sah ।
nivartate ghanananda-brahmamshanubhavo bhavet ।।188।।

"Suppose one maintains that the reality constituting the jiva's true nature is itself Para Brahman, that this very reality is concentrated sat-chit-ananda, and that this itself is Sri Bhagavan. Even then, the individual jivas are accepted by the true authorities as portions of Him, just as the network of rays issuing from the sun is a portion of that concentrated mass of light.

"The jivas are eternally established as distinct portions of Him, just as the rays of the sun, sparks of fire, and waves of the ocean are distinct from their source. Through His beginningless and eternally established shakti, whose nature is the manifestation of consciousness and which is called Mahayoga, they remain eternally distinguished from Him.

"Therefore the saints accept the jivas as both non-different from and different from that Supreme Reality. Consequently, even when liberation is attained, that eternal distinction generally remains.

"The jivas are by nature sat-chit-ananda, but through Krishna's maya, in the form of beginningless avidya, they forget the truth of their own nature, and the resulting condition of samsara is an illusion.

"In mukti, through knowledge of one's own true nature and the disappearance of maya, that illusion ceases. Then one experiences one's own self as a portion of the concentrated bliss that is Brahman."

Dig-darshini

Even after everything just stated, some maintain the following position: Brahman itself is concentrated bliss and may be compared to the luminous orb of the moon. That very Brahman is the true nature of Sri Bhagavan, because scripture says that the one nondual Reality is designated as Brahman, Paramatma, and Bhagavan. The all-pervading consciousness by which the world is illuminated may then be compared to the moonlight issuing from that orb.

Even granting this position, the following seven verses demonstrate through reasoning that the happiness found in moksha remains comparatively slight.

Suppose, then, that the reality constituting the jiva's true nature is itself Para Brahman, that this same reality is concentrated sat-chit-ananda, and that this same reality is also Sri Bhagavan.

Even so, the individual jivas and their distinct spiritual identities are accepted by true authorities such as Parasara as amshas, portions, of that Brahman. The word "concentrated" indicates the distinction between the concentrated source and that which proceeds from it. Thus the reality of the individual self should still be understood as distinct in this sense. The plurality of such selves corresponds to the plurality of the jivas.

The illustration is the sun. The sun is a concentrated mass of brilliance, while the network of rays issuing from it consists of its portions and is not something wholly unrelated to it. In the same way, the jivas are portions of the Supreme Reality.

One might object that the jivas merely appear to be many and distinct portions because of maya, and that when maya disappears in liberation their difference must disappear as well. This is denied.

According to the teaching of the Tattvavadis, the jivas are nitya-siddha in relation to Para Brahman: their status as His portions is eternally established and is not a mistaken appearance produced by maya. Therefore they are genuinely distinct from Him. The

examples are the rays of the sun, the sparks of a fire, and the waves of the ocean. The rays exist within and arise from the sun's brilliance, yet their distinctness as rays remains; similarly with sparks and fire, and waves and the ocean.

How can eternal difference exist without being produced by maya? It exists through Sri Bhagavan's own shakti. By that shakti the jivas are eternally distinguished, as portions, from Bhagavan, the divine form of Para Brahman. That shakti is anadi-siddha, eternally established without beginning. Consequently, the jiva-tattvas distinguished through it are likewise beginningless. Its nature is cid-vilasa, an expansion or manifestation of consciousness itself; therefore the jivas, as manifestations of spiritual consciousness, are not products of material maya. This shakti is also called Mahayoga because it possesses the extraordinary power to accomplish what otherwise appears impossible. Bhagavad Gita similarly says, "I am not manifest to everyone, being covered by My Yogamaya."

Thus even though ordinary reasoning may find it difficult to reconcile the relationship of part and possessor of the parts in this transcendental reality, Bhagavan's shakti possesses the power to establish precisely such a relationship. Therefore the saints accept the jivas as both non-different from and different from Para Brahman. They are non-different because they share with Brahman such characteristics as sat-chit-ananda; yet they are different because they exist as His portions and as many distinct selves.

The same three examples should again be remembered. Rays are non-different from the sun because they possess its illuminating nature, yet they are distinct as individual rays. Sparks share the nature of fire while remaining sparks; waves share the nature of the ocean while remaining individual waves.

For this reason, the eternally established distinction between the jiva and the Supreme generally remains even in mukti.

This accords with the statement attributed to Sri Sankaracarya Bhagavatpada:

"Even the liberated, assuming a vigraha for the sake of lila, worship Bhagavan."

It also accords with the statement of Srimad Bhagavatam:

"Among millions of liberated and perfected souls, a peaceful soul exclusively devoted to Narayana is exceedingly rare, O great sage" (6.14.5).

If liberation necessarily meant complete dissolution into Brahman with no distinct existence remaining whatsoever, who could later assume a vigraha for lila? And who could become devoted to Narayana through bhakti? No distinct conscious person would remain to do either.

Nor can these statements simply be restricted to jivan-muktas. A jivan-mukta already possesses a body, so the expression "assuming a vigraha" would be inappropriate. Likewise, the explicit description "even among the liberated and perfected" would lose its force.

There are further scriptural examples. In the Kartika-mahatmya of the Padma Purana, a great sage whose human body had merged into Bhagavan later manifested again in a form resembling Narayana. Similarly, in the Brihan-Narasimha Purana, in the account of the vow of Nrisimha-caturdasi, a brahmana who had entered into Bhagavan together with a prostitute later manifested again as Prahlada together with his wife. Many other such narratives may also be considered as supporting evidence.

The word "generally" in the verse allows for an exceptional case in which, by Bhagavan's will, someone may attain the condition called sayujya or nirvana.

One might then ask: if distinction continues even after liberation, what has been accomplished by a mukti attained only after such immense effort over many births?

The answer is given in the final two verses. The jivas are by nature sat-chit-ananda, but through Krishna's maya, in the form of beginningless avidya, they forget the truth of their own identity as portions of Para Brahman. That forgetfulness produces samsriti, the condition of wandering through samsara. In that sense samsara is a bhrama, an erroneous condition arising from avidya. On careful examination, such conditioned existence cannot belong to the jiva's eternal spiritual nature.

When mukti arises through knowledge of one's true spiritual identity, maya withdraws and this error ceases. Then there is direct experience of one's own true self as an amsha of the concentrated bliss that is Brahman—here meaning Para Brahman, Bhagavan, since the position presently being examined identifies Brahman and Bhagavan.

Thus even according to this conception, liberation yields only the happiness belonging to the experience of oneself as a portion of that concentrated bliss.

Devotees possess the same spiritual nature, but their attainment is different. Through bhajana of Bhagavan they experience His lotus feet directly, and thereby attain the happiness of bhakti. This is what distinguishes the happiness of the devotee from that of one who has merely attained liberation.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 189
स्वसाधनानुरूपं हि फलं सर्वत्र सिध्यति।
अतः स्वरूपज्ञानेन साध्ये मोक्षेऽल्पकं फलम् ॥१८९॥
sva-sadhananurupam hi phalam sarvatra sidhyati ।
atah svarupa-jnanena sadhye mokshe 'lpakam phalam ।।189।।

"Everywhere, the result attained corresponds to the means by which it is accomplished. Therefore, since moksha is attained through knowledge of one's own svarupa, its resulting happiness must necessarily be small."

Dig-darshini

The reason previously given for the comparatively slight happiness experienced in liberation is now further established by considering the ordinary relationship between a means and its result. Everywhere, both in this world and the next, a result corresponds to the means employed to attain it. Something requiring an axe cannot be accomplished with a small pair of scissors. Similarly, moksha is attained through knowledge of one's own svarupa, the reality of the self as an amsha of Brahman. Since the object of that knowledge is only the amsha, the individual self, the means itself is correspondingly limited. Therefore the happiness attained as its result in moksha must also be limited.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 190
संसारयातनोद्विग्नै रसहीनैर्मुमुक्षुभिः।
बहुधा स्तूयते मोक्षो यथा द्यौः स्वर्गकामिभिः ॥१९०॥
samsara-yatanodvignai rasa-hinair mumukshubhih ।
bahudha stuyate moksho yatha dyauh svarga-kamibhih ।।190।।

"Moksha is greatly praised in many ways by those who, tormented by the sufferings of samsara and devoid of rasa, desire liberation, just as Swarga is highly praised by those who desire heaven."

Dig-darshini

Why, then, do some people describe the happiness of moksha as the ultimate summit of happiness? Those who desire liberation are deeply agitated by the sufferings of samsara, such as birth and death. Because their hearts have been scorched by these miseries, they are devoid of rasa—either of that special substance which melts the heart, or of the particular loving affection by which rasa is tasted. Their scorched hearts have lost the capacity to receive it.

Such mumukshus, desiring above all to escape the torments of samsara, therefore praise moksha in many ways, describing it as the ultimate limit of supreme happiness. But this is merely praise; moksha is not actually of such a nature.

The comparison is with Swarga. Although heavenly existence is mixed with many sufferings, such as fear of falling, rivalry, and the certainty that its pleasures will end, those who desire heaven nevertheless glorify it extensively, saying that its happiness is unmixed with suffering and is never subsequently overcome by misery. Moksha is praised by mumukshus in much the same way.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 191
सुखस्य तु परा काष्ठा भक्तावेव स्वतो भवेत् ।
तन्मयश्रीपदाम्भोजसेविनां साधनोचिता ॥१९१॥
sukhasya tu para kashtha bhaktav eva svato bhavet ।
tan-maya-sri-padambhoja-sevinam sadhanocita ।।191।।

"The supreme summit of happiness arises naturally in bhakti alone, for those who serve the glorious lotus feet of Bhagavan, which are themselves composed of that supreme happiness. Such a result perfectly corresponds to their sadhana."

Dig-darshini

In bhakti to Sri Bhagavan, however, the highest happiness arises effortlessly, because the means employed is itself perfectly suited to such a result. Devotees serve and thereby directly experience Bhagavan's glorious lotus feet, which are themselves the supreme concentration of happiness. Therefore the fruit is perfectly appropriate to the sadhana. As the means is, so the attained result must be. Since the devotee's very practice consists of serving the lotus feet that are the ultimate embodiment of happiness, the supreme limit of happiness naturally manifests through bhakti.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 192
परमातिशयप्राप्तमहत्ताबोधनाय हि ।
पराकाष्ठेति शब्द्येत तस्यानन्तस्य नावधिः ॥१९२॥
paramatishaya-prapta-mahatta-bodhanaya hi ।
para-kashth eti shabdyeta tasyanantasya navadhih ।।192।।

"The expression 'supreme summit' is used only to indicate a greatness beyond which no greater excellence exists. That happiness itself is infinite and therefore has no boundary."

Dig-darshini

One might object that calling something the "supreme summit" seems to imply a fixed limit, and therefore contradicts the statement that the happiness of bhakti is infinite.

The expression is used only to convey that this happiness possesses a greatness beyond which no greater excellence can be conceived. It means that nothing greater than it exists. It does not imply that the happiness itself has a boundary or final measure. That happiness is ananta, unlimited and without any end whatsoever.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 193
तत् सुखं वर्धतेऽभीक्ष्णमनन्तं परमं महत् ।
न तु ब्रह्मसुखं मुक्तौ वर्धते सीमवद् यथा ॥१९३॥
tat sukham vardhate 'bhikshnam anantam paramam mahat ।
na tu brahma-sukham muktau vardhate simavad yatha ।।193।।
"That happiness of bhakti continually increases, while remaining infinite, supreme, and immeasurably great. The happiness of Brahman in moksha, however, does not increase, for it possesses a limit."

Dig-darshini
Here the extraordinary superiority of the happiness arising from bhakti over the happiness of Brahman-realization is further established. The happiness born of bhakti increases constantly.

One might object that if it increases, it must at any given moment possess some finite measure. But even while continually increasing, it remains eternally infinite, unlimited, and supremely great. Devotees experience it at every moment as ever new, ever sweeter, and ever greater than before, while it simultaneously remains at every moment the highest and most unlimited happiness.

The happiness of Brahman experienced in mukti does not expand in this way. It has a fixed limit, because the state of Brahman-realization admits no such transformations of continual increase. Indeed, those devoted to liberation themselves describe it as having reached the ultimate limit of happiness, thereby implicitly assigning it a fixed boundary.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 194
परमात्मा परब्रह्म स एव परमेश्वरः ।
इत्येवमेषामैक्येन सजातीयभिदा हता ॥१९४॥
paramatma para-brahma sa eva parameshvarah ।
ity evam esham aikyena sajatiya-bhida hata ।।194।।
"Paramatma, Para Brahman, and Parameshwar are that one and the same Supreme Reality. Through their essential unity, any division among separate realities of the same spiritual category is eliminated."

Dig-darshini
One might object that if the individual jivas possess eternally distinct existence, then Para Brahman would seem to contain

sajatiya-bheda, a distinction between separate realities belonging to the same essential category. Yet such distinction appears to be rejected by scriptural statements describing the Supreme as one and nondual.

This difficulty is resolved in another way.

The very same Supreme Reality who is Paramatma, the indwelling Lord of all jivas, is Para Brahman, and He is also Parameshwar. The same should be understood of the many particular manifestations of Parameshwar as His guna-avataras, lila-avataras, and other forms: all are that same Supreme Reality.

Although Paramatma, Para Brahman, Parameshwar, and His various avataras appear as distinct manifestations, they are essentially one and possess no difference of fundamental nature. Since all are concentrated sat-chit-ananda, the supposed sajatiya-bheda among them is destroyed. Thus the statement that the Supreme is "one" is established.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 195
सदा वैजात्यमाप्तानां जीवानामपि तत्त्वतः ।
अंशत्वेनाप्यभिन्नत्वाद् विजातीयभिदा मृता ॥१९५॥
sada vaijatyam aptanam jivanam api tattvatah ।
amshatvenapy abhinnatvad vijatiya-bhida mrita ।।195।।

"Although the jivas eternally possess a distinct character, in ultimate truth they are nevertheless non-different from Him as His amshas. Therefore vijatiya-bheda, the division between realities of entirely different natures, is also eliminated."

Dig-darshini

The word advaya, "nondual," is now established.

The jivas possess vaijatya in relation to the Supreme because of such distinctions as their limitation and minuteness. Nevertheless, in ultimate truth they are not completely different in nature from Him. Their distinction is established through His cid-vilasa-shakti, and they themselves are of spiritual nature.

Moreover, because they are His amshas, the qualities of the possessor of the amshas are present in His portions in a corresponding manner. Therefore, even though the jivas are distinct, they are not realities belonging to an utterly different category from the Supreme. In this way vijatiya-bheda—absolute difference of kind—is also eliminated.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 196
अस्मिन् हि भेदाभेदाख्ये सिद्धान्तेऽस्मत्सुसम्मते।
युक्त्यावतारिते सर्वं निरवद्यं ध्रुवं भवेत्॥१९६॥
asmin hi bhedabhedakhye siddhante 'smat-susammate |
yuktyavatarite sarvam niravadyam dhruvam bhavet ||196||

"In this conclusion known as bhedabheda—difference and non-difference—which we fully accept, when the matter is properly established through reasoning, everything becomes certainly free from contradiction."

Dig-darshini

When this siddhanta of simultaneous difference and non-difference is properly unfolded through careful reasoning, every teaching concerning the path of bhakti, whether already stated or still unstated, becomes free from defect and contradiction. This doctrine is fully approved by us, the scriptures devoted to bhakti to Sri Bhagavan, and it possesses the power to remove all such doubts.

Even according to those who maintain that the jivas arise from Brahman itself and ultimately merge back into Brahman, it still follows that the happiness experienced in mukti must be limited, because the liberated jiva does not thereby experience the entire unlimited svarupa of Brahman.

Consider the example of waves arising from the ocean. A wave arises only from one particular portion of the ocean and eventually dissolves again into some particular portion of it. Because the wave consists of water, it is non-different from the ocean in that respect. Yet it does not possess the ocean's vast depth, its character as a great treasury of jewels, and its other immense qualities. It therefore remains distinct in those respects.

When the wave dissolves into the ocean and is no longer externally visible as a separate wave, one may say that it has become one with the ocean or has attained the ocean's nature. Yet it has not thereby become the entire unlimited ocean with all its unfathomable qualities.

In the same way, according to this alternative understanding, a jiva who enters through liberation into that particular aspect of Brahman which is his source may be said to have attained oneness with Brahman. But this does not mean that the jiva has become the unlimited, concentrated fullness of Brahman-bliss, for the jiva remains limited by his own intrinsic nature.

Thus even in mukti there is non-difference because separate external perception has ceased, while there remains difference because the

liberated jiva abides in a limited manner within a particular aspect of Brahman.

For this reason it is possible, as explained previously, that by a special mercy of Sri Bhagavan a liberated soul may again attain distinct existence in order to assume a sat-chit-ananda body and relish the happiness of bhakti.

Only with this understanding does the statement of Sri Sankaracarya Bhagavatpada become fully meaningful:

"Even when difference has disappeared, O Lord, I am Yours; You are not mine. A wave belongs to the ocean, but the ocean never belongs to the wave."

Even after the distinction of conditioned jivahood produced by avidya has disappeared, a distinction remains because the liberated jiva eternally belongs to the Lord. Otherwise, if complete and absolute identity had truly been attained, the words "O Lord, I am Yours" could have no coherent meaning.

The essential point may be understood through another comparison. Limited rivers cannot literally become the unlimited ocean with its immense depth and innumerable varieties of jewels. They are said to "become the ocean" only because their separate external existence disappears when their waters enter it.

In the same way, when the matter is carefully examined, the kind of liberation conceived as total dissolution ultimately amounts merely to the disappearance of separate conditioned existence, comparable to the extinguishing of a lamp. It does not establish the attainment of any new positive happiness. Even according to the principles of those who advocate such liberation, no new function of intelligence or other positive faculty arises there; the self remains according to its own nature.

For this reason, among the four kinds of pralaya, the atyantika-pralaya—the complete cessation of conditioned existence—is not, merely as dissolution, sufficient to explain the positive spiritual reality of moksha.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 197
सदा प्रमाणभूतानामस्माकं महतां तथा।
वाक्यानि व्यवहारश्च प्रमाणं खलु सर्वथा॥१९७॥
sada pramana-bhutanam asmakam mahatam tatha |
vakyani vyavaharash ca pramanam khalu sarvatha ||197||

"The statements of scriptures such as ourselves, which are eternally authoritative, and likewise the words and conduct of the great devotees, are certainly valid evidence in every respect."

Dig-darshini

Some maintain that Brahman alone exists eternally as the one reality without a second, but under the limiting condition of maya it falsely appears divided as innumerable jivas. When true knowledge arises, that false appearance disappears and nothing other than Brahman remains manifest. According to this view, liberation removes the intervening illusion of individual jivahood and reveals the original nature of the self as concentrated Brahman-bliss, exactly as it was before.

They further argue that although no separate ego remains in liberation to experience happiness, liberation itself consists in the manifestation of one's own inherent blissful nature. Thus dense and concentrated happiness is said to exist in moksha. In the same way, according to the devotees, Sri Bhagavan, whose form is concentrated sat-chit-ananda, eternally experiences His own supremely concentrated bliss through the perpetual manifestation of His own svarupa.

If this view of moksha were accepted without qualification, however, the special superiority of bhakti over liberation could no longer be established, since equally concentrated bliss would already be present in moksha. This conclusion is therefore rejected through the following arguments.

The statements of scriptures such as ourselves are authoritative. Srimad Bhagavatam says:

"Even the atmarama sages, who are free from all bondage, perform causeless bhakti to Urukrama, for Hari possesses such extraordinary qualities" (1.7.10).

It also states:

"Bhakti is greater than siddhi"—that is, greater than liberation (3.25.33).

And:

"Those who are exclusively devoted to Narayana fear nothing whatsoever. Swarga, liberation, and hell are all regarded equally by them" (6.17.28).

Again, the personified Vedas pray:

"O Lord, some who have abandoned their homes through association with the swanlike devotees at Your lotus feet, and who wander within the vast ocean of nectar formed by the accounts of Your deeds assumed to reveal the difficult truth of the self, do not even care for liberation" (10.87.21).

There are thousands upon thousands of such statements. Similarly, great devotees such as Narada, Prahlada, Hanuman, and others have declared:

"I do not desire that liberation in which the relationship 'You are the Lord and I am Your servant' is destroyed."

Likewise, among later authorities, the supremely learned paramahamsa-acarya Sri Sankaracarya Bhagavatpada, expert in explaining the entire meaning of the Srutis, states in connection with the Vedanta-sutra phrase muktopasrpyat:

"Even liberated souls assume a vigraha (an eternal form) for the sake of lila and for the worship of Bhagavan."

The conduct of such great personalities is equally authoritative. Sri Suka, Sanaka, and others engaged themselves in narrating the lilas of Bhagavan, while Prahlada, Hanuman, and others refused the liberation personally offered to them by Sri Bhagavan.

All such statements and conduct are always authoritative in every respect. They cannot be dismissed through devices such as claiming that they are merely arthavada, exaggerated praise without literal doctrinal force. The word khalu expresses certainty. No further proof need be sought for the authority of those who are themselves perpetually accepted as sources of valid knowledge.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 198
तथैतदनुकूलानि पुरावृत्तानि सन्ति च।
नैव सङ्गच्छते तस्मादर्थवादत्वकल्पना ॥१९८॥
tathaitad-anukulani pura-vrittani santi ca ।
naiva sangacchate tasmad arthavadatva-kalpana ।।198।।

"Moreover, many ancient accounts confirm this conclusion. Therefore it is entirely unreasonable to suppose that such statements are merely arthavada."

Dig-darshini

There are also many ancient histories that accord perfectly with this teaching concerning the superiority of bhakti over moksha and

with the statements and conduct of the great devotees.

For example, the sons of a brahmana residing in Dwaraka had attained the state of liberation. Yet their father, being devoted to Bhagavan, skilfully criticised Arjuna and thereby caused Sri Bhagavan Himself to bring those sons from the realm of liberation back to Dwaraka, the realm of bhakti.

Similarly, even great Brahman-realized sages such as Ekata, Dvita, and Trita, who resembled Sanaka and the other Kumaras, went to Swetadwip and made extraordinary efforts to obtain Bhagavan's darshan, yet they were unable to behold Him.

Another example is Sri Prithu, an avatara among Bhagavan's devotees. When Bhagavan instructed him to choose the highest possible boon, Prithu satisfied Him with special prayers and said:

"Just as a father acts for the welfare of his child, so You alone should decide what is truly desirable for us" (Srimad Bhagavatam 4.20.31).

Bhagavan then replied:

"May you have bhakti for Me" (4.20.32).

Thus, because the words and conduct of the great authorities are themselves valid evidence, and because numerous ancient histories confirm the same truth, it is impossible to dismiss these teachings as mere arthavada—that is, as statements intended only for praise without expressing actual truth.

If thousands upon thousands of such scriptural statements were all explained away as arthavada, the defect of applying that interpretation excessively and indiscriminately would result. Moreover, the authoritative conduct of the great devotees and the factual events narrated in the ancient histories would still remain unexplained.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 199
अथाप्याचर्यमाणा सा नास्तिकत्वं वितन्वती।
क्षिपेत् कल्पयितारं तं दुस्तरे नरकोत्करे ॥१९९॥
athapy acaryamana sa nastikatvam vitanvati ।
kshipet kalpayitaram tam dustare narakotkare ।।199।।

"If someone nevertheless persists in imagining such statements to be mere arthavada, that interpretation will spread disbelief within him and cast its author into an immense and impassable multitude of hells."

Dig-darshini

Even after disregarding the authoritative statements and conduct of the great devotees, if someone continues to impose the interpretation of arthavada upon them, that very habit of interpretation fosters nastikatva—rejection of the authority of the Vedas and shastras—or publicly reveals the person's alienation from scripture.

Such an interpretation, pursued merely to display one's own intellectual cleverness through arrogant argument, will cast the person who invents it—saying, "These statements are only arthavada"—into a vast and difficult-to-cross multitude of hellish conditions.

Thus the Naradiya Purana declares:

"O best of the twice-born, those who describe as arthavada the teachings of the Puranas, which proclaim all principles of dharma, become fit for hell."

The essential point is this. After properly considering the matter, one must abandon harsh sophistry and false intellectual pride and accept some explanation capable of reconciling the scriptural statements that establish the special superiority of bhakti over moksha. Otherwise one would be forced into rejecting the authority of an immense body of scripture and thereby incur grave consequences.

This most coherent position has already been presented in the four verses beginning, "Bhagavan, however, is Para Brahman" (2.2.178–181). It has also already been demonstrated through reasoning that, when moksha conceived as complete dissolution is examined closely, it ultimately amounts merely to the cessation of conditioned existence rather than the attainment of any positive and concentrated happiness.

Consequently, if liberation requires strenuous practices extending over many births yet culminates only in such a result, there is little reason to labour so greatly for it. The far greater attainment is bhakti to Sri Bhagavan.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 200
अहो श्लाघ्यः कथं मोक्षो दैत्यानामपि दृश्यते।
तैरेव शास्त्रैर्निन्द्यन्ते ये गोविप्रादिघातिनः ॥२००॥
aho shlaghyah katham moksho daityanam api drishyate ।
tair eva shastrair nindyante ye go-vipradi-ghatinah ।।200।।

"Ah! How can moksha be considered worthy of praise when it is seen to be attained even by daityas? Those very scriptures condemn such persons for killing cows, brahmanas, and others."

Dig-darshini

Another clear argument may be considered. Moksha is seen to be attained even by daityas such as Kamsa and Aghasura. Since it is attained by persons of such wicked character, how can liberation itself deserve such extraordinary praise?

The extreme wickedness of the daityas is demonstrated by the very scriptures that glorify moksha, for those scriptures condemn them as killers of cows, brahmanas, and others. The word adi includes their destruction of yajnas, the Vedas, and other sacred things. Thus the ministers of Kamsa say in the Tenth Canto:

"Therefore, O King, let us by every means kill the brahmanas who know Brahman, those devoted to austerity and sacrifice, and also the cows that supply the offerings for yajna" (Srimad Bhagavatam 10.4.40).

Many similar statements concerning other daityas are found elsewhere. Since moksha is attainable even by persons whom scripture itself condemns, it is more reasonable to regard such an attainment as unworthy of the highest praise.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 201

सर्वथा प्रतियोगित्वं यत् साधुत्वासुरत्वयोः।
तत्साधनेषु साध्ये च वैपरीत्यं किलोचितम् ॥२०१॥

sarvatha pratiyogitvam yat sadhutvasuratvayoh ।
tat sadhaneshu sadhye ca vaiparityam kilocitam ।।201।।

"Since saintliness and demonic nature are opposed to one another in every respect, their respective means of attainment and their ultimate goals should certainly also be opposite."

Dig-darshini

Sadhutva, the nature of a sadhu devoted to Bhagavan, and asuratva, the nature of one hostile toward Bhagavan, stand opposed to one another in every respect—in qualities, actions, disposition, and everything else. It is therefore entirely appropriate that their means of attainment and their ultimate goals should also be opposite.

For the sadhus, the means is worship of the lotus feet of Sri Bhagavan. For the daityas, the opposite path is knowledge aimed at realizing an identity of the self with the nondual Absolute. Similarly, the goal of the sadhus is prema-bhakti, whereas the opposite attainment associated with the daityas is mukti.

Certain passages appear to place the result of bhakti and the result of hostility toward Bhagavan within a single category. Thus the personified Vedas say:

"The sages who firmly control breath, mind, and senses through yoga worship Him within their hearts. His enemies also attain Him through constant remembrance. The women of Braja, whose minds cling to His arms like serpents coiling around their beloved object, attain Him; and we too, seeing all equally, attain the nectar of His lotus feet" (Srimad Bhagavatam 10.87.23).

Similarly, the Seventh Canto states:

"By desire, hatred, fear, affection, or bhakti, many have absorbed their minds in Ishwara, abandoned their sins, and attained His destination" (7.1.29).

Such statements should be understood as referring only to a certain similarity: the flow of birth and death in samsara comes to an end in each case. Or their purpose may be to proclaim the extraordinary power of remembering Bhagavan, seeing Him, and receiving the influence of His compassion.

Likewise, Narada says in the Seventh Canto:

"Through continuous enmity a mortal may become absorbed in Him in a way that does not occur through bhakti-yoga—this is my considered conclusion" (7.1.26).

This apparent praise of hatred should be understood as extraordinary skill in expression. It may arise from the natural contentment of bhakti and from the profound depth and strength of prema. Otherwise, such praise of hatred could not properly come from Narada, the supreme Bhagavata and acarya absorbed in the rasa of highest bhakti, while sitting in the assembly of the great devotee Yudhishthira in the direct presence of Sri Krishna Himself.

Alternatively, the statement may contain a grave irony: that particular tanmayata, absorption into Bhagavan, may indeed be obtained especially through hatred—if what is meant is the liberation called sayujya. In that case the statement indirectly mocks such an attainment, because that liberation is supremely undesirable.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 202
कृष्णभक्त्यैव साधुत्वं साधनं परमं हि सा।
तया साध्यं तदङ्घ्र्यब्जयुगलं परमं फलम् ॥२०२॥
krishna-bhaktyaiva sadhutvam sadhanam paramam hi sa ।
taya sadhyam tad-anghry-abja-yugalam paramam phalam ।।202।।

"True saintliness arises through bhakti to Krishna alone, and that bhakti is the supreme sadhana. Through it, the pair of His lotus feet is attained as the supreme fruit."

Dig-darshini

One might object that persons devoted to the performance of sva-dharma, the cultivation of jnana, and other disciplines are also commonly called sadhus. But saintliness in its highest and primary sense arises only through bhakti to Krishna; all other uses of the word are secondary. Alternatively, the statement may be taken absolutely: what is truly called sadhutva exists only through Krishna-bhakti and not otherwise.

This intention is seen in the account of Ambarisha in the Ninth Canto, where Bhagavan says to Durvasa:

"O brahmana, I am dependent upon My devotees and am therefore as though not independent" (Srimad Bhagavatam 9.4.63),

and later:

"The sadhus are My heart, and I am the heart of the sadhus" (9.4.68).

By speaking in this way, Bhagavan indicates that His own devotees are the sadhus in the fullest sense.

Bhakti is also the supreme means for attaining His lotus feet. Karma, jnana, vairagya, and other practices may sometimes serve as secondary auxiliaries at the beginning of bhakti, but bhakti itself is supreme. Or the word "supreme" may simply describe its intrinsic nature.

Through that supreme sadhana of bhakti, the pair of Sri Krishna's lotus feet is attained as the supreme fruit. Here too, "supreme" may indicate their superiority to Brahman, or it may simply describe their very nature.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 203

तद्भक्तिरसिकानां तु महतां तत्त्ववेदिनाम् ।
साध्या तच्चरणाम्भोजमकरन्दात्मिकैव सा ॥२०३॥

tad-bhakti-rasikanam tu mahatam tattva-vedinam ।
sadhya tac-caranambhoja-makarandatmikaiva sa ।।203।।

"But for the great souls who truly know the nature of bhakti and deeply relish devotion to Him, bhakti itself is the goal, for it is the very nectar flowing from His lotus feet."

Dig-darshini

One might object that if bhakti is superior even to moksha, which is commonly regarded as the highest goal of life, then bhakti itself should properly be regarded as the fruit rather than merely as a means. That is indeed so.

For the great souls who are rasikas of bhakti to the lotus feet of Sri Krishna—those who relish that bhakti with profound eagerness—and who truly understand its nature, bhakti itself is the sadhya, the fruit.

But it is well known that direct realization of Sri Krishna's lotus feet is the fruit of the entire practice of bhakti. How, then, can bhakti itself be called the ultimate result?

Because bhakti is itself the makaranda of Sri Krishna's lotus feet—the sweet, fragrant, cooling nectar that constitutes their very essence, meaning an extraordinary form of supreme bliss.

The meaning is this: the happiness obtained merely by directly seeing Bhagavan is surpassed again and again by the happiness arising from directly performing His varied services. Therefore bhakti itself is the supreme fruit. This will be explained much more extensively later.

Thus it has been established in many ways that those who experience Brahman, the atmaramas, the jivan-muktas, and even perfected liberated souls obtain at most freedom from suffering in the conception of liberation under discussion. The devotees of Sri Bhagavan, however—even before reaching Vaikuntha and even while still inhabiting bodies composed of the five material elements—continually experience, by Bhagavan's mercy, an especially concentrated and profound spiritual happiness.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 204
सा कर्मज्ञानवैराग्यापेक्षकस्य न सिध्यति।
परं श्रीकृष्णकृपया तन्मात्रापेक्षकस्य हि॥२०४॥
sa karma-jnana-vairagyapekshakasya na sidhyati ।
param sri-krishna-kripaya tan-matrapekshakasya hi ।।204।।

"That bhakti is not attained by one who depends upon karma, jnana, or vairagya. Rather, it is attained solely by the mercy of Sri Krishna by one who desires bhakti alone."

Dig-darshini

How, then, is such bhakti attained? To answer this, the scriptures devoted to bhakti explain that those who seek bhakti are independent of karma, jnana, vairagya, and similar means. Karma here means the performance of sva-dharma and related duties; jnana means knowledge distinguishing the self from what is not the self and understanding related truths; and vairagya means freedom from thirst for sense objects and other worldly things. One who depends upon these, remaining attached to them as necessary means, does not attain that bhakti. Rather, bhakti is attained solely through the mercy of Sri Krishna.

One might then ask: if Sri Krishna is by nature supremely compassionate, why does everyone not attain bhakti? The answer is that His mercy of this particular kind comes to one who seeks bhakti alone—not karma, jnana, their respective fruits, or even moksha. The word hi expresses certainty: such mercy arises especially toward a person whose aspiration is exclusively for bhakti.

Thus Brahma says in the Tenth Canto:

"One who, while experiencing the results of his own past actions, continues to look earnestly for Your mercy and offers obeisance to You with heart, words, and body, living in this way, becomes an heir to mukti-pada" (Srimad Bhagavatam 10.14.8).

The expression mukti-pada may be understood in several ways. Mukti may mean the manifestation of supreme bliss, while pada may mean the realm called Sri Vaikuntha or the lotus feet of Sri Bhagavan. Alternatively, mukti-pada may mean bhakti itself, the attainment that bears liberation as a subordinate fruit. Or it may refer to the path of bhakti in which mukti has been placed beneath one's feet and thereby rejected as insignificant. Another possibility is that mukti is simply being used there as a technical synonym for apavarga.

Thus the Fifth Canto states:

"Apavarga is that which has as its very characteristic ananya-nimitta-bhakti-yoga to Vasudeva, the Paramatma who is the Self of all beings, untouched by material possessiveness, beyond description, and without any external support" (Srimad Bhagavatam 5.19.19).

Here "ananya-nimitta" means without any ulterior motive. Bhakti-yoga itself is the defining nature of that apavarga.

Sri Bhagavan likewise says in the Eleventh Canto:

"Freedom from dependence is said to be the supreme and immeasurable good. Therefore bhakti to Me arises in one who seeks no blessing and is free from dependence" (Srimad Bhagavatam 11.20.35).

Nairapekshya means complete freedom from dependence upon sense enjoyment and similar aims. Or the statement may mean that the highest attainment accomplished by one who is free from such dependence is the great nihshreyasa known as moksha. Yet one who seeks no boon even from that liberation, and who therefore does not depend upon jnana, vairagya, or other means for attaining it, becomes qualified for bhakti to Me.

Aurva says to Sagara in the Vishnu Purana:

"By a person who properly follows the conduct of varna and ashram, the Supreme Person Vishnu is worshipped. There is no other path that can please Him" (Vishnu Purana 3.8.9).

The meaning is that by performing the duties of varna and ashram, one should worship Vishnu; those duties do not constitute some separate ultimate achievement. Nor, having merely performed them, should one conclude that everything has been accomplished and cease all further endeavour. The ultimate fruit of varnashram conduct is the worship of Vishnu.

Why is this so? Because no path other than His worship—whether karma, jnana, or another independent discipline—can itself become the cause of Vishnu's satisfaction. If these practices were treated as independently sufficient, they would ultimately become futile unless they led one toward bhakti.

Statements such as: "The Sruti and Smriti are My commands. One who disregards them and acts independently is a violator of My command and hostile toward Me. Even if he claims to be My devotee, he is not a Vaishnava," and similar injunctions should therefore be understood in context. They prohibit the premature abandonment of varnashram duties when those duties are still necessary for leading a person toward bhakti. Alternatively, they protect the Vedic path intended for those still engaged in pravritti, or they apply to persons who have not yet developed the particular faith and exclusive aspiration required for bhakti.

Scripture repeatedly teaches that karma has a limited duration and comes to an end upon the arising of higher qualification. Therefore a person wholly devoted to bhakti does not incur fault or degradation merely because ordinary ritual duties have fallen away.

Sri Bhagavan states in the Padma Purana:

"If some omission occurs in the prescribed duties of those engaged in My service, thirty million great sages perform those duties on their behalf."

Likewise, Devadyuti prays there:

"I bow to that pure Brahman whom, once known, persons free from worldly desires, friends of all beings, no longer worship through the ritual actions prescribed by the Srutis."

If this is so merely upon knowing Him, how much more must it be true when one has actually taken shelter of Him and begun His service?

Sri Bhagavan also says in the Eleventh Canto:

"One should continue performing prescribed karma only until one becomes detached from it or until faith arises in hearing and speaking about Me" (Srimad Bhagavatam 11.20.9).

Here karma means regular and occasional prescribed duties. The word va indicates that the arising of faith in hearing about Bhagavan constitutes an independent and especially significant alternative.

Similarly, scripture praises "those great souls who are equipoised, peaceful, free from anger, friendly to all, and saintly," and then especially distinguishes "those who have made loving attachment to Me, the Lord, their sole purpose."

Faith here means firm trust. Sri Bhagavan further says:

"For those saintly persons who are exclusively devoted to Me, who are equal-minded and who have reached what lies beyond ordinary intelligence, the merits and faults arising from prescribed and prohibited actions do not apply" (Srimad Bhagavatam 11.20.36).

Here "merits and faults" means such consequences as piety and sin arising respectively from prescribed and forbidden acts.

Sri Shiva likewise declares:

"Vishnu should always be remembered and never forgotten. All rules and prohibitions are servants of these two principles."

The meaning is that Vishnu should never, under any circumstances, be forgotten. All scriptural injunctions and prohibitions are subordinate to remembrance and forgetfulness of Him. In remembrance of Vishnu all prescribed duties and the merits arising from them find their fulfilment; in forgetfulness of Him all prohibitions and the sins connected with them have their root.

Therefore one should direct one's principal effort toward remembering and serving Bhagavan, rather than regarding karma, jnana, vairagya, or any other independent discipline as necessary for attaining bhakti. Bhakti arises by Sri Krishna's mercy in one whose desire is for bhakti alone.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 205
कर्म विक्षेपकं तस्या वैराग्यं रसशोषकम् ।
ज्ञानं हानिकरं तत्तच्छोधितं त्वनुयाति ताम् ॥२०५॥
karma vikshepakam tasya vairagyam rasa-shoshakam ।
jnanam hani-karam tat-tac-chodhitam tv anuyati tam ।।205।।

"Karma distracts bhakti, vairagya dries up its rasa, and jnana diminishes it. Yet when each of these has been purified of its faults, it may follow bhakti in a subordinate role."

Dig-darshini

Therefore, with the intention of establishing that those devoted to bhakti must certainly abandon everything opposed to devotion, including karma and other practices, they say, "Karma distracts..."

Karma distracts bhakti by drawing it away through hundreds of different activities. Renunciation, which consists of complete indifference towards everything, dries up the rasa of bhakti, namely loving attachment to its object. Such renunciation is certainly inappropriate, since it may give rise to the fault of indifference even towards the service of Bhagavan. Moreover, in the statement, "Bhakti, direct experience of the Supreme Lord, and detachment from everything else" (Srimad Bhagavatam 11.2.42), detachment is specifically said to be from things other than Bhagavan.

Knowledge, on the other hand, diminishes bhakti because, through knowledge of the true nature of the self and related matters, one may come to consider oneself to have already crossed beyond material existence and consequently cease to engage in bhakti. For this very reason, Sri Bhagavan declares in the Eleventh Canto:

"Therefore, for a yogi who is devoted to Me and whose mind is absorbed in Me, neither knowledge nor renunciation is generally a means of attaining the highest good.

"Whatever may be attained through prescribed duties, austerities, knowledge, renunciation, yoga, charity, religious observances, and other auspicious practices, My devotee easily obtains everything through bhakti-yoga to Me, whether heaven, liberation, or My own abode, if he should happen to desire any of these." (Srimad Bhagavatam 11.20.31-33)

By the word prayah, meaning "generally," Sri Bhagavan indicates that renunciation, knowledge, and karma may sometimes serve as means of attaining spiritual welfare. Showing precisely this, they explain that karma and the other practices may also become meaningful when subordinated to bhakti, saying, "When each is purified..."

Karma, renunciation, and knowledge, when purified and freed from their respective impurities, follow bhakti, meaning that they become subordinate to it and serve as preliminary elements in its practice.

Thus it is stated in the Yoga Vasishtha:

"After thousands of lifetimes, through austerities, charity, and meditation, devotion to Krishna arises in those whose sins have been exhausted."

In this connection, the matter should be understood as follows. Karma is purified by abandoning desires for its various fruits and offering the activities solely for the pleasure of Bhagavan. Renunciation is purified by relinquishing desire even for liberation while continuing to cultivate attachment to the service of Bhagavan and other devotional activities. Knowledge is purified by abandoning conceptions such as the nondual identity of the self with Brahman, considering oneself exclusively as belonging to Bhagavan, and ascertaining the greatness of devotion to Sri Bhagavan. This indicates the general principle.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 206
आत्मारामश्च भगवत्कृपया भक्तसङ्गतः ।
सन्त्यज्य ब्रह्मनिष्ठात्वं भक्तिमार्गं विशन्त्यतः ॥२०६॥
atmaramash ca bhagavat-kripaya bhakta-sangatah ।
santyajya brahma-nishthatvam bhakti-margam vishanty atah ।।206।।

"Therefore, even the atmaramas, through the mercy of Bhagavan and the association of His devotees, abandon their steadfast absorption in Brahman and take to the path of bhakti."

Dig-darshini

"Therefore" means because of this extraordinary greatness of bhakti, which far surpasses liberation. The particle ca is used in the sense of "even."

Even the atmaramas completely abandon their steadfast absorption in Brahman, namely the uninterrupted experience of Brahman established through samadhi, and enter exclusively upon the path of bhakti. In other words, leaving liberation far behind, they engage in devotion.

Thus Uddhava says to Sri Bhagavan in the Eleventh Canto:

"O lotus-eyed Lord, the swanlike sages would therefore take shelter of Your lotus feet, which yield abundant bliss." (Srimad Bhagavatam 11.19.3)

But how can such a transformation take place in them? In answer, it is said, "Through the association of devotees obtained by the mercy of Bhagavan."

The meaning is this: Bhagavan is eager to reveal the greatness of His own bhakti and of His devotees. When certain atmaramas somehow receive His mercy, they obtain the association of His devotees. Through the influence of that association, they develop the capacity for exceedingly subtle spiritual discrimination and realise the insignificance of liberation. They then cast aside liberation, together with everything accompanying it, and, as though attracted by the greatness of Bhagavan's qualities, enter the path of bhakti and worship Bhagavan in many different ways.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 207
मुक्ताश्चास्य तया शक्त्या सच्चिदानन्ददेहिताम्।
प्रापितास्ते भजन्ते तं तादृशैः करणैर्हरिम् ॥२०७॥
muktash casya taya shaktya sat-chit-ananda-dehitam ।
prapitas te bhajante tam tadrishaih karanair harim ।।207।।

"And those liberated souls, being endowed by His potency with bodies composed of eternity, consciousness, and bliss, worship Hari with senses of that same spiritual nature."

Dig-darshini

But without a body, senses, and other faculties, devotional activities such as hearing, chanting, offering prayers, and worship cannot possibly be performed. In the case of those who are liberated while living and remain steadfastly absorbed in Brahman, devotional activities may indeed be possible because their bodies still exist. But how can these activities be possible for perfected souls who have already attained liberation, since they have become absorbed in Brahman and no longer possess external bodies and other faculties? Anticipating this objection, it is said, "Those liberated souls..."

The liberated souls here are the siddha-muktas, who, although absorbed in Brahman, continue to exist as distinct individuals. This is also established in the Sixth Canto:

"O great sage, even among millions of liberated and perfected beings, a peaceful soul wholly devoted to Narayana is exceedingly rare." (Srimad Bhagavatam 6.14.5)

Here the word siddhanam, "many perfected beings," is employed. Moreover, at the beginning of that account, it is stated that a certain person may attain liberation and perfection. Many other statements of this kind may also be found in various places and should be examined.

The particle ca is used in the sense of tu, "however," to distinguish these liberated souls from the atmaramas previously discussed.

Through that potency of Bhagavan, which is described as eternally perfect and possessing countless transcendental qualities, the siddha-muktas manifest bodies composed of eternity, consciousness, and bliss. Here dehita means coming in possession of a body.

With senses corresponding to those bodies, likewise composed of eternity, consciousness, and bliss, and not material, they worship Bhagavan, Sri Hari, whose supremely attractive qualities and glories captivate everyone. Thus, with those spiritual senses, they serve Him through hearing, chanting, and other devotional activities.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 208
स्वारामता त्वहङ्कारत्यागमात्रेण सिध्यति।
सुकरोऽतीव तत्त्यागो मतस्तत्तत्त्ववेदिभिः ॥२०८॥
svaramata tv ahankara-tyaga-matrena sidhyati |
sukaro 'tiva tat-tyago matas tat-tattva-vedibhih ||208||
"Self-satisfaction, however, is attained merely by abandoning ahankara. Those who understand the truth of this matter consider the abandonment of ahankara exceedingly easy."

Dig-darshini
An objection may arise. Those devoted to bhakti maintain that nothing of true spiritual value is attained without bhakti. Yet the state of being an atmarama is considered superior even to attaining such great opulences as Brahmaloka. How, then, could atmaramata be attained without bhakti?

If one says that it is attained through bhakti, another difficulty appears. It was just stated that atmaramas later become devotees and enter the path of bhakti. But if bhakti had already produced their state of atmaramata, then bhakti must already have existed within them beforehand.

One might try to answer that even after bhakti has produced atmaramata as the supreme goal, a residual tendency toward bhakti remains, just as traces of worldly desire sometimes remain. Through that lingering tendency, the liberated atmarama later resumes bhakti, and thus the greatness of Bhagavan's qualities is praised.

But this explanation would reduce the attraction of Bhagavan's qualities to the mere continuation of a previous habit. The far more wonderful explanation is that through Bhagavan's mercy

and the influence of Vaishnava association, an atmarama comes to understand the insignificance of the state he previously regarded as the supreme fruit, abandons it, and takes up bhakti because he has become attracted by Bhagavan's astonishing qualities and greatness. Moreover, if atmaramata were itself the principal fruit of bhakti, that would be both inappropriate and contradictory. According to the Vaishnavas, even moksha is merely an incidental fruit of bhakti. Its principal fruit is the attainment of prema for Bhagavan's lotus feet. Mere self-satisfaction would be incompatible with that supreme loving attainment. The objection is therefore answered here: atmaramata does not require bhakti for its attainment. It may arise simply through the abandonment of ahankara.

But one may ask how even ahankara can be abandoned without bhakti. Those who understand the true nature of abandoning ahankara, such as Sri Vasishtha and other authorities, say that it is actually exceedingly easy. Thus it is stated:

"Even easier than crushing a flower, even easier than closing the eyes, is the abandonment of ahankara, according to those who understand its true nature."

Nor should one object that once ahankara has disappeared, subsequent engagement in bhakti becomes impossible because all action is rooted in the sense of "I." Through a special shakti of Bhagavan, a different kind of spiritual self-awareness manifests together with the sat-chit-ananda body: "I am His servant."

With the awakening of this spiritual identity as Bhagavan's servant, bhakti becomes not merely possible but especially natural and complete.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 209
अवान्तरफलं भक्तेरेव मोक्षादि यद्यपि।
तथापि नात्मारामत्वं ग्राह्यं प्रेमविरोधि यत् ॥२०९॥
avantara-phalam bhakter eva mokshadi yadyapi ।
tathapi natmaramatvam grahyam prema-virodhi yat ॥209॥

"Although moksha and similar attainments arise as secondary fruits of bhakti, the state of atmaramata should not be accepted, because it is opposed to prema."

Dig-darshini

The word adi includes atmaramata, yogic siddhis, jnana, and similar attainments. Although moksha and these other results may arise incidentally from bhakti in the forms of hearing and chanting, they are merely secondary consequences, like the removal of darkness and cold by a fire that was actually kindled for cooking.

Nevertheless, atmaramata in particular should not be accepted by devotees; it should be kept far away. The reason is that it is opposed to prema, which is the principal fruit of bhakti.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 210
भक्तेः फलं परं प्रेम तृप्त्यभावस्वभावकम्।
अवान्तरफलेष्वेतदतिहेयं सतां मतम् ॥२१०॥
bhakteh phalam param prema tripty-abhava-svabhavakam ।
avantara-phaleshv etad ati-heyam satam matam ।।210।।

"The supreme fruit of bhakti is prema, whose very nature is the absence of satisfaction. Therefore, among the secondary fruits of bhakti, atmaramata is regarded by the saints as especially fit to be rejected."

Dig-darshini

The true and supreme fruit of bhakti is prema alone. Its distinguishing nature is that it never reaches a state of complete satisfaction. The devotee never thinks, "I have had enough of Krishna; I am now fulfilled and need nothing further from Him." Rather, prema continually intensifies desire for Bhagavan and His service.

Atmaramata, on the other hand, produces a sense of satisfaction within oneself. It therefore stands in opposition to the nature of prema. For this reason the rasika devotees regard atmaramata as especially undesirable among the incidental fruits that may arise from bhakti. The word ati also implies a qualification. Other secondary attainments, such as experience of Brahman or yogic siddhis, may occasionally be accepted for some particular purpose—for example, to fulfil the desire of someone who has taken shelter of a devotee, or to reveal the extraordinary greatness of bhakti and thereby attract externally oriented nondevotees toward it. Atmaramata, however, because of its direct opposition to the ever-increasing nature of prema, is especially to be avoided.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 211
भक्तिं विनापि तत्सिद्धावसन्तोषो भवेन्न तत्।
श्रीमद्भागवतेन्द्राणां मते स हि गुणो महान् ॥२११॥
bhaktim vinapi tat-siddhav asantosho bhaven na tat ।
srimad-bhagavatendranam mate sa hi guno mahan ।।211।।

"Therefore there should be no dissatisfaction if atmaramata can be attained even without bhakti. Indeed, according to the foremost Bhagavatas, this is itself a great excellence of bhakti."

Dig-darshini

Since atmaramata is something especially fit to be rejected, there is no reason to feel dissatisfied on hearing that it can be attained without bhakti.

What defect could there be in saying that such an insignificant and undesirable attainment may arise without bhakti? Learned persons would hardly object, "How could someone obtain a particle of worthless husk without first possessing an invaluable jewel?"

Indeed, this should be regarded as a great excellence of bhakti. Even if someone thoughtlessly seeks some insignificant, troublesome attainment such as atmaramata from the great cintamani jewel of bhakti to the lotus feet of Bhagavan, that worthless result does not necessarily arise from bhakti itself, just as the torment of hell cannot be expected from a wish-fulfilling jewel.

Thus those foremost Bhagavatas who understand the true greatness of bhakti regard this not as a deficiency but as another manifestation of its supreme excellence.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 212
तद्धेतुश्चित्तशुद्धिर्वा स्वधर्माचारभक्तितः ।
बाह्यायास्त्वल्पकं भक्तेरन्तर्याः सुमहत्फलम् ॥२१२॥
tad-dhetus chitta-suddhir va sva-dharmacara-bhaktitah ।
bahyayas tv alpakam bhakter antaryah sumahat phalam ।।212।।

"Or, the purification of the heart that causes atmaramata may itself arise from the bhakti consisting of observance of one's sva-dharma. The external form of bhakti yields that small result, whereas the internal form of bhakti produces an exceedingly great fruit."

Dig-darshini

If some Vaishnavas insist that absolutely nothing can be attained without bhakti, the matter may be explained in another way. The immediate cause of atmaramata is purification of the heart. That purification may arise through the form of bhakti consisting in carrying out one's sva-dharma as obedience to the command of Bhagavan. Thus even the attainment of atmaramata may, in this indirect sense, be attributed to bhakti.

One might then object that this again makes atmaramata a fruit of bhakti, which has already been rejected as inappropriate because atmaramata is exceedingly insignificant whereas the true fruit of bhakti is prema. The answer is that a distinction must be made between external and internal bhakti. The external form of bhakti consisting in observance of sva-dharma may produce the small and insignificant fruit of atmaramata. But the internal bhakti consisting principally of hearing, chanting, and direct devotional engagement produces the vastly greater fruit of the treasure of prema.

With this distinction, no contradiction remains.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 213
निजात्मारामता पश्चाद्भजतां तत्पदाम्बुजम् ।
निर्विघ्नमचिरात् सिध्येद्भक्तिनिष्ठामहासुखम् ॥२१३॥
nijatmaramata pascad bhajatam tat-padambujam ।
nirvighnam acirat sidhyed bhakti-nishtha-maha-sukham ।।213।।

"For those who, after attaining atmaramata, worship His lotus feet, the great happiness of firm establishment in bhakti is attained very quickly and without obstruction."

Dig-darshini

Those who have fully attained the state of atmaramata and then, by the mercy of Sri Bhagavan, abandon attachment to that state and worship His lotus feet soon become completely fulfilled.

For such persons, the great happiness of firm establishment in bhakti arises quickly and without obstruction. The words tat-padambujam may refer to the lotus feet of Bhagavan themselves, which are indescribable and composed of concentrated sat-chit-ananda; alternatively, the great happiness attained may be understood as the happiness inherent in unwavering bhakti to Bhagavan.

The significance of "without obstruction" is this. Persons continually disturbed by the many sufferings of samsara may find uninterrupted engagement in bhakti difficult. But when knowledge of the self has brought about atmaramata, those sufferings no longer agitate the heart. If such a person then takes up bhakti, he can engage in it continually and quickly attain its happiness without disturbance.

For this reason some hold that atmaramas are especially qualified for bhakti. It is sometimes also said that everyone is qualified for bhakti, just as everyone may bathe in the Ganga. According to those who make that statement, its intention is that observance of varna and ashram or other preliminary qualifications is not required for entering bhakti.

Our own conclusion, however, has already been stated. On the authority of such statements as "one who continues to await Your mercy" (Srimad Bhagavatam 10.14.8), on the teaching that bhakti is attained without difficulty, and on the principle that bhakti itself produces further bhakti, the happiness of bhakti arises through the mercy of Sri Bhagavan in one who desires that mercy and bhakti alone.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 214
तत्रानुभविता सोऽनुभावनीयोऽनुभूतयः ।
वृत्तयः करणानां च बहुधा प्रस्फुरन्ति हि ॥२१४॥
tatranubhavita so 'nubhavaniyo 'nubhutayah ।
vrittayah karananam ca bahudha prasphuranti hi ।।214।।

"In the happiness of bhakti, the experiencer, the object to be experienced, the experiences themselves, and the functions of the senses all manifest vividly in countless ways."

Dig-darshini

The supreme excellence and greatness of the happiness of bhakti, in comparison with the faint semblance of happiness experienced by atmaramas in samadhi, is now established through another line of reasoning.

Within the happiness of bhakti, the experiencer is the devotee who experiences that happiness; the object of experience is Sri Bhagavan, who is indescribably wonderful; the experiences themselves are the many acts of directly experiencing Him; and the functions of both the external and internal senses serve as the instruments of that experience. All of these manifest vividly in innumerable varieties.

The devotee, as experiencer, manifests in many ways through such identities as, "I am His servant," together with particular forms of service such as massaging His feet. Bhagavan, the object of experience, manifests through endlessly varied and ever-sweeter forms, gestures, beauties, and lilas. The functions of the senses manifest through hearing, chanting, seeing, touching, and countless other acts of bhakti, each of which contains many further varieties. The experiences themselves likewise possess innumerable forms and distinctions.

Because all these aspects of experience are infinitely varied, the happiness arising from them also manifests in an extraordinary variety of ways. Its immense greatness therefore follows naturally.

One should not object that when awareness of oneself and the activities of the senses arise, awareness of Bhagavan's lotus feet must cease, and that uninterrupted concentrated happiness would therefore be disturbed, since both could not be manifest simultaneously. The devotee's awareness of himself and of his senses is itself completely centred upon Bhagavan's lotus feet and is not independently separate from them. Such self-awareness appears only in a subordinate role.

If one were to say that this subordinate awareness therefore amounts to no awareness of the devotee or his senses at all, that too would be incorrect. Wherever an experience exists, an experiencer and the instruments by which the experience occurs must also in some sense exist. Without experience, even an object already possessed is effectively as though unpossessed, like a necklace hanging around one's own neck but forgotten.

For this reason scripture regularly uses expressions such as "experience of Brahman-bliss" and similar language, for experience necessarily involves an experiencer and the means of experience.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 215
परं समाधौ सुखमेकमस्फुटं
वृत्तेरभावान् मनसो न चाततम् ।
वृत्तौ स्फुरद् वस्तु तदेव भासते
ऽधिकं यथैव स्फटिकाचले महः ॥२१५॥
param samadhau sukham ekam asphutam
vritter abhavan manaso na catatam ।
vrittau sphurad vastu tad eva bhasate
'dhikam yathaiva sphatikacale mahah ।।215।।

"In samadhi, however, because the mind has no active vritti, the happiness is only one, indistinct, and not expansive. But when that same reality manifests within an active vritti, it shines forth more greatly, just as light shines more brilliantly upon a mountain of crystal."

Dig-darshini

In samadhi, all the functions of the external and internal senses, including ahankara, have ceased. Since the experiencer is therefore no longer distinctly manifest, the experience itself also tends toward absence. Consequently, the happiness found there appears almost empty.

Because the mind has no vritti (mental activity) in samadhi—and the word "mind" here also includes all the senses and internal faculties whose operations depend upon it—the happiness experienced there is only one uniform kind. It does not expand through the countless varieties of sensory and mental activity, and it therefore remains indistinct, appearing almost like emptiness.

Thus the personified Vedas say in the Tenth Canto that Brahman, when considered in this manner, "assumes an appearance resembling emptiness, like the sky" (Srimad Bhagavatam 10.87.29).

One might object that Brahman itself is experienced in samadhi, and since Brahman is the foundation of all things and is eternally self-manifest everywhere, it cannot properly be described as empty. Yet in the absence of any vritti there is no distinct act of experience, and therefore the result still tends toward emptiness from the standpoint of actual experience.

Otherwise, since Brahman is always and everywhere present and all beings already possess an inherent relation with it, everyone would automatically be liberated.

This explains the statement:

"Your pure and primordial state is indeed eternally present everywhere, yet it has not severed even a single leaf from the tree of samsara. But when Your Name, O Bhagavan, rests upon the tip of the tongue for even a moment, it uproots the whole of samsara. Of these two, which should be served?"

Although Brahman is always present, the absence of an active vritti directed toward it means that samsara is not thereby destroyed. Bhagavan's Name, however, becomes manifest through the activity of the faculty of speech.

In bhakti, by contrast, the internal and external faculties continually manifest innumerable and ever-increasing varieties of activity. Through these there arises without interruption an experience of astonishing and ever-varied supreme happiness.

This is expressed through the second half of the verse. A reality that remained indistinct because no vritti was active becomes far more vividly manifest when it appears within a conscious vritti.

The comparison is with light from the sun or another luminous source. When that light falls upon a mountain made of crystal, it shines there much more brilliantly than it does in the open sky.

How much more, then, must supreme happiness increase when the lotus feet of Sri Bhagavan—far more densely filled with bliss than the seemingly empty self-reality experienced in samadhi—continually manifest through bhakti within ever-new and varied functions of both the internal and external senses.

It is true that when prema manifests through bhakti, there may sometimes be complete cessation of bodily movement, or the movements of particular limbs may cease. At other times, one or another of the senses may temporarily lose the capacity to grasp its ordinary object.

But this should not be understood as the simple extinction of all sensory function. At such times the functions of one sense may become absorbed into the internal faculties, sometimes into the mind, sometimes into intelligence, or into another internal faculty. At other times they may become concentrated within one of the external senses, such as hearing, sight, speech, touch, or another. Sometimes the functions of two, three, or several senses may combine and operate together.

Thus the activities of all the faculties may become gathered into one another in various extraordinary ways. This should not be considered impossible. In truth, all these spiritual faculties are composed of sat-chit-ananda and therefore possess the capacity to perform one another's functions. Even within the subtle material mind, all the activities of the ordinary senses can to some degree be represented internally. How much more, then, may this occur among completely spiritual faculties.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 216
इत्थं समाधिजान् मोक्षात् सुखं भक्तौ परं महत् ।
तद्भक्तवत्सलस्यास्य कृपामाधुर्यजृम्भितम् ॥२१६॥
ittham samadhijan mokshat sukham bhaktau param mahat ।
tad-bhakta-vatsalasyasya kripa-madhurya-jrimbhitam ।।216।।

"Thus the happiness found in bhakti is vastly greater than the happiness arising from the liberation attained through samadhi. That happiness of bhakti blossoms through the sweetness of the mercy of Bhagavan, who is supremely affectionate toward His devotees."

Dig-darshini

The extraordinary variety just described arises naturally from the greatness of Bhagavan's bhakta-vatsalya, His loving affection toward His devotees, and from the inconceivable variety of His astonishing lilas.

Thus the happiness found in bhakti is incomparably greater than the happiness associated with moksha arising from samadhi. It attains the highest greatness because it is brought into full manifestation by the sweetness of the mercy of Bhagavan, who is bhakta-vatsala.

The meaning is this. Bhagavan Himself is concentrated sat-chit-ananda, and His devotees possess spiritual bodies of sat-chit-ananda. From that standpoint alone, such extraordinary varieties and distinctions might appear impossible, since both are of one spiritual nature. Nevertheless, because of His affection for His devotees, Bhagavan desires that they experience ever-new and extraordinary forms of supreme happiness. Therefore, through His own special and inconceivable shakti, He causes all these varieties of relationship, experience, emotion, service, and bliss to manifest again and again.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 217
सदैक रूपं बहुरूपमद्भुतं
विमुक्तिसौख्यात् प्रतियोगि तत्सुखम् ।
हरेर्महाभक्तिविलासमाधुरी-
भरात्मकं तर्क्यमतद्विदां न हि ॥२१७॥

sadaika-rupam bahu-rupam adbhutam
vimukti-saukhyat prati-yogi tat-sukham ।
harer maha-bhakti-vilasa-madhuri-
bharatmakam tarkyam atad-vidam na hi ।।217।।

"That happiness is astonishing: it is eternally one in nature, yet manifests in innumerable forms. It is the very opposite of the happiness of liberation. Consisting of the overflowing sweetness of Hari's great manifestations of bhakti, it cannot be comprehended by reasoning by those who have no experience of it."

Dig-darshini

The nature of the happiness of bhakti is now described by contrasting it directly with the happiness of moksha, and this very contrast reveals the reason for its supreme greatness.

That happiness is adbhuta, utterly astonishing and ultimately beyond description. Because it belongs to Para Brahman, it is eternally one in its essential nature; yet because of the extraordinary aisvarya of Sri Bhagavan, it simultaneously manifests in innumerable forms.

It is therefore directly opposed to the happiness associated with the particular liberation known as sayujya. The happiness of moksha is uniform and reaches what is conceived as its final limit. Though it may be spoken of as unlimited, it produces complete satisfaction and a sense of fulfilment. The happiness of bhakti, however, manifests in innumerable forms, is truly without limit, and continually removes any possibility of final satisfaction by awakening ever-new desire for Bhagavan and His service.

The other contrasts already explained should similarly be understood. Although the happiness of bhakti remains eternally one in its spiritual nature, it is also continually increasing because at every moment it reveals itself as ever new and ever sweeter.

How can such an astonishing condition exist? Because this happiness consists of the overflowing sweetness of the great vilasa of Hari's bhakti. It is the very embodiment of the extraordinary splendour and sweetness manifested through devotion to the supremely enchanting Bhagavan. This itself constitutes one of the special glories of bhakti.

One might object that it seems contradictory for something to be eternally one yet many, eternally unlimited yet continually increasing. That is true from the standpoint of ordinary reasoning. But those who do not know the overflowing sweetness of bhakti's vilasa cannot comprehend this happiness through logic. Only those who actually know it can understand it.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 218
सदैक रूपोऽपि स विष्णुरात्मनस्
तथा स्वभक्तेर् जनयत्यनुक्षणम्।
विचित्रमाधुर्यशतं नवं नवं
तया स्वशक्त्येतरदुर्वितर्क्यया ॥२१८॥
sadaika-rupo 'pi sa vishnur atmanas
tatha sva-bhakter janayaty anukshanam ।
vicitra-madhurya-shatam navam navam
taya sva-shaktyetara-durvitarkyaya ।।218।।

"Although Vishnu is eternally one and unchanging in His essential nature, at every moment He manifests hundreds of ever-new varieties of sweetness within Himself and likewise within His bhakti, through His own shakti, which cannot be comprehended by those outside its influence."

Dig-darshini

One might ask why such innumerable varieties should be imagined at all. Bhagavan, the object of experience, is the eternally one, concentrated sat-chit-ananda form of Para Brahman. Should not His bhakti, His devotees, and the activities of their spiritual faculties likewise possess a corresponding uniformity?

Although Sri Vishnu is eternally one in His essential nature, at every moment He manifests within Himself hundreds of wonderfully varied and ever-new forms of sweetness. Likewise, He manifests ever-new varieties within His own bhakti. He accomplishes this through His own special shakti, the same shakti described previously. That shakti cannot be grasped by ordinary material persons, nor even by those who stand outside the actual experience of bhakti. Consequently, the astonishing varieties produced through that shakti are themselves beyond ordinary reasoning.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 219
पारब्राह्म्यं मधुरमधुरं पारमेश्यं च तद् वै
भक्तेष्वेष प्रवरकरुणाप्रान्तसीमाप्रकाशः।
तेषां चैषा निविडमधुरानन्दपूरानुभूतेर्
अन्त्यावस्थाप्रकृतिरुदिता धिक्कृतब्रह्मसौख्या ॥२१९॥
parabrahmyam madhura-madhuram parameshyam ca tad vai
bhakteshv esha pravara-karuna-pranta-sima-prakashah ।
tesham caisha nivida-madhurananda-puranubhuter
antyavastha-prakritir udita dhik-krita-brahma-saukhya ।।219।।

"This ever-new manifestation of sweetness is indeed the supremely sweet nature of Para Brahman and His supreme lordship. It is the revelation of the furthest limit of His unsurpassed compassion toward His devotees. And it is said to be the very nature of the highest state of their experience of dense floods of sweet bliss, before which the happiness of Brahman becomes insignificant."

Dig-darshini

This very principle reveals the distinction between Brahman-tattva and Bhagavat-tattva, between the liberated and the devotees, and between mukti and bhakti.

The continual manifestation, at every moment, of hundreds of ever-new and wonderfully varied forms of sweetness is itself the parabarahmya of Bhagavan, His nature as Para Brahman. It is likewise His parameshya, His supreme lordship. The expression madhura-madhuram, "ever more sweet," should be understood as applying throughout: His form, His vilasa, His opulence, and all His manifestations possess this ever-increasing sweetness.

This same ever-new manifestation is also the revelation of the furthest possible limit of Bhagavan's supreme compassion toward His devotees. His bhakta-vatsalya reaches its highest expression by arranging that they continually experience newer and deeper forms of bliss.

For the devotees, this is also described as the natural condition of the ultimate state of their experience of dense and overflowing waves of sweet ananda. Such happiness completely surpasses and places beneath itself the happiness of Brahman-realization.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 220
स्वभक्तानां तत्तद्विविधमधुरानन्दलहरी-
सदासम्पत्त्यर्थं बहुतरविशेषं वितनुते।
यथा स्वस्मिंस्तत्तत्प्रकृतिरहितेऽपि ध्रुवतरं
तथा तेषां चित्राखिलकरणवृत्त्यादिविभवम्॥२२०॥
sva-bhaktanam tat-tad-vividha-madhurananda-lahari-
sada-sampatty-artham bahutara-vishesham vitanute ।
yatha svasmims tat-tat-prakriti-rahite 'pi dhruvataram
tatha tesham citrakhila-karana-vritty-adi-vibhavam ।।220।।

"For the sake of His devotees' perpetual attainment of wave after wave of varied and sweet bliss, He manifests innumerable eternal distinctions within them. Just as, although in His own essential nature He is beyond all such ordinary distinctions, He eternally manifests countless varieties within Himself, so He expands within His devotees the wonderful opulence of all their spiritual faculties, their activities, and much more."

Dig-darshini

Why does Bhagavan manifest all these varieties? The purpose is now stated explicitly.

His devotees possess sat-chit-ananda vigrahas and therefore share one spiritual nature. Yet for the sake of their perpetual attainment of

one succession after another of indescribably varied waves of sweet bliss, Bhagavan manifests innumerable distinctions within them. Some become especially absorbed in hearing, others in chanting, others in other forms of service, and within each of these there are countless further varieties. These distinctions are not temporary or material but supremely eternal.

Likewise, Bhagavan expands the extraordinary opulence of the devotees' varied internal and external faculties and their activities. The word adi includes their forms, bodily splendour, gestures, expressions, and other manifestations.

One might ask how a reality whose nature is eternally one can possess such contrary characteristics as innumerable forms and distinctions. Fire, for example, is by nature hot and cannot suddenly become cold.

The answer is found in Bhagavan Himself. Although, as Para Brahman, He is in His essential nature beyond ordinary material distinctions, He eternally manifests innumerable real and particular features within Himself, while remaining completely untouched by limitation of time, place, or circumstance.

The meaning is this. Although Bhagavan, as Para Brahman, is naturally beyond ordinary distinctions, through His own special shakti He manifests Himself in innumerable particular ways—as Paramatma and in His many extraordinary avataras, and also through the jivas who exist as His amshas.

Likewise, within His bhakti He eternally manifests wonderfully varied and sweet forms of relationship and service: hearing, chanting, beholding Him, speaking with Him, embracing Him, and innumerable others. Within every one of these, new varieties arise at every moment.

Sri Bhagavan reveals all these through His own special shakti so that His devotees may experience happiness far surpassing the uniform happiness of realizing the one spiritual reality of the self or Brahman.

In exactly the same way, although His devotees all possess sat-chit-ananda vigrahas and therefore share one spiritual nature, Bhagavan manifests within them hundreds of varieties of internal and external spiritual faculties and activities, all for the sake of increasing their extraordinary happiness.

Thus difference exists within non-difference, and non-difference

remains within difference. In this way it is established that the happiness of moksha is exceedingly small, whereas the happiness of bhakti is supremely exalted, endlessly varied, and infinite.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 221
नित्यैश्वर्यो नित्यनानाविशेषो
नित्यश्रीको नित्यभृत्यप्रसङ्गः।
नित्योपास्तिर्नित्यलोकोऽवतु त्वां
नित्याद्वैतब्रह्मरूपोऽपि कृष्णः॥२२१॥
nityaishvaryo nitya-nana-vishesho
nitya-sriko nitya-bhritya-prasangah ।
nityopastir nitya-loko 'vatu tvam
nityAdwaita-brahma-rupo 'pi krishnah ।।221।।

"May Krishna protect you—He who, although being the eternal, nondual Brahman, also possesses limitless divine opulence, eternally manifests innumerable distinct features, eternally possesses Sri, always remains in the company of His servants, is eternally worshipped, and forever possesses His own divine realm."

Dig-darshini

The conclusion of this section is now drawn, and because the greatness of bhakti to Sri Bhagavan has been proclaimed only in response to Gopa-kumar's inquiry, a blessing is offered in great joy.

Krishna is eternally the self-same form called Adwaita-brahman. Because Brahman itself is His form, His divine murti is thereby established as concentrated spiritual reality; in other words, His vigraha is composed of Para Brahman.

Although He is eternally of this nature, He eternally possesses aisvarya, for His sovereignty never diminishes. He eternally possesses innumerable particular features, manifest through His beauty, radiance, sweetness, qualities, lilas, and countless other distinctions, for His Bhagavatta never ceases. Thus the eternal nature of His qualities and lilas is also established.

He eternally possesses Sri, Maha-Lakshmi, as His divine consort, for His chest is eternally adorned by Lakshmi. He eternally enjoys intimate association with His servants, for His divine opulence is eternal. The same principle should be understood regarding what follows.

This also establishes the eternality of the associates of Sri Vaikuntha and of other devotees. By the authority of Bhagavan's declaration, "O Kaunteya, declare boldly that My devotee never perishes" (Bhagavad Gita 9.31), and because His mercy eternally follows them, there is never any possibility of their destruction.

His upasana, His bhakti, is also eternal. Since bhakti is eternally established in this way, it should not be understood merely as a temporary activity of material senses. Rather, hearing, chanting, and the other activities of bhakti manifest through the functions of the spiritual senses by Bhagavan's grace. This will be explained more fully later.

His realm, Sri Vaikuntha, is also eternal.

May that Krishna protect you from all obstacles to bhakti, including the desire for moksha.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 222
महौरसेऽस्मिन् न बुधैः प्रयुज्यते
सुकोमले कर्कशतर्ककण्टकम् ।
तथापि निर्वाणरतप्रवृत्तये
नवीनभक्तप्रमुदे प्रदर्शितम् ॥२२२॥
maha-rase 'smin na budhaih prayujyate
sukomale karkasha-tarka-kantakam ।
tathapi nirvana-rata-pravrittaye
navina-bhakta-pramude pradarshitam ।।222।।

"Those who truly have an understanding of this supremely delicate maha-rasa (this subtle topic known as 'sweetness') do not thrust into it the harsh thorn bush of dry reasoning. Nevertheless, reasoning itself has been shown here to turn those who are attached to nirvana toward rasa and to bring great joy to newer devotees."

Dig-darshini

Although many lines of reasoning based upon the accepted means of knowledge shine forth in establishing the greatness of bhakti above moksha, only a small number have been introduced here. The reason is that those who understand the truth of this maha-rasa of bhakti to Bhagavan do not insert the harsh thorn of dry logic into something so exceedingly delicate. To do so would itself be foolish, for such reasoning may become a thorn within rasa and diminish its special happiness.

Nevertheless, some reasoning has been presented for the sake of those attached to nirvana, meaning sayujya-mukti, so that they may turn toward this maha-rasa. Without firm reasoning they may be unable to abandon their attachment to liberation and enter the path of bhakti. Thus, by the principle that one thorn may be removed with another, the thorn of attachment to moksha lodged within the heart may be extracted by the sharp thorn of reasoning.

This discussion also brings great joy to newer devotees who have not yet attained firm nishtha. By hearing how greatly bhakti

surpasses moksha and other attainments, the many thorns of doubt are uprooted from their hearts, producing great happiness and allowing their bhakti to continue without interruption.

The expression "harsh reasoning" also carries another implication. In systems of logic devoted to establishing difference, numerous elaborate and severe arguments based upon the recognized means of knowledge are employed. In Vedanta devoted to nonduality, because direct realization is given greater prominence, such arguments are fewer and comparatively gentler. In scriptures devoted to bhakti, reasoning must be gentler still and used only sparingly, because excessive absorption in argument distracts the mind and interferes with the maturation of bhakti-rasa.

Therefore those who are wise employ only the smallest amount of gentle reasoning necessary.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verses 223–224
भवांस्तु यदि मोक्षस्य तुच्छत्वानुभवेन हि।
विशुद्धभगवद्भक्तिनिष्ठासम्पत्तिमिच्छति॥२२३॥
तदा निजं महामन्त्रं तमेव भजतां परम्।
अत्रापीदं महागूढं शृणोतु हृदयङ्गमम्॥२२४॥
bhavams tu yadi mokshasya tucchatvanubhavena hi।
vishuddha-bhagavad-bhakti-nishtha-sampattim icchati॥223॥
tada nijam maha-mantram tam eva bhajatam param।
atrapidam maha-gudham shrinotu hridayangamam॥224॥

"But if you yourself wish, through direct experience of the insignificance of moksha, to attain firm and complete dedication to pure bhakti to Bhagavan, then worship only your own maha-mantra. And concerning this matter, hear now something exceedingly confidential and deeply pleasing to the heart."

Dig-darshini

Many persons, having understood the extreme insignificance of moksha, have cast it far away and become exclusively devoted to bhakti.

But if you wish to gain this understanding through your own direct experience of the insignificance of moksha and thereby attain the perfection and highest condition of unwavering devotion to pure Bhagavad-bhakti, whose defining nature is prema, then worship only your own maha-mantra—the mantra taught to you by the Mahapurusha, which has the power to fulfil every spiritual desire and which is your own personal object of worship.

The meaning is this. The words and conduct of great souls are indeed authoritative in every respect, but without direct experience

the truth of a matter is not always fully understood. And without such understanding one may not completely reject what deserves to be abandoned and become exclusively established in prema-bhakti.

Therefore, if you wish to experience the nature of liberation for yourself, continue chanting your own mantra with faith. Through that mantra alone your purpose will be accomplished. Even in connection with experiencing the truth of moksha, what will now be explained is exceedingly confidential and pleasing to the heart. It should not be thought unpleasant for a person devoted to bhakti like yourself merely because it concerns the realm of liberation.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 225
ब्रह्माण्डात् कोटिपाञ्चाशद्योजनप्रमिताद् बहिः ।
यथोत्तरं दशगुणान्यष्टावावरणानि हि ॥२२५॥
brahmandat koti-pancashad-yojana-pramitad bahih ।
yathottaram dasha-gunany ashtav avaranani hi ।।225।।

"Outside this brahmanda, which measures fifty crore yojanas across, are eight successive coverings, each ten times greater than the one before it."

Dig-darshini

Outside the brahmanda are eight causal coverings: earth, water, fire, air, ether, ahankara, mahat-tattva, and pradhana. Each successive covering is ten times greater than the preceding one.

Some maintain that the shell of the cosmic egg itself constitutes the covering of earth and therefore speak of only seven additional coverings. This seems difficult to accept, because the shell itself could not then possess the required dimension of ten times the brahmanda, namely five hundred crore yojanas. Moreover, as a transformation of earth, the shell does not itself possess the nature of the causal element that forms the covering.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 226
तान्यतिक्रम्य लभ्येत तन्निर्वाणपदं ध्रुवम् ।
महाकालपुराख्यं यत् कार्यकारणकालनात् ॥२२६॥
tany atikramya labhyeta tan nirvana-padam dhruvam ।
maha-kala-purakhyam yat karya-karana-kalanat ।।226।।

"Having crossed beyond those coverings, one attains that imperishable realm of nirvana, known as Maha-kala-pura because there both effect and cause are brought to complete dissolution."

Dig-darshini

This realm is well known from the account in which Sri Bhagavan travelled there with Arjuna to recover the sons of the brahmana of Dwaraka.

It is called the pada of nirvana, meaning either the nature or the realm of sayujya-moksha. Strictly speaking, when moksha is examined in ultimate terms it is not necessarily confined to a particular physical location. Nevertheless, because it is beyond the material manifestation and beyond the successive coverings of the universe, it is spoken of as though situated outside them. Similar descriptions occurring later should be understood in the same way.It is called dhruva because, being beyond the material cosmos, it is imperishable.

It is known as Maha-kala-pura. The name is explained by the fact that there karya and karana, effect and cause, are brought to complete cessation through nirvana. "Effects" may refer to the body, senses, and other gross manifestations, while "causes" refer to the great elements and other subtle principles from which they arise.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 227
तत्स्वरूपमनिर्वाच्यं कथञ्चिद् वर्ण्यते बुधैः ।
साकारं च निराकारं यथामत्यनुसारतः ॥२२७॥
tat svarupam anirvacyam kathancid varnyate budhaih ।
sakaram ca nirakaram yatha-maty-anusaratah ।।227।।

"Its true nature is indescribable, yet the wise attempt to describe it somehow. According to the manner of one's realization, it is experienced as possessing form or as formless."

Dig-darshini

Its nature is anirvacya, beyond the reach of words. Nevertheless, those who understand it attempt to describe it in various ways: "It is neither cold nor hot; it is brilliantly clear like refined gold; it is serene; it is of the nature of eternal bliss and consciousness," and so forth.

It is experienced there through jnana alone, and according to the particular understanding of the one who perceives it, it may appear either with form or without form.

Arjuna says in the Harivamsa:

"Then in that expanse I saw an intensely blazing effulgence, pervading all worlds, standing there in the form of a Purusha."

Thus it may be described as sakara, possessing form. Yet because it is the realm of nirvana, it is also described as nirakara, formless.

The phrase "according to one's understanding" means that even when that reality possesses the form of a Purusha, those devoted solely to dry jnana perceive it as formless, while those who worship Bhagavan perceive it as possessing form.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 228
भगवत्सेवकैस्तत्र गतैश्च स्वेच्छया परम्।
हृद्याकारं घनीभूतं ब्रह्मरूपं तदीक्ष्यते ॥२२८॥
bhagavat-sevakais tatra gataish ca svecchaya param ।
hridyakaram ghani-bhutam brahma-rupam tad ikshyate ।।228।।
"But when the servants of Bhagavan go there of their own free will, they behold that Brahman in a concentrated form, supremely beautiful and pleasing to the heart."

Dig-darshini
This further explains the preceding statement. Even when the servants of Bhagavan enter that realm, they directly experience it as possessing a form supremely pleasing to the heart. The words "of their own free will" indicate that they have no other reason compelling them to go there.

Alternatively, svecchaya may mean that because of their own desire to behold Bhagavan, they perceive that reality in this way. What they see is Brahman itself become concentrated into a visible form.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 229
अतस्तत्रापि भवतो दीर्घवाञ्छामहाफलम्।
साक्षात् सम्पत्स्यते स्वीयमहामन्त्रप्रभावतः ॥२२९॥
atas tatrapi bhavato dirgha-vancha-maha-phalam ।
sakshat sampatsyate sviya-maha-mantra-prabhavatah ।।229।।
"Therefore, even there, the great fruit of your long-cherished desire will manifest directly through the power of your own maha-mantra."

Dig-darshini
Gopa-kumar's long-standing desire has always been to see Bhagavan directly. The great fruit of that desire is Bhagavan's own darshan.

One might wonder, "How can I possess such qualification as a servant of Sri Bhagavan that even there I will obtain such a vision?" The answer is that this will occur through the power of his own maha-mantra—the ten-syllable mantra whose presiding Deity is Sri Madana-gopala.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 230
बहुकालविलम्बश्च भवान् नापेक्षतेऽत्र चेत्।
तदा श्रीमथुरायास्तं व्रजभूमिं निजां व्रज ॥२३०॥
bahu-kala-vilambash ca bhavan napekshate 'tra cet ।
tada sri-mathurayas tam vraja-bhumim nijam Braja ।।230।।
"But if you do not wish to wait here for such a long time, then go to your own Braja-bhumi within Sri Mathura."

Dig-darshini

If Gopa-kumar is eager to attain that destination immediately and does not wish to endure a prolonged delay, then for that purpose he should go directly to the Braja-bhumi of Sri Mathura. By calling it "your own" Braja-bhumi, the scriptures indicate his extraordinary good fortune and intimate relationship with that supremely enchanting land.

Among those who reach Brahmaloka, persons who still possess worldly attachment may eventually return to lower realms, while those who are detached attain liberation together with Brahma at the time of the great cosmic dissolution. But that occurs only at the end of Brahma's lifespan of two parardhas. Thus, if Gopa-kumar followed that course, the delay would be immense. He could instead perform the necessary practice while remaining in Brahmaloka, but because of the enjoyment and responsibilities connected with such supreme cosmic opulence, his purpose would not quickly be accomplished there.

Therefore he should go without delay to his own most beloved land of Sri Brindaban, Govardhan, and the other places of Bhagavan's divine play, where all his desires can quickly be fulfilled.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 231
श्रीगोपकुमार उवाच—
तेषामेतैर्वचोभिर्मे भक्तिर्वृद्धिं गता प्रभौ ।
विचारश्चैष हृदयेऽजनि माथुरभूसुर ॥२३१॥
sri-gopa-kumara uvaca—
tesham etair vacobhir me bhaktir vriddhim gata prabhau ।
vicarash caisha hridaye 'jani mathura-bhusura ।।231।।

Sri Gopa-kumar said:

"O brahmana of Mathura, through these words of theirs my bhakti to Bhagavan increased greatly, and the following thought arose within my heart."

Dig-darshini

Because their words had so powerfully established the greatness of bhakti to Bhagavan, Gopa-kumar's own devotion to the Lord increased still further. As a result, the following consideration arose within his heart.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 232
भक्तिर्यस्येदृशी सोऽत्र साक्षात् प्राप्तो मया पिता ।
तं परित्यज्य गन्तव्यमन्यत्र बत किं कृते ॥२३२॥
bhaktir yasyedrishi so 'tra sakshat prapto maya pita ।
tam parityajya gantavyam anyatra bata kim krite ।।232।।

"Here I have directly attained as my own father that very Lord whose bhakti possesses such incomparable greatness. Alas, why should I abandon Him and go somewhere else?"

Dig-darshini

The bhakti being spoken of is that which makes even liberation its servant and which consists of an indescribable and extraordinary bliss.

And here Gopa-kumar has obtained Bhagavan Himself in the relationship of a father, for the Lord has treated him with the most intense affection, caring for and comforting him like His own son.

Thus he thinks with sorrow, "Why should I leave Him? What purpose could possibly justify my going elsewhere?"

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 233
इत्थमुद्विग्नचित्तं मां भगवान् स कृपाकरः।
सर्वान्तरात्मवृत्तिज्ञः समादिशदिदं स्वयम् ॥२३३॥
ittham udvigna-chittam mam bhagavan sa kripakarah ।
sarvantar-atma-vritti-jnah samadishad idam svayam ।।233।।

"Seeing me thus deeply troubled at heart, that Bhagavan, the ocean of mercy, who knows every movement within the hearts of all beings, personally gave me the following instruction."

Dig-darshini

Gopa-kumar's heart was agitated by two opposing forces: his desire to go to the Braja-bhumi of Sri Mathura and his inability to bear the thought of leaving Bhagavan.

That Bhagavan who presides over Brahmaloka in the form of the Mahapurusha knows every movement of the inner consciousness of all living beings. Understanding Gopa-kumar's condition, He personally spoke the following words directly from His own mouth.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 234
श्रीभगवानुवाच—
निजप्रियतमां याहि माथुरीं तां व्रजक्षितिम्।
तत्तन्मत्परमक्रीडास्थल्यावलिविभूषिताम् ॥२३४॥
sri-bhagavan uvaca—
nija-priyatamam yahi mathurim tam vraja-kshitim ।
tat-tan-mat-parama-krida-sthaly-avali-vibhushitam ।।234।।

Sri Bhagavan said:

"Go to that Braja-bhumi of Mathura which is most dear to you, adorned with row upon row of places where My supreme and most celebrated lilas are performed."

Dig-darshini

That Braja-bhumi is adorned with innumerable places of Bhagavan's supremely exalted and indescribable lilas, such as the rasa-lila and His many other celebrated pastimes.

By describing Braja in this way, Bhagavan indicates that it possesses a greatness surpassing even Brahmaloka.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 235
यस्यां श्रीब्रह्मणाप्यात्मतृणजन्माभियाच्यते।
परिवृत्तोऽपि या दीर्घकाले राजति तादृशी ॥२३५॥
yasyam sri-brahmanapy atma-trina-janmabhiyacyate ।
parivritto 'pi ya dirgha-kale rajati tadrishi ।।235।।

"Even Sri Brahma prays to take birth there as a blade of grass. And although a very long time has passed, that land still shines exactly as you once knew it."

Dig-darshini

Gopa-kumar might object: "Having attained this position of Brahma, and having directly attained You here, how can I abandon You and go somewhere else?"

Bhagavan therefore explains that going to a particular place may be appropriate because the happiness of beholding Him there can be of a special and superior nature.

Even Sri Brahma himself prays to take birth in Braja-bhumi as a mere blade of grass. Therefore residence there is superior even to the position of Parameshthi, Brahma.

One might then wonder whether, after such a vast passage of time, Braja-bhumi must have changed and lost the beauty it possessed when Gopa-kumar lived there previously. Bhagavan answers that it remains exactly as he once saw it.

Thus Braja is shown to possess another superiority over Brahmaloka: it is untouched by deterioration or transformation produced by the passage of time.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 236
तत्र मत्परमप्रेष्ठं लप्स्यसे स्वगुरुं पुनः।
सर्वं तस्यैव कृपया नितरां ज्ञास्यसि स्वयम् ॥२३६॥
tatra mat-parama-preshtham lapsyase sva-gurum punah ।
sarvam tasyaiva kripaya nitaram jnasyasi svayam ।।236।।

"There you will again meet your own guru, who is supremely dear to Me. By his mercy alone you will come to understand everything fully for yourself."

Dig-darshini

Gopa-kumar might say: "But You Yourself are directly present here. By Your grace I can learn everything I need to know. In Braja, who will be there to guide and support me?"

Bhagavan therefore tells him that in Braja he will again find his own guru, who is supremely dear to Him.

By describing the guru as "supremely dear to Me," Bhagavan indicates the extraordinary greatness of His devotees, even beyond His own glory in a certain sense. Through the mercy of that guru, Gopa-kumar will understand everything even more completely.

Hence the emphatic words: "everything," "fully," and "for yourself."

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 237
महाकालपुरे सम्यग् मामेव द्रक्ष्यसि द्रुतम् ।
तत्रापि परमानन्दं प्राप्स्यसि स्वमनोरमम् ॥२३७॥
maha-kala-pure samyag mam eva drakshyasi drutam ।
tatrapi paramanandam prapsyasi sva-manoramam ।।237।।

"In Maha-kala-pura you will soon behold Me alone, and there you will behold Me even more fully. There too you will attain a supreme bliss that completely satisfies your heart."

Dig-darshini

In the realm of liberation known as Maha-kala-pura, Gopa-kumar will behold Bhagavan Himself, not some reality different from Him.

One might therefore ask: "If I can behold You there just as I behold You here, why make the effort to go there at all?"

The answer lies in the word samyak: there he will behold Bhagavan in a still more complete and excellent manner. Consequently, even within that realm of liberation he will experience a supreme happiness surpassing what he now experiences in Brahmaloka, a happiness especially pleasing and fulfilling to his own heart.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 238
मत्प्रसादप्रभावेण यथाकाममितस्ततः ।
भ्रमित्वा परमाश्चर्यशतान्यनुभविष्यसि ॥२३८॥
mat-prasada-prabhavena yatha-kamam itas tatah ।
bhramitva paramashcarya-shatany anubhavishyasi ।।238।।

"By the power of My mercy, you will wander here and there exactly as you desire, and you will experience hundreds of supremely astonishing wonders."

Dig-darshini

Gopa-kumar might think that the happiness truly desired by his heart will come only through playing with Bhagavan in Sri Brindaban. That is certainly true, and Bhagavan assures him that this too will come in due course.

Before then, by the power of Bhagavan's mercy, he will freely wander according to his own desire through the eight coverings of the universe, the realm of liberation, Sri Vaikuntha, and other extraordinary regions, experiencing hundreds of astonishing manifestations along the way.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 239
कालेन कियता पुत्र परिपूर्णाखिलार्थकः।
वृन्दावने मया सार्धं क्रीडिष्यसि निजेच्छया ॥२३९॥
kalena kiyata putra paripurnakhilarthakah ।
vrindavane maya sardham kridishyasi nijecchaya ।।239।।

"After only a little time, O My son, all your desires will be completely fulfilled, and in Brindaban you will play with Me according to your heart's own desire."

Dig-darshini

"Kiyata kalena" means after only a short time.

By addressing Gopa-kumar as "My son," Bhagavan reveals His special affection for him and assures him of the certainty of this promise.

All of Gopa-kumar's aspirations will then be completely fulfilled. Ultimately he will attain the direct vision of Sri Madana-gopala in Sri Goloka and will play with Him in Sri Brindaban according to his own deepest desire. Brindaban here may be understood in relation to both Sri Goloka and its manifestation within the earthly realm.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 240
श्रीगोपकुमार उवाच—
एवं तदाज्ञया हर्षशोकाविष्टोऽहमागतः।
एतद् वृन्दावनं श्रीमत् तत्क्षणान् मनसेव हि ॥२४०॥
sri-gopa-kumara uvaca—
evam tad-ajnaya harsha-shokavishto 'ham agatah ।
etad Brindabanm srimat tat-kshanan manaseva hi ।।240।।

Sri Gopa-kumar said:

"Thus, by His command, overwhelmed simultaneously with joy and sorrow, I came at once to this glorious Brindaban, moving as swiftly as the mind."

Dig-darshini

Following Bhagavan's command exactly as described, Gopa-kumar immediately came to this supremely beautiful and glorious Sri Brindaban.

The expression "as swiftly as the mind" indicates the extraordinary speed with which he travelled.

He was overwhelmed with joy at the prospect of ultimately playing with Sri Bhagavan in Brindaban, while at the same time he was filled with sorrow born from separation from the Lord he had just left behind.

Thus ends the Second Chapter, entitled "Jnana," within the Goloka-mahatmya section of Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam.

श्रीमच्चैतन्यरूपाय तस्मै भगवते नमः ।
यत्कारुण्यप्रभावेण पाषाणोऽप्येष नृत्यति ॥

srimac-caitanya-rupaya tasmai bhagavate namah ।
yat-karunya-prabhavena pashano 'py esha nrityati ।।

"I offer obeisance to that Bhagavan who has appeared in the glorious form of Sri Chaitanya. By the power of His mercy, even this stone begins to dance."

Thus ends the Second Chapter of the Second Part of the Dig-darshini commentary on Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam.

श्रीश्रीबृहद्भागवतामृतम्
द्वितीयभागः
श्रीगोलोकमहिमा
तृतीयोऽध्यायः — भजनम्

Sri Sri Brihad-Bhagavatamritam

Part Two

The Glories of Sri Goloka

Chapter Three: Bhajana

**Obeisance to Sri Krishna, the Supreme Lord,
the delight of Sri Radhika**

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 1
श्रीगोपकुमार उवाच—
ब्रह्मलोकादिमां पृथ्वीमागच्छन् दृष्टवानहम्।
पूर्वं यत्र यदासीत् तद्गन्धोऽप्यस्ति न कुत्रचित् ॥१॥
sri-gopa-kumara uvaca—
brahma-lokad imam prithvim agacchan drishtavan aham ।
purvam yatra yad asit tad-gandho 'py asti na kutracit ।।1।।

Sri Gopa-kumar said:

As I returned from Brahmaloka to this earth, I saw that whatever had formerly existed in each place had completely disappeared. Not even the faintest trace of it remained anywhere.

Dig-darshini

In the Third Chapter, after Gopa-kumar has passed beyond the eight coverings of the universe and reached the realm of liberation, the characteristics of bhakti are explained to him by the associates of Vaikuntha in the presence of Shiva.

First, by demonstrating the authority and truth of Sri Bhagavan's words, the extraordinary greatness of Sri Mathura together with all that belongs to it is described. Bhagavan had previously said that Mathura was unaffected by the disturbances and transformations of time, and this is now shown to be true. Gopa-kumar begins by describing what he actually saw. In every place, whatever devas,

human beings, or other living creatures had formerly existed there had disappeared so completely during the vast passage of time that not even the slightest trace of them remained.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 2
परं श्रीमथुरा तादृग्वनाद्रिसरिदन्विता।
विराजते यथापूर्वं तादृशैर्जङ्गमैर्वृता॥२॥
param sri-mathura tadrig-vanadri-sarid-anvita ।
virajate yatha-purvam tadrishair jangamair vrita ।।2।।

Yet Sri Mathura alone remained exactly as before, adorned with the same forests, mountains, and rivers, and surrounded by the same kinds of moving creatures.

Dig-darshini

Sri Mathura alone, endowed with all her glory, remained shining exactly as she had before. This unchanged condition is demonstrated through both the stationary and moving forms of life found there. She was still adorned with forests filled with trees, shrubs, creepers, and other vegetation just like those that had been there previously; with mountains such as Sri Govardhan; and with rivers such as Sri Kalindi. She was likewise surrounded by the same kinds of moving beings as before—human beings, animals, birds, and others.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 3
आज्ञां भगवतः स्मृत्वा भ्रमन् वृन्दावनान्तरे।
अन्विष्य कुञ्जेऽत्रापश्यं स्वगुरुं प्रेममूर्छितम्॥३॥
ajnam bhagavatah smritva bhraman Brindabanntare ।
anvishya kunje 'trapashyam sva-gurum prema-murchitam ।।3।।

Remembering Bhagavan's command, I wandered throughout Brindaban searching for my guru. Here, in this very kunja, I found him lying unconscious in prema.

Dig-darshini

Gopa-kumar remembered Bhagavan's command:

"There you will again meet your own guru, who is supremely dear to Me" (2.2.236).

Keeping these words in mind, he wandered within Brindaban searching for him. At last, in this very kunja, he saw his own guru overwhelmed and unconscious in prema.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 4
प्रयासैर्बहुभिः स्वास्थ्यं नीतोऽसौ वीक्ष्य मां नतम्।
परिरेभेऽथ सर्वज्ञो बुबुधे मन्मनोरथम्॥४॥
prayasair bahubhih svasthyam nito 'sau vikshya mam natam ।
parirebhe 'tha sarvajno bubudhe man-manoratham ।।4।।

With great effort I restored him to external consciousness. Seeing me bowing before him, he embraced me, and, being all-knowing, immediately understood the desire within my heart.

Dig-darshini

With considerable effort—by sprinkling him with water and other such means—Gopa-kumar brought his guru back to an externally normal condition.

When the guru saw Gopa-kumar bowing before him, he embraced him affectionately. Being all-knowing, he immediately understood the desire within Gopa-kumar's heart: Gopa-kumar wished to undertake the means for reaching the realm of liberation.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 5
स्नात्वा स्वदत्तमन्त्रस्य ध्यानादिविधिमुद्दिशन्।
किञ्चिन्मुखेन किञ्चिच्च सङ्केतेनाभ्यवेदयत्॥५॥
snatva sva-datta-mantrasya dhyanadi-vidhim uddishan ।
kincin mukhena kincic ca sanketenabhyavedayat ।।5।।

After bathing, he instructed me in the procedures of meditation and other practices connected with the mantra he himself had given me. Some things he explained verbally, while others he communicated only through gestures.

Dig-darshini

His face had become wet with mucus, saliva, and tears because of the overwhelming manifestation of prema. Therefore, as though for the sake of purification, he immersed himself in the Yamuna and bathed.

He then began instructing Gopa-kumar in the procedures connected with the mantra that he himself had previously bestowed. The word adi includes such practices as nyasa, mudra, and related procedures.

Some of these, such as nyasa, he explained directly through spoken words. But other matters, especially meditation upon Sri Murti, he communicated only through signs and gestures of the hands. Whenever he remembered the Lord in this way, prema would arise so powerfully that he became helpless and unable to speak normally.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 6
जगाद च निजं सर्वमिदं प्रेष्ठया तेऽदम्।
सर्वमेतत्प्रभावेण स्वयं ज्ञास्यसि लप्स्यसे॥६॥
jagada ca nijam sarvam idam preshthaya te 'dadam ।
sarvam etat-prabhavena svayam jnasyasi lapsyase ।।6।।

He then said, "All of this that is mine I have given to you out of great affection. By the power of all that I have bestowed, you yourself will come to know and attain everything."

Dig-darshini

One might wonder how Gopa-kumar could acquire complete knowledge of all the procedures connected with the mantra from instructions given only briefly, and in part through gestures. The answer is that everything would become known through the mercy of his guru.

"Everything" includes both what had been explicitly explained and what had not been explained, together with both the means of practice and the goal to be attained. Through the power of the mantra, complete with all its accompanying practices, which his guru had bestowed upon him, Gopa-kumar would himself come to know, attain, and fully assimilate everything.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 7
हर्षेण महता तस्य पादयोः पतिते मयि।
सोऽन्तर्हित इवागच्छद् यत्र कुत्राप्यलक्षितम् ॥७॥
harshena mahata tasya padayoh patite mayi ।
so 'ntarhita ivagacchad yatra kutrapy alakshitam ।।7।।

Overwhelmed with great joy, I fell at his feet. Then he went away somewhere without my noticing, appearing almost as though he had suddenly disappeared.

Dig-darshini

The guru departed in such a way that Gopa-kumar could not perceive where he had gone. Since no particular destination could be determined, it is said that he went "somewhere or other."

Because his departure itself was completely unnoticed, it appeared as though he had simply vanished.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 8
अहं च तद्वियोगार्तं मनो विष्टभ्य यत्नतः।
यथादेशं स्वमन्त्रं तं प्रवृत्तो जप्तुमादरात् ॥८॥
aham ca tad-viyogartam mano vishtabhya yatnatah ।
yathadesham sva-mantram tam pravritto japtum adarat ।।8।।

My heart was afflicted by separation from him, but with great effort I steadied my mind and respectfully began chanting my mantra exactly according to his instructions.

Dig-darshini

Gopa-kumar's mind was deeply distressed by separation from his guru. With great effort he restrained and steadied it, and then

began chanting his own mantra in the manner he had just been taught, following his guru's command.

Although merely chanting a mantra of Bhagavan in almost any manner can itself bring one to the realm of liberation, Gopa-kumar now performed his mantra-japa according to the prescribed procedure so that the result might be attained quickly and without difficulty.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 9
पाञ्चभौतिकतातीतं स्वदेहं कलयन् रवेः ।
निर्भिद्य मण्डलं गच्छन्नूर्ध्वं लोकान् व्यलोकयम् ॥९॥
pancabhautikatatitam sva-deham kalayan raveh ।
nirbhidya mandalam gacchann urdhvam lokan vyalokayam ।।9।।

I perceived that my own body had passed beyond its condition of being composed of the five material elements. Piercing through the orb of the sun, I travelled upward and beheld the various worlds.

Dig-darshini

Gopa-kumar realized that his own body had transcended pancabhautikata, the condition of being a transformation of the five material elements.

This indicates that he had gone beyond his former material bodily condition and had become qualified to cross the successive coverings of the universe and attain the realm of liberation.

He then pierced completely through the solar orb, which serves as a gateway toward liberation, and, travelling upward, beheld the fourteen worlds.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 10
दूषितान् बहुदोषेण सुखाभासेन भूषितान् ।
मायामयान् मनोराज्यस्वप्नदृष्टार्थसम्मितान् ॥१०॥
dushitan bahu-doshena sukhabhasena bhushitan ।
mayamayan mano-rajya-svapna-drishtartha-sammitan ।।10।।

I saw that those worlds were afflicted by innumerable faults and adorned only by a semblance of happiness. Being products of maya, they resembled objects seen in fantasies of the mind or in dreams.

Dig-darshini

What were those worlds like?

They were contaminated by many kinds of faults and possessed only an abhasa, a mere shadow or semblance, of happiness rather than genuine happiness.

Because they were all composed of maya, they were comparable to things experienced in mental fantasy or seen in dreams: they appeared substantial while being experienced, yet lacked the enduring reality of the spiritual realm.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 11
पूर्वं ये बहुकालेन सम्प्राप्ताः क्रमशोऽधुना।
सर्वे निमेषतः क्रान्ता युगपन् मनसैव ते ॥११॥
purvam ye bahu-kalena sampraptah kramasho 'dhuna ।
sarve nimeshatah kranta yugapan manasaiva te ।।11।।
Those worlds which I had previously reached one after another only after a very long time, I now crossed all at once, in the blink of an eye, as swiftly as the mind.

Dig-darshini
Previously Gopa-kumar had reached those worlds gradually and only after long periods of time: first Swarga, then Maharloka, and so on in succession.

But now, while journeying toward the realm of liberation, he crossed all of them together in a single instant. The expression "as swiftly as the mind" indicates the extraordinary speed of his passage.

Since these worlds are products of maya, one might interpret the phrase to mean that they were transcended simply by withdrawing the mind, because once the mind is restrained their illusory character becomes apparent. That, however, is not the principal meaning here. In the present context, where Gopa-kumar is travelling upward after piercing the sun's orb, the intention is to emphasize the extraordinary speed with which he crossed them. This is also indicated by the word iva, "as though."

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 12
ब्रह्मलोकात् सुखैः कोटिगुणितैरुत्तरोत्तरम्।
वैभवैश्च महिष्ठानि प्राप्तोऽस्म्यावरणान्यथ ॥१२॥
brahma-lokat sukhaih koti-gunitair uttarottaram ।
vaibhavaish ca mahishthani prapto 'smy avaranany atha ।।12।।
Thereafter I reached the coverings of the universe, each successive one possessing happiness millions of times greater than that of Brahmaloka and endowed with correspondingly greater opulences.

Dig-darshini
After crossing the planetary worlds, Gopa-kumar reached the successive coverings of the universe.

These coverings possessed happiness vastly exceeding that of Brahmaloka. Each successive covering was greater than the

preceding one, and their happiness increased accordingly. Likewise, their vaibhava, their extraordinary splendour and opulence, increased to an immense degree from one covering to the next.

Thus Gopa-kumar now entered regions whose happiness and magnificence far surpassed even the exalted experience of Brahmaloka.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verses 13–14
कार्योपाधिमतिक्रान्तैः प्राप्तव्यक्तममुक्तिकैः ।
लिङ्गाख्यं कारणोपाधिमतिक्रमितुमात्मभिः ॥१३॥
प्रविश्य तत्तद्रूपेण भुज्यमानानि कामतः ।
तत्तदुद्भवनिःशेषसुखसारमयानि हि ॥१४॥
karyopadhim atikrantaih praptavyaktam amuktikaih ।
lingakhyam karanopadhim atikramitum atmabhih ।।13।।
pravishya tat-tad-rupena bhujyamanani kamatah ।
tat-tad-udbhava-nihsesha-sukha-sara-mayani hi ।।14।।

Those souls who have transcended the gross bodily covering but have not yet attained liberation enter these successive coverings in forms corresponding to each one, in order to pass beyond the subtle causal covering known as the linga-sarira. There they may freely enjoy according to their desire, for each covering consists of the concentrated essence of all the happiness arising from everything produced from that particular causal element.

Dig-darshini

These coverings are further described. The jivas who enter them have already transcended the karya-upadhi, the gross bodily condition, but have not yet attained liberation. Their purpose in passing through these realms is to transcend the still remaining karana-upadhi, the subtle causal covering called the linga-sarira, which sustains conditioned jivahood.

They enter each covering in a form corresponding to the nature of that covering itself—for example, assuming a form corresponding to earth within the earth covering, and so forth. This removes any concern that they might suffer from such things as being drenched by water or burned by fire. Having assumed a corresponding form, they may enjoy within each realm according to their desire.

Why do these coverings possess such extraordinary happiness? Each causal element contains in concentrated form the essence of all the pleasures belonging to everything that arises from it. Since a cause is superior to its effects, the happiness found in the causal covering may properly be understood as surpassing the happiness available through its various products.

Although all varieties of happiness and their means may in some sense be present within every covering, each realm is especially characterized by the particular happiness and objects arising from its own predominant causal principle. In this way the progressively greater happiness of each succeeding covering, beginning from what surpasses Brahmaloka and increasing from one covering to the next, should be understood.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verses 15–16
पृथिव्यावरणं तेषां प्रथमं गतवानहम् ।
तदैश्वर्याधिकारिण्या धरण्या पूजितं प्रभुम् ॥१५॥
ब्रह्माण्डदुर्लभैर्द्रव्यैर्महासूकररूपिणम् ।
अपश्यं प्रतिरोमान्तर्भ्रमद्ब्रह्माण्डवैभवम् ॥१६॥
prithivy-avaranam tesham prathamam gatavan aham ।
tad-aishvaryadhikarinyā dharanya pujitam prabhum ।।15।।
brahmanda-durlabhair dravyair maha-sukara-rupinam ।
apashyam prati-romantar-bhramad-brahmanda-vaibhavam ।।16।।

The first of those coverings I entered was the covering of earth. There I beheld the Lord in the form of the great Sukara, worshipped by Dharani, the personified Earth who presides over the opulence of that realm, with substances rarely obtainable even within a brahmanda. Within every hair of His body I saw the splendour of entire universes moving about.

Dig-darshini

Having described the coverings in general, Gopa-kumar now explains them individually in the order in which he passed through them. He begins with the covering of earth. Within that covering he saw Bhagavan manifest in the form of the great Sukara, the divine Boar. Within every single hair of His body appeared the splendour of an entire brahmanda consisting of the fourteen planetary worlds. In this respect His manifestation there displayed a greatness surpassing even that of the Mahapurusha who presides over Brahmaloka. The same principle should be understood regarding the still greater manifestations encountered in the succeeding coverings.

The personified Dharani, who presided over all the aisvarya of the earth covering, worshipped this form of Bhagavan with extraordinary substances that were rare and difficult to obtain even anywhere within the entire brahmanda. Thus the greatness of Dharani herself also surpassed that of Brahma in corresponding opulence.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 17
तस्यां कारणरूपायां कार्यरूपमिदं जगत् ।
तदुपादानकं सर्वं स्फुरितं च व्यलोकयम् ॥१७॥

tasyam karana-rupayam karya-rupam idam jagat ।
tad-upadanakam sarvam sphuritam ca vyalokayam ।।17।।

Within that causal form of earth I saw this entire world of effects manifest, together with everything whose material cause is earth.

Dig-darshini

The earth of that covering exists in its causal form. Just as clay is the material cause from which a pot is produced, that causal earth is the material basis of everything produced from earth.

Since much of the manifested world has earth as its material cause, Gopa-kumar saw the entire corresponding world of effects manifested within that causal earth itself. This is because the effect exists implicitly within its cause.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 18

विधाय भगवत्पूजां तयातिथ्येन सत्कृतः ।
दिनानि कतिचित्तत्र भोगार्थमहमर्थितः ॥१८॥

vidhaya bhagavat-pujam tayatithyena sat-kritah ।
dinani katicit tatra bhogartham aham arthitah ।।18।।

After completing her worship of Bhagavan, Dharani received me with all the honour due to a guest and requested me to remain there for several days to enjoy the pleasures of that realm.

Dig-darshini

After Dharani had completed her worship of Bhagavan, she honoured Gopa-kumar by performing all the duties appropriate for receiving an honoured guest. She then earnestly requested him to remain within that covering for several days and enjoy the extraordinary happiness available there.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 19

तामनुज्ञाप्य केनाप्याकृष्यमाण इवासु तत् ।
अतीत्यावरणं प्राप्तः पराण्यावरणानि षट् ॥१९॥

tam anujnapya kenapy akrishyaman ivashu tat ।
atityavaranam praptah parany avaranani shat ।।19।।

Taking leave of her, I quickly crossed beyond that covering, as though being irresistibly drawn onward by someone, and reached the next six coverings.

Dig-darshini

Gopa-kumar respectfully took leave of Dharani, receiving her permission to depart, and then crossed beyond the covering of earth.

One might wonder why he did not remain there, despite the earnest invitation of such an exalted Vaishnavi. The answer is contained

in the words "as though being drawn onward by someone." The spiritual power carrying him toward the realm of liberation would permit no unnecessary delay elsewhere.

Thus he was propelled rapidly onward and entered the next six coverings.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verses 20–21
महारूपधरैर्वारितेजोवाय्वम्बरैस्तथा।
अहङ्कारमहद्भ्यां च स्वस्वावरणतोऽर्चितम् ॥२०॥
क्रमेण मत्स्यं सूर्यं च प्रद्युम्नमनिरुद्धकम्।
सङ्कर्षणं वासुदेवं भगवन्तमलोकयम् ॥२१॥
maha-rupa-dharair vari-tejo-vayv-ambarais tatha ।
ahankara-mahadbhyam ca sva-svavaranato 'rcitam ।।20।।
kramena matsyam suryam ca pradyumnam aniruddhakam ।
sankarshanam vasudevam bhagavantam alokayam ।।21।।

Within their respective coverings, I saw water, fire, air, ether, ahankara, and mahat appearing in immense personified forms and worshipping Bhagavan. In succession I beheld Him as Matsya, Surya, Pradyumna, Aniruddha, Sankarshan, and Vasudeva.

Dig-darshini

Within each of these six coverings, the corresponding causal principle appeared in a vast personified form and worshipped its own particular manifestation of Sri Bhagavan. Thus, in the covering of water, water itself worshipped Bhagavan in the form of Matsya. In the covering of tejas, fire or luminous energy, Bhagavan appeared in the form of Surya. In the covering of air He appeared as Pradyumna; in the covering of ether as Aniruddha; in the covering of ahankara as Sankarshan; and in the covering of mahat-tattva as Vasudeva.

Gopa-kumar beheld each of these manifestations successively as he passed upward through the coverings.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 22
स्वकार्यात् पूर्वपूर्वस्मात् कारणं चोत्तरोत्तरम्।
पूज्यपूजकभोगश्रीमहत्त्वेनाधिकाधिकम् ॥२२॥
sva-karyat purva-purvasmat karanam cottarottaram ।
pujya-pujaka-bhoga-sri-mahattvenadhikadhikam ।।22।।

Each successive causal covering was greater and greater than the preceding one and than the effects produced from it, in the greatness of its worshipful Lord, its worshipper, its enjoyments, and its opulence.

Dig-darshini

One might ask for a more detailed description of each covering, of its presiding personality such as Vayu, and of the particular

form of Bhagavan such as Matsya who was worshipped there. The distinctions already indicated are therefore summarized here.

In each successive covering, the object of worship—Matsya and the other forms of Bhagavan—the worshipper, such as the personified water or air, the happiness of that realm, and its sri or opulence all exceeded those of the preceding covering.

Thus every successive causal realm was increasingly more exalted than the one before it.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 23
पूर्ववत् तान्यतिक्रम्य प्रकृत्यावरणं गतः ।
महातमोमयं सान्द्रश्यामिकाक्षिमनोहरम् ॥२३॥
purvavat tany atikramya prakrity-avaranam gatah ।
maha-tamo-mayam sandra-syamikakshi-manoharam ।।23।।

Passing beyond those coverings as before, I reached the covering of prakriti. It consisted of immense darkness, yet its dense dark radiance was enchanting to the eyes and mind.

Dig-darshini

"As before" means that in each of the preceding coverings Gopa-kumar had been respectfully received as a guest and invited to remain there and enjoy its pleasures, but he declined those invitations, took leave of the presiding personalities, and continued onward. He then reached the covering of prakriti. It was composed of maha-tamas, immense darkness, because it is a manifestation of prakriti, whose nature is to provide the ultimate covering of material existence.

Thus Arjuna says in the Harivamsa: "The darkness had become like thick mud; its density could be known by touch." And again: "Then the darkness became like a mountain."

Similarly, in the Tenth Canto of Srimad Bhagavatam it is said that Krishna "crossed beyond Lokaloka and then entered the vast darkness" (10.89.47). Here loka may be understood as the brahmanda consisting of the fourteen worlds, while aloka refers to the eight coverings surrounding it.

Yet this darkness possessed an intensely concentrated syama radiance, a deep dark lustre that captivated both the eyes and the mind.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 24
तस्मान् निजेष्टदेवस्य वर्णसादृश्यमातते ।
दृष्ट्वाहं नितरां हृष्टो नैच्छं गन्तुं ततोऽग्रतः ॥२४॥

tasman nijeshta-devasya varna-sadrishyam atate ।
drishtvaham nitaram hrishto naiccham gantum tato 'gratah ।।24।।

Seeing throughout that vast expanse a colour resembling the dark complexion of my own worshipful Lord, I became exceedingly joyful and no longer wished to proceed any further.

Dig-darshini

Within that covering Gopa-kumar saw everywhere a colour resembling the syamasundara complexion of the lotus feet of his own worshipful Lord, Sri Madana-gopala. The resemblance extended everywhere, for prakriti has no easily measurable limit. Thus wherever Gopa-kumar looked, the same enchanting dark colour appeared before him, producing extraordinary joy. For this reason his mind no longer inclined toward going beyond that covering.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 25
श्रीमोहिनीमूर्तिधरस्य तत्र
विभ्राजमानस्य निजेश्वरस्य ।
पूजां समाप्य प्रकृतिः प्रकृष्ट-
मूर्तिः सपद्येव समभ्ययन् माम् ॥२५॥
sri-mohini-murti-dharasya tatra
vibhrajamanasya nijaishvarasya ।
pujam samapya prakritih prakrishta-
murtih sapady eva samabhyan mam ।।25।।

There prakriti, manifest in a magnificent personified form, completed her worship of her own Lord, who shone resplendently in the form of Sri Mohini, and immediately came forward to meet me.

Dig-darshini

Within that covering Bhagavan, her own Lord, was brilliantly manifest in the form of Sri Mohini.

Since prakriti herself is supremely bewildering, the Lord whom even she worships must necessarily possess a form still more wonderfully captivating than her own.

Having completed her worship of Sri Mohini, prakriti appeared before Gopa-kumar in a magnificent personified form and immediately approached him as he was preparing to continue his journey.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 26
उपानयन् महासिद्धीरणिमाद्या ममाग्रतः ।
ययाचे च पृथिव्यादिवत् तत्र मदवस्थितिम् ॥२६॥
upanayan maha-siddhir animadya mamagratah ।
yayace ca prithivy-adivat tatra mad-avasthitim ।।26।।

She brought before me as gifts the great siddhis beginning with anima, and, just as the presiding deities of earth and the other coverings had done, she requested me to remain there.

Dig-darshini

Prakriti presented the great mystic perfections beginning with anima as offerings to Gopa-kumar.

Then, just as Dharani and the other presiding personalities of the previous coverings had requested him to remain within their respective realms, prakriti likewise asked him to stay within her covering.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 27
सस्नेहं च जगादेदं यदि त्वं मुक्तिमिच्छसि।
तदाप्यनुगृहाणेमां मां तस्याः प्रतिहारिणीम् ॥२७॥
sa-sneham ca jagadedam yadi tvam muktim icchasi ।
tadapy anugrihanemam mam tasyah pratiharinim ।।27।।

With affection she said to me, "Even if you desire liberation, please show favour to me and accept me, for I am the gatekeeper of mukti."

Dig-darshini

Prakriti spoke these words affectionately to Gopa-kumar: "Even if you desire liberation rather than the enjoyments I am offering you, still please accept and honour me, for I stand as the gatekeeper before liberation."

One might object that liberation can be attained only by rejecting prakriti. Her meaning is precisely this: "Only when you become detached from me can you pass beyond me and enter that realm."

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 28
भक्तिमिच्छसि वा विष्णोस्तथाप्येतस्य चेटिकाम्।
भगिनीं शक्तिरूपां मां कृपया भज भक्तिदाम् ॥२८॥
bhaktim icchasi va vishnos tathapy etasya cetikam ।
bhaginim shakti-rupam mam kripaya bhaja bhaktidam ।।28।।

"Or if you desire bhakti to Vishnu, then still kindly honour me, for I am His maidservant, His sister, a manifestation of His shakti, and one who bestows bhakti."

Dig-darshini

One might say, "But those devoted to bhakti have no need for mukti." Prakriti therefore adds: "Even if what you seek is bhakti to Vishnu, you should still show favour to me and honour me."

She calls herself Vishnu's chetika, His maidservant, because she remains completely subordinate to Him. She calls herself His sister

because she appeared from the womb of Yashoda. She also describes herself as shakti-rupa, a manifestation of His potency, and therefore as bhaktida, one who can bestow and increase varieties of bhakti.

Material maya and Bhagavan's spiritual shakti are in fact distinct. Nevertheless, because maya exists as a shadow of that shakti, a certain unity between them is intended here, and prakriti therefore speaks of herself in this way.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 29
श्रीगोपकुमार उवाच—
तदशेषमनादृत्य विष्णुशक्तिधिया परम् ।
तां नत्वावरणं रम्यवर्णं तद् द्रष्टुमभ्रमम् ॥२९॥
sri-gopa-kumara uvaca—
tad ashesham anadritya vishnu-shakti-dhiya param ।
tam natvavaranam ramya-varnam tad drashtum abhramam ।।29।।
Sri Gopa-kumar said:

Disregarding everything she had offered and said, I simply bowed to her with the understanding that she was a shakti of Vishnu. Then I wandered here and there throughout that covering, wishing to behold its enchanting dark colour.

Dig-darshini
Gopa-kumar accepted neither the objects prakriti had offered nor the proposals she had made. He simply bowed to her because he regarded her as a shakti of Vishnu.

Then he wandered throughout that covering, looking here and there, because its beautiful dark radiance was so deeply attractive to him.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 30
प्राधानिकैर्जीवसङ्घैर्भुज्यमानं मनोरमम् ।
सर्वतः सर्वमाहात्म्याधिक्येन विलसत् स्वयम् ॥३०॥
pradhanikair jiva-sanghair bhujyamanam manoramam ।
sarvatah sarva-mahatmyadhikyena vilasat svayam ।।30।।
That enchanting realm was enjoyed by hosts of jivas whose condition corresponded to pradhana, and it appeared supremely magnificent, surpassing everything below it in every kind of greatness.

Dig-darshini
The inhabitants of that covering were communities of jivas whose condition corresponded to pradhana, causal prakriti itself, for they had already passed beyond the gross and subtle effects and now existed in relation to prakriti at the level of its causal state.

The realm was captivating and possessed a greatness surpassing that of all the gross and subtle effects and causes beneath it. This is appropriate because prakriti is the causal source from which the entire material manifestation proceeds.

The word "itself" does not mean that insentient prakriti is literally self-luminous, for being jada it possesses no independent power of self-revelation. Rather, prakriti covers its own underlying conscious basis by its very nature as the power of concealment. When knowledge of that underlying reality arises, prakriti itself is dissolved. Thus the expression indicates the extraordinary prominence with which that covering appeared, despite prakriti having no consciousness or independent luminosity of its own.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 31
बहुरूपं दुर्विभाव्यं महामोहनवैभवम् ।
कार्यकारणसङ्घाटैः सेव्यमानं जगन्मयम् ॥३१॥
bahu-rupam durvibhavyam maha-mohana-vaibhavam ।
karya-karana-sanghataih sevyamanam jagan-mayam ।।31।।

That covering appeared in innumerable forms and was extremely difficult to comprehend. Possessing a profoundly bewildering splendour, it was served by the combined hosts of effects and causes and contained within itself the entire material universe.

Dig-darshini

Prakriti appears in innumerable forms because it is the source of countless transformations and manifestations. It is durvibhavya, exceedingly difficult to comprehend, because its nature cannot be adequately described and because the manner in which it operates is inconceivable.

For this reason it possesses an immense power of bewilderment and an extraordinary capacity to captivate the mind.

It is served by the aggregates of both effects and causes. The effects include earth and the other gross elements, while the causes include the tanmatras and other subtle principles. Since prakriti exists in the subtle causal form from which the entire gross material manifestation develops, it contains the whole universe within itself and is therefore described as jagan-maya.

Although Gopa-kumar's passage beyond the five tanmatras and related principles has not been separately described, it should be understood to have occurred here, because all of them are included within prakriti. Alternatively, because those causal principles remain inherent within their respective effects, they may already be understood as having been crossed together with those effects.

Otherwise Gopa-kumar could not properly ascend to the realm of liberation.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 32
अथेश्वरेच्छयातीत्य दुरन्तं तद् घनं तमः ।
तेजःपुञ्जमपश्यं तं दृङ्निमीलनकारणम् ॥३२॥
atheshvarecchayatititya durantam tad ghanam tamah ।
tejah-punjam apashyam tam dring-nimilana-karanam ।।32।।

Then, by the will of Ishwara, I crossed beyond that boundless mass of dense darkness and saw an inconceivable mass of light so brilliant that it caused my eyes to close.

Dig-darshini

Gopa-kumar passed beyond that dense darkness, which was a transformation of prakriti. He did so only by the will of Ishwara. Because the dark beauty of that covering so strongly resembled the complexion of his own worshipful Lord, Gopa-kumar himself had no desire to leave it. He crossed beyond it solely because Bhagavan willed that he should proceed onward toward the realm of liberation.

He then beheld an indescribable mass of concentrated light. Its brilliance was so intense that merely seeing it caused his eyes to close.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 33
भक्त्या परमया यत्नादग्रे दृष्टीः प्रसारयन् ।
सूर्यकोटिप्रतीकाशमपश्यं परमेश्वरम् ॥३३॥
bhaktya paramaya yatnad agre drishtih prasarayan ।
surya-koti-pratikasham apashyam parameshvaram ।।33।।

With supreme bhakti and great effort, I opened my eyes and looked ahead. There I beheld Parameshwar, blazing with the brilliance of millions of suns.

Dig-darshini

Parameshwar appeared like millions upon millions of suns because His form was an immensely concentrated mass of divine radiance.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 34
मनोदृगानन्दविवर्धनं विभुं
विचित्रमाधुर्यविभूषणाचितम् ।
समग्रसत्पूरुषलक्षणान्वितं
स्फुरत्परब्रह्ममयं महाद्भुतम् ॥३४॥
mano-drig-ananda-vivardhanam vibhum
vicitra-madhurya-vibhushanacitam ।
samagra-sat-purusha-lakshananvitam
sphurat-para-brahma-mayam mahadbhutam ।।34।।

He was all-pervading and increased the joy of both the mind and the eyes. He was adorned with wonderfully varied sweetness and ornaments, possessed all the auspicious characteristics of the Supreme Person, and was a radiant manifestation of Para Brahman. He was astonishing beyond all measure.

Dig-darshini

Although Parameshwar shone with the brilliance of millions of suns, His radiance did not cause distress. Rather, He increased the happiness of the mind and eyes of those who beheld Him. He was vibhu, all-pervading, and was adorned with innumerable varieties of sweetness and beautiful ornaments. He possessed in their completeness all thirty-two auspicious bodily characteristics of a perfect divine person, beginning with the seven reddish features and the other traditional marks.

He was composed entirely of manifest Para Brahman. Because there was no covering of maya upon Him, that Para Brahman shone forth from every direction. Thus He was mahadbhuta, supremely astonishing and unlike anything else whatsoever.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 35

सदागुणातीतमशेषसद्गुणं
निराकृतिं लोकमनोरमाकृतिम् ।
प्रकृत्यधिष्ठातृतया विलासिनं
तदीयसम्बन्धविहीनमच्युतम् ॥३५॥

sada-gunatitam ashesha-sad-gunam
nirakritim loka-manoramakritim ।
prakrity-adhishthatritaya vilasinam
tadiya-sambandha-vihinam Achyutam ।।35।।

He is eternally beyond the material gunas, yet possesses every transcendental good quality. He is without material form, yet His form enchants all beings. He manifests as the ultimate basis of prakriti while remaining completely untouched by any connection with it, for He is Achyuta, eternally infallible and unchanging.

Dig-darshini

His extraordinary nature is further described. He is eternally beyond the material gunas because His form is Para Brahman itself. Yet, because He is Bhagavan, He possesses all transcendental qualities, such as affection for His devotees and countless other auspicious attributes. The principle that apparently opposed attributes are perfectly reconciled in Bhagavan has already been established. He is called nirakriti because He has no material form. Alternatively, because He is Para Brahman, He is beyond any form imposed by limiting material distinctions. Yet at the same time He possesses a form so beautiful that it captivates the minds of all beings.

He manifests as the adhishthana, the ultimate supporting basis of prakriti. Because He is the basis upon which prakriti rests, He is also the foundation underlying all of her manifestations.

A distinction should be noted here. The Mahapurusha who presides over Brahmaloka was previously described as the controller of prakriti. The Parameshwar now being seen by Gopa-kumar presides over the realm of liberation and, in His manifestation as Para Brahman, serves as the ultimate basis upon which prakriti rests.

Yet He has no actual contact with prakriti or anything belonging to her. He is completely free from every material relationship or touch. For this reason He is called Achyuta: His transcendental nature can never be diminished or altered in any way.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 36
महासम्भ्रमसन्त्रासप्रमोदभरविह्वलः ।
तदा किं करवाणीति ज्ञातुं नेशे कथञ्चन ॥३६॥
maha-sambhrama-santrasa-pramoda-bhara-vihvalah ।
tada kim karavaniti jnatum neshe kathancana ।।36।।
Overwhelmed by an immense flood of reverence, awe, fear, and joy, I became completely helpless and could not determine in any way what I should do.

Dig-darshini
At that moment Gopa-kumar could not understand what he ought to do.

The reason was that he had become utterly overwhelmed by the combined force of extraordinary reverence, awe, apprehension, and immense joy. Under the weight of all these emotions he lost the capacity to decide how he should respond.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 37
यद्यपि स्वप्रकाशोऽसावतीतेन्द्रियवृत्तिकः ।
तत्कारुण्यप्रभावेण परं साक्षात् समीक्ष्यते ॥३७॥
yadyapi sva-prakasho 'sav atitendriya-vrittikah ।
tat-karunya-prabhavena param sakshat samikshyate ।।37।।
Although that Parameshwar is self-manifest and lies beyond the functions of the material senses, He can nevertheless be seen directly and completely, solely through the power of His mercy.

Dig-darshini
Parameshwar is sva-prakasha: He reveals Himself by His own power and does not depend upon anything else to become manifest.

At the same time, He is beyond the functions of all the senses and cannot be made an object of perception through their independent power. Nevertheless, through the influence of His own compassion alone, He may be directly and fully beheld. By His mercy one can see Him face to face and perceive the beauty of His individual limbs and all the other features of His divine form. Thus direct vision of Him does not arise from the ordinary power of the senses; it occurs solely because Parameshwar graciously reveals Himself.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 38
नैतन्निश्चेतुमीशेऽयं दृग्भ्यां चित्तेन वेक्ष्यते।
किं वातिक्रम्य तत् सर्वमात्मभावेन केनचित् ॥३८॥
naitan niscetum ise 'yam drigbhyam cittena veksyate ।
kim vatikramya tat sarvam atma-bhavena kenacit ॥38॥

I could not determine whether this Parameshwar was being seen with my eyes, with my mind, or perhaps by some indescribable faculty of the self that transcended all of them.

Dig-darshini

Even then, Gopa-kumar could not determine exactly how he was seeing Parameshwar. Was He being perceived by the eyes? Or was He being perceived by the mind? Or did the perception take place through some indescribable conscious faculty of the self that transcended all these instruments—the eyes, the mind, and all the other external and internal faculties? Gopa-kumar could not arrive at any definite conclusion.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 39
क्षणान्निराकारमिवावलोकयन्
स्मरामि नीलाद्रिपतेरनुग्रहम्।
क्षणाच्च साकारमुदीक्ष्य पूर्ववन्
महामहःपुञ्जममुं लभे मुदम् ॥३९॥
ksanan nirakaram ivavalokayan
smarami niladri-pater anugraham ।
ksanac ca sakaram udiksya purvavan
maha-mahah-punjam amum labhe mudam ॥39॥

At one moment I seemed to behold that great mass of radiance as formless, and I remembered the mercy of the Lord of Niladri. Then, a moment later, seeing Him again with form as before, I became filled with joy.

Dig-darshini

At times that immense mass of divine radiance appeared almost formless to Gopa-kumar, either because its brilliance was so concentrated that he could not distinguish particular features within it, or because such an appearance accords with the nature of the realm of liberation.

The word iva, "as though," rejects the idea that Parameshwar is actually formless.

When this happened, Gopa-kumar remembered the mercy of Sri Jagannatha, the Lord of Niladri, and thought, "Surely there can be no one more compassionate than Him," for Jagannatha had always remained visible to him in a clearly manifest personal form.

Then, after another moment, Gopa-kumar again looked upward and saw this Parameshwar possessing form just as before. Seeing Him thus, he became joyful.

The present tense is sometimes used here while describing past events because these experiences continued repeatedly over a long period. The same should be understood where appropriate in what follows.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 40
कदापि तस्मिन्नेवाहं लीयमानोऽनुकम्पया।
रक्षेय निजपादाब्जनखांशुस्पर्शतोऽमुना ॥४०॥
kadapi tasminn evaham liyamano 'nukampaya ।
rakseya nija-padabja-nakhamsu-sparsato 'muna ।।40।।
Sometimes, as I was beginning to merge into that very mass of radiance, Parameshwar would compassionately preserve me by the touch of the rays shining from the nails of His own lotus feet.

Dig-darshini
At times Gopa-kumar began to dissolve into that mass of radiance, approaching the state of sayujya. But out of compassion Parameshwar protected him, preserving his distinct existence and maintaining him in his previous personal form. How did He do so? By allowing the rays issuing from the jewel-like nails of His lotus feet to touch Gopa-kumar.

The implication is that even contact with the brilliant rays of Bhagavan's toenails did not cause Gopa-kumar to attain liberation in the sense of losing his distinct devotional identity.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 41
भिन्नाभिन्नैर्महासिद्धैः सूक्ष्मैः सूर्यमिवांशुभिः।
वृतं भक्तैरिवालोक्य कदापि प्रीयते मनः ॥४१॥
bhinnabhinnair maha-siddhaih suksmaih suryam ivamsubhih ।
vritam bhaktair ivalokya kadapi priyate manah ।।41।।
Sometimes I saw Him surrounded by supremely perfected liberated souls, subtle and simultaneously different and non-different from Him, like the sun surrounded by its rays. Seeing them there almost like devotees surrounding their Lord, my mind became joyful.

Dig-darshini

Because He had been described as Parameshwar, one might naturally expect Him to possess servants engaged in His service.

At times Gopa-kumar therefore saw Him surrounded by maha-siddhas, souls who had attained perfected liberation, and this sight brought joy to his heart.

These liberated souls were both different and non-different from Parameshwar. They were different because they existed as His amshas, yet non-different because they shared His spiritual nature.

They were described as subtle because, after liberation, they were no longer separately visible in the same gross and distinct manner as conditioned beings. Their gross coverings of maya had disappeared, and by nature they existed as subtle portions of that Supreme Reality.

They appeared "like devotees." The word iva is used because previously they had not possessed bhakti of the particular kind being described here, nor even now were they engaged in varied personal service. Their "service" consisted simply in remaining around Parameshwar like a surrounding radiance.

The appropriate comparison is the sun surrounded by its rays. The minute rays are both different from and non-different from the sun, and they remain around it like attendant portions of its brilliance. In the same way, these liberated souls surrounded Parameshwar.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 42

इत्थमानन्दसन्दोहमनुविन्दन्निमग्नधीः ।
आत्माराम इवाभूवं पूर्णकाम इवाथवा ॥४२॥

ittham ananda-sandoham anuvindan nimagna-dhih ।
atmarama ivabhavam purna-kama ivathava ।।42।।

Experiencing in this way an immense abundance of bliss, my consciousness became completely immersed in it, and I became almost like an atmarama—or even as though all my desires had been completely fulfilled.

Dig-darshini

In this way Gopa-kumar's consciousness became immersed in what seemed like an ocean of bliss. For this reason he became almost like an atmarama, one who is fully satisfied within the self.

Or, alternatively, he appeared almost like one whose every desire had been completely fulfilled.

The word iva, "as though," in both expressions indicates that he had not truly become either of these. If he had actually become completely satisfied as an atmarama, his inclination toward direct darshan and service of Bhagavan could not have remained. The second expression therefore offers another way of describing the condition without asserting complete self-satisfaction.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 43
तर्कार्चितविचारौघैरिदमेव परं पदम् ।
परां काष्ठां गतं चैतदमंसि परमं फलम् ॥४३॥
tarkarcita-vicaraughair idam eva param padam ।
param kastham gatam caitad amamsi paramam phalam ।।43।।

Through many carefully reasoned reflections, I came to think that this alone was the supreme abode, and that this attainment, having reached the ultimate limit, was the highest possible fruit.

Dig-darshini

Gopa-kumar explains why he fell into such a state of apparent complete satisfaction.

Through streams of reflections honoured and supported by logical reasoning, he concluded that this realm called Maha-kala-pura must itself be the supreme destination.

He also concluded that the attainment he had now reached was the ultimate fruit, having arrived at the final possible limit of spiritual accomplishment.

The description applies both to the realm itself and to the result experienced there.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 44
पदस्वभाविकानन्दतरङ्गक्षोभविह्वले ।
चित्ते तदन्यस्वप्राप्यज्ञानमन्तर्दधाविव ॥४४॥
pada-svabhavikananda-taranga-ksobha-vihvale ।
citte tad-anya-sva-prapya-jnanam antar-dadhav iva ।।44।।

My heart had become overwhelmed by the waves of bliss arising naturally from that realm, and awareness that I had some higher goal to attain beyond it seemed almost to disappear.

Dig-darshini

One might wonder how this could happen to Gopa-kumar, who worshipped Sri Madana-gopala and had already come to understand something of the incomparable beauty of His divine form. The answer is that Gopa-kumar's heart had become overwhelmed by the successive waves of bliss that arose naturally from that realm. These waves produced such intense agitation and such a loss of

ordinary steadiness that he temporarily lost awareness of any goal beyond that realm or beyond the Parameshwar manifest there. The word iva, "as though," is important. His knowledge of his true higher attainment did not completely disappear; it merely became obscured under the overwhelming influence of that experience.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 45
श्रीमन्महाभागवतोपदेशतः
सन्मन्त्रसेवाबलतो न केवलम्।
लीना कदाचिन्निजपूज्यदेवता-
पादाब्जसाक्षादवलोकलालसा॥४५॥
sriman-maha-bhagavatopadesatah
san-mantra-seva-balato na kevalam।
lina kadacin nija-pujya-devata-
padabja-saksad-avaloka-lalasa।।45।।

Yet, by the instruction of my glorious maha-bhagavata guru and by the power of serving the sacred mantra he had given me, my intense longing to behold directly the lotus feet of my own worshipful Deity never disappeared, not even for a moment.

Dig-darshini

Although Gopa-kumar had become deeply absorbed in the happiness of that realm, his longing to see directly the lotus feet of Sri Madana-gopala never ceased.

This introduces the cause of his eventual dissatisfaction with remaining there and of his further journey toward an even higher destination, just as similar dissatisfaction had impelled him onward from previous realms.

His own worshipful Deity was Sri Madana-gopala. The profound eagerness to behold His lotus feet directly never disappeared, even for a moment.

Why did that longing remain?

Because of the instruction and mercy of his guru, the glorious maha-bhagavata, and because of the power of his faithful service to the sacred mantra bestowed by that guru. Those two influences preserved within him an unceasing desire for direct darshan of Sri Madana-gopala.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 46
उतास्य तेजोमयपूरुषस्य
चिरावलोकेन विवर्धितोऽभूत्।
निजेष्टसन्दर्शनदीर्घलोभः
स्मृतेः सृतिं नीत इव प्रकर्षात्॥४६॥

utasya tejo-maya-purushasya
ciravalokena vivardhito 'bhut ।
nijashta-sandarshan-dirgha-lobhah
smriteh sritim nita iva prakarshat ।।46।।

Indeed, by gazing for a long time upon this radiant Purusha, my long-standing yearning to behold my own worshipful Lord became still more intense, as though that vision had forcefully brought Him again onto the pathway of my remembrance.

Dig-darshini

One might ask what special greatness the realm of liberation possessed for Gopa-kumar beyond that of Brahmaloka and the other realms. The answer is given here.

His own worshipful Lord was Sri Madana-gopala. Gopa-kumar had long cherished a deep and persistent longing to behold Him directly. By gazing for a long time upon the radiant Purusha who presided over the realm of liberation, that longing increased still further.

It was as though the continued vision of this Purusha forcefully brought Sri Madana-gopala again onto the pathway of his remembrance and intensified his meditation upon Him.

The word iva, "as though," indicates that in truth Gopa-kumar had never forgotten his worshipful Lord.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 47
तेन तं प्रकटं पश्यन्नपि प्रीये न पूर्ववत् ।
सीदाम्यथ लयं स्वस्य शङ्कमानः स्वयम्भवम् ॥४७॥
tena tam prakatam pashyann api priye na purvavat ।
sidamy atha layam svasya shankamanah svayam-bhavam ।।47।।

Because that longing had increased, even while seeing Parameshwar clearly manifested before me, I no longer felt the same happiness as before. Instead, I became distressed, fearing that my own dissolution might arise there of itself.

Dig-darshini

Because his longing to see Sri Madana-gopala had become still more intense, Gopa-kumar no longer experienced the same satisfaction as before, even though the presiding Parameshwar of the realm of liberation remained visibly manifest before him in personal form.

Instead, he began to suffer from another anxiety: he feared his own dissolution into that realm. Dissolution could arise spontaneously because it belonged to the very nature of that supra-mundane location. And if his distinct existence were dissolved, then his hope

of directly beholding Sri Madana-gopala would also disappear. It was this prospect that caused him such distress.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 48
व्रजभूमाविहागत्य साधयेऽहं स्ववाञ्छितम् ।
विमृश्यन्नेवमश्रौषं गीतवाद्याद्भुतध्वनिम् ॥४८॥
vraja-bhumav ihagatya sadhaye 'ham sva-vanchitam ।
vimrishann evam ashrausham gita-vadyadbhuta-dhvanim ।।48।।

Thinking, "I should return here to Braja-bhumi and attain what my heart truly desires," I suddenly heard an astonishing sound of singing and musical instruments.

Dig-darshini

Gopa-kumar thought, "I should return to this Braja-bhumi and there attain the direct vision of my own worshipful Lord, which is the true desire of my heart."

Having formed this intention, he began to proceed beyond that realm. It should therefore be understood that his meeting with Sri Shiva, described next, did not occur while he remained together with the radiant Mahapurusha.

At that moment he heard an extraordinary sound of singing and musical instruments unlike anything he had ever heard before.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 49
हृष्टोऽहं परितः पश्यन् वृषारूढं व्यलोकयम् ।
कमप्यूर्ध्वपदात् तत्रायान्तं सर्वविलक्षणम् ॥४९॥
hrishto 'ham paritah pashyan vrisharudham vyalokayam ।
kam apy urdhva-padat tatrayantam sarva-vilakshanam ।।49।।

Delighted, I looked all around and saw someone approaching that realm from a higher destination, riding upon a bull and appearing entirely unlike anyone I had ever seen before.

Dig-darshini

Gopa-kumar looked around in great happiness and saw someone arriving in the realm of liberation from a still higher region.

At that moment he did not yet know who this person was, and therefore says, "someone."

He appeared completely different from all the exalted beings Gopa-kumar had previously encountered.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 50
कर्पूरगौरं त्रिदृशं दिगम्बरं
चन्द्रार्धमौलिं ललितं त्रिशूलिनम् ।

गङ्गाजलाम्लानजटावलीधरं
भस्माङ्गरागं रुचिरास्थिमालिनम् ॥५०॥
karpura-gauram tri-drisham dig-ambaram
Chandrardha-maulim lalitam tri-shulinam ।
ganga-jalamlanajata-validharam
bhasmanga-ragam rucirasthi-malinam ।।50।।

He was fair like camphor, possessed three eyes, and wore the directions themselves as his garment. A crescent moon adorned his head, and his form was supremely beautiful. He carried a trident, bore luxuriant matted locks kept fresh by the waters of the Ganga, anointed his body with sacred ash, and wore a beautiful garland of bones.

Dig-darshini

His extraordinary appearance is now described.

His complexion was fair like camphor. He possessed three eyes and wore no ordinary clothing, the directions themselves serving as his garment. A crescent moon adorned his head, and despite these unusual features his form was supremely graceful and beautiful. He carried a trident. Upon his head he bore both the Ganga and an abundance of matted locks, which remained ever fresh because of contact with her waters. Ash served as the ointment decorating his body. Around his neck he wore a beautiful garland of bones. These bones were beautiful because they had arisen from the bodies of exalted Vaishnavas who had departed from this world.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 51
गौर्या निजाङ्काश्रितयानुरञ्जितं
दिव्यातिदिव्यैः कलितं परिच्छदैः ।
आत्मानुरूपैः परिवारसञ्चयैः
संसेव्यमानं रुचिराकृतीहितैः ॥५१॥
gaurya nijankashritayanuranjitam
divyatidivyaih kalitam paricchadaih ।
atmanurupaih parivara-sancayaih
samsevyamanam rucirakriti-hitaih ।।51।।

He was lovingly embraced by fair-complexioned Gauri, who rested upon his lap. He was surrounded by divine arrangements more splendid than even those enjoyed by the devas and was served by hosts of attendants suited to him, whose forms and activities were wonderfully beautiful.

Dig-darshini

Gauri rested upon his own lap, meaning that he had seated her there and embraced her. Through her love she delighted and refreshed him.

Gopa-kumar calls her Gauri simply because, not yet understanding her true identity, he describes her according to the fair complexion that he directly observed.

Shiva was surrounded by paraphernalia such as parasols, chamaras, and other royal articles that were not merely divine but superior even to the most exalted objects enjoyed by the devas. He was also served with devotion by large groups of attendants whose forms and positions were appropriate to his own. They rendered services such as waving chamaras. Their bodily forms and activities were themselves beautiful, although some possessed extraordinary appearances such as large bellies or elephant-like faces.

Although worship of personalities such as Lambodara may ordinarily result in forms resembling those deities, the attendants described here had attained Shiva-loka through worship of Sri Shiva in non-difference from Sri Krishna. Their forms should therefore be understood as beautiful and spiritual, in accordance with the account of the battle with Andhaka found in the Vamana Purana.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 52
परमं विस्मयं प्राप्तो हर्षं चैतदचिन्तयम् ।
कोऽन्वयं परिवाराढ्यो भाति मुक्तिपदोपरि ॥५२॥
paramam vismayam prapto harsham caitad acintayam ।
ko 'nv ayam parivaradhyo bhati mukti-padopari ।।52।।

Filled with extraordinary wonder and joy, I thought, "Who can this be, surrounded by such a magnificent retinue and shining above even the realm of liberation?"

Dig-darshini

Gopa-kumar was filled simultaneously with amazement and happiness.

The reason for both emotions was the thought arising within him: "Who indeed is this extraordinary person, surrounded by such an exalted retinue, who appears to come from a position above even the realm of liberation?"

The particle nu conveys his uncertainty and wonder.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 53
जगद्विलक्षणैश्वर्यो मुक्तवर्गाधिकोऽपि सन् ।
लक्ष्यतेऽतिसदाचारो महाविषयवानिव ॥५३॥
jagad-vilakshanaishvaryo mukta-vargadhiko 'pi san ।
lakshyate 'ti-sad-acaro maha-vishayavan iva ।।53।।

"Although he possesses an opulence unlike anything within the universe and is more exalted even than the liberated souls, he

appears almost to stand beyond ordinary standards of proper conduct, and at the same time seems like one surrounded by immense objects of enjoyment."

Dig-darshini

Gopa-kumar found Sri Shiva profoundly puzzling.

On the one hand, he possessed an aisvarya unlike anything within the material universe and appeared superior even to the liberated souls. Yet, at first sight, he seemed almost to stand beyond conventional standards of proper conduct: he was digambara, without ordinary clothing, and openly embraced his beloved consort.

Likewise, although he appeared more exalted than the liberated beings who had abandoned every connection with material sense objects, he seemed almost like one possessing immense objects of enjoyment, because he was surrounded by such extraordinary varieties of splendour and opulence.

The word iva, "as though," rejects the literal conclusion in both cases. Sri Shiva is Parameshwar and the protector of dharma, so there can be no real question of his violating proper conduct. Likewise, although his nature is supremely liberated, he manifests extraordinary opulence without becoming an enjoyer of material sense objects.

It was precisely this apparent combination of mutually contrary features that filled Gopa-kumar with such intense wonder.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 54

परानन्दभराक्रान्तचेतास्तद्दर्शनादहम्।
नमन् सपरिवारं तं कृपयालोकितोऽमुना॥५४॥

parananda-bharakranta-cetas tad-darshand aham ।
naman sa-parivaram tam kripayalokito 'muna ।।54।।

The sight of him overwhelmed my heart with an immense flood of transcendental joy. As I bowed before him together with all his attendants, he looked upon me mercifully.

Dig-darshini

By seeing the Lord of Gauri, Gopa-kumar's heart became overwhelmed by an extraordinary abundance of supreme happiness.

While he bowed before Sri Shiva together with his entire retinue, the Lord of Gauri graciously cast his merciful glance upon him.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 55
हर्षवेगादुपव्रज्य श्रीमन्नन्दीश्वराह्वयम् ।
अपृच्छं तद्गणाध्यक्षं तद्वृत्तान्तं विशेषतः ॥५५॥
harsha-vegad upavrajya sriman-nandishvarahvayam ।
apriccham tad-ganadhyaksham tad-vrittantam visheshatah ।।55।।

Impelled by a surge of joy, I approached the glorious Nandishvara, chief of Shiva's attendants, and questioned him in detail about that extraordinary person.

Dig-darshini

Overcome by the force of his happiness, Gopa-kumar approached the glorious Nandishvara, the chief among the servants of the Lord of Gauri. He then asked him specifically about Sri Shiva: "Who is this person? Where does he reside? Where is he going?" and other such questions concerning him.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 56
स सहासमवोचन्मां गोपालोपासनापर ।
गोपबाल न जानीषे श्रीशिवं जगदीश्वरम् ॥५६॥
sa sa-hasam avocan mam gopalopasana-para ।
gopa-bala na janishe sri-shivam jagad-ishvaram ।।56।।

Smiling, Nandishvara said to me, "O young cowherd, devoted exclusively to the worship of Gopala, do you not recognize Sri Shiva, the Lord of the universe?"

Dig-darshini

Nandishvara replied with a smile. By addressing Gopa-kumar as "one devoted to the worship of Gopala," he removes any suggestion that Gopa-kumar's failure to recognize Sri Shiva was improper or unreasonable. Because Gopa-kumar's entire consciousness was absorbed in his own worshipful Gopala, his unfamiliarity with Sri Shiva was understandable. Nevertheless, Nandishvara smiled at his innocence. He therefore affectionately addresses him again: "O young cowherd!"

By calling Sri Shiva jagad-isvara, "the Lord of the universe," Nandishvara also indicates that because Shiva is supremely independent, no fault can arise in him even when his conduct appears to transcend ordinary standards of proper behaviour.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 57
भुक्तेर्मुक्तेश्च दातायं भगवद्भक्तिवर्धनः ।
मुक्तानामपि सम्पूज्यो वैष्णवानां च वल्लभः ॥५७॥
bhukter muktes ca datayam bhagavad-bhakti-vardhanah ।
muktanam api sampujyo vaishnavanam ca vallabhah ।।57।।

"He bestows both material enjoyment and liberation, and he increases bhakti for Bhagavan. He is worshipful even to the liberated and is especially dear to the Vaishnavas."

Dig-darshini

Sri Shiva increases devotion to Bhagavan, Sri Krishna. By manifestations of affection and other devotional sentiments, he causes bhakti for Krishna to increase. Alternatively, the compound may be understood to mean that he is himself Bhagavan and at the same time one who increases bhakti. From this it should be understood that bhakti is a distinct supreme goal surpassing all the other goals of human life. This particular manner of expression reflects Nandishvara's own devotion to Sri Shiva. In the ultimate sense, however, Sri Shiva increases the devotion of people toward Bhagavan through both his teachings and his own conduct.

For this reason he is especially dear to the Vaishnavas, those wholly devoted to Vishnu. According to Nandishvara's understanding, this also follows from the non-difference of Shiva and Krishna. Alternatively, Sri Shiva may be called dear to the Vaishnavas because he himself is an exalted object of attainment and affection for them.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verses 58–59

शिवकृष्णापृथग्दृष्टिभक्तिलभ्यात् स्वलोकतः ।
स्वानुरूपात् कुबेरस्य सख्युर्भक्तिवशीकृतः ॥५८॥
कैलासाद्रिमलङ्कर्तुं पार्वत्या प्रिययानया ।
समं परिमितैः याति प्रियैः परिवारैर्वृतः ॥५९॥

shiva-krishnaprithag-drishti-bhakti-labhyat sva-lokatah ।
svanurupat kuverasya sakhyur bhakti-vashi-kritah ।।58।।
kailasadrim alankartum parvatya priyayanaya ।
samam parimitaih yati priyaih parivarair vritah ।।59।।

"From his own realm, perfectly suited to his nature and attained through bhakti in which Shiva and Krishna are seen as non-different, he is now travelling to adorn Mount Kailasa. Subdued by the devotion of his friend Kuvera, he goes there together with his beloved Parvati and accompanied by only a limited number of his dear attendants."

Dig-darshini

Nandishvara now explains where Sri Shiva has come from and where he is going.

He has come from his own realm and is travelling to Mount Kailasa to grace that mountain with his presence. He does so because he has become controlled by the bhakti of Kuvera, whom he has accepted as his friend.

Sri Shiva's own realm is attained through bhakti characterized by the vision that Shiva and Krishna are non-different. That realm is also perfectly appropriate to Sri Shiva himself and possesses eternally unlimited and wonderfully varied opulence.

The fair-complexioned goddess who had been sitting upon Sri Shiva's lap is now identified as Parvati. She accompanies him because she is his beloved. Thus there is nothing improper in the affectionate embrace described previously.

One might wonder why such an exalted Lord appeared to have so few attendants. The answer is that he was accompanied on this journey only by a limited number of those especially dear to him. Vast numbers of his other associates remained within Shiva-loka. Since he was merely visiting Mount Kailasa, there was no need for him to bring his entire retinue.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 60
श्रीगोपकुमार उवाच—
तदाकर्ण्य प्रहृष्टोऽहमैच्छं तस्मान्महेश्वरात् ।
प्रसादं कमपि प्राप्तुमात्मनो हृदयङ्गमम् ॥६०॥
sri-gopa-kumara uvaca—
tad akarnya prahristo 'ham aiccham tasman maheshvarat ।
prasadam kam api praptum atmano hridayangamam ।।60।।

Sri Gopa-kumar said:

Hearing this, I became greatly delighted and desired to receive from Maheshwar some special mercy that would be deeply satisfying to my heart.

Dig-darshini

The special mercy Gopa-kumar desired was something such as realization of the non-difference between Sri Shiva and his own Sri Madana-gopala—something that his heart could lovingly accept and find deeply satisfying.

His inner feeling was this: "My spontaneous rati rests exclusively at the two lotus feet of Sri Madana-gopala. Yet having witnessed Sri Shiva's extraordinary supremacy and opulence, I cannot simply disregard him. My heart can therefore be satisfied only by understanding the non-difference between them."

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verses 61–62
ज्ञात्वा भगवता तेन दृष्ट्यादिष्टस्य नन्दिनः ।
उपदेशेन शुद्धेन स्वयं मे स्फुरदञ्जसा ॥६१॥
श्रीमन्मदनगोपालान्निजप्राणेष्टदैवतात् ।
अभिन्नः श्रीमहेशोऽयमुत तद्भाववर्धनः ॥६२॥

jnatva bhagavata tena drishtyadishtasya nandinah ।
upadeshena shuddhena svayam me sphurad anjasa ।।61।।
sriman-madana-gopalan nija-praneshta-daivatat ।
abhinnah sri-mahesho 'yam uta tad-bhava-vardhanah ।।62।।

Bhagavan Maheshwar understood the desire within my heart and, with a glance, instructed Nandi to enlighten me. Through Nandi's pure instruction, this truth then manifested clearly within me of its own accord: Sri Mahesha is non-different from glorious Madana-gopala, the worshipful Lord dearer to me than my very life; moreover, he increases my bhava for that same Madana-gopala.

Dig-darshini

Sri Maheshwar, the crown jewel of the all-knowing, understood the innermost desire of Gopa-kumar's heart. Merely by his glance he therefore instructed Nandi—either Sri Nandishvara himself or the bull named Nandi, who is manifested from an amsha of Bhagavan—to give Gopa-kumar the necessary instruction.

Through Nandi's pure and faultless teaching concerning the nature of the non-difference between Shiva and Krishna, that realization arose directly and effortlessly within Gopa-kumar's heart.

What was revealed to him? Sri Mahesha is non-different from Sri Madana-gopala, the worshipful Lord whom Gopa-kumar loves more dearly than his own life. Therefore his spontaneous affection may properly extend toward Sri Shiva as well. Moreover, by worshipping Sri Shiva in this understanding, that worship ultimately reaches the same Sri Madana-gopala.

But there is something further: Sri Shiva also increases bhava, loving devotion, toward Sri Madana-gopala. Thus, especially through devotion to Sri Shiva, Gopa-kumar's devotion to his own beloved Madana-gopala can become still more deeply nourished.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 63
सुखं तद्गणमध्येऽहं प्रविष्टः प्रीणितोऽखिलैः ।
शैवैः श्रीनन्दिनोऽश्रौषं वृत्तमेतद् विलक्षणम् ॥६३॥
sukham tad-gana-madhye 'ham pravishtah prinito 'khilaih ।
shaivaih sri-nandino 'shrausham vrittam etad vilakshanam ।।63।।

I happily entered among Sri Shiva's attendants, and all those devotees of Shiva received me with affection and delight. Then I heard from Sri Nandi the following extraordinary account.

Dig-darshini

Gopa-kumar comfortably entered among the attendants of Sri Shiva, where all the Shaivas, the devotees of Shiva, welcomed him warmly and gave him great happiness.

He then heard from Sri Nandi the remarkable description that follows. Since Gopa-kumar, as a cowherd boy, naturally felt affection for a bull, it was especially fitting that he approached Nandi and heard this account directly from him.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 64
सदैकरूपो भगवान् शिवोऽयं
वसन् स्वलोके प्रकटः सदैव।
विलोक्यते तत्र निवासतुष्टैस्
तदेकनिष्ठैः सततं निजेष्टैः ॥६४॥
sadaika-rupo bhagavan shivo 'yam
vasan sva-loke prakatah sadaiva ।
vilokyate tatra nivasa-tushtais
tad-eka-nishthaih satatam nijeshtaih ।।64।।

"This Bhagavan Sri Shiva eternally remains in one and the same form. Residing perpetually manifest in his own realm, he is always beheld there by his beloved devotees, who are completely satisfied simply to dwell in that place and whose devotion is fixed exclusively upon him."

Dig-darshini

Sri Shiva always remains in one form. He does not sometimes become formless and at other times possess form, as Parameshwar in the realm of liberation had appeared to do. Alternatively, this means that Sri Shiva eternally possesses his own single characteristic form rather than manifesting many different forms such as Matsya, Kurma, and others.

This assures those exclusively devoted to Sri Shiva that they need never fear losing sight of the particular form they love. Thus his devotees perpetually possess the happiness of seeing him.

Sri Shiva remains eternally manifest within his own loka. Unlike manifestations of Sri Vishnu encountered in other realms, he does not disappear from his devotees and depart elsewhere. His own beloved associates therefore behold him continuously. This distinguishes Shiva-loka from Swarga, Maharloka, and the other realms where presiding manifestations such as Vishnu or Yajneshvara may sometimes disappear. This is the understanding expressed by Sri Nandi as a devotee of Shiva.

More fundamentally, "always of one form" means that Sri Shiva eternally possesses a sat-chit-ananda form that never undergoes transformation. His realm is beyond the entire material manifestation and is situated even above the realm of liberation. There he remains eternally manifest, delighting the minds and eyes of his own associates.

Those devotees are completely satisfied simply by residing in Shiva-loka, for they possess unwavering and exclusive devotion to Sri Shiva.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 65
स्वाभिन्नभगवद्भक्तिलाम्पट्यं ग्राहयन्निव।
सदा रमयति स्वीयान् नृत्यगीतादिकौतुकैः ॥६५॥
svabhinna-bhagavad-bhakti-lampatyam grahayann iva ।
sada ramayati sviyan nritya-gitadi-kautukaih ।।65।।
"He constantly delights his own devotees with the joyful wonders of dancing, singing, and other devotional activities, as though teaching them an intense relish for bhakti to Bhagavan, who is non-different from himself."

Dig-darshini
Sri Shiva continually gives delight to his devotees through dancing, singing, and similar joyful activities. The word adi includes such things as enthusiastic sankirtan of Bhagavan's names, expressions of honour and reverence, and weeping in prema.

Through such activities he appears to teach others a deep and eager relish for bhakti to Bhagavan Sri Krishna, who is non-different from himself.

The expression "as though teaching" indicates that such devotion is actually Sri Shiva's own inherent nature. Like Narada and other manifestations who descend in the role of devotees, Sri Shiva naturally embodies and demonstrates bhakti.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 66
भगवन्तं सहस्रास्यं शेषमूर्तिं निजप्रियम्।
नित्यमर्चयति प्रेम्णा दासवज्जगदीश्वरः ॥६६॥
bhagavantam sahasrasyam shesha-murtim nija-priyam ।
nityam arcayati premna dasavaj jagad-ishvarah ।।66।।
"Although he is himself the Lord of the universe, Sri Shiva eternally worships with prema, like a servant, his own beloved Bhagavan in the thousand-headed form of Sesha."

Dig-darshini
Because Sri Shiva possesses this devotional nature, although he is himself Jagad-isvara, the Lord of the universe, he eternally worships Bhagavan in the form of Sesha just like a servant.

Why does he particularly worship Bhagavan in the form of Sesha? Because that form is especially dear to him. In the Lord's lila, both Sri Shiva and Sesha have a particular relation with tamo-guna, and therefore Sri Shiva worships Him constantly with prema.

This is described in the Fifth Canto of Srimad Bhagavatam in the account of worship in Ilavrita-varsha. There Bhava, surrounded by Bhavani and her innumerable attendants, worships Sankarshan, the fourth manifestation of the Mahapurusha, by establishing Him within his heart in meditation (SB 5.17.16).

The Sankarshan worshipped here is distinguished from the Sankarshan encountered previously in the covering of ahankara by the description sahasrasya, "thousand-headed." His thousand hoods and related features should likewise be understood. These characteristics are also described in Sri Shiva's prayers in that same passage of the Bhagavatam.

Like Pradyumna and Aniruddha, Sankarshan generally possesses a four-armed divine form as well. In this way the extraordinary greatness of Shiva-loka is shown to surpass everything previously encountered.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 67
ज्ञात्वेमं शिवलोकस्य विशेषं सर्वतोऽधिकम् ।
प्रमोदं परमं प्राप्तोऽप्यपूर्णं हृद् अलक्षयम् ॥६७॥
jnatvemam shiva-lokasya vishesham sarvato 'dhikam ।
pramodam paramam prapto 'py apurnam hrid alakshayam ।।67।।

Although I attained supreme joy upon learning of this extraordinary greatness of Shiva-loka, which surpassed everything I had previously encountered, I still perceived that my heart was not completely satisfied.

Dig-darshini

By hearing of the distinctive greatness of Shiva-loka, Gopa-kumar developed the hope of attaining that realm and consequently experienced extraordinary happiness.

Nevertheless, his longing to behold the lotus feet of Sri Madana-gopala continued to trouble him.

He therefore noticed that his own heart remained apurna, incomplete and unsatisfied. He recognized this from the fact that a certain fullness of happiness still failed to arise within him.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 68
तन्निदानमनासाद्य सद्योऽज्ञासिषमामृशन् ।
श्रीमद्गुरुप्रसादाप्तवस्तुसेवाप्रभावतः ॥६८॥
tan-nidanam anasadya sadyo 'jnasisham amrishan ।
srimad-guru-prasadapta-vastu-seva-prabhavatah ।।68।।

At first I could not discover the cause of that incompleteness, but as I reflected upon it, I immediately understood, by the power of

serving the treasure I had received through the grace of my revered guru.

Dig-darshini

Initially Gopa-kumar could not identify the cause of his heart's dissatisfaction. But as soon as he carefully reflected upon it, the reason became clear.

He understood it through the influence of his service to the vastu, the precious spiritual treasure he had received by the mercy of his guru—namely, the ten-syllable mantra.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 69
श्रीमन्मदनगोपालदेवपादसरोजयोः ।
लीलाद्यनुभवाभावो मामयं बाधते किल ॥६९॥
sriman-madana-gopala-deva-pada-sarojayoh ।
lilady-anubhavabhavo mam ayam badhate kila ।।69।।

"Surely what is troubling me is that I am unable here to experience the lotus feet of Sri Madana-gopala Deva, together with His lila and all His other sweetness."

Dig-darshini

Gopa-kumar now recognized the source of his dissatisfaction. What troubled him was the absence of direct experience of Sri Madana-gopala and His lotus feet.

The word adi, "and so forth," includes His beauty, sweetness, compassion, qualities, lilas, and all the other features belonging to Him. It was the absence of direct experience of these that caused Gopa-kumar pain.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 70
अबोधयं मनोऽनेन महेशेनैव स खलु ।
लीलाविशेषवैचित्री कृता मूर्तिविशेषतः ॥७०॥
abodhayam mano 'nena maheshenaiva sa khalu ।
lila-vishesha-vaicitri krita murti-visheshatah ।।70।।

I then tried to reassure my mind: "Surely that very Madana-gopala is this Mahesha before me. He has simply manifested a particular form in order to display a distinctive variety of lila."

Dig-darshini

Gopa-kumar therefore attempted to console and instruct his own mind. He thought, "This Mahesha whom I am directly seeing is actually that very same Lord."

One might object: "But Madana-gopala is one person and this Shiva is another, since their forms are different."

Gopa-kumar answers that the difference arises only because the Lord has manifested a particular divine form for the sake of a particular variety of lila. The same Lord has revealed this distinct and exceedingly beautiful form and thereby performs these different pastimes.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verses 71–72
तथाप्यस्वस्थमालक्ष्य स्वचित्तमिदमब्रुवम् ।
यद्यस्मिन्ननुभूयेत सा तद्रूपादिमाधुरी ॥७१॥
तथापि दीर्घवाञ्छा तेऽनुग्रहादस्य सेत्स्यति ।
अचिरादिति मन्यस्व स्वप्रसादविशेषतः ॥७२॥
tathapy asvastham alakshya sva-chittam idam abruvam ।
yady asminn anubhuyeta sa tad-rupadi-madhuri ।।71।।
tathapi dirgha-vanchha te 'nugrahad asya setsyati ।
acirad iti manyasva sva-prasada-visheshatah ।।72।।

Yet when I saw that my heart still remained uneasy, I said to it: "Even if the unique sweetness of Madana-gopala's form and other qualities cannot be experienced fully in this manifestation, believe that through the mercy of Sri Shiva your long-cherished desire to experience them will soon be fulfilled. His extraordinary favour toward you is itself the proof of this."

Dig-darshini

Even after Gopa-kumar had tried to reassure his heart in this way, he found that it remained unsettled, because the full experience he desired could not actually be obtained there in precisely the same manner.

He therefore spoke again to his own heart.

"The incomparable and unique sweetness of Sri Madana-gopala's form may not be experienced here in Sri Rudra exactly as it is in Madana-gopala Himself." The word adi includes the sweetness of His qualities, lilas, and everything else belonging to Him.

"Nevertheless, through the mercy of this Sri Shiva, your long-standing desire to experience the sweetness of Madana-gopala's form and other qualities will soon be fulfilled. You should firmly believe this."

Why should his heart believe it?

Because Sri Shiva had already shown Gopa-kumar such extraordinary grace. Without some greater purpose, mercy of this exceptional kind would not have arisen. His special favour therefore indicated that Sri Shiva himself would help bring Gopa-kumar to the fulfilment of his deepest desire.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 73
एवं तुष्टमनास्तस्य तत्र केनापि हेतुना।
विश्रान्तस्य महेशस्य पार्श्वेऽतिष्ठं क्षणं सुखम् ॥७३॥
evam tushta-manas tasya tatra kenapi hetuna ।
visrantasya maheshasya parshve 'tishtham kshanam sukham ।।73।।
Thus pacifying my mind, I happily remained for a short while beside Mahesha, who for some reason had paused there to rest.

Dig-darshini
Having reassured his mind in the manner just described, Gopa-kumar became peaceful and happily remained for a short time beside Sri Mahesha, whose greatness had just been explained.

One might wonder how Gopa-kumar could remain beside Sri Shiva when Shiva was on his way to Mount Kailasa. The answer is that, for some reason, Sri Shiva had paused there in the realm of liberation.

The reason for this will soon become apparent. He had apparently stopped there in expectation of meeting the associates of Vaikuntha who were coming there specifically for Gopa-kumar.

The words "for a short while" indicate that another event arose almost immediately.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 74
तर्ह्येव भगवन् दूरे केषामपि महात्मनाम्।
सङ्गीतध्वनिरत्यन्तमधुरः कश्चिदुद्गतः ॥७४॥
tarhy eva bhagavan dure kesham api mahatmanam ।
sangita-dhvanir atyanta-madhurah kashcid udgatah ।।74।।
At that very moment, O Bhagavan, from a distance there arose an indescribably sweet sound of music produced by some exalted personalities.

Dig-darshini
At that very moment, an extraordinary musical sound arose in the distance.

"O Bhagavan!" This form of address expresses the exceptional good fortune of Gopa-kumar, who had taken birth in Mathura and was devoted there to the worship of Sri Madana-gopala.

The sound was indescribably sweet and came from certain exalted personalities whose identity Gopa-kumar did not yet know.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 75
तं श्रुत्वा परमानन्दसिन्धौ मग्नो महेश्वरः।
महाप्रेमविकारात्तः प्रवृत्तो नर्तितुं स्वयम् ॥७५॥

tam shrutva paramananda-sindhau magno mahesvarah ।
maha-prema-vikaratttah pravritto nartitum svayam ।।75।।

Hearing that sound, Maheshwar became immersed in an ocean of supreme bliss. Overcome by the transformations of maha-prema, he spontaneously began to dance.

Dig-darshini

Upon hearing that music, Sri Maheshwar became submerged in an ocean of supreme happiness.

He was seized and completely overcome by the transformations arising from intense prema—softening of the heart, perspiration, faltering of the voice, trembling, horripilation, torrents of tears, and other such symptoms.

Thus, entirely of his own accord, he began to dance.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 76
पतिव्रतोत्तमा सा तु देवी नन्द्यादिभिः सह ।
प्रभुमुत्साहयामास वाद्यसङ्कीर्तनादिभिः ॥७६॥
pati-vratottama sa tu devi nandy-adibhih saha ।
prabhum utsahayam asa vadya-sankirtandibhih ।।76।।

That Devi, supreme among devoted wives, together with Nandi and the others, encouraged her Lord with musical instruments, sankirtan, and other expressions of devotion.

Dig-darshini

Although Parvati saw her own Lord lose all external composure in this way, she did not become disturbed or resentful. Instead, she joined him and encouraged his devotional ecstasy. Together with Nandi and the other attendants, she inspired him through the playing of musical instruments, sankirtan, and similar activities. She did so because she is foremost among all devoted wives.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 77
सद्य एवागतांस्तत्राद्राक्षं चारुचतुर्भुजान् ।
श्रीमत्कैशोरसौन्दर्यमाधुर्यविभवाचितान् ॥७७॥
sadya evagatams tatradraksham caru-caturbhujan ।
srimat-kaishora-saundarya-madhurya-vibhavacitan ।।77।।

At that very moment I saw them arrive beside Sri Shiva: beautiful four-armed personalities, resplendent with the full opulence of youthful beauty and sweetness.

Dig-darshini

At that same instant Gopa-kumar saw those personalities arrive and come to stand beside Sri Shiva.

They possessed four beautiful arms. The word "beautiful" is specifically used here to distinguish their four-armed forms from those of certain attendants of Sri Shiva who also possessed four arms.

Their forms were filled with expansive manifestations of glorious youthful beauty and sweetness.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 78
भूषाभूषणगात्रांशुच्छटाच्छादितशैवकान् ।
निजेश्वरमहाकीर्तिगानानन्दरसाप्लुतान् ॥७८॥
bhusha-bhushana-gatramsu-cchata-cchadita-shaivakan ।
nijeshvara-maha-kirti-gana-nanda-rasaplutan ।।78।।

The radiance of their bodies and ornaments covered even the attendants of Shiva, while they themselves were immersed in the blissful rasa of singing the great glories of their own Lord.

Dig-darshini

Their ornaments were themselves so beautiful that they seemed to adorn the very idea of ornamentation.

The effulgence streaming from their exquisitely beautiful bodies and ornaments spread outward and covered the attendants of Sri Shiva.

At the same time, these four-armed personalities were completely immersed in the blissful rasa arising from singing the great glories of their own Lord, Sri Vaikuntha-natha.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 79
अनिर्वाच्यतमांश्चेतोहारिसर्वपरिच्छदान् ।
सङ्गतान् पूर्वदृष्टैस्तैश्चतुर्भिः सनकादिभिः ॥७९॥
anirvacyatamams ceto-hari-sarva-paricchadan ।
sangatan purva-drishtais tais caturbhih sanakadibhih ।।79।।

They were indescribably wonderful, and every garment, ornament, and article they carried captivated the mind. They were accompanied by the four Kumaras headed by Sanaka, whom I had seen previously.

Dig-darshini

Every article belonging to these personalities—their garments, ornaments, and all their other paraphernalia—was so captivating that it stole away the mind, and their overall splendour was beyond description.

They were accompanied by the four Kumaras headed by Sanaka, whom Gopa-kumar had previously seen in Tapoloka.

The fact that the Kumaras ordinarily reside eternally in Tapoloka should not be taken to imply that they are inferior to the residents of Brahmaloka or other higher realms. Their exalted position is established by their being manifestations of Bhagavan.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 80
तद्दर्शनस्वभावोत्थप्रहर्षाकृष्टमानसः।
नाज्ञासिषं किमप्यन्तर्बहिश्चान्यं निजप्रियम् ॥८०॥
tad-darshan-svabhavottha-praharshakrishta-manasah ।
najnashisham kim apy antar bahish canyam nija-priyam ।।80।।

The extraordinary joy that arose naturally from seeing them completely drew away my mind, so that inwardly and outwardly I knew nothing else as dear to me.

Dig-darshini

After seeing these exalted personalities, Gopa-kumar became so overwhelmed by the intense joy arising naturally from their darshan that his mind was completely drawn toward them.

At that moment, both within his heart and externally, he perceived nothing else whatsoever as dear to him beyond them.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 81
क्षणात् स्वस्थोऽप्यहो तेषां दासत्वमपि चेतसा।
नाशकं याचितुं भीत्या लज्जया च सुदुर्घटम् ॥८१॥
kshanat svastho 'py aho tesham dasatvam api cetasa ।
nashakam yacitum bhitya lajjaya ca sudurghatam ।।81।।

After a moment I regained my composure, yet, alas, because of fear and embarrassment I could not even bring myself inwardly to ask for the privilege of becoming their servant, so exceedingly difficult did such an attainment seem.

Dig-darshini

Although Gopa-kumar soon regained his normal composure, he still could not ask even within his own mind to become the servant of those beautiful four-armed personalities.

Why not?

Because he was overcome by both fear and embarrassment.

Such a position seemed extraordinarily difficult to attain. For one who considered himself lowly to desire so supremely exalted a position appeared improper, and he feared that merely entertaining such a request might constitute an offense. Thus both fear and shame arose naturally within him.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 82
एषा हि लालसा नूनं कृपणं मामबाधत।
सम्भाषेरन्निमे किं मां शिवस्य कृपया सकृत् ॥८२॥
esha hi lalasa nunam kripanam mam abadhata ।
sambhasherann ime kim mam shivasya kripaya sakrit ।।82।।

Yet this longing certainly tormented my helpless heart: "By the mercy of Sri Shiva, might these personalities speak with me just once?"

Dig-darshini

Because Gopa-kumar felt unable even mentally to request their service, he became deeply humble and helpless.

Still, one longing continued to press upon him:

"Might these beautiful four-armed personalities, by the mercy of Sri Shiva, speak to me just once?"

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 83
कुत्रत्याः कतमे वैते कृपापाङ्गेन पान्तु माम्।
यानालिङ्ग्य भृशं रुद्रः प्रेममूर्च्छामयं व्रजेत् ॥८३॥
kutratyah katame vaite kripapangena pantu mam ।
yan alingya bhrisham rudrah prema-murccham ayam vrajet ।।83।।

"From what realm have they come? Who are these extraordinary persons? May they protect me with even a sidelong glance of mercy—these personalities whom Rudra embraces so fervently that he falls into a swoon of prema."

Dig-darshini

Gopa-kumar prayed that they might protect him simply by casting upon him a slight sidelong glance filled with mercy.

His feeling was that without such mercy he could scarcely survive.

He reasoned that these must surely be personalities of the very highest order, for Sri Rudra embraced them so intensely that he became overwhelmed and fell unconscious in prema.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 84
इत्यादिमन्मनोवृत्तं ज्ञात्वा देव्योमयेरितः।
शिवचित्तानुवर्तिन्या गणेशोऽकथयच्छनैः ॥८४॥
ity-adi-man-mano-vrittam jnatva devyomayeritah ।
shiva-chittanuvartinya ganesho 'kathayac chanaih ।।84।।

Understanding these and other thoughts within my heart, Devi Uma, who always follows the intention of Sri Shiva, prompted Ganesha, and he quietly began to explain everything to me.

Dig-darshini

The word adi indicates that Gopa-kumar also desired such things as the touch of their feet and other forms of their mercy. Understanding all these movements within his heart, Sri Parvati instructed Ganesha to speak to him. She is described as one who always follows Sri Shiva's heart, indicating that Sri Shiva himself approved of this instruction.

Ganesha spoke softly and privately because these matters were not suitable for open discussion before all the attendants of Shiva and because, by their very nature, they were profoundly confidential.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 85

श्रीगणेश उवाच—
एते वैकुण्ठनाथस्य श्रीकृष्णस्य महाप्रभोः ।
पार्षदाः प्राप्तसारूप्या वैकुण्ठादागताः किल ॥८५॥

sri-ganesha uvaca—
ete vaikuntha-nathasya sri-krishnasya maha-prabhoh ।
parshadah prapta-sarupya vaikunthad agatah kila ।।85।।

Sri Ganesha said:

"These are the associates of Sri Krishna, the great Lord of Vaikuntha. Having attained forms resembling His own, they have come here from Vaikuntha."

Dig-darshini

These exalted personalities have attained sarupya, forms resembling that of Sri Krishna Himself.

This statement also indicates that Sri Krishna in Vaikuntha possesses a form of the same four-armed character as theirs.

The word kila conveys certainty: "They have indeed come from Vaikuntha. There should be no doubt or disbelief regarding this."

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verses 86–87

पश्येमेऽप्यपरे यान्ति ब्रह्मणोऽधिकृतेऽल्पके ।
ब्रह्माण्डे चतुरास्यस्य तथामी दूरतः परे ॥८६॥
अमी चाष्टमुखस्यैतद् द्विगुणे यान्ति वेगतः ।
अमी तु षोडशास्यास्य ब्रह्माण्डे द्विगुणे तथा ॥८७॥

pashyeme 'py apare yanti brahmano 'dhikrite 'lpake ।
brahmande caturasyasya tathami duratah pare ।।86।।
ami cashta-mukhasyaitad dvi-gune yanti vegatah ।
ami tu shodashasyasya brahmande dvi-gune tatha ।।87।।

"See! Some of these associates are going to the comparatively small brahmanda governed by a four-headed Brahma. Others, visible farther away, are going to the brahmanda of an eight-headed

Brahma, which is twice as large. Still others are swiftly travelling to the brahmanda of a sixteen-headed Brahma, again twice as great."

Dig-darshini

Ganesha now explains why Sri Krishna is called Maha-prabhu, the great Lord, by revealing the immense range of His dominion.

Some of the Vaikuntha associates were travelling to the brahmanda governed by the familiar four-headed Brahma. That universe is described as small only in comparison with the still greater brahmandas to be mentioned next.

Others, visible farther away because they had travelled a greater distance, were going to the universe of an eight-headed Brahma. That brahmanda is twice the size of the one governed by the four-headed Brahma, extending to one hundred koti yojanas. Everything within it should likewise be understood as proportionately greater.

Still others were travelling swiftly toward the universe of a sixteen-headed Brahma, which was again twice the size of the universe ruled by the eight-headed Brahma. Since the greatness of the presiding Brahma doubles, the greatness of his brahmanda may likewise be understood to increase correspondingly. The same principle applies to the universes described hereafter.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verses 88–89

इत्येवं कोटिकोटीनां ब्रह्मणां महतां क्रमात् ।
कोटिकोटिमुखाब्जानां तादृग्ब्रह्माण्डकोटिषु ॥८८॥
गच्छतो लीलया तत्तदनुरूपपरिच्छदान् ।
गणेशोऽदर्शयत् तान् मां बहुशो दृङ्मनोहरान् ॥८९॥

ity evam koti-kotinam brahmanam mahatam kramat ।
koti-koti-mukhabjanam tadrig-brahmanda-kotishu ।।88।।
gacchato lilaya tat-tad-anurupa-paricchadan ।
ganesho 'darshayat tan mam bahusho dring-mano-haran ।।89।।

In this way, Ganesha showed me countless hosts of those associates travelling playfully to countless brahmandas governed by ever greater Brahmas, some possessing millions upon millions of lotus faces. Their forms and opulences appeared suitably adapted to each universe they entered, and in every case they captivated both my eyes and my mind.

Dig-darshini

Here Gopa-kumar himself briefly resumes the narration while reporting what Ganesha showed him.

The succession of increasingly great Brahmas continues: after the sixteen-headed Brahma comes one with thirty-two heads, then

sixty-four, then one hundred and twenty-eight, and so on without limit. To indicate that there is no boundary to this progression, Gopa-kumar speaks of millions upon millions of Brahmas possessing millions upon millions of lotus faces.

Correspondingly, there are countless millions of immense brahmandas governed by such Brahmas. The intention is to establish the complete boundlessness of the material universes.

This is also expressed in Srimad Bhagavatam. Brahma says:

"What am I, together with my universe, compared with Your greatness? Innumerable universes pass through the pores of Your body like particles of dust carried through the air." (SB 10.14.11)

Similarly, the personified Vedas declare that even the lords of countless universes cannot reach the limit of Bhagavan's greatness, while innumerable covered brahmandas move within Him like particles of dust in the sky (SB 10.87.41).

And in the Sixth Canto it is said in praise of Sankarshan that each universe is surrounded by seven successive coverings, each ten times greater than the previous one, while countless millions of such universes exist within His unlimited greatness (SB 6.16.37).

Ganesha showed Gopa-kumar countless groups of Vaikuntha associates travelling freely and playfully to these innumerable universes. Because the realm of liberation has no obstructing coverings, such distant vision was possible there.

Each group manifested a form, splendour, and surrounding opulence appropriate to the particular brahmanda they were entering. Thus, when entering a greater universe, they displayed correspondingly greater magnificence. Otherwise the inhabitants of those immense universes might have regarded them as comparatively insignificant and failed to recognize their extraordinary position.

In every respect these associates stole away both the eyes and the mind.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verses 90–91
एते हि मृत्युकालेऽपि जिह्वाग्रे श्रोत्रवर्त्म वा।
कथञ्चित् सकृदाप्तेन नामाभासेन च प्रभोः ॥९०॥
भक्तान् कृत्स्नभयात् पान्तस्तान्वन्तो भक्तिमुज्ज्वलाम्।
सर्वत्र विचरन्त्यात्मेच्छया भक्त्येकवल्लभाः ॥९१॥
ete hi mrityu-kale 'pi jihvagre shrotra-vartma va ।
kathancit sakrid-aptena namabhasena ca prabhoh ।।90।।

bhaktan kritsna-bhayat pantas tanvanto bhaktim ujjvalam ।
sarvatra vicaranty atmecchaya bhakty-eka-vallabhah ।।91।।

"These associates travel everywhere by their own free will, for bhakti alone is dear to them. They protect devotees from every danger and spread pure, radiant bhakti wherever they go. Even one who, at the time of death, somehow receives merely a namabhasa of their Lord—whether uttered once upon the tongue or entering only through the pathway of the ear—may come under their protection."

Dig-darshini

One might ask why the associates of Vaikuntha travel throughout so many different universes.

They wander everywhere entirely according to their own will and not because they are dependent upon any external authority.

Their purpose is to protect the devotees of Sri Vaikuntha-natha from every kind of danger, especially obstacles to bhakti, and to spread ujjvala-bhakti, pure and radiant devotion, throughout all worlds.

Their mercy extends even to one who, at the time of death, somehow obtains merely a namabhasa, a faint manifestation of the Lord's name. Even if the name is uttered only once, and even if it is spoken jokingly, carelessly, or in some other indirect manner—or is merely received through the pathway of the ear—it may bring that person within the protection of Bhagavan's associates.

They act in this way because bhakti alone is supremely dear to them.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verses 92–93

भक्तावतारास्तस्यैते चत्वारो नैष्ठिकोत्तमाः ।
परिभ्रमन्ति लोकानां हितार्थं पार्षदा इव ॥९२॥
वसन्ति च तपोलोके प्रभुं नारायणं विना ।
अनाथानामिव क्षेमं वहन्तस्तन्निवासिनाम् ॥९३॥

bhaktavataras tasyaite catvaro naishthikottamah ।
paribhramanti lokanam hitartham parshada iva ।।92।।
vasanti ca tapo-loke prabhum narayanam vina ।
anathanam iva kshemam vahantas tan-nivasinam ।।93।।

"These four, headed by Sanaka, are bhakta-avataras of that Lord and are supreme among those fixed in lifelong celibacy. Like His personal associates, they wander throughout the worlds for the welfare of all beings. They also reside in Tapoloka, bringing auspiciousness to its inhabitants, who would otherwise appear almost without a presiding Lord such as Narayana."

Dig-darshini

One might ask why these Vaikuntha associates were travelling together with the four Kumaras, who are generally known as atmaramas. The answer is that Sanaka and his three brothers are bhakta-avataras of Sri Vaikuntha-natha. By their own conduct they establish and spread bhakti throughout the worlds, and thus they descend in the role of devotees. For this reason they wander everywhere for the welfare of all beings, just like the eternal associates of Vaikuntha.

One might then object: "But I previously saw these four residing for a very long time in Tapoloka."

That is true, and their residence there serves precisely this purpose. Tapoloka does not have a directly manifest presiding Lord such as Narayana. Its inhabitants are exalted yogis and lifelong celibates who follow the path shown by the Kumaras. Sanaka and his brothers therefore remain there and continually bring them kshema, spiritual welfare and auspiciousness, by discussing Bhagavan, performing sankirtan, and engaging in other devotional activities.

They are said to care for those inhabitants "as though they were without a Lord." The word iva, "as though," is important, because in truth those yogis are not abandoned by Bhagavan: through meditation they may always behold their Lord.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verses 94–95
गत्वा सम्प्रति वैकुण्ठे सर्वाकर्षकसद्गुणम्।
भगवन्तं तमालोक्य मोक्षानन्दविडम्बिना॥९४॥
निर्भरानन्दपूरेण संयोज्यात्मानमागताः।
पिबन्तो भक्तसङ्गत्या हरेर्भक्तिमहारसम्॥९५॥
gatva samprati vaikunthe sarvakarshaka-sad-gunam ।
bhagavantam tam alokya mokshananda-vidambina ।।94।।
nirbharananda-purena samyojyatmanam agatah ।
pibanto bhakta-sangatya harer bhakti-maha-rasam ।।95।।

"Recently these four Kumaras went to Vaikuntha and directly beheld Bhagavan, whose supremely excellent qualities attract everyone. There they became immersed in such an overwhelming flood of bliss that it made the happiness of moksha seem contemptible. Associating with the devotees of Hari, they drank deeply of the maha-rasa of bhakti, and in that condition they have now come here."

Dig-darshini

One might ask how these four Kumaras, who are generally known as atmaramas, came to associate with the personal attendants of Vaikuntha. The answer is given here.

Recently they went to Sri Vaikuntha-loka and directly beheld Sri Vaikuntha-natha. By that darshan they became immersed in an overwhelming flood of happiness, and through association with the devotees of Hari they began drinking the maha-rasa of His bhakti, especially the great nectar arising from singing His glories. In this condition they have now come here together with the Vaikuntha associates.

But why would such self-satisfied atmaramas go to Vaikuntha at all? Because Bhagavan possesses supremely excellent qualities that attract everyone. For this reason He is specifically called Hari, "He who steals away the heart."

The extraordinary nature of the bliss arising from His direct darshan is indicated by describing that flood of happiness as mokshananda-vidambin: it mocks, ridicules, and makes insignificant the happiness of liberation.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verses 96–97

नित्यापरिच्छिन्नमहासुखान्त्य-
काष्ठावतस्तादृशवैभवस्य ।
साक्षाद् रमानाथपदारविन्द-
क्रीडाभराजस्रविभूषितस्य ॥९६॥
तत्प्रेमभक्तैः सुलभस्य वक्तुं
वैकुण्ठलोकस्य परं किमीशे ।
अद्वैतदुर्वासनया मुमुक्षा-
विद्धात्मनां हृद्यपि दुर्लभस्य ॥९७॥

nityaparicchinna-maha-sukhantya-
kashthavatas tadrisha-vaibhavasya ।
sakshad rama-natha-padaravinda-
krida-bharajasra-vibhushitasya ।।96।।
tat-prema-bhaktaih sulabhasya vaktum
vaikuntha-lokasya param kim ishe ।
Adwaita-durvasanaya mumuksha-
viddhatmanam hridy api durlabhasya ।।97।।

"What more can I possibly say about Vaikuntha-loka? Its limitless eternal happiness has reached the ultimate summit of perfection, and its opulence is of the same extraordinary nature. It is eternally adorned by the abundant pastimes of the lotus feet of the Lord of Ramaa. It is easily attained by those who love Him through prema-bhakti, yet it is difficult even to conceive within the hearts of those whose minds are pierced by the desire for liberation born from the harmful conditioning of Adwaita."

Dig-darshini

Having concluded this incidental discussion, the description now returns to Vaikuntha itself.

"What more can I say about Sri Vaikuntha-loka beyond what has already been spoken? I am incapable of adequately describing anything further."

Several reasons are given.

The happiness of Vaikuntha is eternal and without limitation, and it has reached the ultimate summit and fullest maturity of maha-sukha. The opulences found there—its surroundings, attendants, paraphernalia, and all else—possess that same character of eternal, immeasurable happiness.

Why is Vaikuntha like this? Because it is perpetually adorned by the abundant lilas of the lotus feet of Ramaa-natha, the Lord of Sri Lakshmi, directly present there.

For this reason Vaikuntha is easily attained by those who possess prema-bhakti for Him.

Yet it is difficult even to arise within the imagination of those whose hearts have been pierced by mumuksha, the desire for liberation, arising from the harmful conditioning of Adwaita—the conception of absolute identity between oneself and Bhagavan. Such a disposition is called a durvasana, an unhealthy and corrupt mental impression.

Thus, although Vaikuntha is readily attainable through prema-bhakti, it remains beyond even the inward aspiration of those whose consciousness is absorbed in the desire to become one with Brahman.

This principle is illustrated in the Vasistha:

"If one who is ignorant and only half-awakened declares, 'Everything is Brahman,' he thereby consigns himself to the network of terrible hells."

Similarly, the Brahma-vaivarta Purana states:

"One who remains attached to sense enjoyment yet declares, 'I am Brahman,' is cooked in hell for thousands of millions of kalpas."

And another Purana says:

"One who remains attached to worldly happiness while declaring, 'I am Brahman,' and thereby falls away from both karma and Brahman, should be abandoned like an outcaste."

If such consequences are described even for these kinds of claims, then the gravity of asserting absolute identity with Bhagavan, the Supreme Brahman Himself, should be understood to be still greater.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 98
यद्यस्य मत्पितुः सम्यक् करुणा स्यात् तदा त्वया।
श्रोष्यते महिमा तस्य गत्वा चानुभविष्यते ॥९८॥
yady asya mat-pituh samyak karuna syat tada tvaya ।
shroshyate mahima tasya gatva canubhavishyate ।।98।।
"If this father of mine, Sri Shiva, bestows his full mercy upon you, then you will hear further of the greatness of Vaikuntha, and by going there yourself you will directly experience it."

Dig-darshini
One might still ask, "Can you not describe something more of Vaikuntha's special greatness?"

The answer is: if Sri Shiva, who is directly present here and whom Ganesha calls "my father," bestows his complete mercy upon Gopa-kumar, then Gopa-kumar will hear still more about the greatness of Vaikuntha.

"Complete mercy" means mercy that will carry him beyond merely attaining Shiva-loka.

Ultimately, however, the true greatness of Vaikuntha cannot be fully understood merely by hearing descriptions of it. Gopa-kumar must go there himself and directly experience its glory.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 99
श्रीगोपकुमार उवाच—
ब्रह्मंस्तत्प्राप्तये जातमहालालसया भृशम्।
अहं चिन्तार्णवापारभङ्गरङ्गे प्रनर्तितः ॥९९॥
sri-gopa-kumara uvaca—
brahmams tat-praptaye jata-maha-lalasaya bhrisham ।
aham cintarnavapara-bhanga-range pranartitah ।।99।।
Sri Gopa-kumar said: O brahmana, an immense longing to attain that Vaikuntha arose within me, and I was made to dance helplessly upon the endless waves of an ocean of anxious thought.

Dig-darshini
A profound longing arose within Gopa-kumar to attain Sri Vaikuntha-loka.

That intense desire plunged him into overwhelming anxiety. The limitless waves of the ocean of his thoughts became, as it were, a stage upon which he was forced to dance without rest.

In other words, his desire to reach Vaikuntha became so powerful that his mind could no longer remain peaceful.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 100
विचारजाततः स्वस्य सम्भाव्य तदयोग्यताम् ।
प्ररुदन् शोकवेगेन मोहं प्राप्यापतं क्षणात् ॥१००॥
vicara-jatatah svasya sambhavya tad-ayogyatam ।
prarudan shoka-vegena moham prapyapatam kshanat ।।100।।

After considering the matter from every side, I began to fear that I was unqualified to attain Vaikuntha. I burst into tears, and overwhelmed by the force of grief, I lost consciousness and immediately fell to the ground.

Dig-darshini

Gopa-kumar reflected upon his own condition from many different perspectives and came to fear that he was unqualified to attain Sri Vaikuntha-loka.

This thought caused him to weep intensely.

Then, overcome by the force of his grief, he lost external consciousness and collapsed.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 101
महादयालुनानेन परदुःखासहिष्णुना ।
वैष्णवैकप्रियेणाहमुत्थाप्याश्वास्य भाषितः ॥१०१॥
maha-dayalunanena para-duhkhasahishnuna ।
vaishnavaika-priyenaham utthapyashvasya bhashitah ।।101।।

Then this supremely compassionate Lord, who cannot tolerate the suffering of others and for whom the Vaishnavas alone are especially dear, raised me up, consoled me, and spoke.

Dig-darshini

"This supremely compassionate Lord" refers to Sri Mahadev.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 102
श्रीमहादेव उवाच—
हे श्रीवैष्णव पार्वत्या सहाहमपि कामये ।
तस्मिन् वैकुण्ठलोके तु सदा वासं भवानिव ॥१०२॥
sri-mahadeva uvaca—
he sri-vaishnava parvatya sahaham api kamaye ।
tasmin vaikuntha-loke tu sada vasam bhavan iva ।।102।।

Sri Mahadev said:

"O glorious Vaishnava, I too, together with Parvati, desire—as you do—to reside eternally in that Vaikuntha-loka."

Dig-darshini

By saying "as you do," Sri Mahadev implies: "You desire the same attainment that Parvati and I desire. In this respect you have already become like me. Therefore you may come to my own realm and reside there happily."

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 103

सोऽतीवदुर्लभो लोकः प्रार्थ्यो मुक्तैरपि ध्रुवम् ।
साध्यो ब्रह्मसुतानां हि ब्रह्मणश्च ममापि सः ॥१०३॥

so 'tiva-durlabho lokah prarthyo muktair api dhruvam ।
sadhyo brahma-sutanam hi brahmanash ca mamapi sah ।।103।।

"That realm is certainly exceedingly difficult to attain and is desired even by liberated souls. It remains an object of attainment for the sons of Brahma, for Brahma himself, and even for me."

Dig-darshini

Vaikuntha-loka is extraordinarily difficult to attain.

Even the sons of Brahma, such as Bhrigu and the other great sages, still regard it as a goal to be attained; they have not necessarily attained it merely by their present exalted positions.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verses 104–106

निष्कामेषु विशुद्धेषु स्वधर्मेषु हि यः पुमान् ।
परां निष्ठां गतस्तस्मिन् या कृपा श्रीहरेर्भवेत् ॥१०४॥
तस्याः शतगुणा चेत् स्याद् ब्रह्मत्वं लभते तदा ।
तस्याः शतगुणायां च सत्यां मद्भावमृच्छति ॥१०५॥
श्रीमद्भगवतस्तस्य मयि यावाननुग्रहः ।
तस्माच्छतगुणोत्ताने जाते वैकुण्ठमेति तम् ॥१०६॥

nishkameshu vishuddheshu sva-dharmeshu hi yah puman ।
param nishtham gatas tasmin ya kripa sri-harer bhavet ।।104।।
tasyah shata-guna cet syad brahmatvam labhate tada ।
tasyah shata-gunayam ca satyam mad-bhavam ricchati ।।105।।
srimad-bhagavatas tasya mayi yavan anugrahah ।
tasmac chata-gunottane jate vaikuntham eti tam ।।106।।

"When a person becomes perfectly established in the pure and desireless performance of his own prescribed dharma, a certain mercy of Sri Hari arises toward him. If that mercy increases a hundredfold, he attains the position of Brahma. If it becomes a hundred times greater again, he attains a position like mine. But when the mercy of glorious Bhagavan becomes a hundred times greater even than the favour He has bestowed upon me, that person attains Vaikuntha."

Dig-darshini

Sri Mahadev now explains why Vaikuntha is so difficult to attain.

Suppose a person becomes completely mature and perfectly established in the pure and desireless performance of his own varna and ashram duties. Sri Hari may then bestow a particular degree of mercy upon him. If that mercy increases a hundredfold, he may attain Brahmatva, the position of Brahma. If it increases another hundredfold, he may attain mad-bhava, a position like that of Sri Shiva.

Sri Shiva himself states this principle to the Pracetas in the Fourth Canto of Srimad Bhagavatam:

"One who remains perfectly established in his own dharma for one hundred births may attain the position of Brahma, and beyond that may attain me. But a Bhagavata reaches the unmanifest Vaishnava abode beyond material nature, just as I and the other devas will attain it when our appointed cosmic functions come to an end." (SB 4.24.29)

The meaning is that after rising beyond Brahma's position, one may attain a status like that of Rudra. Yet one who becomes a Bhagavata attains the avyakrita Vaishnava-pada, the Vaishnava realm beyond the entire material manifestation. Sri Rudra and other devas who presently occupy divinely appointed offices will also attain that realm when the term of their cosmic responsibilities is completed and their subtle bodies cease.

Thus, when Bhagavan's mercy becomes a hundred times greater even than the mercy by which one attains Sri Shiva's position, one reaches Vaikuntha.

The same conclusion is stated in the Mudgala narrative of the Itihasa-samuccaya:

"Above the abode of Brahma is that supreme abode of Vishnu, the pure and eternal effulgent realm which the wise know as Para Brahman. Those sadhus who are free from possessiveness and false ego, beyond dualities, self-controlled, and absorbed in meditation and yoga go there. Those who worship Hari, Vishnu, Krishna, Jishnu, the eternal Lord, Narayana, the unborn Krishna, Vishvaksena, the four-armed Lord — those who meditate upon that divine Purusha and remember Achyuta attain the imperishable abode. This is the eternal teaching of scripture."

Here "above the abode of Brahma" may also indicate a position beyond the realm of liberation, since Brahman is directly experienced there through sayujya.

In this way Sri Mahadev's words appear to establish that the residents of Vaikuntha possess a greatness even surpassing his own. This, however, should be understood as an expression of humility appropriate to Sri Shiva's role as a bhakta-avatara. In reality, because Sri Shiva is himself an avatara of Bhagavan, even the associates of Vaikuntha properly worship him. This will later be made explicit through their own words.

The same principle should be understood regarding all avataras of Bhagavan. Any apparent gradation among them corresponds only to the degree in which Bhagavatta, the nature and majesty of Bhagavan, is manifest in a particular form; it does not indicate an essential inferiority in their divine reality. Sri Narada will explain this more fully later.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 107
अथापि गोवर्धनगोपपुत्रस्
तमर्हसि त्वं मथुरेशभक्तः ।
तदेकभक्तिप्रियविप्रशिष्यस्
तदीयतन्मन्त्रपरोऽनुरक्तः ॥१०७॥
athapi govardhan-gopa-putras
tam arhasi tvam mathuresha-bhaktah ।
tad-eka-bhakti-priya-vipra-shishyas
tadiya-tan-mantra-paro 'nuraktah ।।107।।

"Yet despite Vaikuntha being so exceedingly difficult to attain, you are worthy of attaining it. You are a cowherd's son from Govardhan, a devotee of the Lord of Mathura, the disciple of a brahmana for whom exclusive bhakti to that Lord alone is dear, devoted to the mantra belonging to Him, and deeply attached to Him."

Dig-darshini

Although Vaikuntha is supremely difficult to attain, Sri Mahadev tells Gopa-kumar that he is nevertheless qualified to reach it. He then gives five reasons. Gopa-kumar is a cowherd boy from Govardhan. He is a devotee of Mathuresha, the Lord of Mathura. He is the disciple of that brahmana whose sole delight is exclusive bhakti to Mathuresha. He is wholly devoted to the extraordinary ten-syllable mantra of Sri Madana-gopala, whose greatness is beyond description. And, as a consequence of all these things, he possesses deep spontaneous attachment to Sri Gopala Deva Himself.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verses 108–111
चतुर्विधेषु मोक्षेषु सायुज्यस्य पदं त्विदम् ।
प्राप्यं यतीनामद्वैतभावनाभावितात्मनाम् ॥१०८॥
महासंसारदुःखाग्निज्वालासंशुष्कचेतसाम् ।
असारग्राहिणामन्तःसारासारावि वेकिनाम् ॥१०९॥
मयैव कृष्णस्यादेशात् पतितानां भ्रमर्णवे ।

निजपादाम्बुजप्रेमभक्तिसङ्गोपकस्य हि ॥११०॥
भगवद्भजनानन्दरसैकापेक्षकैर्जनैः ।
उपेक्षितमिदं विद्धि पदं विघ्नसमं त्यज ॥१११॥
catur-vidheshu moksheshu sayujyasya padam tv idam ।
prapyam yatinam adwaita-bhavana-bhavitatmanam ।।108।।
maha-samsara-duhkhagni-jvala-samshushka-cetasam ।
asara-grahinam antah-sarasara-vivekinam ।।109।।
mayaiva krishnasyadeshat patitanam bhramarnave ।
nija-padambuja-prema-bhakti-sangopakasya hi ।।110।।
bhagavad-bhajanananda-rasaikapekshakair janaih ।
upekshitam idam viddhi padam vighna-samam tyaja ।।111।।

"Among the four kinds of moksha, this is the abode of sayujya. It is the destination of renunciants whose minds have been conditioned by contemplation of Adwaita, whose hearts have been dried up by the blazing fire of the sufferings of immense samsara, who grasp what is without true substance and cannot distinguish what is essential from what is not. By Krishna's command, I myself have caused such persons to fall into an ocean of bewilderment, for Krishna keeps the prema-bhakti of His own lotus feet concealed from them.

"Know that those who desire nothing but the rasa of the bliss of bhajana to Bhagavan disregard this destination entirely. You too should abandon it, for to such a devotee this realm is equivalent to an obstacle."

Dig-darshini

Sri Mahadev now explains why it would be inappropriate for Gopa-kumar to remain in this realm of liberation, beginning with the reason why he should abandon it.

Among the four kinds of moksha, this particular realm is the destination of sayujya, liberation in the form of absorption into Brahman. In the Harivamsa, Sri Bhagavan tells Arjuna:

"The vast divine expanse composed of Brahman-radiance that you beheld is Myself, O best of the Bharatas. That is My own eternal effulgence. It is My higher prakriti, eternal, both manifest and unmanifest. Entering it, the foremost knowers of yoga become liberated. It is the destination of the followers of Sankhya, of yogis, and of ascetics. It is that supreme Para Brahman from which the entire universe is manifested. Know that concentrated radiance to be My own effulgence."

Some say that the place to which Sri Krishna and Arjuna travelled was Lokaloka Mountain within another brahmanda. Such statements may refer to another occasion. Alternatively, loka may

be understood as the fourteen planetary worlds and aloka as the regions lying outside them. Thus the place described as beyond loka and aloka may still be spoken of in connection with the cosmic geography of Lokaloka because of a certain similarity of description.

Sri Mahadev describes the kind of renunciants who seek this sayujya. Their minds have been thoroughly conditioned by meditation upon Adwaita, absolute identity. Their hearts have been dried up by the blazing sufferings of the vast material world. Consequently, they seize upon something lacking the true essence and cannot properly distinguish what has inner substance from what does not. Sri Brahma similarly compares such persons to those who beat empty husks rather than grain (SB 10.14.4).

Sri Shiva then says that he himself, acting under the command of Sri Krishna, has caused such persons to enter an ocean of bewilderment. This recalls his statement in the Uttara-khanda of the Padma Purana:

"Mayavada is an untrue doctrine and is called Buddhism in disguise. O Devi, in Kali-yuga I shall teach it in the form of a brahmana. I shall describe an inferior conception of Brahman as nirguna in order to bewilder the entire world in the age of Kali."

Similarly, at the beginning of the Brihat-sahasra-nama-stotra the Lord commands him in substance: "Through doctrines of your own composition, turn those people away from Me."

Why would Krishna give such an instruction? Because the prema-bhakti of His own lotus feet is supremely confidential and is therefore kept concealed from those who are disinclined toward it.

Those whose sole desire is the ananda-rasa of Bhagavan's bhajana consequently disregard this realm of sayujya altogether. Sri Mahadev therefore tells Gopa-kumar, "You too should abandon it. For one devoted to bhakti, sayujya resembles an obstacle, because the personal service of Bhagavan cannot be performed within the condition of such absorption."

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 112
द्वारकावासिविप्रेण कृष्णभक्तिरसार्थिना।
इतो नीताः सुतास्तत्र सचातुर्यविशेषतः ॥११२॥
Dwaraka-vasi-viprena krishna-bhakti-rasarthina ।
ito nitah sutas tatra sa-caturya-visheshatah ।।112।।

"The sons of the brahmana of Dwaraka, who desired the rasa of Krishna-bhakti, were therefore brought from this realm back to Dwaraka through a wonderfully ingenious arrangement."

Dig-darshini

The conduct of the great devotees themselves also serves as evidence that this realm of sayujya is not their desired attainment. The sons of the brahmana residing in Dwaraka were brought from this realm of liberation back to Dwaraka. Their father desired the rasa of Krishna-bhakti, not the happiness of moksha.

The residents of Dwaraka at that time possessed sat-chit-ananda forms, and because of their wonderful prema-bhakti for the lotus feet of Sri Devaki-nandana, the happiness of moksha was something they could only disdain.

Some maintain that because birth and similar events are described in relation to the inhabitants of Dwaraka, they must have been ordinary human beings possessing bodies made of the five material elements. Even according to that view, however, their apparently material human condition could only be an outward resemblance to such embodiment, not their ultimate nature. Otherwise persons possessing ordinary material bodies would be incapable of participating in intimate lilas with Sri Bhagavan, whose form is a concentrated manifestation of sat-chit-ananda. Such a conclusion would also contradict what has already been established: by the power of Bhagavad-bhakti, the devotee ultimately manifests a sat-chit-ananda form.

One might object that if the apparently human bodies of Bhagavan's associates are merely an outward appearance, then Bhagavan's own humanlike form might also have to be considered an imitation. That conclusion does not follow. The various forms of Sri Bhagavan are eternally and truly existent, as will be explained later, and He eternally reveals Himself in precisely those forms to His respective worshippers. His humanlike form therefore cannot be regarded as an imitation.

It is also heard that some residents of Dwaraka and other sacred places abandon what appears to be a human body and thereafter exist openly in their purely sat-chit-ananda form. Those who hold the view just mentioned similarly interpret the Bhagavatam's description of certain gopis who were confined within their homes and "gave up their guna-maya bodies" (SB 10.29.9–11): they understand that the gopis left behind an apparently material body and attained a body of sat-chit-ananda beyond the gunas, by which they could accomplish their desired loving pastimes with Sri Bhagavan.

Sri Krishna's message sent through Uddhava also says:

"Those blessed women who were unable to participate with Me in the rasa-lila when I sported at night here in the forests of Braja attained Me by meditating upon My divine potency." (SB 10.47.37)

A similar principle should be understood in the cases of Sisupala and Dantavakra. When the curse of Sanaka and the other Kumaras came to an end, although Jaya and Vijaya were destined to resume their former positions as the Lord's gatekeepers, Sisupala and Dantavakra are nevertheless described as entering directly into Bhagavan's effulgence and attaining sayujya.

That cannot mean that they attained sayujya-moksha in the sense of permanently losing their personal identity. Such a result would be utterly inappropriate for devotees of Bhagavan who were destined to return to Vaikuntha as His personal associates. Moreover, scripture explicitly states that they again attained their positions as His parshadas. Sri Narada says:

"Through the intense meditation produced by their bond of enmity, the two attained absorption in Achyuta and then, as associates of Vishnu, again returned to Hari's side." (SB 7.1.46)

And earlier:

"As those two fell from their own abode because of the curse, the compassionate sages told them, 'After three births you will again return to your proper position.'" (SB 7.1.38)

Thus the description of their entering Bhagavan's radiance must be understood in harmony with their eternal identity as His associates. But our own conclusion is still more direct: just like Sri Bhagavan Himself, all His associates who appear in humanlike forms within the earthly realm possess sat-chit-ananda vigrahas from the beginning. At particular times, in accordance with the manifest and unmanifest phases of their Lord's lila—or because of the arising of some exceedingly intense condition of prema—they may reveal or withdraw their forms. When sages describe such an event with expressions such as "giving up the body," those words refer to such a disappearance, not to the destruction of a material body.

Accordingly, when Srimad Bhagavatam says that the gopis confined within their homes "gave up their guna-maya bodies," the meaning can be understood as follows: their bodies, filled with all auspicious spiritual qualities, were immediately withdrawn from external vision through lila. They had already fully attained Krishna, the Paramatma, through their celebrated mood of loving Him as their paramour.

Their "bonds" that were destroyed were the restrictions imposed by ordinary rules of vidhi and nishedha, for they had become recipients of Bhagavan's exceptional grace. Sri Narada expresses this principle:

"When Bhagavan bestows special grace upon someone whose heart is absorbed in Him, that person gives up fixed attachment to both worldly and merely scriptural considerations." (SB 4.29.47)

The Bhagavatam's description of those gopis meditating upon Krishna with closed eyes should therefore not be understood as ordinary meditation arising from material limitation. Their intense separation from their dearmost Krishna consumed every obstacle, and through meditation they directly experienced the embrace of Achyuta. Their celebrated paramour-bhava was itself the profoundly confidential means by which they meditated upon and attained Krishna. They were unable to leave their houses externally, and therefore, absorbed completely in Him, they closed their eyes and entered that inner meeting.

Thus the account of the Dwaraka brahmana's sons provides another example of the same fundamental principle: for one whose heart seeks the rasa of Krishna-bhakti, sayujya is not the final attainment. Even one situated there may be brought out of it so that personal relationship and service to Bhagavan may be fulfilled.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 113
अत्रापि भगवन्तं यद् दृष्टवानसि तादृशम्।
सद्गुरोः कृपया कृष्णदिदृक्षाभरकारितम् ॥११३॥
atrapi bhagavantam yad drishtavan asi tadrisham ।
sad-guroh kripaya krishna-didriksha-bhara-karitam ।।113।।

"Even here, in this realm of liberation, the fact that you saw Bhagavan in such an indescribably beautiful personal form was brought about by the intense longing to see Krishna that arose within you through the mercy of your sad-guru."

Dig-darshini

Even within such a realm of liberation, Gopa-kumar had beheld Bhagavan in an indescribably beautiful personal form. He should understand that this too was brought about by the overwhelming desire within him to see Sri Krishna—a desire awakened and sustained by the mercy of his true guru.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 114
श्रीगोपकुमार उवाच—
तच्छङ्करप्रसादेन परानन्दभरं गतः।
किञ्चिदिच्छन्नपि ब्रह्मन् नाशकं वदितुं ह्रिया ॥११४॥

sri-gopa-kumara uvaca—
tac-chankara-prasadena parananda-bharam gatah ।
kincid icchann api brahman nashakam vaditum hriya ।।114।।
Sri Gopa-kumar said:

O brahmana, by that mercy of Sankara I became filled with an overwhelming abundance of supreme joy. Although I still desired something more, I was unable to express it because of shyness.

Dig-darshini
By the mercy of Sri Sankara, bestowed in the manner just described, Gopa-kumar attained an extraordinary fullness of supreme happiness.

Even so, he still cherished a further desire—especially the desire to speak with the associates of Bhagavan and receive their association. But because of humility and embarrassment, he could not bring himself to express that desire.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 115
भगवत्पार्षदाः श्रुत्वा तं तं वाचमुमापतेः ।
प्रणम्य सादरं प्रीत्या तमूचुर्विनयान्विताः ॥११५॥
bhagavat-parshadah shrutva tam tam vacam uma-pateh ।
pranamya sadaram pritya tam ucur vinayanvitah ।।115।।
The associates of Bhagavan heard each of the statements spoken by the Lord of Uma. Then, bowing before him with great respect and affection, they addressed him with deep humility.

Dig-darshini
Before carrying out the purpose for which they had come, the associates of Bhagavan first sought to console Gopa-kumar, who appeared overwhelmed by sorrow arising from the intensity of his love for Bhagavan.

Having heard the various statements spoken by Uma-pati, Sri Shiva, they respectfully bowed before him and then addressed him with affection and humility.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 116
श्रीभगवत्पार्षदा ऊचुः—
तेन वैकुण्ठनाथेन समं कोऽपि न विद्यते ।
भगवन् भवतो भेदो गौर्याश्च रमया सह ॥११६॥
sri-bhagavat-parshada ucuh—
tena vaikuntha-nathena samam ko 'pi na vidyate ।
bhagavan bhavato bhedo gauryash ca ramaya saha ।।116।।
The associates of Bhagavan said:

O Bhagavan, there is no distinction whatsoever between you and that Lord of Vaikuntha; nor is there any distinction between Gauri and Ramaa, Sri Lakshmi.

Dig-darshini

There is no real distinction between Sri Shiva and Sri Vaikuntha-natha, and likewise no real distinction between Gauri and Ramaa, Sri Lakshmi.

This is because Shiva and Gauri are manifestations of that same divine reality in their respective forms.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 117
तल्लोके भवतो वासो देव्याश्च किल युज्यते।
ख्याताः प्रियतमास्तस्यावताराश्च भवान् महान्॥११७॥
tal-loke bhavato vaso devyash ca kila yujyate ।
khyatah priyatamas tasyavatarash ca bhavan mahan ।।117।।

"It is therefore entirely fitting that you and Devi should reside in His Vaikuntha-loka. Indeed, you are renowned as one of His dearest devotees and as a great avatara of that Lord."

Dig-darshini

Because of this non-difference, it is entirely appropriate that Sri Shiva and Devi should reside in the realm of Sri Vaikuntha-natha.

Sri Shiva is celebrated both as one exceedingly dear to the Lord of Vaikuntha and as a great avatara of Him.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 118
तथापि यदिदं किञ्चिद् भाषितं भवताधुना।
स्वभावो भगवत्प्रेष्ठतमातौपयिको ह्ययम्॥११८॥
tathapi yad idam kincid bhashitam bhavatadhuna ।
svabhavo bhagavat-preshthatamatopayiko hy ayam ।।118।।

"Nevertheless, whatever you have just spoken in this humble manner is entirely appropriate to your nature as one who is most dear to Bhagavan."

Dig-darshini

Sri Shiva had just said such things as, "That Vaikuntha remains a goal even for the sons of Brahma, for Brahma himself, and for me."

The associates now explain that such statements do not indicate any actual inferiority in Sri Shiva. Rather, this humility is precisely the natural disposition appropriate to one who is among the most beloved of Bhagavan. The more intimately dear a devotee is to Bhagavan, the more naturally such humility appears within him.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 119
तद्भक्तिरसकल्लोलग्राहको वैष्णवेडितः ।
अतः सर्वावतारेभ्यो भवतो महिमाधिकः ॥११९॥
tad-bhakti-rasa-kallola-grahako vaishnaveditah ।
atah sarvavatarebhyo bhavato mahimadhikah ।।119।।

"You receive and distribute the surging waves of the rasa of bhakti for Him, and for this reason you are glorified by the Vaishnavas. Thus your greatness surpasses that of all other avataras."

Dig-darshini

The associates further explain the nature of Sri Shiva's extraordinary devotional disposition.

He is a grahaka of the surging waves of Bhagavad-bhakti-rasa: he receives them deeply within himself and also causes them to spread among others.

For this reason he is praised and glorified by the Vaishnavas.

Thus, in the particular greatness arising from his role as an exalted devotee who relishes and propagates bhakti-rasa, Sri Shiva's glory is said here to surpass that of all the other avataras.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 120
श्रीगोपकुमार उवाच—
निजस्तुत्या तया तस्मिन् ह्रिया तूष्णीं स्थिते प्रभौ ।
भगवत्पार्षदास्ते मामाश्लिष्यौचुः सुहृद्वराः ॥१२०॥
sri-gopa-kumara uvaca—
nija-stutya taya tasmin hriya tushnim sthite prabhau ।
bhagavat-parshadas te mam ashlishyocuh suhrid-varah ।।120।।

Sri Gopa-kumar said: When that Lord fell silent out of embarrassment upon hearing himself praised in this way, those associates of Bhagavan, the foremost of well-wishers, embraced me and spoke.

Dig-darshini

Hearing such praise of himself from the associates of Bhagavan, Sri Shiva, who possesses the highest transcendental qualities, became embarrassed, for great souls naturally feel shy when they hear themselves glorified. He therefore remained silent. Those associates of Bhagavan are suhrit-varah, the foremost of true well-wishers, bestowing causeless mercy. Therefore they embraced Gopa-kumar and began to speak to him.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 121
श्रीभगवत्पार्षदा ऊचुः—
अस्मदीश्वरसन्मन्त्रोपासकोमापतिप्रिय ।
गोपनन्दन भक्तेषु भवन्तं गणयेम हि ॥१२१॥

sri-bhagavat-parshada ucuh—
asmad-ishvara-san-mantropasakomapati-priya ।
gopa-nandana bhakteshu bhavantam ganayema hi ।।121।।

The associates of Bhagavan said: "O son of a cowherd, O worshipper of the sacred mantra of our Lord, O you who are dear to Uma-pati, we certainly count you among the devotees."

Dig-darshini

First they reassure Gopa-kumar that he is indeed qualified to attain Vaikuntha.

"O son of a cowherd, we certainly count you among the devotees."

Why? Because he faithfully worships the sacred mantra of their own Lord, Sri Vaikuntha-natha, and because he is dear to Uma-pati, Sri Shiva.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 122
गौडे गङ्गातटे जातो मथुराब्राह्मणोत्तमः ।
जयन्तनाम कृष्णस्यावतारस्ते महान् गुरुः ॥१२२॥
gaude ganga-tate jato mathura-brahmanottamah ।
jayanta-nama krishnasyavataras te mahan guruh ।।122।।

"Your great guru, named Jayanta, the foremost among the brahmanas of Mathura, who was born in Gauda on the bank of the Ganges, is the great avatar of Krishna."

Dig-darshini

kim ca, krishnasya mahan avataras te tava guruh: Furthermore, your Guru is the great avatar of Krishna.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 123
सत्यं प्रतीहि वयमत्र भवन्निमित्तम्
एवागताः शृणु हितं निजकृत्यमेतत् ।
वैकुण्ठमिच्छसि यदि परिहाय सर्वं
सप्रेमभक्तिमनुतिष्ठ नवप्रकारम् ॥१२३॥
satyam pratihi vayam atra bhavan-nimittam
evagatah shrinu hitam nija-krityam etat ।
vaikuntham icchasi yadi parihaya sarvam
sa-prema-bhaktim anutishtha nava-prakaram ।।123।।

"Believe this with certainty: we have come here solely for your sake. Now hear what is truly beneficial and what you should do. If you desire to attain Vaikuntha, then set aside everything else and engage in the nine forms of bhakti, performing them with prema."

Dig-darshini

The associates tell Gopa-kumar to believe with certainty that they have come to the realm of liberation specifically for his benefit.

He should therefore abandon any fear that he is unqualified for Vaikuntha.

They now explain the course of action that will truly benefit him.

To attain Sri Vaikuntha-loka, Gopa-kumar should relinquish attachment to everything else, including this realm of liberation and even exclusive dependence upon mantra-japa as his principal practice, and become firmly established in the nine forms of bhakti beginning with hearing and chanting.

These should be performed sa-prema, with love.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 124
तज्ज्ञापकं च भज भगवदादिशास्त्रं
लीलाकथा भगवतः शृणु तत्र नित्यम्।
ता एव कर्णविवरं प्रणयात् प्रविष्टाः
सद्यः पदं भगवतः प्रभवन्ति दातुम् ॥१२४॥
taj-jnapakam ca bhaja bhagavatadi-shastram
lila-katha bhagavatah shrinu tatra nityam ।
ta eva karna-vivaram pranayat pravishtah
sadyah padam bhagavatah prabhavanti datum ।।124।।

"Devotedly study Srimad Bhagavatam and the other scriptures that reveal this bhakti, and constantly hear within them the accounts of Bhagavan's lilas. Entering the openings of the ears with affection, those very lila-kathas have the power to bestow immediately the abode of Bhagavan."

Dig-darshini

One might ask what the nine forms of bhakti are and how they should be practised.

The associates therefore instruct Gopa-kumar to honour and study the scriptures that reveal bhakti, especially Srimad Bhagavatam.

Among all these practices, hearing Bhagavan's lila-katha is generally the foremost and most beneficial, because it possesses an extraordinary power to attract the heart.

The accounts of Bhagavan's lilas, entering the openings of the ears with loving affection, can themselves immediately bestow His abode.

Sri Sukadev states in the Twelfth Canto:

"For one who desires to cross the exceedingly difficult ocean of samsara, scorched by the forest fire of innumerable sufferings,

there is no other boat than the relishing of the rasa of the lila-katha of Bhagavan, Purushottama." (SB 12.4.40)

Similarly, the Second Canto says:

"Those who drink through the vessels of their ears the nectar of the narrations of Bhagavan, the Self of the sadhus, purify their hearts contaminated by sense objects and approach the lotus feet of the Lord." (SB 2.2.37)

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 125
तेषां नवप्रकाराणामेकेनैव सुसिध्यति ।
सर्वसाधनवर्येण वैकुण्ठः साध्यसत्तमः ॥१२५॥
tesham nava-prakaranam ekenaiva susidhyati ।
sarva-sadhana-varyena vaikunthah sadhya-sattamah ।।125।।

"By perfectly practising even one of these nine forms, Vaikuntha, the highest of all attainable goals, is easily attained, for each is supreme among all spiritual means."

Dig-darshini

One might therefore wonder why all nine forms of bhakti need to be practised.

The answer is that even one of these nine can easily bring about attainment of Vaikuntha.

Bhakti is supreme among all means of attainment, including jnana, karma, and the other paths. Therefore its fruit is likewise supreme among all goals, including bhukti and mukti. A great means naturally produces a great result.

The Brahma Purana states:

"Simply by receiving initiation into Krishna's mantra, human beings can attain moksha. What then need be said of those who constantly worship Achyuta with bhakti?"

Here Krishna Himself is called moksha because He liberates.

It is also said:

"Even those who constantly remember Janardana with deceit may, after leaving the body, attain the faultless realm of Vishnu."

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 126
महत्तमतया श्रूयमाणा अपि परेऽखिलाः ।
फलव्रतविचारेण तुच्छा महदनादृताः ॥१२६॥

mahattamataya shruyamana api pare 'khilah ।
phala-vrata-vicarena tuccha mahad-anadritah ।।126।।

"Although other attainments may be described in scripture as exceedingly great, when their actual fruits and the practices leading to them are carefully considered, all of them are insignificant and are therefore disregarded by the great devotees."

Dig-darshini

One might object that scriptures also speak of many other attainments as producing very great results.

The associates reply that all goals other than Sri Vaikuntha-loka are ultimately insignificant.

How can this be known? By examining both the result attained and the nature of the practice required to attain it.

Those who are truly great—discriminating devotees who know the difference between what is essential and what is not, and who relish bhakti-rasa—do not value these lesser attainments. The reasons for this have already been explained.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 127
तथापि तद्रसज्ञैः सा भक्तिर्नवविधाञ्जसा।
सम्पाद्यते विचित्रैतद्रसमाधुर्यलब्धये ॥१२७॥
tathapi tad-rasajnaih sa bhaktir nava-vidhanjasa ।
sampadyate vicitraitad-rasa-madhurya-labdhaye ।।127।।

"Nevertheless, those who truly know the rasa of bhakti practise all nine forms, so that they may taste the varied sweetness of the many different rasas found within them."

Dig-darshini

Although Vaikuntha can be attained through the perfect practice of even one form of bhakti, those who understand and relish bhakti-rasa practise all nine forms together.

Bhakti itself consists of an indescribable and supremely exalted maha-rasa.

Why then practise its many different forms?

Because hearing, chanting, remembering, and the other limbs of bhakti each offer distinct varieties of devotional relish. Those who are rasajna, expert in tasting bhakti-rasa, therefore engage in all nine so that they may experience the diverse sweetness contained within those different forms of devotion.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 128
तेषां कस्मिंश्चिदेकस्मिन् श्रद्धयानुष्ठिते सति।
स्वयमाविर्भवेत् प्रेमा श्रीमत्कृष्णपदाब्जयोः ॥१२८॥
tesham kasmimshcid ekasmin shraddhayanushthite sati ।
svayam avirbhavet prema srimat-krishna-padabjayoh ।।128।।

"When even one of these nine forms is faithfully practised, prema for the glorious lotus feet of Sri Krishna naturally manifests of its own accord."

Dig-darshini

Having explained why rasika devotees may practise all nine forms of bhakti, the associates now describe the arising of prema.

If even one of those nine forms is performed with genuine shraddha, with faithful conviction, then prema for the lotus feet of Sri Krishna manifests spontaneously within the heart.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 129
तथापि कार्या प्रेम्णैव परिहाराय हृद्रुजः।
फलान्तरेषु कामस्य वैकुण्ठाप्तिविरोधिनः ॥१२९॥
tathapi karya premnaiva pariharaya hrid-rujah ।
phalantareshu kamasya vaikunthapti-virodhinah ।।129।।

"Nevertheless, bhakti should always be performed with prema, in order to eliminate desire for other results. Such desire is a disease of the heart and stands opposed to attainment of Vaikuntha."

Dig-darshini

Bhakti should indeed be performed with prema. Why? Because prema, by its very nature, does not seek some separate fruit. It therefore removes desire for other attainments.

Desire is compared to a disease of the heart because it produces the fever of endless anxieties. It also obstructs attainment of Vaikuntha, since the enjoyment of lesser results creates powerful delays and diversions.

Thus desire for separate fruits brings misfortune both in this life and beyond. When prema is present, however, such desires are absent, and supreme happiness arises naturally here and hereafter.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 130
यद्यप्येतादृशी भक्तिर्यत्र यत्रोपपद्यते।
तत्तत्स्थानं हि वैकुण्ठस्तत्र तत्रैव स प्रभुः ॥१३०॥
yadyapy etadrishi bhaktir yatra yatropapadyate ।
tat tat sthanam hi vaikunthas tatra tatraiva sa prabhuh ।।130।।

"Wherever pure bhakti arises, that place is Vaikuntha, and it is there that the Lord is present."

Dig-darshini

One might ask: if prema-bhakti, filled with supreme sweetness and capable of making even Brahmananda seem insignificant, can be perfected here itself, what need is there to attain Vaikuntha-loka?

The associates reply that wherever this kind of bhakti—the ninefold bhakti performed with prema—fully manifests, that very place is in truth Vaikuntha.

One may then ask: "But Bhagavan is directly present in Vaikuntha."

The answer is that He is also present wherever His devotees engage in pure bhakti. As Bhagavan Himself declares:

"I do not reside in Vaikuntha, nor in the hearts of yogis. O Narada, I remain wherever My devotees sing My glories."

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 131
तथापि सर्वदा साक्षादन्यत्र भगवान् तथा।
न दृश्येतेति वैकुण्ठोऽवश्यं भक्तैरपेक्ष्यते ॥१३१॥
tathapi sarvada sakshad anyatra bhagavams tatha ।
na drishyeteti vaikuntho 'vashyam bhaktair apekshyate ।।131।।

"Even so, outside Vaikuntha Bhagavan is not always seen directly in that same manner. Therefore the devotees aspire to attain Vaikuntha."

Dig-darshini

Elsewhere Bhagavan is not always directly visible in the same way as He is in Vaikuntha, where His wonderful beauty, qualities, lilas, sweetness, and other features are continuously experienced.

For this reason devotees still necessarily desire Vaikuntha-loka.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 132
सर्वप्रकारिका भक्तिस्तादृशी च सदान्यतः।
न सम्पद्येत निर्विघ्ना तन्निष्ठैर्बहुभिः सह ॥१३२॥
sarva-prakarika bhaktis tadrishi ca sadanyatah ।
na sampadyeta nirvighna tan-nishthair bahubhih saha ।।132।।

"Nor can all the varieties of bhakti be practised elsewhere forever, completely free from obstruction, together with multitudes of devotees who are equally fixed in that same state of bhakti."

Dig-darshini

There is another reason why Vaikuntha is desired.

Outside Vaikuntha, all varieties of bhakti cannot always be performed without obstruction in the same way they are there.

Nor can anyone elsewhere enjoy the bliss of uninterrupted bhakti performed in the association of countless devotees wholly established in it.

In Vaikuntha there are no obstacles produced by time or other material conditions. There, innumerable eternal residents in their sat-chit-ananda forms naturally relish prema-bhakti-rasa and continually engage in its many varieties together.

For this reason Vaikuntha must indeed be desired.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 133
निजेन्द्रियमनःकायचेष्टारूपं न विद्धि ताम् ।
नित्यसत्यघनानन्दरूपा सा हि गुणातिगा ॥१३३॥
nijendriya-manah-kaya-ceshta-rupam na viddhi tam ।
nitya-satya-ghananda-rupa sa hi gunatiga ।।133।।

"Do not think that bhakti consists merely of the activities of one's own senses, mind, and body. Bhakti is eternal, real, and composed of concentrated bliss, for she exists beyond the three material gunas."

Dig-darshini

Because the associates had instructed Gopa-kumar to "perform" bhakti, one might assume that bhakti is something produced by human effort. They therefore now explain her true nature.

Do not understand bhakti merely as the activity of the material senses, mind, and body—as though hearing and chanting were simply functions of the ears and speech, remembrance merely a function of the mind, and offering obeisances merely an activity of the body. Bhakti is not an object like that, an object of the material senses, She is beyond the three gunas of prakriti. Her nature is eternal, real, and composed of dense, concentrated ananda.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 134
निर्गुणे सच्चिदानन्दात्मनि कृष्णप्रसादतः ।
स्फुरन्ती विलसत्यात्मभक्तानां बहुधा मुदे ॥१३४॥
nirgune sat-chit-anandatmani krishna-prasadatah ।
sphuranti vilasaty atma-bhaktanam bahudha mude ।।134।।

"By Krishna's mercy, bhakti manifests within the nirguna jiva, whose true nature is sat-chit-ananda, and there she plays in many forms —hearing, chanting, remembering, and others— for the delight of his devotees."

Dig-darshini

One might ask: if bhakti is not simply a potency like the various powers of nature, or a conscious action that arises in the form of

activities performed by a mind, body and senses, where and how does bhakti arise?

By the mercy of Krishna, bhakti manifests within the atma—the pure jiva-tattva, whose true nature is beyond the gunas and is sat-chit-ananda.

Although bhakti herself is one in nature, being composed of concentrated sat-chit-ananda, she manifests in many forms such as hearing, chanting, remembering, and the other devotional practices.

Why does she appear in such variety? For the joy of Bhagavan's own devotees. As already explained, distinct varieties of devotional activity produce distinct varieties of rasa and happiness.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 135
विशुद्धे तु विवेकेन सत्यात्मनि हरेः पदम् ।
गतेऽप्यप्राकृतं भक्तिविधयो विलसन्ति हि ॥१३५॥
vishuddhe tu vivekena saty atmani hareh padam ।
gate 'py aprakritam bhakti-vidhayo vilasanti hi ।।135।।
"Even when the atma has been purified by discrimination and has reached the transcendental abode of Hari, all the various practices of bhakti continue to flourish there."

Dig-darshini
The transcendental nature of bhakti can be demonstrated more specifically through both positive and negative reasoning.

By discrimination, one comes to understand: "The senses are simply engaging with their respective objects." In this way the jiva is distinguished from identification with the material body, senses, and their activities.

Even after the purified atma has gone to the completely transcendental abode of Hari, Sri Vaikuntha-loka, all the different forms of bhakti continue to flourish there.

This itself demonstrates that bhakti cannot be merely an activity of material senses.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 136
अन्यथेतरकर्माणीवैतेऽपि स्युर्न सङ्गताः ।
कायेन्द्रियात्मचेष्टातो ज्ञानेनात्मनि शोधिते ॥१३६॥
anyathetera-karmanivaite 'pi syur na sangatah ।
kayendriyatma-ceshtato jnanenatmani shodhite ।।136।।
"Otherwise, if these forms of bhakti were merely material activities, then when the atma had been purified through knowledge from

identification with the movements of body and senses, bhakti too would cease, just like other karma."

Dig-darshini

Suppose bhakti were actually material and consisted merely of the activities of the senses.

Then, once the atma had been purified by discriminative knowledge and freed from identification with bodily and sensory activity, the forms of bhakti should no longer remain.

They would disappear just like other material activities, including nitya and naimittika duties, because through knowledge the self would recognize itself as separate from all such operations.

But bhakti does not disappear. Therefore she cannot be of the same nature as material karma.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 137
अन्येभ्य इव कर्मभ्यो भगवद्भक्तिकर्मतः।
विविक्तः सन् कथं यातु वैकुण्ठं मुक्तिमर्हति ॥१३७॥
anyebhya iva karmabhyo bhagavad-bhakti-karmatah ।
viviktah san katham yatu vaikuntham muktim arhati ।।137।।

"If the atma became separated from the activities of Bhagavad-bhakti just as it becomes separated from other karma, how could it ever attain Vaikuntha? It would qualify only for liberation."

Dig-darshini

One might say that perhaps there is no problem if bhakti also ceases when the purified self becomes distinct from activity.

But if the atma became separated from Bhagavad-bhakti in exactly the same way that it becomes separated from bodily and material karmas, how could it attain Vaikuntha? If bhakti did not inherently remain with the purified self, the jiva would qualify only for inactive liberation, not for Vaikuntha.

The very attainment of Vaikuntha therefore requires the continuing presence of bhakti.

And since bhakti remains when the jiva is completely beyond material nature, it follows that bhakti herself must necessarily be aprakrita, transcendental.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 138
न ह्यन्यकर्मवद् भक्तिरपि कर्मेति मन्यताम्।
बहिर्दृष्ट्यैव जल्प्येत भक्तदेहादिवत् क्वचित् ॥१३८॥

na hy anya-karma-vad bhaktir api karmeti manyatam ।
bahir-drishtyaiva jalpyeta bhakta-dehadivat kvacit ।।138।।

"Bhakti should never be regarded as karma in the same sense as other actions. If at times bhakti is called 'karma,' this is said only from an external point of view, just as one may use the same word 'body' for both the devotee's spiritual form and an ordinary material body."

Dig-darshini

In the previous verse the expression bhakti-karma was used only by temporarily adopting the viewpoint of those who classify bhakti together with other actions. The associates now explicitly reject the idea that bhakti is truly karma in the material sense.

Some thoughtful followers of Mimamsa may say that among all good actions that purify the heart, Bhagavad-bhakti is the highest. In such a context bhakti may sometimes be spoken of as karma.

But this is merely a description from an external point of view, not a statement of bhakti's true ontological nature.

A comparison may be made with the word "body." The same word deha may be applied both to the sat-chit-ananda forms of the residents of Vaikuntha and to ordinary bodies composed of the five material elements, although the two are entirely different in nature. Similarly, the same word mani, "jewel," may refer both to a cintamani and to an ordinary glass-like gem.

Likewise, the word sattva may refer to one of the three gunas of prakriti, but elsewhere it may refer to Para Brahman as the concentrated reality of all existence and all goodness, as in the Bhagavatam statement, "If this sattva were not Your own..." (SB 10.2.35).

In the same way, the word karma may externally be applied both to ordinary prescribed duties and to bhakti, but their true natures are entirely different.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 139
भक्तानां सच्चिदानन्दरूपेष्वङ्गेन्द्रियात्मसु ।
घटते स्वानुरूपेषु वैकुण्ठेऽन्यत्र च स्वतः ॥१३९॥
bhaktanam sat-chit-ananda-rupeshv angendriyatmasu ।
ghatate svanurupeshu vaikunthe 'nyatra ca svatah ।।139।।

"Bhakti naturally manifests through the limbs, senses, and very selves of devotees, whether in Vaikuntha or elsewhere, because these are sat-chit-ananda in nature and therefore correspond to bhakti herself."

Dig-darshini

A doubt may still arise. If bhakti manifests as hearing, chanting, remembering, and other activities involving the senses, how can she be transcendental and self-manifest?

The answer is that in the devotees—whether they reside in Vaikuntha or elsewhere—bhakti naturally connects with their limbs, senses, and very selves.

Why? Because those limbs and senses are appropriate to bhakti's own nature: they too are sat-chit-ananda.

Thus there is no contradiction. Bhakti and the faculties through which she manifests are of a corresponding spiritual nature.

Even in the case of devotees who presently appear to possess bodies made of the five material elements, the manifestation of bhakti ultimately culminates in the revelation of a sat-chit-ananda form.

Alternatively, by the special power of bhakti's mercy, she may manifest even through such apparently material faculties.

Or, when bhakti manifests within the atma, Bhagavan's special shakti may cause the very jiva-tattva itself to manifest appropriate spiritual limbs and senses through which that bhakti can be expressed.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 140
वयमत्र प्रमाणं स्मोऽनिशं वैकुण्ठपार्षदाः ।
तान्वन्तो बहुधा भक्तिमस्पृष्टाः प्रकृतैर्गुणैः ॥१४०॥
vayam atra pramanam smo 'nisham vaikuntha-parshadah ।
tanvanto bahudha bhaktim asprishta prakritair gunaih ।।140।।

"We ourselves, the associates of Vaikuntha, are direct proof of this. Untouched by the material gunas and their transformations, we continually engage in bhakti in countless forms."

Dig-darshini

The associates now offer their own direct experience as evidence.

They themselves, the parshadas of Vaikuntha, demonstrate both that bhakti is entirely transcendental and that varied devotional activity continues even after one has attained a sat-chit-ananda form.

They are completely untouched by the material gunas, by the twenty-three material principles arising from them, and by all their various transformations.

Yet without interruption they continually perform bhakti in many forms—chanting, hearing, serving, and countless other devotional activities. As Yudhishthira says in the Seventh Canto of Srimad Bhagavatam, the residents of Vaikuntha are beyond ordinary material bodies, senses, and life airs (SB 7.1.34). Thus the continued presence of varied hearing, chanting, and service among the eternally liberated associates of Vaikuntha directly establishes that bhakti is not material sensory action but an eternal function of spiritual existence.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 141
नवीनसेवकानां तु प्रीत्या सम्यक्प्रवृत्तये ।
निजेन्द्रियादिव्यापारतयैव प्रतिभाति सा ॥१४१॥
navina-sevakanam tu pritya samyak-pravrittaye ।
nijendriyadi-vyaparatayaiva pratibhati sa ।।141।।

"To those who are newly beginning devotional service, however, bhakti appears to be simply the activity of their own senses and other faculties, so that they may joyfully engage in it with firm determination."

Dig-darshini

One might object: "We directly experience Bhagavad-kirtan and the other practices of bhakti as activities of our own speech and other senses, just like ordinary conversation. How, then, can this direct experience simply be denied?" The associates reply that bhakti appears in this way to navina-sevakas, those who are newly beginning devotional service. To them she seems to be an activity performed by their own senses and faculties. This appearance has a purpose: it encourages them to engage in bhakti joyfully and with determination. A beginner thinks with happiness, "My ears and tongue are hearing and chanting these names of Bhagavan," and by this sense of personal engagement he gradually becomes firmly established in devotional practice. Otherwise, if from the very beginning he understood that bhakti is not something produced by his own independent effort, there would be a danger of becoming indifferent or negligent toward engaging the senses in hearing, chanting, and the other forms of service.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 142
महद्भिर्भक्तिनिष्ठैश्च न स्वाधीनेति मन्यते ।
महाप्रसादरूपेयं प्रभोरित्यनुभूयते ॥१४२॥
mahadbhir bhakti-nishthaish ca na svadhineti manyate ।
maha-prashad-rupeyam prabhor ity anubhuyate ।।142।।

"But the great souls firmly established in bhakti do not consider her to be under their own control. They directly experience bhakti as the maha-prashad, the supreme grace, of their Lord."

Dig-darshini

The experience of the great devotees themselves is the authority on this point. Those who are deeply established in bhakti do not experience her as something produced or controlled by their own power. Rather, they directly realize, "This bhakti is the maha-prashad of my Lord, His supreme gift of grace." Their own experience contains no sense that bhakti has been accomplished by their personal strength; instead, as bhakti matures, they perceive ever more clearly that her appearance and activity depend upon the mercy of Bhagavan.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 143
त्वरा चेद् विद्यते श्रीमद्वैकुण्ठालोकने तव।
सर्वाभीष्टप्रदश्रेष्ठां तां श्रीव्रजभुवं व्रज ॥१४३॥
tvara ced vidyate srimad-vaikunthalokane tava ।
sarvabhishta-prada-shreshtham tam sri-vraja-bhuvam Braja ।।143।।

"If you are eager to behold glorious Vaikuntha without delay, then go to that blessed land of Braja, supreme among all places for swiftly granting every cherished desire."

Dig-darshini

Having completed this subsidiary discussion concerning the nature of bhakti, the associates return to their immediate instruction to Gopa-kumar. Through attainment of Shiva-loka and the mercy of Sri Maheshwar, he could eventually reach Vaikuntha in due course. But if he is impatient to behold Vaikuntha and wishes to attain it without delay, then he should go instead to that celebrated and glorious land of Braja, which is also his own homeland. Why should he go there? Because Braja-bhumi is supreme among all sacred places in granting, swiftly and completely, every cherished spiritual desire of those who take shelter of her.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 144
परं श्रीमत्पदाम्भोजसदासङ्गत्यपेक्षया।
नामसङ्कीर्तनप्रायां विशुद्धां भक्तिमाचर ॥१४४॥
param srimat-padambhoja-sada-sangaty-apekshaya ।
nama-sankirtan-prayam vishuddham bhaktim acara ।।144।।

"There, desiring only the eternal association of His glorious lotus feet, practise pure bhakti, making nama-sankirtan your principal engagement."

Dig-darshini

For the rapid attainment of Vaikuntha, Gopa-kumar should especially perform Bhagavan-nama-sankirtan. His bhakti should be motivated by only one desire: perpetual association with the glorious lotus feet of Bhagavan. It should therefore be vishuddha, completely pure bhakti, unmixed with karma, jnana, or any other

independent aspiration. Among its various forms, nama-sankirtan should predominate.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 145
तयाशु तादृशी प्रेमसम्पदुत्पादयिष्यते।
यया सुखं ते भविता वैकुण्ठे कृष्णदर्शनम् ॥१४५॥
tayashu tadrishi prema-sampad utpadayishyate ।
yaya sukham te bhavita vaikunthe krishna-darshanm ।।145।।

"Through that bhakti, such a treasure of prema will quickly arise within you that you will easily attain the direct vision of Krishna in Vaikuntha."

Dig-darshini

The expression prema-sampad may mean "the treasure consisting of prema," or it may indicate the magnificent wealth and splendour produced by prema. Through the attainment of such prema, direct darshan of Sri Krishna in Vaikuntha will become easy for Gopa-kumar. Sri Brahma describes the residents of Vaikuntha in the Third Canto: "Those whose conduct follows the foremost among the deathless beings go there—far beyond us—to that realm whose qualities are worthy of aspiration. Their bodies become covered with horripilation and their eyes with tears through their loving absorption in mutually narrating the excellent glories of their Lord." (SB 3.15.25)

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 146
प्रेम्णोऽन्तरङ्गं किल साधनोत्तमं
मन्येत कैश्चित् स्मरणं न कीर्तनम्।
एकेन्द्रिये वाचि विचेतने सुखं
भक्तिः स्फुरत्याशु हि कीर्तनात्मिका ॥१४६॥
premno 'ntarangam kila sadhanottamam
manyeta kaishcit smaranam na kirtanm ।
ekendriye vaci vicetane sukham
bhaktih sphuraty ashu hi kirtantmika ।।146।।

"Some consider smarana, rather than kirtan, to be the foremost sadhana because it is more intimately connected with prema. They reason that kirtan-bhakti manifests quickly and easily through only one sense, the faculty of speech, which itself is without consciousness."

Dig-darshini

One might object that the great yogis residing in Tapoloka had declared smarana to be the foremost among all the forms of bhakti. The associates acknowledge that this is indeed the opinion of some, such as Pippalayana and others. They consider smarana to be the most intimate companion of prema and therefore the highest sadhana, rather than kirtan. Their reasoning is that kirtan-bhakti

manifests quickly and easily through only one faculty, speech, which is itself an unconscious karmendriya, an organ of action. Because kirtan can be performed with comparatively little difficulty and manifests so readily through a single sense, they infer that its very ease of accomplishment indicates a lesser status, whereas a practice requiring deeper inward control should be considered superior.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 147
भक्तिः प्रकृष्टा स्मरणात्मिकास्मिन्
सर्वेन्द्रियाणामधिपे विलोले।
घोरे बलिष्ठे मनसि प्रयासैर्
नीते वशं भाति विशोधिते या॥१४७॥
bhaktih prakrishta smaranatmikasmin
sarvendriyanam adhipe vilole ।
ghore balishthe manasi prayasair
nite vasham bhati vishodhite ya ।।147।।

"Thus they consider smarana-bhakti superior because it manifests only when the mind—the ruler of all the senses, restless, formidable, and exceedingly powerful—has with great effort been brought under control and purified."

Dig-darshini

According to this view, smarana-bhakti is superior because it manifests only when the mind has been brought under control and purified through considerable effort. The mind is the ruler of all the senses, and in this sense even kirtan and the other sensory activities are ultimately connected with its functioning. Yet the mind is vilola, exceedingly restless; ghora, formidable and dangerous, because it can immediately generate hundreds of disturbances and unwanted conditions; and balishtha, extraordinarily powerful and therefore exceedingly difficult to control. The mendicant brahmana therefore sings in the Eleventh Canto: "All the other controlling deities have come under the power of the mind, but the mind never comes under the power of another. It is indeed a terrible deity, stronger than the strongest. Whoever can bring it under control is truly the lord of the gods." (SB 11.23.47) And again: "Charity, one's prescribed duty, niyama, yama, study, ritual action, and all virtuous vows ultimately culminate in control of the mind. The supreme yoga is concentration of the mind." (SB 11.23.45) Thus, according to this reasoning, an attainment that requires mastery over such an extraordinarily difficult and powerful mind should naturally be regarded as superior.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 148
मन्यामहे कीर्तनमेव सत्तमं
लोलात्मकैकस्वहृदि स्फुरत्स्मृतेः।
वाचि स्वयुक्ते मनसि श्रुतौ तथा
दीव्यत् परानप्युपकुर्वदात्म्यवत्॥१४८॥

manyamahe kirtanm eva sattamam
lolatmakaika-sva-hridi sphurat smriteh ।
vaci sva-yukte manasi shrutau tatha
divyat paran apy upakurvad atmyavat ।।148।।

"We, however, consider kirtan itself superior to smarana. Smarana manifests only within one's own restless heart, whereas kirtan shines through speech, through the mind naturally joined with speech, and through the faculty of hearing. Moreover, just as it benefits the person performing it, kirtan also benefits others who hear it."

Dig-darshini

Having presented the opinion of others, the associates now state their own conclusion: "We consider kirtan to be superior." Smarana manifests only within one's own heart or mind, and that mind is by nature restless. Kirtana, however, manifests simultaneously through several faculties. It shines through speech; it also shines within the mind, because the mind is naturally connected in subtle form with the functioning of every sense, without which sensory perception could not occur; and it shines through the faculty of hearing because the sound of one's own kirtan naturally enters one's ears. Moreover, kirtan benefits not only the devotee who performs it but also other persons who hear it, just as it benefits its own practitioner. Smarana does not possess this same outward power of benefiting others.

There is also a deeper implication: because the mind is inherently restless, the attempt to control it by completely removing its restless nature may itself be exceedingly difficult, and therefore smarana may not become perfectly established merely through efforts at mental restraint. Nor, from the standpoint of the intrinsic nature of these forms of bhakti, should superiority and inferiority be decided simply according to whether something requires greater or lesser effort. Parasara therefore says: "One whose mind is fixed upon Achyuta does not go to hell; even heaven becomes an obstacle to one absorbed in contemplation of Him; Brahmaloka itself seems insignificant to one whose mind and self are fixed upon Him; and when imperishable Achyuta dwells in the purified heart, He grants liberation. What wonder, then, that when Achyuta is glorified through kirtan even a sinner is delivered?" (Vishnu Purana 6.8.57) Here agha may mean a sinful person like Ajamila. If even such a person attains liberation through kirtan, then by the principle of arguing from the lesser to the greater, the extraordinary glory of kirtan beyond mere smarana is established. Similarly, the statement, "Whatever one attains in Satya-yuga through meditation, in Treta-yuga through sacrifice, and in Dvapara-yuga through worship, one attains in Kali-yuga by sankirtan of Keshava" (Vishnu Purana

6.2.17), indicates that the fruits of meditation, sacrifice, worship, and other processes are all contained within the fruit of kirtan.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 149
बाह्यान्तराशेषहृषीकचालकं
वागिन्द्रियं स्याद् यदि संयतं सदा।
चित्तं स्थिरं सद् भगवत्स्मृतौ तदा
सम्यक् प्रवर्तेत ततः स्मृतिः फलम् ॥१४९॥
bahyantarashesha-hrishika-calakam
vag-indriyam syad yadi samyatam sada ।
chittam sthiram sad bhagavat-smritau tada
samyak pravarteta tatah smritih phalam ।।149।।

"Some devoted to meditating on the Lord may argue: 'The faculty of speech agitates all the external and internal senses. If speech is continually restrained, the mind becomes steady and can then properly engage in remembrance of Bhagavan. Thus smriti, remembrance, is ultimately the fruit of kirtan.'

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 150
एवं प्रभोर्ध्यानरतैर्मतं चेद्
बुद्धेदृशं तत्र विवेचनीयम्।
ध्यानं परिस्फूर्तिविशेषनिष्ठा
सम्बन्धमात्रं मनसा स्मृतिर्हि ॥१५०॥
evam prabhor dhyana-ratair matam ced
buddhyedrisham tatra vivecaniyam ।
dhyanam parisphurti-vishesha-nishtha
sambandha-matram manasa smritir hi ।।150।।

"If this is the view of those attached to meditation upon the Lord, then the matter should be carefully distinguished. Dhyana is the mature state in which Bhagavan becomes vividly and completely manifest within the heart, whereas smriti is merely the mind's connection with Him."

Dig-darshini

Some devotees who relish meditation upon Bhagavan hold that even the ultimate fruit of kirtan is dhyana. The associates first present their reasoning and then, through careful discrimination, qualify it.

The faculty of speech can agitate all the senses, both external faculties such as hearing and internal faculties such as the mind. Because speech naturally excites the other senses, if it is continually restrained—whether through silence or by directing it exclusively toward Bhagavad-kirtan—the mind may become steady and thereafter remain properly engaged in remembrance of Bhagavan. According to this view, because kirtan gives rise to smriti, remembrance itself should be regarded as the fruit of kirtan.

From this perspective, the scriptural statement that in Kali-yuga the result of meditation is included within sankirtan could be interpreted simply in relation to the special conditions of the age.

One might instead argue that sankirtan is greater because the extraordinary faults peculiar to Kali-yuga can be destroyed by the immense power of kirtan, whereas meditation and the other processes cannot accomplish this so readily. But even this does not fully establish the superiority of kirtan. Merely destroying the great sins of Kali-yuga would not by itself constitute such extraordinary greatness that kirtan must therefore surpass dhyana. Nor is there sufficient reason to maintain that meditation upon Bhagavan cannot destroy those faults, for hundreds of scriptural statements declare that even remembrance of Bhagavan in almost any manner destroys all sins. If, therefore, those deeply attached to meditation upon the Lord conclude from such considerations that dhyana itself is supreme, the distinction between smriti and dhyana must be understood carefully.

Dhyana is not merely remembering that Bhagavan exists or thinking, "I am Bhagavan's servant." That is smriti, a simple connection of the mind with Bhagavan.

Dhyana is much more developed. It is the mature state of a particular vivid manifestation in which Bhagavan appears within the consciousness almost as though directly present, with the beauty and sweetness of His form—from His hair down to His feet—and His particular features fully revealed.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 151
चेद् ध्यानवेगात् खलु चित्तवृत्ताव्
अन्तर्भवन्तीन्द्रियवृत्तयस्ताः ।
सङ्कीर्तनस्पर्शनदर्शनाद्या
ध्यानं तदा कीर्तनतोऽस्तु वर्यम् ॥१५१॥
ced dhyana-vegat khalu chitta-vrittav
antar-bhavantindriya-vrittayas tah ।
sankirtan-sparshana-darshandya
dhyanam tada kirtanto 'stu varyam ।।151।।

"If, through the overwhelming power of dhyana, the activities of the senses—such as sankirtan, touching, seeing, and the others—become included within the movements of the mind itself, then we too accept that such dhyana is superior to kirtan."

Dig-darshini

The associates now acknowledge that there is indeed a kind of dhyana that may rightly be considered superior.

If, through the extraordinary intensity of meditation, the activities of the senses desired by the devotee—sankirtan through speech, touching through the sense of touch, seeing through the eyes, and so forth—actually become manifest within the chitta-vritti itself, so that these devotional activities occur internally within the meditation, then such dhyana may certainly be accepted as superior to external kirtan alone. Thus they do not reject the greatness of meditation when it contains within itself the full experience of kirtan, darshan, touch, and other forms of personal service.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 152
प्रीतिर्यतो यस्य सुखं च येन
सम्यग्भवेत् तद्रसिकस्य तस्य।
तत्साधनं श्रैष्ठतमं सुसेव्यं
सद्भिर्मतं प्रत्युत साध्यरूपम्॥१५२॥
pritir yato yasya sukham ca yena
samyag bhavet tad-rasikasya tasya।
tat sadhanam shreshthatamam susevyam
sadbhir matam pratyuta sadhya-rupam ।।152।।

"For a devotee who relishes a particular form of bhakti, whatever practice most fully awakens his love and happiness is the very best sadhana for him and should be carefully cultivated. Indeed, the sadhus regard that very practice as becoming his sadhya, his desired attainment."

Dig-darshini

One may then ask: what if no internal sankirtan, touching, or similar activity arises within one's meditation, but one's mind simply delights in maintaining an unbroken current of contemplation upon Sri Bhagavan's divine form? What should such a devotee do?

The answer is that whichever devotional practice most deeply awakens a particular devotee's priti and happiness should be regarded as the supreme sadhana for that individual rasika.

Because his heart naturally loves that practice, it should be carefully and continually cultivated with shraddha and honour. Since it is already the object of his love, it is especially capable of quickly bringing him to his own cherished spiritual fulfilment.

Indeed, the sadhus say something still stronger: when prema fully arises, that very form of devotional practice becomes not merely the means but also the sadhya, the desired goal itself.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 153
सङ्कीर्तनाद् ध्यानसुखं विवर्धते
ध्यानाच्च सङ्कीर्तनमाधुरीसुखम्।

अन्योन्यसंवर्धकतानुभूयते
ऽस्माभिस्तयोस्तद् द्वयमेकमेव तत् ॥१५३॥
sankirtand dhyana-sukham vivardhate
dhyanac ca sankirtan-madhuri-sukham ।
anyonya-samvardhakatānubhuyate
'smabhis tayos tad dvayam ekam eva tat ।।153।।

"We, however, consider both dhyana and sankirtan to be worthy of cultivation. Through sankirtan the happiness of dhyana increases, and through dhyana the sweet happiness of sankirtan increases. We directly experience them as mutually nourishing one another; therefore the two are, in this sense, one."

Dig-darshini

The associates now state their own practical conclusion: both dhyana and sankirtan should be cultivated. They directly experience that each nourishes the other. Sankirtan intensifies the happiness and vividness of meditation, while meditation deepens the sweetness and happiness tasted in sankirtan. There is no defect of circular dependence in this mutual relationship, because according to differences of time, place, circumstance, and devotional condition, one may first nourish the other and then in turn be strengthened by it. Thus nama-sankirtan and dhyana may be regarded as one in the sense that cause and effect become intimately united through their mutual nourishment.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 154
ध्यानं च सङ्कीर्तनवत् सुखप्रदं
यद् वस्तुनोऽभीष्टतरस्य कस्यचित् ।
चित्तेऽनुभूत्यापि यथेच्छमुद्भवेच्
छान्तिस्तदेकाप्तिविषक्तचेतसाम् ॥१५४॥
dhyanam ca sankirtanvat sukha-pradam
yad vastuno 'bhishtatarasya kasyacit ।
citte 'nubhutyapi yathecchamudbhavec
chantis tad-ekapti-vishakta-cetasam ।।154।।

"Dhyana too, like sankirtan, bestows happiness. For those whose hearts are completely absorbed in attaining one supremely beloved object, even experiencing that beloved within the mind according to their desire brings peace and relief from the pain of separation."

Dig-darshini

Having accepted dhyana, the associates now further praise its value.

Meditation, like sankirtan, is capable of giving great happiness.

Suppose someone's consciousness is wholly attached to attaining one particular object who is supremely dear. Even before attaining

that beloved externally, an inner experience of that person within the mind, arising according to one's heartfelt desire, can produce shanti—a deep relief and happiness.

At the very least, it can temporarily quiet the intense pain produced by separation and longing.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 155
यथा ज्वररुजार्तानां शीतलामृतपाथसः ।
मनःपानादपि त्रुट्येत् तृड्वैकल्यं सुखं भवेत् ॥१५५॥
yatha jvara-ruj-artanam shitalamrita-pathasah ।
manah-panad api trutyet trid-vaikalyam sukham bhavet ।।155।।
"Just as a person tormented by the pain of fever may find his agonizing thirst diminished and experience relief merely by mentally drinking cool, nectar-like water, so too meditation upon one's beloved Lord can bring immediate solace."

Dig-darshini
A clear example is given.

A person suffering intensely from fever may be overwhelmed by thirst. If he vividly imagines drinking cool water like nectar, even that mental act may lessen the distress of his thirst and produce a certain happiness.

In the same way, a devotee whose heart is consumed by longing for Bhagavan may receive genuine relief and happiness through the vivid inner experience produced by dhyana.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 156
तत्तत्सङ्कीर्तनेनापि तथा स्याद् यदि शक्यते ।
सतामथ विविक्तेऽपि लज्जा स्यात् स्वैरकीर्तने ॥१५६॥
tat-tat-sankirtanenapi tatha syad yadi shakyate ।
satam atha vivikte 'pi lajja syat svaira-kirtane ।।156।।
"The same relief may also arise by performing sankirtan of whatever is most dearly desired—if one is actually able to express it. Yet even in solitude, saintly devotees may feel shy to speak freely of certain deeply confidential matters."

Dig-darshini
One might object that the same result could arise through sankirtan, according to the principle, "By expressing one's sorrow, one becomes relieved."

That is true. By speaking or singing about one's supremely beloved object, the same kind of peace and relief may indeed arise.

But this is possible only if what is experienced within the mind can actually be expressed through words. The full range of inner thoughts and experiences cannot always be captured by the power of speech.

Even if, through special effort, one becomes capable of expressing them, saintly devotees may still feel embarrassed to speak openly of certain experiences. Even when completely alone in a secluded place, they may hesitate to reveal through unrestricted kirtan matters that are supremely confidential.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 157
एकाकित्वेन तु ध्यानं विविक्ते खलु सिध्यति।
सङ्कीर्तनं विविक्तेऽपि बहुनां सङ्गतोऽपि च ॥१५७॥
ekakitvena tu dhyanam vivikte khalu sidhyati ।
sankirtanm vivikte 'pi bahunam sangato 'pi ca ।।157।।
"Dhyana, however, is properly accomplished when one is alone in a secluded place, whereas sankirtan can be performed both in solitude and in the company of many others."

Dig-darshini
Having praised dhyana, the associates now begin to explain the still greater excellence of Bhagavan-nama-sankirtan, which they especially favour.

First they point out a general superiority of sankirtan over meditation.

Dhyana generally requires one to be alone and in a secluded place. Its successful performance depends upon the absence of various disturbances and distractions.

Sankirtan, however, is not restricted in this way. It can be performed in solitude, but it can equally be performed in the association of many devotees.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 158
कृष्णस्य नानाविधकीर्तनेषु
तन्नामसङ्कीर्तनमेव मुख्यम्।
तत्प्रेमसम्पज्जनने स्वयं द्राक्
शक्तं ततः श्रेष्ठतमं मतं तत् ॥१५८॥
krishnasya nana-vidha-kirtaneshu
tan-nama-sankirtanm eva mukhyam ।
tat-prema-sampaj-janane svayam drak
shaktam tatah shreshthatamam matam tat ।।158।।
"Among the many forms of kirtan concerning Krishna, sankirtan of His names is foremost. By its own power, without dependence

upon anything else, it can immediately bring forth the treasure of prema for Him. Therefore it is regarded as the very best."

Dig-darshini

Among the many different forms of kirtan concerning Sri Krishna—such as reciting the Vedas and Puranas, narrating His kathas, singing about Him, and offering prayers—the sankirtan of Krishna's names is foremost. Why? Because Krishna-nama-sankirtan is independently powerful. Without depending upon another means, it can directly and immediately cause the treasure of prema for Sri Krishna to manifest. For this reason the sadhus—and these associates of Vaikuntha themselves—regard Sri Krishna-nama-sankirtan as the most excellent of all.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 159
श्रीकृष्णनामामृतमात्महृद्यं
प्रेम्णा समास्वादनभङ्गिपूर्वम् ।
यत् सेव्यते जिह्विकयाविरामं
तस्यातुलं जल्पतु को महत्त्वम् ॥१५९॥
sri-krishna-namamritam atma-hridyam
premna samasvadana-bhangi-purvam ।
yat sevyate jihvikayaviramam
tasyatulam jalpatu ko mahattvam ।।159।।

"When the nectar of Sri Krishna's name, so dear to the heart, is served without interruption by the tongue, with prema and with ever-varied ways of relishing its rasa—who could possibly describe the incomparable greatness of such sankirtan?"

Dig-darshini

Having spoken generally of nama-sankirtan, the associates now describe it more specifically. Sri Krishna-namamrita, the nectar of Krishna's name, is deeply pleasing and dear to the devotee's own heart. When that name is continually served by the tongue with prema, accompanied by various ways of tasting and relishing its rasa, its greatness becomes incomparable. Who could adequately describe the glory of such nama-sankirtan? No one is capable of fully expressing it.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 160
सर्वेषां भगवन्नाम्नां समानो महिमापि चेत् ।
तथापि स्वप्रियेणाशु स्वार्थसिद्धिः सुखं भवेत् ॥१६०॥
sarvesham bhagavan-namnam samano mahimapi cet ।
tathapi sva-priyenashu svartha-siddhih sukham bhavet ।।160।।

"Although all the names of Bhagavan possess equal greatness, by chanting the particular name that is personally most dear to oneself, one's cherished desire is fulfilled quickly and with ease."

Dig-darshini

One might object that no gradation should be imagined among the names of Bhagavan, because each and every divine name is described as possessing unlimited greatness. That is true. Their greatness is equal. Just as a single cintamani is sufficient to fulfil every desire, so one divine name possesses unlimited potency. Thus statements declaring one name equal to a thousand others ultimately indicate the limitless power inherent within Bhagavan's name. Nevertheless, from the standpoint of the devotee's own rati, a particular name may be especially dear to the heart. By lovingly serving that personally cherished name, the devotee may attain his desired spiritual fulfilment more swiftly and effortlessly. For this reason devotees especially attached to the name Rama have declared:

"O beautiful one, uttering the name Rama is equal to saying a thousand names of Vishnu."

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 161
विचित्ररुचिलोकानां क्रमात् सर्वेषु नामसु ।
प्रियतासम्भवात् तानि सर्वाणि स्युः प्रियाणि हि ॥१६१॥
vicitra-ruci-lokanam kramat sarveshu namasu ।
priyata-sambhavat tani sarvani syuh priyani hi ।।161।।

"Because different people possess different devotional tastes, every one of Bhagavan's names becomes especially dear to someone. Therefore all His names are certainly dear and worthy of loving service."

Dig-darshini

One might then wonder whether this means that only certain names of Bhagavan are truly dear while others should not be served with the same affection. The answer is no. The devotional tastes of people are wonderfully varied. One devotee may be especially drawn to one particular name, another to a different name. Someone may cherish only one name, another two, another three, and another several names. In this way, when all varieties of devotional taste are considered, each and every name of Bhagavan becomes especially dear to someone. Therefore all His names are certainly objects of love and devotional service.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 162
एकस्मिन्निन्द्रिये प्रादुर्भूतं नामामृतं रसैः ।
आप्लावयति सर्वाणीन्द्रियाणि मधुरैर्निजैः ॥१६२॥
ekasminn indriye pradurbhutam namamritam rasaih ।
aplavayati sarvanindriyani madhurair nijaih ।।162।।

"Although the nectar of the divine name first manifests through a single sense, it floods all the senses with its own sweet rasas."

Dig-darshini

Bhagavan's name, however it may be served, generates complete happiness. Although namamrita may initially manifest through a single sense, it does not remain confined there. By its own inherent sweet rasas and varieties of happiness, it thoroughly inundates all the senses.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 163
मुख्यो वागिन्द्रिये तस्योदयः स्वपरहर्षदः ।
तत् प्रभोर्ध्यानतोऽपि स्यान् नामसङ्कीर्तनं वरम् ॥१६३॥
mukhyo vag-indriye tasyodayah sva-para-harshadah ।
tat prabhor dhyanato 'pi syan nama-sankirtanm varam ।।163।।

"The principal manifestation of the divine name occurs through the faculty of speech, and there it gives joy both to oneself and to others. Therefore nama-sankirtan is superior even to meditation upon the Lord."

Dig-darshini

Although the name can permeate and delight all the senses, its principal manifestation occurs through the faculty of speech because the name appears in the form of syllables and sound.

When Bhagavan's name manifests through vocal sankirtan, it gives happiness not only to the devotee who chants but also to everyone who hears.

For this reason, according to the principle already explained, nama-sankirtan is superior even to dhyana upon the Lord.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 164
नामसङ्कीर्तनं प्रोक्तं कृष्णस्य प्रेमसम्पदि ।
बलिष्ठं साधनं श्रेष्ठं परमाकर्षमन्त्रवत् ॥१६४॥
nama-sankirtanm proktam krishnasya prema-sampadi ।
balishtham sadhanam shreshtham paramakarsha-mantra-vat ।।164।।

"Namasankirtan of Krishna is declared to be the most powerful and excellent sadhana for attaining the treasure of prema for Him, for it acts like an irresistible mantra of attraction."

Dig-darshini

It has already been established that the most exalted possible fruit—Krishna-prema—arises especially through sankirtan. The associates now joyfully emphasize the reason for its supremacy. Krishna-nama-sankirtan is the most powerful sadhana for producing the wealth of prema.

It is compared to a supremely powerful mantra of attraction. Just as such a mantra can draw even an exceedingly difficult-to-obtain

object from far away and bring it near, nama-sankirtan draws forth the otherwise extremely rare treasure of Krishna-prema. This strengthens everything that has just been explained. Srimad Bhagavatam first says: "Hearing the auspicious births and activities of the Lord who bears the disc, and singing without shame the names that signify those lilas, one should wander through the world without attachment." (SB 11.2.39)

Then, when describing the actual manifestation of prema, it speaks more specifically of chanting the particular name most dear to the devotee: "Observing such a vow, by chanting the name of his own beloved Lord he develops deep attachment. His heart melts, and he loudly laughs, weeps, cries out, and sings..." (SB 11.2.40) Thus, even after speaking generally of hearing and glorifying Bhagavan, the Bhagavatam especially identifies the kirtan of one's own beloved divine name as the intimate means by which prema manifests.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 165
तदेव मन्यते भक्तेः फलं तद्रसिकैर्जनैः।
भगवत्प्रेमसम्पत्तौ सदैवाव्यभिचारतः॥१६५॥
tad eva manyate bhakteh phalam tad-rasikair janaih |
bhagavat-prema-sampattau sadaivavyabhicaratah ||165||

"Indeed, those who are rasikas of nama-sankirtan regard that very sankirtan itself as the fruit of bhakti, because wherever the treasure of prema for Bhagavan is fully manifest, nama-sankirtan is invariably present."

Dig-darshini

What more need be said? Nama-sankirtan is not merely the foremost sadhana; some rasika devotees regard it as the sadhya itself, the very fruit to be attained. Here "that very thing" refers to nama-sankirtan, and those who hold this view are rasikas who possess an intense relish for chanting the divine name. One might object that the accepted fruit of all forms of sadhana-bhakti is prema itself, not nama-sankirtan. That is true. Nevertheless, because nama-sankirtan invariably accompanies the full manifestation of prema for Bhagavan, and because prema cannot remain fully manifest without naturally expressing itself through the divine name, nama-sankirtan is spoken of as the fruit itself. Wherever the wealth of Bhagavat-prema reaches full maturity, nama-sankirtan is necessarily present.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 166
सल्लक्षणं प्रेमभरस्य कृष्णे
कैश्चिद् रसज्ञैरुत कथ्यते तत्।
प्रेम्णो भरेणैव निजेष्टनाम-
सङ्कीर्तनं हि स्फुरति स्फुटार्त्या॥१६६॥

sal-lakshanam prema-bharasya krishne
kaishcid rasajnair uta kathyate tat ।
premno bharenaiva nijeshta-nama-
sankirtanm hi sphurati sphutartya ।।166।।

"Some rasajnas even describe nama-sankirtan as the most excellent symptom of an overwhelming abundance of prema for Krishna, for only under the pressure of intense love does the chanting of one's own beloved name arise with such clearly manifest anguish and longing."

Dig-darshini

Some devotees go still further and regard nama-sankirtan itself as a defining characteristic of prema. They say that the chanting of Krishna's name is the most excellent and unmistakable symptom of a great abundance of love for Him, because the spontaneous chanting of the name of one's own worshipful Lord, voiced with openly manifest longing and distress, arises only from the overwhelming force of prema. In this way nama-sankirtan and prema stand in a reciprocal relation of cause and effect: nama-sankirtan gives rise to prema, and when prema becomes intense it in turn bursts forth as nama-sankirtan. From this mutual causality, their profound unity may also be understood.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 167
नाम्नां तु सङ्कीर्तनमार्तिभारान्
मेघं विना प्रावृषि चातकानाम् ।
रात्रौ वियोगात् स्वपते रथाङ्गि-
वर्गस्य चाक्रोशनवत् प्रतीहि ॥१६७॥
namnam tu sankirtanm arti-bharan
megham vina pravrishi chatakanam ।
ratrau viyogat sva-pater rathangi-
vargasya cakroshanavat pratihi ।।167।।

"Understand the sankirtan of the divine names, arising from the weight of intense longing, to be like the anguished cries of chataka birds in the rainy season when no cloud appears, calling 'Priya! Priya!'—or like the cries of the female chakravaka birds at night when separated from their mates."

Dig-darshini

The associates now illustrate how nama-sankirtan arises especially from intense prema. One should understand that such chanting springs from the heavy pressure of longing within the heart. It resembles the cries of the chataka birds during the rainy season when the desired cloud has not appeared; tormented by longing, they call out in plaintive tones, "Priya! Priya!"—"Beloved! Beloved!" It is likewise comparable to the lamentation of the female chakravaka birds at night when they are separated from their mates. Thus nama-sankirtan very often becomes most intense

through prema born of separation. The extraordinary greatness of love manifest through viraha has already been indicated earlier and will again be discussed later. The essential intention is that Bhagavan's names should be chanted in the form of wonderfully sweet songs and verses arising from profound inner longing. The familiar principle applies: what appears naturally as the symptom of perfection becomes the practice to be cultivated by the sadhaka.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 168
विचित्रलीलारससागरस्य
प्रभोर्विचित्रात् स्फुरितात् प्रसादात्।
विचित्रसङ्कीर्तनमाधुरी सा
न तु स्वयत्नादिति साधु सिध्येत् ॥१६८॥
vicitra-lila-rasa-sagarasya
prabhor vicitrat sphuritat prasadat ।
vicitra-sankirtan-madhuri sa
na tu sva-yatnad iti sadhu sidhyet ।।168।।

"The wondrous sweetness of such varied sankirtan arises from the wondrous grace of the Lord, who is an ocean of endlessly varied lila-rasa. It does not arise from one's own effort. Therefore, through His grace alone, it becomes perfectly accomplished."

Dig-darshini

One might object that expressive kirtan of this kind can encounter many difficulties: one may fear disturbance, public recognition, or praise; one may sometimes lack the bodily strength to sing; and other obstacles may arise, whereas inward meditation can proceed quietly and unnoticed. The answer is that the extraordinary sweetness of the nama-sankirtan just described does not arise from personal exertion or human ability. It manifests through the astonishing grace of Bhagavan, who is Himself an ocean of endlessly varied lila-rasa. Because its source is His grace rather than independent effort, it can become fully and perfectly manifest despite apparent obstacles. Where Bhagavan's mercy has truly descended, such impediments cannot ultimately prevent its expression. The same principle should be understood to apply to all nine forms of bhakti: their deepest manifestation comes from Bhagavan's grace, not from autonomous personal power.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 169
इच्छावशात् पापमुपासकानां
क्षीयेत भोगोन्मुखमप्यमुष्मात्।
प्रारब्धमात्रं भवतीतरेषां
कर्मावशिष्टं तदवश्यभोग्यम् ॥१६९॥
iccha-vashat papam upasakanam
kshiyeta bhagonmukham apy amushmat ।
prarabdha-matram bhavatitaresham
karmavashishtam tad avashya-bhogyam ।।169।।

"For those who constantly worship through the divine name, even sinful karma that has already begun to bear fruit may be destroyed by nama-sankirtan according to their desire. For others, only prarabdha-karma may remain, and that must ordinarily be exhausted through experience."

Dig-darshini

One might ask: if nama-sankirtan possesses such extraordinary power, why do those who practise it sometimes still appear to undergo suffering? The associates reply that for true upasakas, those constantly devoted to the service of Bhagavan's name, even sinful karma that has already begun to produce its fruit may be destroyed by nama-sankirtan itself. Because such karma would otherwise bring suffering, it can be removed entirely. Auspicious results may remain, since they do not oppose bhakti. The deeper point is that karma now becomes subordinate to the will of such devotees: according to their own desire, karma may remain or disappear. As stated in the Hari-bhakti-sudhodaya: "The wheel of karma, said to be impossible for devas and asuras to transgress, should be understood as already transcended by mortals whose bhakti to Me has become powerful." For others who are not such constant worshippers, but who somehow perform nama-sankirtan occasionally, all other forms of karma may be destroyed while prarabdha alone remains, because prarabdha is ordinarily exhausted through the actual experience of its result.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 170

महाशया ये हरिनामसेवकाः
सुगोप्यतद्भक्तिमहानिधेः स्वयम्।
प्रकाशभीत्या व्यवहारभङ्गिभिः
स्वदोषदुःखान्यनुदर्शयन्ति ते ॥१७०॥

mahashaya ye hari-nama-sevakah
sugopya-tad-bhakti-maha-nidheh svayam ।
prakasha-bhitya vyavahara-bhangibhih
sva-dosha-duhkhany anudarshayanti te ।।170।।

"Those great souls who serve Hari-nama sometimes deliberately display faults and sufferings through the outward patterns of their behaviour, fearing that the immensely precious and deeply confidential treasure of their bhakti might otherwise become revealed."

Dig-darshini

One may still object that even among exalted devotees such as Bharata Maharaja, karma apparently continued to produce painful consequences. The associates explain that great souls whose inner devotional condition is profound and difficult to fathom may intentionally display apparent faults or sufferings

through particular patterns of outward behaviour—for example, Bharata's care for the young deer and the consequences apparently connected with it. In this way they may seem to exhibit association with undesirable things, misfortune, or even birth in an inferior condition. Such appearances need not reveal the true condition of their inner life. They may themselves enact or allow these outward circumstances because bhakti to Hari is an immensely precious and profoundly confidential treasure, capable of granting every attainment, and they fear its public disclosure. Thus, through the external drama of their conduct, they conceal the extraordinary wealth of devotion within their hearts.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 171
तन्नामसङ्कीर्तनमात्रतोऽखिला
भक्ता हरेः स्युर्हतदुःखदूषणाः।
केचित् तथापि प्रभुवत् कृपाकुला
लोकान् सदाचारमिमं प्रशासति ॥१७१॥
tan-nama-sankirtan-matrato 'khila
bhakta hareh syur hata-duhkha-dushanah ।
kecit tathapi prabhuvat kripakula
lokan sad-acaram imam prashasati ।।171।।

"Simply through sankirtan of His name, all devotees of Hari may become free from suffering and fault. Nevertheless, some, overflowing with compassion like Bhagavan Himself, instruct the people of this world in proper conduct."

Dig-darshini

One might then ask whether such exalted devotees should not openly reveal the power of nama-sankirtan for the deliverance of everyone. The associates reply that simply through the chanting of Hari's name all persons may become devotees and be freed from suffering and fault. Even so, some great devotees, overwhelmed with compassion like Bhagavan Himself, deliberately instruct ordinary people in proper conduct—such as avoiding harmful association, refraining from sinful behaviour, and following the basic principles that support spiritual life. They do this because when the heart is heavily contaminated by sinful habits, one may not even develop the inclination to begin bhakti. Thus, although the divine name possesses the power to destroy all fault directly, compassionate devotees still teach sadacara so that people may become properly disposed to approach and receive the mercy of bhakti.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 172
दुःसङ्गदोषं भरतादयो यथा
दुर्द्यूतदोषं च युधिष्ठिरादयः।
ब्रह्मस्वभीतिं च नृगादयोऽमलाः
प्रादर्शयन् स्वव्यवहारतो जनान् ॥१७२॥

duhsanga-dosham bharatadayo yatha ।
durduta-dosham ca yudhishthiradayah ।
brahma-sva-bhitim ca nrigadayo 'malah ।
pradarshayan sva-vyavaharato janan ।।172।।

"Thus Bharata and others demonstrated to people the danger of harmful association; Yudhishthira and others demonstrated the danger of disastrous gambling; and Nriga and others demonstrated the need for extreme caution regarding the property of brahmanas. Though themselves completely pure, they taught these lessons through the circumstances of their own conduct."

Dig-darshini

The principle just stated is now illustrated. Bharata Maharaja and others demonstrated the danger of harmful association through the outward circumstances of their own lives—in Bharata's case, through his attachment to caring for the young deer and his subsequent birth in an animal body. Similarly, Yudhishthira and others demonstrated the grave danger of destructive gambling, while King Nriga and others demonstrated how carefully one must avoid even an inadvertent offense involving the property of a brahmana. Yet Bharata, Yudhishthira, Nriga, and the others were in truth amala, completely pure and free from the faults apparently displayed in these narratives. Through the visible circumstances of their own lives they provided powerful instruction for ordinary people, making the consequences of such conduct directly understandable.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 173
भक्तिप्रभावेन विचारजातैः
सञ्जायमानेन सदेदृशैस्त्वम् ।
विघ्नातिविघ्नान् किल जेष्यसीह
सर्वत्र ते हन्त वयं सहायाः ॥१७३॥
bhakti-prabhavena vicara-jataih
sanjayamanena sadedrishais tvam ।
vighnativighnan kila jeshyasiha
sarvatra te hanta vayam sahayah ।।173।।

"Through the ever-increasing power of bhakti produced by reflections such as these, you will certainly conquer every obstacle, however formidable. And how wonderful! In overcoming these obstacles, and indeed in every circumstance, we shall always be your helpers."

Dig-darshini

Gopa-kumar might wonder how someone like himself, surrounded by so many possible obstacles, could ever become firmly established in nama-sankirtan of the kind just described. The associates reassure him that by continually reflecting upon truths such as those they

have been teaching, the power of his bhakti will steadily increase, and through that increasing strength he will certainly overcome obstacles upon obstacles, even those that appear exceedingly difficult. One might then object that without the mercy and assistance of great devotees nothing can truly be accomplished. The associates therefore joyfully tell him, "In this very conquest of obstacles, in the arising of these proper understandings, and indeed everywhere and in every circumstance, we ourselves will be your helpers." The expression hanta conveys their delight and affectionate eagerness to assist him.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 174
श्रीकृष्णचन्द्रस्य महानुकम्पा-
स्माभिः स्थिरा त्वय्यवधारितास्ति।
लीना न साक्षाद्भगवद्दिदृक्षा
त्वत्तस्तपोलोकनिवासिवाक्यैः ॥१७४॥
sri-krishna-Chandrasya mahanukampasmabhih
sthira tvayy avadharita asti।
lina na sakshad-bhagavad-didriksha
tvattas tapo-loka-nivasi-vakyaih ।।174।।

"We have firmly concluded that the great mercy of Sri Krishna-Chandra rests steadily upon you, for even the words of the residents of Tapoloka could not extinguish your longing to behold Bhagavan directly."

Dig-darshini

The associates now tell Gopa-kumar that, in reality, he is already extraordinarily fortunate. At the same time, they return to the teaching he had previously heard in Tapoloka from Pippalayana, who had maintained that seeing Bhagavan within the purified consciousness could be considered complete and that direct external vision was not necessary. They acknowledge that teaching but now qualify it. They say, "We have become firmly convinced that the great and unwavering compassion of Sri Krishna-Chandra is present upon you." The proof is that, despite the powerful arguments spoken by the exalted residents of Tapoloka, Gopa-kumar's desire to see Bhagavan directly never disappeared or even became concealed. His longing for face-to-face darshan remained alive within him, showing that Krishna's special mercy was continually drawing him onward.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 175
रूपं सत्यं खलु भगवतः सच्चिदानन्दसान्द्रं
योग्यैर्ग्राह्यं भवति करणैः सच्चिदानन्दरूपम्।
मांसाक्षिभ्यां तदपि घटते तस्य कारुण्यशक्त्या
सद्यो लब्ध्या तदुचितगतेर्दर्शनं स्वेहया वा ॥१७५॥
rupam satyam khalu bhagavatah sat-chit-ananda-sandram
yogyair grahyam bhavati karanaih sat-chit-ananda-rupam।

mamsakshibhyam tad api ghatate tasya karunya-shaktya
sadyo labdhya tad-ucita-gater darshanm svehaya va ||175||

"Bhagavan's form is certainly real and is concentrated sat-chit-ananda. Properly, it is perceived by faculties that are themselves of the nature of sat-chit-ananda and therefore fit to perceive it. Yet even through these fleshly eyes His darshan may occur by the power of His compassion, either because He immediately grants the perceiver a condition or faculty suitable for such vision, or because by His own will He empowers those very eyes to see Him."

Dig-darshini

The associates first acknowledge the point previously made by Pippalayana: Bhagavan's form is indeed completely real, composed of concentrated sat, chit, and ananda, and therefore it is naturally perceived by senses and faculties that are themselves spiritually constituted and suitable for apprehending such a form. This principle is true. Nevertheless, it does not follow that Bhagavan can never be directly seen through what appear to be ordinary physical eyes. Such darshan can indeed occur through the extraordinary power of His compassion. By that mercy He may instantly bestow upon the devotee a state, spiritual form, or faculty of knowledge appropriate for perceiving Him, so that the devotee's vision becomes capable of apprehending His transcendental form. Alternatively, without visibly replacing the devotee's existing eyes, Bhagavan may simply empower those very eyes by His own compassionate shakti and allow Himself to be seen through their activity. Thus, although it would ordinarily be impossible for a finite and material sense organ to apprehend the unlimited, self-manifest Lord, there is no contradiction when this occurs through Bhagavan's own inconceivable power of mercy.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 176
तद्दर्शने ज्ञानदृशैव जाय-
मानेऽपि पश्याम्यहमेष दृग्भ्याम् ।
मनो भवेत् कृष्णकृपाप्रभाव-
विज्ञापको हर्षविशेषवृद्धौ ॥१७६॥
tad-darshane jnana-drishaiva jay-
amane 'pi pashyamy aham esha drigbhyam |
mano bhavet krishna-kripa-prabhava-
vijnapako harsha-vishesha-vriddhyai ||176||

"Even if that darshan actually arises through spiritual vision, the devotee may nevertheless think, 'I myself am seeing Him with these very eyes.' Such an experience reveals the extraordinary power of Krishna's mercy and greatly increases the devotee's joy."

Dig-darshini

Even if one maintains that Bhagavan is in fact seen only through jnana-cakshus, spiritual vision, and that the ordinary material eye

itself does not independently perceive Him, the devotee may still experience the powerful conviction, "I am seeing Bhagavan directly with these very eyes." This experience is itself meaningful and spiritually valuable, for it reveals to the devotee the extraordinary power of Krishna's mercy: "How astonishing! He who is ordinarily impossible to behold has allowed Himself to become directly visible before me." Such a conviction greatly increases the devotee's happiness, because Bhagavan, who lies beyond the natural range of all material sensory activity, appears to have become accessible even to his own physical eyes. The apparent directness of the vision thus serves to communicate the exceptional intimacy and magnitude of Bhagavan's grace.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 177
प्रभोः कृपापूरबलेन भक्तेः
प्रभावतो वा खलु दर्शनं स्यात्।
अतः परिच्छिन्नदृशापि सिद्ध्येन्
निरन्तरं तन्मनसैव सम्यक् ॥१७७॥
prabhoh kripa-pura-balena bhakteh
prabhavato va khalu darshanm syat ।
atah paricchinna-drishapi siddhyen
nirantaram tan manasaiva samyak ।।177।।

"Darshana of the Lord arises through the overwhelming power of His mercy, or through the power of bhakti. Therefore even through limited eyes His vision can be perfectly attained, just as through the mind it may be attained continuously and without obstruction."

Dig-darshini

One might argue that if Bhagavan is seen through the eyes, whose natural field of operation is limited, then such vision must sometimes be interrupted by distance, concealment, disappearance, or other obstructions, whereas the mind is subtler and more pervasive and can contemplate Him continually. The associates therefore summarize and resolve the issue: darshan of Bhagavan ultimately occurs through the immense power of the Lord's mercy, or alternatively through the power of bhakti, which contains and manifests His spiritual shaktis. Once this principle is accepted, there is no reason to impose ordinary material limitations upon the experience. Through that mercy or through bhakti's potency, perfect vision of Bhagavan may arise even through seemingly limited eyes, while through the mind He may likewise be perceived continuously and without obstruction, with the beauty of all His limbs and features fully manifest. The decisive factor is therefore neither the physical eye nor the subtle mind considered independently, but the power by which Bhagavan chooses to reveal Himself.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 178
न चेत् कथञ्चिन् न मनस्यपि स्यात्
स्वयम्प्रभस्येक्षणमीश्वरस्य ।
घनं सुखं सञ्जनयेत् कथञ्चिद्
उपासितः सान्द्रसुखात्मकोऽसौ ॥१७८॥
na cet kathancin na manasy api syat
svayam-prabhasyekshanam ishvarasya ।
ghanam sukham sanjanayet kathancid
upasitah sandra-sukhatmako 'sau ।।178।।

"If His vision did not arise through the special power of mercy or bhakti, then even within the mind there could be no possibility whatsoever of seeing Ishwara, for He is self-manifest and beyond the mind's power to grasp. Yet whenever and however that Lord is worshipped and experienced, He produces dense and concentrated happiness, because He Himself is the very embodiment of concentrated bliss."

Dig-darshini

If Bhagavan's darshan did not arise through the special power of His compassion or through the potency of bhakti, then it could not occur even within the mind. Bhagavan is svayam-prabha, self-manifest: He does not become an object merely because a mental faculty attempts to grasp Him. Moreover, as Ishwara He is supremely independent and the controller of all faculties, including the mind itself. Thus mental meditation has no autonomous capacity to produce His presence any more than the physical eye does. One might then argue that because the mind is subtler and less limited than the physical eyes, vision within the mind should produce an unlimited happiness while direct sensory vision should yield something comparatively small. That too is rejected. Whenever Bhagavan is truly worshipped or experienced—whether through meditation, direct vision, or any other authentic mode—He gives dense and abundant happiness, because He Himself is sandra-sukhatmaka, the concentrated embodiment of bliss. The measure of the happiness therefore comes from Bhagavan Himself, not from the apparent breadth or limitation of the faculty through which He is experienced.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 179
दृग्भ्यां प्रभोर्दर्शनतो हि सर्वतस्
तत्तत्प्रसादावलिलब्धिरीक्ष्यते ।
सर्वाधिकं सान्द्रसुखं च जायते
साध्यं तदेव श्रवणादिभक्तितः ॥१७९॥
drigbhyam prabhor darshanto hi sarvatas ।
tat-tat-prasadavali-labdhir ikshyate ।
sarvadhikam sandra-sukham ca jayate ।
sadhyam tad eva shravanadi-bhaktitah ।।179।।

"By directly seeing the Lord with one's eyes, the attainment of His many special gifts of grace is everywhere observed. From such darshan arises the most intense and concentrated happiness of all. Indeed, that direct vision is the very goal sought through hearing and the other forms of bhakti."

Dig-darshini

The associates now point out that direct vision of Bhagavan produces distinctive results beyond those ordinarily associated with inward contemplation. Everywhere in scripture one sees that extraordinary successions of Bhagavan's mercy were obtained after His direct darshan, as in the cases of Kardama, Dhruva, and many others. Pippalayana had earlier pointed out in Tapoloka that Brahma also received extraordinary grace through a vision experienced within samadhi. That may certainly occur, but it should be understood as a special occurrence in Brahma's own case rather than as the usual principle. Generally, the scriptures repeatedly show exceptional mercy following direct vision of Bhagavan. Moreover, the most intense and concentrated happiness arises through seeing Him directly with the eyes. Such direct darshan is itself the goal sought through the different forms of bhakti beginning with shravana and including kirtan, smarana, and the others. Thus even those practices that operate principally within the mind, such as dhyana and dharana, ultimately have direct vision of Bhagavan as their fruit.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 180
सर्वेषां साधनानां तत्साक्षात्कारो हि सत्फलम्।
तदैवामूलतो माया नश्येत् प्रेमापि वर्धते ॥१८०॥
sarvesham sadhananam tat-sakshatkaro hi sat-phalam ।
tadaivamulato maya nashyet premapi vardhate ।।180।।

"Direct realization of that Lord is indeed the highest fruit of all sadhanas. At that very moment maya is destroyed from its very root, and prema also increases."

Dig-darshini

The reason is that direct sakshatkara of Bhagavan is the true and exalted fruit of all spiritual practices. When Bhagavan is directly realized, maya is destroyed all the way down to its root, and that root is forgetfulness of Bhagavan Himself. Srimad Bhagavatam therefore says: "The knot of the heart is broken, all doubts are cut away, and one's karmas are exhausted when the Lord, who is the Self, is directly seen" (SB 1.2.21). The words atmani ishvare may be understood to indicate that the knot, doubts, and karmas situated within the self are destroyed upon seeing Ishwara; alternatively, atmani may mean "in the one who is supremely dear to the self." At that same moment prema for Bhagavan also increases, because

direct experience of His beauty, sweetness, and other divine qualities naturally intensifies the devotee's love.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 181
कायाधवादेर्हदि पश्यतोऽपि
प्रभुं सदाक्ष्णा किल तद्दिदृक्षा।
तत्र प्रमाणं हि तथावलोकाद्
अनन्तरं भावविशेषलाभः ॥१८१॥
kayadhavader hridi pashyato 'pi
prabhum sadakshna kila tad-didriksha ।
tatra pramanam hi tathavalokad
anantaram bhava-vishesha-labhah ।।181।।

"Prahlada, the son of Kayadhu, and other devotees continued to long to see the Lord with their own eyes even though they already beheld Him within the heart. Their conduct is itself evidence of the supreme value of direct darshan, as is the extraordinary increase of bhava that arose immediately after such vision."

Dig-darshini

The conduct of great devotees also serves as evidence. Prahlada, the son of Kayadhu, and other devotees already perceived Bhagavan within their hearts, yet they still possessed a powerful longing to behold Him directly with their eyes. This very desire of the saints confirms the special importance and desirability of face-to-face darshan. The word akshna may indicate vision through the eye as a sense faculty, or simply direct seeing with the two eyes. Moreover, after such direct vision, an extraordinary intensification of bhava and prema is observed. In Prahlada's case, the account in the Hari-bhakti-sudhodaya describing the great flood of prema that arose after he directly beheld Bhagavan on the shore of the ocean should be recalled. Thus both the longing of the devotees before darshan and the transformation of their love afterward establish the special greatness of seeing Bhagavan directly.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 182
कृष्णस्य साक्षादपि जायते यत्
केषाञ्चिदक्षिद्वयमीलनादि।
ध्यानं न तत् किन्तु मुदां भरेण
कम्पादिवत् प्रेमविकार एषः ॥१८२॥
krishnasya sakshad api jayate yat
keshancid akshi-dvaya-milanadi ।
dhyanam na tat kintu mudam bharena
kampadivat prema-vikara eshah ।।182।।

"When some devotees, even while Krishna stands directly before them, close their two eyes and exhibit similar symptoms, this is not meditation. Rather, like trembling and the other transformations of prema, it is an ecstatic transformation produced by an overwhelming flood of joy."

Dig-darshini

One might object that even in Vaikuntha, while the Kumaras were directly seeing Bhagavan, Srimad Bhagavatam appears to describe them as entering meditation. For example: "Having gazed upon His face, like the interior of a blue lotus, upon His exceedingly beautiful lips and jasmine-like smile, and then again upon His two feet with their ruby-like nails, they meditated" (SB 3.15.44). The associates explain that the closing of the eyes and the cessation of ordinary bodily or sensory movement in such circumstances should not be taken as dhyana in the technical sense. Once the object of meditation is standing directly before the devotee, there is no need to generate His presence through meditation. Rather, such closing of the eyes is an outward transformation of prema, comparable to trembling, perspiration, horripilation, tears, and other ecstatic symptoms. Because it resembles the stillness associated with meditation, scripture may describe it using the language of dhyana, but ontologically it is a transformation of love produced by overwhelming joy. In this way the supremacy of direct darshan as the consummate fruit remains intact.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 183
ध्यानं परोक्षे युज्येत न तु साक्षान्महाप्रभोः ।
अपरोक्षे परोक्षेऽपि युक्तं सङ्कीर्तनं सदा ॥१८३॥
dhyanam parokshe yujyeta na tu sakshan maha-prabhoh ।
aparokshe parokshe 'pi yuktam sankirtanm sada ।।183।।

"Dhyana is appropriate when the great Lord is not directly present before one, but not when He stands visibly before one's eyes. Sankirtan, however, is always appropriate—whether He is directly present or apparently absent."

Dig-darshini

Having established the inferiority of dhyana to direct sakshatkara, the associates now return to their principal subject and bring their praise of Bhagavan-nama-sankirtan to a sweet conclusion. Meditation is appropriate when Maha-prabhu is paroksha, not directly manifest before the devotee, but once He is visibly present face to face, ordinary meditation upon Him is no longer the natural activity. This follows from common experience and from the conduct of the devotees themselves. Sankirtan, by contrast, remains perfectly appropriate under both conditions: when Bhagavan is directly present and when He is absent from external sight.

Thus during the rasa-lila, even while Krishna was directly present among the gopis, Srimad Bhagavatam says: "As they sang of Him, they shone like flashes of lightning within a circle of clouds" (SB 10.33.7). The Vishnu Purana likewise states: "Krishna sang beneath the autumn moon, which causes the night lilies to

bloom, while the gopis repeatedly sang only the name 'Krishna, Krishna.'" And again: "As Krishna sang the song of the rasa in a voice drawn out beautifully, the gopis responded, 'Sadhu, Krishna! Krishna!' and sang with twice the intensity." When Bhagavan is externally absent, the suitability of kirtan is still more obvious, as demonstrated throughout the Tenth Canto in the Gopi-gita, the songs of separation, the narratives surrounding Uddhava's journey to Braja, and many similar passages. Thus nama-sankirtan possesses a unique excellence: unlike dhyana, it does not depend upon Bhagavan being either visible or invisible, for it remains a natural expression of prema in both union and separation.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 184
श्रीमन्नाम प्रभोस्तस्य श्रीमूर्तेरप्यतिप्रियम्।
जगद्धितं सुखोपास्यं सरसं तत्समं न हि ॥१८४॥
sriman-nama prabhos tasya sri-murter apy atipriyam ।
jagad-dhitam sukhopasyam sa-rasam tat-samam na hi ।।184।।

"The glorious name of that Lord is exceedingly dear, even more so than His own divine form. It brings welfare to the entire world, is easily worshipped, and is filled with rasa. Nothing can equal it."

Dig-darshini

For this reason the associates say that they especially and repeatedly glorify Sri Bhagavan-nama-sankirtan. The divine name is srimat, endowed with an extraordinary abundance of all beauty and splendour, because through the fullness of its own glory it manifests always, everywhere, and for everyone. In this sense the name is said to be exceedingly dear even in comparison with the Lord's own Sri Murti. Scripture elsewhere establishes that certain devotees and manifestations may be especially dear to Bhagavan even beyond His own form, yet nowhere is anything declared to surpass the divine name in glory. The associates therefore explain why the name is so exceptionally dear. It brings welfare to the entire world because, without requiring any particular qualification, it can benefit everyone simply by being served somehow through one of the senses. It is sukhopasya, easily worshipped, because service to it can be performed simply upon the tip of the tongue. It is sa-rasa, filled with rasa: this may mean that its syllables are tender and sweet; or that the name itself is composed of sat-chit-ananda-rasa; or that it contains all rasas, manifesting throughout the nine aesthetic rasas, within bhakti-rasa and prema-rasa, and in both separation and meeting. Rasa may also mean raga, loving attachment, because the name invariably and swiftly generates prema for Bhagavan; or because it awakens anuraga within those who serve it and even within others who hear it. Rasa may further indicate extraordinary potency, because the name possesses supreme shakti; a special quality, because it delivers all fallen

souls; intense happiness, because it is composed of concentrated bliss; or exceptional sweetness, because it is supremely sweet. Thus scripture speaks of the name as "sweeter than the sweetest." For all these reasons nothing whatsoever can be considered equal to Bhagavan's name. It is truly incomparable.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 185
तन्मानयन् शिवस्याज्ञामितो निःसर सत्वरम्।
कृष्णप्रियतमं श्रीमन्मथुरां त्वं नमाम ताम् ॥१८५॥
tan manayan sivasyajnam ito nihsara satvaram ।
krishna-priyatamam sriman-mathuram tvam namama tam ।।185।।
"Therefore, honouring the command of Sri Shiva, leave this realm of liberation without delay. Go to glorious Mathura, supremely dear to Krishna. We offer our obeisances to that sacred land."

Dig-darshini
Having completed their instruction concerning what would truly benefit Gopa-kumar, the associates now reveal the immediate purpose of their coming. Because of all the principles they have just explained, he should quickly leave this realm of liberation. By doing so he will also honour Sri Shiva's command, expressed earlier when Mahadev told him to abandon this realm, which is comparable to an obstacle for one seeking prema-bhakti. Gopa-kumar might wonder how, having travelled such an immense distance to reach the realm of liberation, he could possibly return quickly to Sri Mathura. The associates therefore direct him specifically toward that glorious Mathura which is supremely dear to Sri Krishna and which, by her very nature, swiftly grants every desired spiritual attainment. Their own reverence for Mathura is indicated when they themselves offer obeisances to her.

Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam Part 2, Chapter 3, Verse 186
श्रीगोपकुमार उवाच—
निपीय तत्कर्णरसायनं तत्
प्रमोदभारेण भृतो नमंस्तान्।
शिवौ च सद्यो व्रजभूमिमेतां
तैः प्रापितोऽहं बत मुग्धबुद्धिः ॥१८६॥
sri-gopa-kumara uvaca—
nipiya tat-karna-rasayanam tat
pramoda-bharena bhrito namams tan ।
sivau ca sadyo vraja-bhumim etam
taih prapito 'ham bata mugdha-buddhih ।।186।।
Sri Gopa-kumar said:

Drinking those words, which were like a rejuvenating nectar for my ears and heart, I became filled with an overwhelming abundance of joy. As I bowed before those associates and before Shiva and Shiva,

I was suddenly brought by them to this very land of Braja. Ah! My mind was so bewildered with wonder that I could understand nothing of how it had happened.

Dig-darshini

Gopa-kumar drank the words of the Vaikuntha associates as though they were a rasayana, a life-giving nectar for both the heart and the ears. Filled completely with an immense flood of joy, he bowed before those associates and also before Shiva and Shiva—Sri Shiva and Sri Parvati. At that very moment, through their power, he was immediately brought to this very Braja-bhumi. The exclamation bata expresses both wonder and joy. His intelligence became mugdha, bewildered and overwhelmed. While he was beginning to offer full prostrated obeisances, his eyes had closed, and before he could understand what was occurring he suddenly found himself in Braja. Thus he could not comprehend how, in that single instant, he had been transported there from the realm of liberation.

iti sri-brihad-bhagavatamrite sri-goloka-mahatmya-khande bhajana-nama tritiyo 'dhyayah

Thus ends the Third Chapter, entitled "Bhajana," in the Goloka-mahatmya section of Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam.

iti srimad-bhagavatamrita-tikayam dig-darshinyam dvitiya-khande tritiyo 'dhyayah

Thus ends the Third Chapter of the Second Part of the Dig-darshini commentary on Sri Brihad Bhagavatamritam.