

śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Śrī Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta

by
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INTRODUCTION

Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī's *Śrī Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta* occupies a special place in the realm of Vaiṣṇava literature. It is unparalleled in its delineation of *siddhānta*, *rasa*, *bhāva* and *līlā*. Its glories are limitless, and it is without question one of the most beneficial books for the progressive *sādhaka*. It is divided into two parts, and both parts tell the story of a *parivrājaka*; that is, one who refuses the comforts of a permanent residence and constantly wanders in search of the essence of life.

In the first part, the *parivrājaka* is Nārada Ṛṣi. As he searches for the foremost recipient of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's mercy, he approaches various exalted devotees and shows the gradation in their *bhakti*. In the second part, the *parivrājaka* is Gopa-kumāra. His spiritual search is described from the beginning stages of *bhajana* all the way up to his attainment of perfection. Especially noteworthy for *sādhakas* is how Gopa-kumāra remains without any type of material desire throughout his entire journey. In the course of visiting numerous holy places, he is made a king and offered heavenly opulences and even liberation. But his determination to attain the eternal company of Śrī Kṛṣṇa in Vraja inspires him to continue chanting his *gopāla-mantra* until he is fully successful. His longing is exemplary, and as a lighthouse guides ships at sea, the life of Gopa-kumāra will guide the sincere *sādhaka*.

I have translated this edition of *Śrī Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta* from Śrī Śyāmalāla Hakīma's Hindi edition, which was published by the Śrī Harināma Saṅkīrtana Maṅḍala in Vṛndāvana. In one sense no edition of *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta* can be considered complete without the inclusion of Sanātana Gosvāmī's own commentary, but to my knowledge there is no authoritative Hindi translation of Sanātana Gosvāmī's commentary, and as a result it has not been included here. Still, I am confident that this edition is a vast improvement on the two previously available English editions of *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta* and I pray that it will meet with approval from the Vaiṣṇava community. *Jaya Jaya Śrī Rādhe!*

Vaiṣṇava dāsānudāsa,

Prema-vilāsa dāsa
London, England

Completed on January 24, 1995, the anniversary of the disappearance day of Śrīla Locana dāsa Ṭhākura.

Part One

The Search for the Essence of Bhagavān's Mercy

Chapter One – The Earth

1. Glory to the eternally youthful Vrajendra-nandana Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is a great ocean of various sweetnesses, who descends to this world to bestow *bhakti* for his own lotus feet, and who assumed the form of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu especially to bestow direct experience of the ultimate mode of divine love, *gopī-bhāva*.

2. Glory to the *vraja-gopīs* headed by Śrīmatī Rādhikā, who are famous as Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa's dearest beloveds. No one (even the Lord himself) will ever be capable of describing even a fraction of the sweetnesses of their intimate love for him.

3. Glory to Śrī Hari, who, intensely hankering to relish the exceedingly sweet ecstatic love that his devotees bear for him, descended in the form of a devotee, who is now splendid as gold, who is dressed as a *sannyāsī*, who is the son of Śrīmatī Śacīdevī and who bears the name Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya.

4. Glory to Mathurā-devī, who is the best and most enchanting of holy places and who is supremely dear to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Splendorous due to the Lord's having taken birth there, she removes the sins of everyone and is worshipped for the benedictions of liberation (*mukti*) and devotion (*bhakti*). What to speak then of the potency of the narrations of the transcendental pastimes that Kṛṣṇa performed there?

5. Glory, glory to Murāri's supremely beloved Śrī Vṛndāvana! Residing there is more dear to him than residing either within his devotees' hearts or in Vaikuṅṭha. There he eternally enjoys by protecting the cows and, by playing sweet melodies on his flute, forever increasing the *gopīs'* amorous love for him.

6. Glory to the Yamunā, who is the daughter of Sūrya, the sister of Yamarājam and the friend of Mathurā. She is even more glorious than the Gaṅgā, very dear to the killer of the Mura demon and flows with what seems to be water but is actually the nectar of the lotus flower of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's feet.

7. Glory to Govardhana Hill, the king of mountains, who was proclaimed by the *gopīs* to be the best of those who are *hari-dāsa*, whom Śrī Kṛṣṇa worshipped after ceasing the sacrifice to Indra and who attained the immense good fortune of resting continuously in Kṛṣṇa's lotus hand for seven days and nights.

8. Being rejected by Vaiṣṇavas, knowing the confidential truths of all the Vedas and abandoning its faith in the chanting of *mantras*, performance of sacrifices, severe austerities and the acceptance of *sannyāsa*, *mukti* itself desires to attain the shelter of Bhagavān by worshipping the lotus feet of *prema-bhakti*. Glory, glory to *prema-bhakti*!

9. Glory, glory to śrī-kṛṣṇa-nāma, the embodiment of divine bliss, which rids one of the painful endeavours required in performing the rituals of *varṇāśrama-dharma*, meditation and *pūjā*, which awards liberation to a living entity who somehow or other utters it even once, which is the supreme nectar and which is my sole treasure and, indeed, my very life.

10. I offer obeisances to Śrī Kṛṣṇacandra, who, being boundlessly merciful, appeared in the form of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu to bestow *prema-rasa* in this age of Kali.

11. This Śrī Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta, which was revealed to me upon receiving the merciful *darśana* of my dearest Śrī Caitanyadeva, represents a collection of the essence of all devotional scriptures.

12. O Vaiṣṇavas, please hear this confidential scripture entitled Śrī Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta, which Jaimini Ṛṣi lovingly recited to Janamejaya.

13. After hearing a wonderful, historical narration of the kings of ancient India from Jaimini, the king of sages, the son of Parīkṣit Mahārāja, Janamejaya, became very eager to hear the remainder and said:

14. O *brāhmaṇa*, that *rasa* which I did not attain upon hearing the *Mahābhārata* directly from the mouth of Vaiśampāyana (Vyāsa), I have achieved from you. Now please sweetly complete that story.

15. Śrī Jaimini said: O Nṛpottama (best of kings), upon hearing the entire Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam spoken by Śukadeva Gosvāmī, Parīkṣit Mahārāja became free from all fear, attained the full fruits of religiosity (*dharma*), economic development (*artha*), sense gratification (*kāma*) and liberation (*mokṣa*) and became immersed in the liquid mellows of *kṛṣṇa-prema*.

16–17. Seeing that the time for him to ascend to his desired destination (Goloka-dhāma) had come, his mother Uttarā became very distressed out of maternal affection for him. After being reassured and made cheerful by her son, out of great eagerness to hear about Śrī Kṛṣṇa she asked:

18. My dear son, as nectar was extracted from the ocean of milk, reveal to me the essence of the instructions that you heard from the lotus mouth of Śukadeva Gosvāmī.

19. Śrī Jaimini said: Mahārāja Parīkṣit, who was very affectionate to his mother and who, due to being immersed in *prema-rasa*, was very eager to repeat the remarkably wonderful narrations describing Śrī Govinda that he had heard, respectfully said:

20. O Mother, although in these final moments I desired to observe a vow of silence, I am impelled to speak by the sweetness of your question.

21–3. I offer obeisances to Acyuta Bhagavān, who saved both of our lives, because by the power of his mercy as well as the mercy of my spiritual master, Śukadeva Gosvāmī, I will now narrate the *Śrī Bhāgavatāmṛta*, which was extracted by the topmost devotees such as Śukadeva and Nārada, which represents the conclusions of sages such as the four Kumāras, which is approved by great souls such as Parāśara and which is extremely confidential – please listen carefully.

24–5. Once, during the month of Māgha at the crown-jewel of holy places, Prayāga, some exalted *munis* completed their morning bath and sat down near the deity of Śrī Mādhava. Blissfully considering themselves fully gratified, they began praising one another by saying, “You are dear to Śrī Kṛṣṇa.”

26–7. O Mother, at that time an exalted *brāhmaṇa*, who was the king of that land and a follower of the path of devotion unto the Supreme Lord (*bhagavad-bhakti*), came there to Daśāsvamedha-ghāṭa accompanied by his entourage. Attended by immense opulence, out of great respect for the *brāhmaṇas* he began to make arrangements to feed them.

28–9. After completing his morning duties, he set aside a large area, quickly arranged an altar and prepared all the beautiful paraphernalia for worship. After anointing the ground with his own hand, he erected a pavilion.

30–1. In the middle of that altar he placed Śrī Kṛṣṇa in his form as *śālagrāma-silā* on a beautiful golden throne (*simhāsana*). After making an offering of clothes, ornaments, fragrant substances, flowers and foodstuffs with great devotion, he celebrated a tremendous festival of singing and instrumental music where he himself danced before the deity.

32. Then he offered obeisances to the *brāhmaṇas* who were scholars of the Vedas and Purāṇas, as well as to the *sannyāsīs*, *gṛhastas* and *brahmacāris*.

33. With sweet words he pleased the Vaiṣṇavas, who were always immersed in the bliss of chanting Kṛṣṇa’s names.

34. He honoured them by placing the water that had washed their feet upon his head and distributing to them the foodstuffs and valuables that had been offered to Bhagavān.

35. Then he respectfully fed the non-devotees and outcasts, and he satisfied even the dogs, jackals, birds and insects.

36. After satisfying everyone in this way and receiving the order of the *sādhus*, he and his associates ate the *prasāda* remnants, which were just like nectar.

37. Next he went before Śrī Śālagrāma Kṛṣṇa and with folded hands offered the fruits of all his actions to him.

38–40. After blissfully putting Śrī Bhagavān to sleep, the *brāhmaṇa* was thinking to proceed home when Śrī Nārada, who had been observing his activities from a distance, stood up in the assembly of sages and said repeatedly, “This *brāhmaṇa* is very dear to Bhagavān Mahā-Viṣṇu!” Then Śrī Nārada, who is most expert in relishing the mellows of *bhagavad-bhakti*, in order to proclaim to the world the glories of the greatest recipient of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s mercy (Śrīmatī Rādhikā), approached the exalted *brāhmaṇa* and said:

41–2. “O king of *brāhmaṇas*, you are the object of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s great mercy! You have respectfully engaged all your wealth and opulences in his service. O great soul, I have personally seen all this with my own eyes here in this best of holy places.”

43. Hearing this, the scholarly *brāhmaṇa* replied, “O best of the sages, it is not so. O Svāmī, what symptoms of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s mercy have you detected in me?”

44. “I am not even equal to a lowly insect! What opulence do I possess? What can I give and what devotion unto the Lord can I perform?”

45. “In the south there is a great king who is the real recipient of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s mercy. In his land there are numerous temples.”

46. “Because he sustains all the *sādhus* and pilgrims who tour the holy places with the foodstuffs that have been offered to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, they always blissfully wander here and there within his kingdom.”

47. “Near the royal palace is a large temple where *sac-cid-ānanda* Śrī Bhagavān himself has mercifully assumed a stationary form as the deity.”

48. “Newer and newer festivals are always being celebrated there, and at every moment newer and newer valuable presentations are being offered to him.”

49. “The king respectfully feeds all the residents of the kingdom, as well as pilgrims who have come from distant lands, with Śrī Viṣṇu’s *prasāda*.”

50–1. “Because they are very eager to see the lotus-eyed God, because they are filled with happiness upon receiving *mahā-prasāda* and because in that place they meet many *sādhus*, many saints and Vaiṣṇavas from foreign lands come and permanently reside there.”

52. “Because the king has donated his entire kingdom to the *brāhmaṇas* and Śrī Viṣṇu, there is never any calamity, suffering or fear there.”

53. “In his country the land produces crops even without being ploughed and just enough rain falls to facilitate the citizens’ happiness. The fruits and flowers there are very beautiful, and clothing and other necessities are easily acquired.”

54. “Because the citizens there are always engaged in their respective occupational duties and are devoted to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, they are always very happy. They follow the decrees of the king as if they were his own sons.”

55. “Devoid of pride, that great devotee-king performs even the most menial of services for Bhagavān Śrī Acyuta and pleases everyone.”

56–7. “He perpetually pleases Śrī Bhagavān by celebrating festivals consisting of *nāma-saṅkīrtana*, the singing of various beautiful songs and the playing of various instruments, and by personally dancing before him accompanied by his brothers, wives, children, grandchildren, servants, ministers, priests and other associates.”

58. “O Nārada, how far can I describe the unlimited qualities of the king’s devotion to Śrī Kṛṣṇa? How many of them can I even comprehend?”

59. Śrī Parīkṣit said: Hearing this, Nārada immediately went to that country to receive the king’s *darśana*. Arriving there he saw how all the citizens were intently engaged in the service of the Lord.

60. Happily playing his *vīṇā*, Nārada entered the royal palace and, impelled by the *brāhmaṇa*’s description, he approached the king and said:

61. “O king, you are certainly the recipient of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s mercy. You are adorned by your royal power, saintly subjects, virtues, religiosity, wealth, knowledge and devotion.”

62. Śrī Parīkṣit said: In this way Śrī Nārada, the best of Vaiṣṇavas, embraced the king again and again and glorified his good qualities while playing his *vīṇā*.

63. Hearing the praise from the best of sages, the king became very embarrassed. Bowing his head, he worshipped Śrī Nārada and with folded hands said:

64. “O Devarṣi Nārada, why are you glorifying me so much? I am merely an ordinary human with a short life-span. I do not possess enough wealth to even make proper offerings of charity. I am not independent; I am plagued by the threefold miseries and always fearful.”

65. “Why, without considering all of these points, do you consider me, who am so unqualified, to be the object of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s mercy?”

66. “The demigods, who are worshipped by human beings and who possess effulgent bodies, are the real recipients of Śrī Viṣṇu Bhagavān’s mercy.”

67. “They are sinless and are situated in the mode of goodness. They never suffer and are always joyful. They are completely independent and always fulfil the innermost desires of their devotees.”

68. “By always drinking celestial nectar, they have conquered disease, old age and death. There is never any obstacle to them fulfilling their hunger and thirst, and by accepting the remnants of sacrifices according to their desire, they are always satisfied.”

69. “O Bhagavān Nārada, by the power of their immense good fortune they reside in the heavenly realm of Svarga, which is attained by the residents of this Bhāratavarṣa (present-day India) only upon performing abundant pious activities.”

70. “O sage, the foremost of those demigods is Indra, who has the capacity to reward or punish and who, by bestowing rain, is the giver of life to all living entities.”

71. “For seventy-one *yugas* he presides over the three planetary systems, a post that an ordinary human like myself could not attain even by performing one hundred horse-sacrifices.”

72. “He possesses the horse Uccaśravā, the elephant Airavata, the cow Kāmadhuka and the Nandana garden.”

73. “That Nandana garden is splendid with the *pārijāta* flower and wish-fulfilling trees and creepers.”

74. “From a single flower of that garden, according to one’s desires varieties of songs, musical instruments and the dancing of the Apsarās – as well as varieties of garments, ornaments and foodstuffs – can be easily attained.”

75. “Aho! Who can describe the good fortune of Śrī Indra? Śrī Viṣṇu Bhagavān himself became his younger brother as Vāmanadeva.”

76. “He protects Indra from all calamities, brings him great happiness and personally accepts his worship. O Devarṣi, you know all of this well.”

Chapter Two – The Higher Material Planets

1. Śrī Parīkṣit said: After glorifying the king, Nārada Muni went to Svarga, where he received *darśana* of Śrī Viṣṇu Bhagavān (Vāmanadeva), who was brilliantly manifest in the middle of a great assembly of demigods.
2. He was adorned with garlands composed of beautiful and fragrant flowers from desire trees, anointed with fragrant *candana*, attired in exquisite garments and ornaments, being offered celestial nectar and other wonderful substances, and blissfully sitting on the back of Garuḍa.
3. Śrī Bṛhaspati and other great sages were glorifying him with prayers and his mother Aditi was nurturing him while pleasing him with sweet words.
4. The Siddhas, Vidyādharas, Gandharvas and Apsarās were pleasing him with prayers, exclamations of “*jaya*”, instrumental music, singing and dancing.
5. He was assuring Indra in emphatic words that he need not fear the demons and was gracefully accepting and chewing the betel-nuts offered by Śrī Kīrti (Lakṣmī-devī).
- 6–7. Near him, Śrī Indra, accompanied by all his potencies, was splendidly seated on his own throne. As he time and again described in a choked voice Śrī Bhagavān’s fame and the beneficial activities that he had performed for the demigods, tears of joy were flowing from his thousands of eyes.
8. When Śrī Bhagavān Upendra departed for his own abode of Vaikuṅṭha, Indra followed behind him. When Indra returned and re-entered his assembly, Śrī Nārada praised him by saying:
9. “You are the recipient of Śrī Bhagavān’s mercy, because even Sūrya, Candra and other rulers of planets obey your orders, what to speak of others?”
10. “Sages like myself are always under your dominion, the Vedas praise you as the master of the universe and you are the bestower of the results of pious and impious deeds.”
11. “Aho! Śrīman Nārāyaṇa has become your younger brother, having taken birth from the same womb as you did. In accordance with religious principles, he always shows you great respect.”
12. Śrī Parīkṣit said: Repeatedly glorifying the good fortune and opulence of Indra while playing on his *viṇā*, Devarṣi Nārada began blissfully dancing.

13. Then Indra offered obeisances to Nārada and, being embarrassed, slowly said, “O learned musician (who are expert in false glorification), why do you mock me?”

14. “Do you not know the situation here in Svarga? Have we not abandoned this place on numerous occasions out of fear of the demons?”

15. “One incident you didn’t mention is when Bali Mahārāja usurped my post, appointed his demon associates to the posts of Sūrya and Candra and nearly starved me to death by enjoying my portions of the sacrifices!”

16. “Then, being pleased by my parents’ severe austerities, Bhagavān assumed an incarnation as my younger brother.”

17. “Still, he did not kill my enemies. By snatching the kingdom back from Bali Mahārāja in a deceptive manner and returning it to me, he merely embarrassed us demigods.”

18. “What happiness is there for us residents of Svarga? Because we are perpetually embroiled in rivalry due to excessive envy and pride, and because we sometimes murder *brāhmaṇas* and commit other crimes, we are always fearful of falling down from our positions.”

19. “And furthermore, see how Śrī Upendra Bhagavān always treats me with special disdain! He took both the Sudharmā assembly house and the *pārijāta* tree from here in Svarga and established them on the Earth planet.”

20. “He ceased the cowherd men’s traditional worship of me and burned to the ground the Khāṇḍava forest, which was so dear to me.”

21. “When I petitioned him to kill Vṛtrāsura, who was terrifying the three worlds, he became indifferent and instead allotted that task to me.”

22. “Treating me with contempt, he left my city of Amarāvati and made a new home for himself above all the worlds.”

23. “He only comes here and accepts my *pūjā* because my parents also worship him and due to the insistence of Bṛhaspati, and then he immediately returns to his own residence.”

24–6. “One such time when he came here in great haste and accepted my offering of *arghya*, I said to him, ‘O Lord, it would be your immense mercy upon us if you would reside here permanently’ but he merely cheated me by speaking this instruction: ‘When I am not here you may worship Śrī Brahmā or Śrī Śiva because they are both non-different from me. Have you forgotten this statement from the scriptures: ‘The one Supreme Lord has expanded into the three forms of Viṣṇu, Rudra and Brahmā?’”

27. “His place of residence is also not fixed, and therefore what to speak of me, even the *munis* cannot find him. Sometimes he resides in *Vaikuṅṭha*, sometimes in *Dhruvaloka* and sometimes in the ocean of milk.”

28–9. “At present he is in *Dvārakā*, but it is not certain that he is always there either. Sometimes he is in the *Pāṇḍavas*’ palace, sometimes in the city of *Mathurā* and sometimes going from forest to forest in *Gokula*. Therefore I cannot even receive his *darśana*, what to speak of his mercy.”

30. “O *Nārada*, best of *Brahmā*’s sons, your father *Brahmājī* is the real object of *Bhagavān*’s mercy, being the direct son of *Lakṣmī-kānta Nārāyaṇa* himself.”

31. “Within his day, which lasts for one thousand *catur-yugas*, live fourteen *Manus* and *Indras* like myself.”

32. “His night is of the same duration. Three hundred and sixty such days and nights comprise his one year, and one hundred such years comprise his life-span.”

33. “*Śrī Brahmā* creates the fourteen worlds along with their respective rulers whom he places in command. He protects them, bestows the results of their actions and, upon the arrival of his night, destroys them all.”

34. “The thousand-headed *Mahā-puruṣa* (*Garbhodaśāyī Viṣṇu*) perpetually resides on *Brahmā*’s planet, eating a great multitude of sacrificial offerings and bestowing transcendental bliss upon everyone.”

35. “In this way I have given thousands of reasons why *Brahmājī* is the real object of *Śrī Kṛṣṇa*’s mercy. What to speak of merely being his object of mercy, he is really *Śrī Kṛṣṇa* himself!”

36. “O *Prabhu*, this fact is celebrated in the words of the *Śrutis* and *Smṛtis*, and besides, you know his glories and the glories of his planet better than I.”

37. *Śrī Parīkṣit* said: Hearing *Indra*’s words, *Bhagavān Nārada* said, “*Sādhu! Sādhu!*” (meaning “Well done! Well done!”) and quickly travelled to *Brahmaloka*.

38. From a distance *Nārada* heard the sounds of many exalted sages continually performing sacrifices with great devotion.

39. Going nearer, he saw the blissful Supreme Personality in his *mahā-puruṣa* form with his hair splendidly matted.

40. Accompanied by Lakṣmī-devī, the thousand-headed Lord of sacrifices was bestowing divine bliss upon the sages by happily accepting their sacrificial offerings.

41. To please Śrī Brahmā, he was accepting Brahmā's offerings in his thousands of hands and was eating them with his thousands of mouths.

42. After giving the performers of sacrifice their cherished benedictions, Yajñapuruṣa Bhagavān retired to his bedroom and, as Śrī Lakṣmī massaged his feet, he performed the pastime of falling asleep.

43. Then Śrī Brahmā, knowing the order of Bhagavān, engaged the sages – who were really his own sons – in the sacrifices, and to perform tasks related to creation, went to his own domicile.

44. There he comfortably sat on his throne and with a choked voice recited the glories of his worshipful Lord, and as he heard others also glorify him, tears flowed from his eight eyes.

45. Then Śrī Nārada approached his father, who was served by supremely wonderful opulences, offered his prostrated obeisances and said:

46. “You are certainly the object of Bhagavān's mercy. You are the master of all the Prajāpatīs and the grandfather of all living entities.”

47. “You alone create, maintain and destroy the fourteen worlds. You alone are the eternal master of the universe, and because you were self-manifest, you are called ‘Svayambhū’.”

48. “From your four lotus mouths the Vedas, Purāṇas and other scriptures, which reveal the goal of life, have manifest, and assuming personified forms, reside in your assembly house.”

49. “Residing on your planet are the saints who, being devoid of false pride and all other faults, have for one hundred births flawlessly executed their occupational duties (*svadharmā*).”

50. “In this entire universe there is no planet superior to yours; even the Vaikuṅṭha of Śrīman Nārāyaṇa is situated within it.”

51. “Here Padmanābha Bhagavān resides in his *mahā-puruṣa* form, eating the sacrificial offerings and bestowing the fruits of their sacrifices upon his worshippers.”

52. “At the time of your appearance you searched for him for a very long time but did not receive his *darśana*. Then, by the strength of your austerities, he appeared for a moment within your heart.”

53. “Therefore you are truthfully very dear to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Aho! Indeed, not only are you very dear to him, but you are actually Śrī Kṛṣṇa himself, who assumes various forms as his pastime.”

54. Śrī Parikṣit said: In this way Śrī Nārada, seeing with his own eyes Brahmājī’s glories that he had heard described by Indra, time and again sang of those glories while offering obeisances.

55. When Śrī Brahmā heard his own glories being delineated, he became very agitated and covering his eight ears, repeatedly said with his four mouths, “I am only the Lord’s servant.”

56. Upon hearing himself being praised, which he did not desire to hear, Brahmājī became furious, but after restraining his anger with great endeavour, he admonished his son Nārada and said:

57. “Have I not from your early childhood repeatedly taught you with numerous evidences and logic that I am not Śrī Kṛṣṇa?”

58. “In the form of a maidservant, his potency named Mahāmāyā stands before him awaiting his order. It is this potency who, through her three modes, creates, maintains and destroys the universe.”

59. “All of us are bewildered by her and are firmly under her control. Therefore you should know that I have not obtained even a particle of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s mercy.”

60–1. “Being bewildered by this māyā, I am always thinking, ‘I am the master of the entire universe, the grandfather of all living entities, I was personally born from the lotus flower emanating from Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s navel, and I satisfied him through my performance of austerities.’ In this way I am overcome with false pride, and due to my endless responsibilities in maintaining this universe, I am always perturbed.”

62. “I am always anxious that the time for my planet to be destroyed is nearing, and being afraid of all-devouring time, I always pray for liberation.”

63. “Only for this purpose do I worship Śrī Bhagavān and cause others to worship him. You said that he personally resides on my planet, but where does he *not* reside?”

64. “He only accepts the sacrificial offerings here to firmly establish the Vedic revelation and to make the sacrifice successful, not to bestow mercy upon me.”

65. “O Nārada, you should know that only *bhakti* pleases Bhagavān and that he only bestows his mercy upon devotees, not non-devotees.”

66. “Having *bhakti* for him is very far away from me; if I somehow avoid offending him I think that I am doing very well indeed. He does not forgive my offences as he does those of Śiva.”

67. “Obtaining a boon from me, the wicked Hiraṇyakaśipu became an enemy of the Vaiṣṇavas and tormented the entire world.”

68–70. “When after Bhagavān assumed the form of Nṛsimha and killed him, due to fear myself and the demigods stood at a distance offering various eloquent prayers, but he refused to recognise us with even a momentary sidelong glance. Instead he was only pleased with the prayers of Prahlāda, and later, when Prahlāda was performing the coronation ceremony, with great fear I slowly approached Nṛsimhadeva and he angrily said to me, ‘O Brahmā, don’t give any boons like this to the demons ever again!’”

71. “Nevertheless I have since given many boons to demons such as Rāvaṇa, and whose tongue has the power to describe the bedlam he created?”

72. “You may also remember how I gave administrative posts to Indra and others whose good sense became completely destroyed by their inflated pride.”

73. “Indra offended Śrī Kṛṣṇa by showering incessant rains on the Govardhana sacrifice and by fighting with him when he stole the *pārijāta* tree. Varuṇadeva committed *aparādha* by kidnapping Nanda Mahārāja and by stealing the cows from the forest.”

74. “Yamarāja had the son of Sāṅdīpani Muni killed, and Kuvera is responsible for his follower Śaṅkhacūḍa’s kidnapping of the *gopīs*.”

75. “Also, in the lower planets the demons and the angry serpents who are relatives of Kāliya-nāga have become enemies of the Vaiṣṇavas.”

76. “And just recently, I myself went to Vṛndāvana, and while Śrī Kṛṣṇa was taking lunch in the forest, I used my illusory potency to kidnap the calves and boys he was personally protecting.”

77. “Then I saw something so astonishing that I became frightened, and although I offered him prayers and obeisances, due to my impudence he cheated me by ignoring me and simply resuming his pastimes as a cowherd boy.”

78. “Still I considered myself to be fully gratified because I had the immense good fortune to enter Vraja and receive *darśana* of his smiling face.”

79. “Fearing that if I stayed there for any length of time I would commit more offences, I returned here. What benefit would there be in continuing to describe my immense misfortune?”

80. “I do not see anyone in this entire universe who is such an object of Śrī Viṣṇu Bhagavān’s mercy as Mahādeva Śiva, who is famous as his friend.”

81. “Always intoxicated by the *rasa* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet, Śiva has rejected the four objects of human pursuit as well as the enjoyments that accompany the opulence of being supremely powerful.”

82. “Eating the poisonous seeds of the thorn-apple and intoxicating *āka* leaves, decorated with a garland of skulls and his naked body smeared with ashes, it is as if he is mocking materialists like myself who are addicted to sensual pleasures.”

83. “With dishevelled locks of matted hair, he wanders about like a madman. Keeping himself carefully concealed, he carries on his head the Gaṅgā, which washed the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and when he joyfully dances, it seems that the entire universe quakes.”

84. “By Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s mercy not only is he capable of bestowing the most cherished liberation even to demigods like myself, but his wife Pārvatī also has that power.”

85. “Aho! All the residents of Śivaloka are liberated. By Śrī Śiva’s mercy even ordinary *jīvas* have obtained liberation and *kṛṣṇa-bhakti*.”

86. “My opinion is that seeing Śiva to be different from Śrī Kṛṣṇa is a great offence. Bhagavān forgives offences committed to him, but he never forgives offences committed against Śiva.”

87. “When Śiva was placed in great danger by Tripureśvara, Vṛkāsura and other demons who were maddened by boons that Śiva himself had given them, Śrī Kṛṣṇa protected him and overjoyed him with words that were as sweet as nectar.”

88. “Śrī Kṛṣṇa is so conquered by Śiva’s intimate devotion that he assumes forms such as Paraśurāma just to worship him.”

89–90. “By personally arranging for Śiva to drink the gruesome poison that was produced from the churning of the nectar ocean and having the Prajāpatis worship him, it was as if Śrī Kṛṣṇa showered him in immense glory by adorning him for all time with the name ‘Nīlakaṇṭha’.”

91. “The Purāṇas sing of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s mercy to Śiva. O sage, you know all of this better than I, but I have spoken only to remind you.”

92. Śrī Parīkṣit said: O mother, offering obeisances to his spiritual master Śrī Brahmā, Nārada decided to go to Kailāsa Mountain, and seeing this, Brahmā said:

93. “Once, Kuvera worshipped Rudra so well that he became obliged to reside within this universe at Kuvera’s abode on Mount Kailāsa.”

94. “Assuming the role of the protector of all the directions, Umāpati Śiva resides there with his associates and a minimal amount of his real opulences.”

95. “In the same way, the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa himself, being overpowered by his devotees’ *bhakti*, becomes obliged to reside on my planet, on Svargaloka and on many other planets, and enjoys suitable pastimes in these places.”

96. “Regarding Śiva’s own immensely opulent abode, I quote the *Vāyu Purāṇa*: ‘Śivaloka is situated beyond the sevenfold coverings of the material universe. It is eternal, blissful and factual, and only the topmost servants of Śiva can enter it.’”

97. “There Śiva is surrounded by associates who are as glorious and splendid as he is, who possess great powers and opulences and who are adorned with exquisite garments and ornaments.”

98. “There Śiva worships Śrī Saṅkarṣaṇa Bhagavān, who is actually non-different from him, as his chosen deity – is that not wonderfully astonishing?”

99. “O Nārada, because you are a pure devotee of Śrī Śiva, you have the power to go there. Go, take shelter of Śiva, and see for yourself how he is the real object of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s mercy.”

100. Śrī Parīkṣit said: O mother, receiving this instruction, and chanting the names of Śiva and Kṛṣṇa, Nārada eagerly proceeded to Śivaloka.

Chapter Three – Beyond the Material World

1. Śrī Parīkṣit said: In Śivaloka, Śrī Śiva was just completing his worship of Śrī Saṅkarṣaṇa Bhagavān, and absorbed in *prema*, he began dancing and performing *kīrtana*.
2. His followers headed by Śrī Nandiśvara were lovingly praising him by singing, playing musical instruments and calling out “*Jaya! Jaya!*”
3. With her lotus hands Śrī Pārvatī was creating an enchanting rhythm with *karatālas*, and Śrī Śiva was praising her for it. Seeing all this from a distance, the sage Nārada jubilantly offered obeisances and began playing his *vīṇā*.
4. Time and again he said, “You are the greatest recipient of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s mercy!” and repeating his father’s words, he began glorifying Śiva in a melodious voice.
- 5–6. When Śrī Nārada approached Śrī Rudra to take the dust from his lotus feet, Śrī Śiva, who was intoxicated in the nectar-stream of *kṛṣṇa-prema* and who is very dear to the Vaiṣṇavas, pulled the sage near, embraced him and respectfully said, “O son of Brahmā, what are you saying?”
- 7–9. Then Śiva, realising that on that day he was receiving the fortunate opportunity to converse with he who is the best of Vaiṣṇavas, stopped his dancing, and retiring with some of his intimate associates, sat on a seat of *kuśa* grass in the *virāsana yoga* posture. Then with great devotion Nārada offered obeisances to him and sang many eloquent prayers that described in detail how Śiva is the master of the universe and the great recipient of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s mercy.
10. Hearing himself being praised, Śrī Rudra, who is the crown-jewel of Vaiṣṇavas and the original preacher of *viṣṇu-bhakti*, covered his ears and angrily said:
11. “I am not the master of the universe, nor am I the object of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s mercy; I always yearn for the mercy of his servants’ servants.”
12. Śrī Parīkṣit said: Hearing this, Nārada immediately ceased his prayers describing Śiva’s equality with Kṛṣṇa, and considering himself an offender, slowly said:
13. “In truth, you know very well the glories of Bhagavān and his devotees, and you also teach those mysterious and difficult-to-understand glories to others.”
14. “Therefore even the best of Vaiṣṇavas yearn for your mercy, and being pleased with you, Śrī Kṛṣṇa himself widely delineates your glories.”

15. “How many times did Śrī Kṛṣṇa, assuming many different forms, devoutly worship you, and how many benedictions did he take from you?”
16. Śrī Parīkṣit said: Hearing this, Śrī Śiva could not keep his composure. Being very embarrassed, he rose from his seat, covered Nārada’s mouth with both his hands and said, “O Nārada, don’t describe my impudence!”
17. Wonderstruck, Śiva loudly said, “Look! The power and opulence of Bhagavān’s pastimes are inconceivable!”
18. “Aho! My Lord is a fathomless ocean of wonderful, variegated glories, who, even though I have offended him on numerous occasions, has not become averse to me.”
19. Śrī Parīkṣit said: Hearing this, Nārada became supremely blissful. Grasping Śiva’s feet, he made him sit down again, and then he continued to glorify Śiva, who is always immersed in the liquid mellows of *kṛṣṇa-bhakti*.
20. Śrī Nārada said: “You are exceedingly dear to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and could never have offended him at any time. Even if in the vision of common people it seems that you sometimes did, he never took offence.”
21. “When Banāsura, who was immensely proud of the strength of his arms, began troubling the *sādhus* and by his mystic power captured and bound Aniruddha, Śrī Kṛṣṇa fought with him.”
22. “When your devotee Banāsura, whom you had nurtured like a son, was almost dead, to save him you prayed to Śrī Kṛṣṇa.”
23. “Being satisfied, Śrī Kṛṣṇa gave Banāsura a form similar to his own and made him your eternal associate, a destination that even the demigods cannot attain.”
24. “When Gārgya and other enemies of Vaiṣṇavas worshipped you with severe austerities, you granted them a clever benediction that proved to be no benediction at all.”
25. “But when Citraketu and others, who due to not knowing your glories had offended you, worshipped Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s plenary portion Śrī Ananta, you did not at all become angry with them.”
26. “Once, out of pure love for Śrī Kṛṣṇa, you prayed to him for the boon of being more exalted than him. Knowing that the only personalities more exalted than him are his devotees, you were actually cleverly praying to become his devotee.”

27. “For this reason Bhagavān gave both you and goddess Durgā the power to grant that liberation which even the demigods headed by Brahmā are always praying for.”

28. “Aho! Disregarding the happiness found in your immense opulence and power, which cannot be attained by even Brahmā and the other demigods, you always remain as an *avadhūta*.”

29. “You are always intoxicated in the ecstasy of *kṛṣṇa-prema*. Who else would dance naked with his wife and associates?”

30. “Today I have seen the wonderful glories of the intense hankering to relish the *rasa* of devotion unto the Supreme Lord. This confirms that for all time you are very dear to Śrī Kṛṣṇa.”

31. “Aho! How can I possibly describe how dear you are to Śrī Kṛṣṇa? By your mercy many others have also become dear to him.”

32. “By Pārvatī’s mercy many have also become dear to him. She knows well the established truths concerning both you and Kṛṣṇa.”

33. “Śrī Kṛṣṇa loves Pārvatī as if she were his own sister, and therefore, although you are self-satisfied (*ātmārāma*), you also love her dearly.”

34. “You please her by always festively chanting *nāma-saṅkīrtana* and speaking *hari-kathā*, and in her company you are always experiencing the bliss of associating with a pure devotee of Śrī Viṣṇu.”

35. Śrī Parīkṣit said: O mother, then Śrī Śiva, the best of Vaiṣṇavas, out of embarrassment lowered his head and said to the great devotee Nārada:

36. “O Nārada, you have abandoned all pride, but alas! Who am I, the very root of all pride (being the demigod of *ahaṅkāra*), in comparison to the Supreme Master, Śrī Kṛṣṇa?”

37. “I am so proud that I consider myself the master of this world, the most knowledgeable, the bestower of knowledge, liberated, the bestower of liberation, a pure devotee of Śrī Viṣṇu and the bestower of pure *bhakti*.”

38. “But when the dreadful time for Bhagavān to devour the entire universe comes, I feel ashamed to carry out my duty in the mode of ignorance to destroy everything.”

39. “O Nārada, if I possessed even a particle of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s mercy, why would I have fought with him over the *pārijāta* flower and the kidnapping of Uṣā?”

40. “If I was really the recipient of his mercy, why would he worship his own servant? And why would he have ordered me to (assume the form of Śaṅkarācārya and) invent a philosophy to make people averse to him?”
41. “You were happily glorifying both myself and Pārvatī as the givers of liberation, but the hideous liberation that we give simply brings pain to devotees’ ears!”
42. “O best of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s associates, don’t consider me the object of his mercy. The greatest recipients of his mercy are the residents of Vaikuṅṭha.”
43. “Renouncing everything as if it were only a blade of grass, they devoutly worship their beloved Śrī Hari. Even though they possess all mystic perfections, they never even glance in their direction.”
44. “Only those who are free from all pride can enter that realm of Vaikuṅṭha, where fear is unknown and which is *sac-cid-ānanda* and beyond the modes of material nature.”
45. “Even though the residents there possess *sac-cid-ānanda* bodies and transcendental opulences equal to those of Śrī Hari himself, they do not care for them.”
46. “Being satisfied only by *bhagavad-bhakti*, they perpetually travel by their own volition throughout the creation protecting devotees and increasing their devotion.”
47. “As they, having assumed various forms such as birds and trees, eternally serve Bhagavān in Vaikuṅṭha, they seem to mock the souls who have merged in impersonal liberation.”
48. “Receiving the direct *darśana* of Śrī Hari, who is the increaser of divine bliss and whose lotus feet are massaged by Śrī Lakṣmī-devī, they enjoy pastimes with him.”
49. “Aho! The mercy of Śrī Kṛṣṇa that the residents of Vaikuṅṭhaloka possess cannot be found anywhere else.”
50. “There various devotees, who are all conveyances of *prema*, with blissful hearts perpetually perform *saṅkīrtana* and other devotional activities; indeed, nothing else is known there.”
51. “Aho! The glories of the ocean of the topmost ecstatic mellows (*paramānanda-rasa*) there are wonderful! The happiness of impersonal liberation cannot be compared to even half a drop of that blissfulness.”
52. “Vaikuṅṭha, its residents and all of the objects there possess the supreme *prema* for the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.”

53. “In this way the residents of Vaikuṅṭha are the real objects of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s mercy, and since their glories are greater than mine, how can I possibly describe them?”

54. “Devotees who are *rasika*, expert in relishing the mellows of *bhagavad-bhakti*, even if they possess bodies composed of five elements and reside in the Earthly planets, are always worshipful to those like myself.”

55. “To attain *prema* for Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet, they have abandoned their wealth and families and offered their very souls to him.”

56. “Disregarding both material and spiritual attainments as well as the methods to achieve them, they have crossed over the regulations governing the conduct concerning one’s own class, caste, stage of life and occupational duty.”

57. “Due to the strength of their *hari-bhakti*, they are free from the three debts (to the demigods, sages and one’s forefathers), they have transcended the path of the Vedas and they are always fearless.”

58. “Those who crave *bhakti-rasa*, who desire nothing of this world, see heaven, hell and liberation with equanimity.”

59. “Truthfully, they are as dear to me as Bhagavān himself is, and I am always praying for their association.”

60. “O Nārada, I believe that wherever devotees like this reside is actually Vaikuṅṭha – there is no doubt.”

61. “Those who by drinking the nectar of *kṛṣṇa-bhakti* forget both the body and everything related to it, possess forms of *sac-cid-ānanda* even while residing within material bodies.”

62. “To achieve direct participation in Bhagavān’s pastimes, these devotees sometimes desire to enter Vaikuṅṭha.”

63. “Therefore I have said that the residents of Vaikuṅṭha are the most glorious because they are the most beloved of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and the objects of his special mercy.”

64. Śrī Pārvatī said: “And it is well known that of all the residents of Vaikuṅṭha, Lakṣmī-devī is the most dear to him. She is the queen of both Vaikuṅṭha and its residents.”

65. “By her sidelong glances one attains powers and opulences like those of the demigods who rule the various planets, and by her mercy one attains knowledge, renunciation and devotion.”

66. “Even though many sages like yourself worship her with great reverence, she disregards you all and chooses her beloved Nārāyaṇa. And even though Nārāyaṇa is indifferent to her, she worships him with austerities.”

67. “She eternally resides at his handsome chest. The topmost faithful wife, she accompanies her husband in all his incarnations.”

68–9. Śrī Parikṣit said: Hearing this, Nārada Muni became overjoyed and called out, “Śrī Kamalākānta Bhagavān *kī jaya!* O Vaikuṅṭhapate! O Hari! Vaikuṅṭhaloka *kī jaya!* All glories to the residents of Vaikuṅṭha! All glories to Lakṣmī, beloved of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and queen of Vaikuṅṭha!”

70. Then Nārada rose to go to Vaikuṅṭha and meet Lakṣmī-devī, but understanding his intention, Śiva prevented him by grasping his hand and said:

71. “O Nārada, in the great eagerness to receive the *darśana* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s dear associates, your memory has failed you. Do you not remember that these days Bhagavān is residing in Dvārakā on the Earth?”

72. “Śrī Kṛṣṇa is Svayam Bhagavān, and Rukmiṇī is Mahā-Lakṣmī, whose plenary portions are the consorts of Vāmana and the other incarnations.”

73. “Rukmiṇī, the original goddess of fortune, eternally serves the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the original Supreme Personality.”

74. “O *brāhmaṇa*, sit down and I will whisper a great secret in your ear – please listen with great faith.”

75. “More than your father Brahmājī, Lakṣmī, myself, Garuḍa and all other devotees, Prahlāda is the object of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s mercy. It is well known throughout the entire universe that he is very dear to Śrī Kṛṣṇa.”

76. “Have you forgotten the words of Bhagavān in the Purāṇas, and do you not remember this verse (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (9.4.64))?”

77. ““O *brāhmaṇa*, without my saintly devotees for whom I am the only destination, I do not desire to enjoy my transcendental bliss and my supreme opulence.””

78. “Who can properly glorify the devotees? Without them Bhagavān doesn’t care for even his own transcendental form, from which all we demigods are manifest and with which he enjoys playful pastimes with his devotees.”

79. “Bhagavān himself has said that the inconceivably fortunate Prahlāda is the ideal devotee.”

80. “When Hiranyakaśipu was killed, Lakṣmī and all of us demigods directly experienced the incomparable good fortune of Prahlāda.”

81. “At that time Bhagavān time and again offered Prahlāda benedictions, but he did not ask for liberation and prayed only for *bhakti*. I offer obeisances unto that Prahlāda.”

82–4. “Bali Mahārāja transgressed the rules of propriety, disobeyed the order of his spiritual master and was unable to keep his word. Did Śrī Vāmanadeva Bhagavān become his doorkeeper for all time as a result of his insignificant offering? Did Bhagavān protect Banāsura because of my prayers? In reality he did these things only out of love for his dear devotee Prahlāda. I cannot say more about this now, because Lakṣmī’s dear friend Pārvatī is here. (Pārvatī may take offence if Prahlāda is glorified at the expense of her friend Lakṣmī.)”

85. “Now go quickly to Sataloka and congratulate Prahlāda through the bestowal of your blessings. Embrace him and tell him that I also embrace him again and again.”

86. “Prahlāda, the foremost of saintly persons, will not tolerate our offering of obeisances to him. Therefore if you wish to experience happiness there, do not even inadvertently praise him or offer *praṇāma* to him.”

Chapter Four – The Devotees

1. Śrī Parikṣit said: Being wonderstruck upon hearing the words of Śiva, Nārada Muni was very eager to have *darśana* of Prahlāda. By his mystic power, within a moment he arrived at Satalaloka, the planet of the demons.
2. At that time Śrī Prahlāda, the foremost of Vaiṣṇavas, was sitting in a secluded place rapt in blissful, loving meditation on the lotus feet of Bhagavān. Seeing Nārada from a distance, he at once stood up, and when the *brāhmaṇa* Nārada approached him, Prahlāda offered obeisances.
3. Carefully seating Nārada on a throne, Prahlāda began worshipping him with elaborate rituals, but bemused and crying tears of joy, Nārada suddenly embraced Prahlāda and said:
4. “Receiving your *darśana* after a very long time, all of my endeavours have become fruitful. You are the object of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s abundant mercy. Since childhood you have possessed a variety of *kṛṣṇa-bhakti* so pure that it has never been detected in anyone else.”
5. “Your father tried to vanquish you in a thousand ways, but by the power of your *bhakti* you emerged victorious, so much so that by your influence even all the demons became devotees.”
6. “Deeply immersed in *kṛṣṇa-prema*, you forget yourself and appear like a madman, sometimes dancing, sometimes singing, sometimes trembling and sometimes crying. By doing so, you have saved all living entities from the agony of material life and delighted them by bestowing *viṣṇu-bhakti* upon them.”
7. “When your father had thrown you into the ocean, Bhagavān himself appeared on the shore, took you in his lap and caressed you as a mother would. At the time of your father’s killing, Brahmā, Mahādeva and other demigods were offering Bhagavān eloquent prayers, yet he ignored them all, as well as even Lakṣmī, and heeded you only.”
8. “Being frightened of Nṛsimha Bhagavān’s anger, Brahmā beseeched you to pacify him. When you fell at the Lord’s lotus feet, he lifted you up, placed his lotus hand on your head and licked your body.”
9. “Śrī Bhagavān tried with great determination and skill to entice you into accepting liberation, for which the demigods headed by Brahmā are always praying to him. Disregarding it, you prayed solely to possess *bhakti* birth after birth.”

10. “For the satisfaction of your Lord, and because at the time of offering prayers to him you prayed for the deliverance of all living entities, you accepted your father’s kingdom. Therefore although being the ruler of this kingdom, still you remain rapt in meditation on Bhagavān.”

11. “Once, when you were going to Naimiṣāranya to receive *darśana* of the lotus feet of Nārāyaṇa, who wears yellow garments, you met him on the way, disguised as a renunciate but also carrying a bow and arrows. Seeing this contradictory dress, you began fighting with him, and when you satisfied him in battle, he revealed himself and gave you the benediction that, ‘I am always defeated by you.’” (This pastime is narrated in the *Vāmana Purāna*.)

12. Śrī Parīkṣit said: Saying this, Nārada, who is an ocean of *bhakti* for Śrī Hari and his intimate servant, began dancing and cried out, “We have defeated him!”

13. Śrī Nārada said: “O best of the Vaiṣṇavas! You defeated Bhagavān – what more need I say? He was also defeated by your grandson Bali, the king of the demons, and therefore was posted as a guard protecting Bali’s gate – this is all a result of your mercy.”

14. “Now my sole desire is to permanently reside here, by your power counteracting the curse of Dakṣa (to be unable to stay for long in any one place).”

15. Śrī Parīkṣit said: Unable to tolerate hearing himself being praised, Prahlāda lowered his head out of embarrassment. Offering obeisances to Nārada and showing him great respect, he slowly said:

16. “O Bhagavān, O Gurudeva, please consider everything. In childhood one cannot learn the science of *kṛṣṇa-bhakti* well.”

17–19. “By accepting instructions from great personalities such as you, one naturally begins to understand the topmost knowledge and becomes inclined towards *bhakti*. But great souls know that the glories which you just delineated, such as never being defeated by any obstacles, giving spiritual instructions to children, being merciful to all living entities and rejecting liberation, are not real indications of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s mercy. Only those who are directly serving him have factually received his mercy.”

20. “I have never directly served Bhagavān as Hanumān and many others did; I merely remembered him whenever I was faced with a dilemma.”

21. “You praised the Lord’s caressing me, but some (such as the *māyāvādīs*) say that it was illusory while others proclaim that it was only his pastime.”

22. “Great personalities like yourself may consider that his caressing me was an expression of his natural affection for me, but I consider that it was like a dream (because it was so brief). And even if what you were saying is true, it is not a symptom of his mercy upon me.”

23. “Saintly persons consider the wonderful gift of direct service that Bhagavān bestowed upon Hanumān and others to be the real symptom of his mercy.”

24. “Śrī Nṛsimha’s pastimes were not performed out of favour for me, but for the protection of the devotee demigods and to deliver his two eternal associates (Jaya and Vijaya) from a curse.”

25. “They were meant to establish the truthfulness of the words of Brahmā and his sons the Kumāras and to thoroughly reveal the immense glories of *bhakti*.”

26. “O crown-jewel of those who are free from worldly attachment, when Bhagavān gave me a kingdom, I could understand that I had not received even a particle of his mercy.”

27. “Bhagavān himself has said, ‘When I desire to show mercy to someone, I take away their material wealth.’ The words of great devotees also bear witness to this fact.”

28. “And moreover, just see how ruling this kingdom and always being surrounded by relatives and servants has devastated my *bhagavad-bhajana*! Fie! Fie on me! I do not even weep over my own misfortune!”

29. “If this were not so, then why would I have again adopted the temperament of the demon class that I was born into and fought with the glorious Nārāyaṇa at Badrikāśrama?”

30. “By associating with demons, who are miseducated in the nature of the soul (*ātmā-tattva*), I became infected by dry, contemptible theories, a mere fragment of which I as of yet have not been able to remove from my heart.”

31. “Therefore where is my pure devotion, by which one receives Bhagavān’s mercy? As I consider the misdeeds of my grandson Banāsura, I can clearly discern my own dearth of *bhakti*.”

32. “I have heard that Bhagavān imprisoned Bali and now stands at the door to prevent his escape. But where the Lord is now, I simply don’t know (because it is not definite that he always remains there).”

33. “However, according to one’s activities, the Lord may still be seen, just as Rāvaṇa saw him there as the gatekeeper, and as Durvāsā Muni did by the strength of his faith.”

34. “One who craves to see Śrī Bhagavān can attain him in any place; he need not travel to his abode.”

35. “If Bhagavān eternally resides at Bali’s gate, then why did I travel such a great distance to Naimiṣāraṇya to attain the *darśana* of the Lord, who wears yellow garments?”

36. “By your mercy perhaps Bhagavān has bestowed some affectionate mercy upon me, but still it is very minute in comparison to the abundant mercy received by devotees of modern times (such as Hanumān).”

37. “O sage whose heart melts with boundless mercy, there is no sense in describing my great misfortune further; it will only bring you sadness. It is better that you proceed directly to Kimpuruṣavarṣa to see the glorious mercy that Bhagavān has bestowed upon Hanumān.”

38. “O Nārada, please consider how when Śrī Bhagavān appeared in the form of Nṛsimha to kill my father, after completing his task he quickly disappeared.”

39. “At that time I could not fill my eyes with his beauty, and when another time I saw him on the shore of the ocean, it was as if in a flickering dream.”

40. “Hanumān is very fortunate because he is able to incessantly enjoy the happiness of serving Bhagavān without experiencing any obstructions for thousands of years.”

41. “From childhood he has been very strong, and having received benedictions from the demigods, he is free from old-age and death.”

42. “He is completely fearless, a pious *naiṣṭika-brahmacārī*, acquainted with all the scriptures, very heroic and the foremost servant of Śrī Raghunātha.”

43. “He effortlessly jumped over the fathomless, eight-hundred-mile-wide ocean, and he expertly comforted the distressed Sītā in the palace of the king of *rakṣasas*.”

44. “He terrified his enemies and burned Laṅka to the ground. When he returned with news of Sītā, he was firmly embraced by his master.”

45. “He was the great carrier of his master, his tail became a white parasol shading his master, his broad back was the comfortable seat of his master and he was the leader of those engaged in constructing the bridge at Setubandha.”

46–7. “He fulfilled the needs of Vibhīṣaṇa and destroyed the army of the *rakṣasas*. He is immensely powerful, and he brought the life-restoring medicinal herb *viśālya-kāriṇī* that saved his army. Pleasing both his master and his master’s younger brother Lakṣmaṇa, he became the devoted carrier of them both.”

48. “He brought victory to his master, and he is highly intelligent and heroic. He expands the fame of his master, the destroyer of the demoniac dynasty.”

49. “Because he brought great joy to Sītā, he is the object of his master’s mercy. Even though he is unable to tolerate separation from Śrī Raghunātha, he remains in this world by his order.”

50. “He sustains himself by hearing of his master’s fame, and even today he stands near the deity form of his master as he always stood by him in the past.”

51. “O Svāmin Nārada, it is well known that Hanumān is especially qualified to render service to Bhagavān, and that service has brought him Prabhu’s mercy.”

52. “I offer obeisances to Hanumān who, although having easily attained liberation, disregards it and aspires solely to serve Śrī Viṣṇu, the son of Mahārāja Daśaratha.”

53. “You yourself know even more of his glories than what I have just spoken; therefore go now to Kimpuruṣavarṣa and become happy by receiving his *darśana*.”

54. Śrī Parīkṣit said: O mother, saying “Aho! This is very auspicious! Aho! This is very auspicious!” Nārada rose from his seat and travelled through outer space to Kimpuruṣavarṣa.

55. There he saw Hanumān worshipping the lotus feet of the deity of Śrī Rāmacandra with wonderful ingredients collected from the forest as if the Lord were directly present before him.

56. As he blissfully heard the nectarean *Rāmāyaṇa* sung by Gandharvas and others, Hanumān trembled, shed tears and the hairs of his body stood erect.

57. While offering many wonderful poems, prayers and famous hymns of his own composition, he was offering prostrated obeisances to his master.

58. Seeing this, with great jubilation Nārada called out, “*Jaya Śrī Raghunātha! Jaya Śrī Janakī-kānta! Jaya Śrī Lakṣmaṇāgraja* (elder brother of Lakṣmaṇa)!”

59. Becoming elated upon hearing *nāma-kīrtana* of his worshipful Lord, Hanumān at once jumped a great distance into the sky and embraced Nārada around the neck.

60. Blissfully dancing in the sky, Nārada wiped away Hanumān’s streaming tears of love, and in an unprecedented state of divine ecstasy, loudly said:

61. “O Śrīman, you are factually very dear to Bhagavān, and by receiving your *darśana* today, I have also become dear to him.”

62. Śrī Parīkṣit said: Within a moment Hanumān composed himself and offered obeisances to Devarṣi Nārada. Then he led Nārada into the temple so he, too, could offer *praṇāma* to the deity of Śrī Raghunātha.

63. After Nārada offered obeisances to the deity, with great insistence Hanumān had him sit in a carefully arranged seat. His body exhibiting symptoms of ecstatic love, Nārada said:

64. “Aho! In truth you are the incomparable object of Śrī Bhagavān’s mercy, because you are always immersed in the wonderful nectar ocean of *bhagavad-bhajana*.”

65. “You are Śrī Bhagavān’s friendly servant, carrier, sitting place, flag, parasol, awning, fan, minister, physician, military commander, foremost assistant and great broadcaster of his fame.”

66. “You have offered your soul to the lotus feet of your master, you are the supreme recipient of his mercy and the narrations of his divine fame are your very life. You perpetually increase the bliss of those who have taken shelter of your master, and you are even more glorious than Garuḍa and other devotees.”

67. “Aho! Because you do not consider anything superior to the happiness of rendering service unto the Lord, you are certainly a pure devotee. By speaking these words to your master, who is the crown-jewel of the generous, you delighted all devotees:

68. “‘O Prabhu, I do not desire any liberation from the ties that bind one to repeated birth and death if the relationship that ‘I am your servant, and you are my master’ is lost.’”

69. Śrī Parīkṣit said: It was as if Nārada’s description of how Hanumān was the recipient of his master’s special mercy ignited a fierce fire of separation within Hanumān. Overcome with acute sorrow, he began loudly weeping, and as Nārada Muni was comforting him, Hanumān said:

70. “O best of the sages, why do you make this poor person, suffering due to separation from the lotus feet of Śrī Raghunātha, cry by reminding me of his cruelty to me?”

71. “If I am really his servant, then why did he abandon me when he took his beloved devotees such as Sugrīva and the residents of Ayodhyā with him?”

72. “When soft-hearted *mahātmās* like you see that I had the good fortune to serve Śrī Raghunātha directly, you consider that he was very merciful to me, but it is not so.”

73. “Now he has assumed an incarnation and descended in Mathurā, exhibiting the pinnacle of his opulence.”

74. “The mercy that he gives the Paṇḍavas is like the great Mount Sumeru, and in comparison the mercy that he gave me is like a pebble.”

75. “By sending them so many troubles since their childhood, Śrī Kṛṣṇa has broadcast to the world their patience, adherence to religious principles, fame, transcendental knowledge, pure devotion and divine love.”

76. “Śrī Bhagavān sometimes becomes their charioteer, and sometimes their companion, minister, messenger and guard. Sometimes he follows behind them, sometimes he eulogises them and sometimes he even offers obeisances to them.”

77. “Being overcome with affection for them, what does Prabhu not do for them? They mutually share a combination of servitude, friendship and love.”

78. “Because he always resides with them, their capital has not become merely like a sacred forest where ascetics perform austerities, but it has become the very fruit of their austerities.”

79. Śrī Parīkṣit said: Hearing this and craving the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Nārada desired to eternally reside in Dvārakā. Rising into the sky time and again, he loudly called out in great bliss and began dancing.

80. Then Hanumān, his heart immersed in the *rasa* of the narrations concerning the Paṇḍavas and his elation having increased upon seeing Nārada’s dancing, continued singing their glories:

81. “Just as *mahātmās* attain Śrī Kṛṣṇa by virtue of their excellent service to him, in the same way the calamities that befell the Paṇḍavas made Śrī Kṛṣṇa anxious for them and at once brought him into their company.”

82. “O Paṇḍavas, subjugated by *prema*, you have abandoned all sense of propriety and made my master into your charioteer and messenger!”

83. “O Paṇḍavas, you must certainly know some extraordinary magic spell or possess a magic potion by which you have confounded even the greatest of spell-binders, Śrī Bhagavān.”

84. Śrī Parīkṣit said: O mother, who broadcasts the fame of the Paṇḍavas, speaking thus, Hanumān jumped up time and again, and dancing with Nārada Muni said:

85. “Aho Bhagavān, who are subjugated by affection for your devotees, to attract their hearts you perform varieties of pastimes.”

86. “It is my immense good fortune that the intermediate son of Kuntī is my beloved younger brother Bhīmasena.”

87. “By sharing *sakhya-bhāva* with him and by giving his own sister in marriage to him, Śrī Kṛṣṇa has been very merciful to Arjuna. And because Arjuna’s flag, which carries an insignia of me, is dear to him, I am fortunate indeed.”

88. “Without the mercy of those who are dear to Bhagavān, a devotee’s service will not be perfected and will not bear fruit.”

89. “Therefore O best of the devotees, we should go there now to receive their *darśana* and to take shelter of them.”

90–1. “The supreme opulence and sweetness, which is beyond the comprehension of even Brahmā and Śiva, which increases the *bhakti* of his devotees and which was not revealed when my master appeared in Ayodhyā, is now displayed in Dvārakā, which is non-different from Mathurā.”

92. Śrī Nārada said: “O friend Hanumān, what to speak of Ayodhyā, such supreme opulence is not manifest even in Vaikuṅṭha! Therefore quickly arise and let us go there immediately!”

93. Śrī Parikṣit said: Then Hanumān, who is as grave as the ocean, sighed and reflected within himself for a moment. Offering obeisances to Nārada, he said:

94–5. “Although it is thoroughly appropriate for us to go see and serve Prabhu’s beloved devotees, he is now displaying the sweetness of his kindness in a greater and more profound fashion than he ever has in the past.”

96. “His enchanting *līlā* is very bewildering, and even the most learned sages who have seen it have become perplexed.”

97–8. “Aho! You know well that even Brahmā, who is your father, the grandfather of the entire universe and the original preacher of the Vedas, is bewildered by these pastimes, so what to speak of an ignorant monkey like myself? I fear that I will commit an offence.”

99. “Bhagavān’s wonderful pastimes are the supreme destination of his exclusive devotees and the increaser of *prema-bhakti*.”

100–4. “I pray that my *bhakti* will always increase for Śrī Raghunātha, who is simple by nature, whose soft heart is very merciful, who is the best preceptor of *dharma*, who maintains a vow of having a single wife, whose lotus face and eyes are always lowered out of humble shyness, whose character delights the entire world, who is the monarch of

Ayodhyāpurī and greatest of all kings, who is eternally served by Śrī Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa, who is the elder brother of Bharata, who is the dear friend of the ruler of monkeys Sugrīva, who is the shelter of Vibhīṣana, who always carries a bow in his hand and who is the son of Daśaratha and Kauśalyā.”

105. “Remaining here eternally receiving *darśana* of his deity form, I drink the nectar of the narrations of his pastimes.”

106–9. “If at any time Śrī Kṛṣṇa ever calls me out of his great mercy to bestow upon me the happiness of serving him, or impelled by affection for me, he calls me to receive the *darśana* of Śrī Raghunātha, who is dearer to me than my own life, then I will immediately go there. But you should go now to the Paṇḍavas and in their palace see Parabrahma himself who, having assumed human form, is always pleased with the Paṇḍavas, beyond the reach of the *munis*’ hearts and words and a mine of wonderfully enchanting pastime-sweetnesses.”

110. “Please don’t become an offender by thinking that we are *naiṣṭhika-brahmacārīs*, and that the Paṇḍavas are mere householders busy in managing a kingdom.”

111. “By serving Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet, they have become free from all desires for mundane pleasures, and their lotus feet are worshipped by even the *ācāryas* of the swan-like devotees.”

112–5. “The eldest Paṇḍava rules the kingdom solely for the pleasure of Bhagavān. Although possessing varieties of royal opulence that even the demigods cannot attain, immense piety from the performance of *rājasūya* and *aśvamedha* sacrifices, sovereignty over Viṣṇuloka, Jambudvīpa and other worlds, and pure fame spread throughout the three worlds, he is free from all faults. Attaining all of this opulence, which even the demigods pray for, by the mercy of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, he has offered it back to his lotus feet, not having any affection or attachment for it.”

116. “Because his heart is always burning with the fire of *kṛṣṇa-prema*, he doesn’t consider his opulence to be pleasing, just as a man who is burning with hunger cannot be pleased with fine garments, fragrant flower garlands, or *candana*.”

117–18. “Aho! What more can I say? Although he possesses an exalted queen like Śrīmatī Draupadī, and brothers like Śrī Bhīmasena and Arjuna, they are not dear to him because of being relatives or as assistants in the quest for the fourfold objects of human pursuit. They are dear to him solely because they have *prema* for the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.”

119. “O Bhagavān Nārada, being a mere ordinary monkey, how can I possibly describe their glories? Besides, you know their greatness better than I.”

Chapter Five – The Dear Devotees

1. Śrī Parīkṣit said: Dancing and overcome with joy, Nārada flew to Kurudeśa and quickly entered the capital.
2. At that time Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira was advising his brothers that on the pretext of either a sacrifice or a calamity taking place, they should call Śrī Kṛṣṇa there so they could receive his *darśana*.
- 3–4. When he heard Nārada arrive at the door, he immediately stood up and along with his mother, brothers and wife, quickly went over and offered obeisances to him. Taking Nārada inside the palace, he carefully seated him on a beautiful throne.
5. O mother, Śrī Yudhiṣṭhira collected together many articles to perform *pūjā* of Śrī Nārada, but instead Nārada took those articles and with them worshipped your fathers-in-law and their servants.
6. While playing his *viṇā*, Nārada time and again sang in a sweet melody Hanumān’s description of the great mercy that the Paṇḍavas had received from Śrī Kṛṣṇa.
7. Śrī Nārada said: “In this world you are all extremely fortunate, because the Supreme Controller of all controllers, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, is your dear worshipful deity, spiritual master, cousin, brother, messenger, friend, charioteer and servant.”
8. “Even Śrī Brahmā, Śrī Śiva and the other great demigods see him in their meditation only with immense difficulty. He is the sole objective of the special purport of the words of the Vedas, and Śrī Nṛsiṃha, Śrī Vāmana and Śrī Rāmacandra are his plenary portions.”
9. “All the other incarnations are portions of his plenary portions, while Brahmā and the other demigods are his shadow-extensions. Illusory *māyā*, which creates, maintains and destroys the material universes, stands before him as a maidservant.”
10. “When, inspired by the lament of Mother Earth, Brahmā and the demigods went to the shore of the ocean of milk, with great determination they offered *pūjā* and prayers to him but still did not receive any of his mercy.”
11. “Then, when in meditation Brahmā received his order from within the heart, all the demigods became joyful.”
12. “In a secluded place, Gargācārya and other scholars secretly revealed that only Śrī Nārāyaṇa Bhagavān and no one else can even partially compare to him.”

13. “Therefore in Mathurāpurī he is also known by the names Dīrgha-Viṣṇu, Mahā-Hari, Mahā-Viṣṇu and Mahā-Nārāyaṇa.”

14. “We sages perpetually pray for his mercy through performing spiritual activities such as observing vows of silence, being peaceful and practising *bhakti*, but you have not merely pleased Svayam Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa, you have even brought him under your control.”

15. “Aho! Listen, since previous ages it has been his long-standing principle to give liberation only to those who are specially qualified for it.”

16–17. “Therefore Kālanemi, Hiraṇyākṣa, Hiraṇyakaśipu, Rāvaṇa, Kumbhakarna and others who were personally killed by him were not given liberation, nor were any of them given *uttama-bhakti*. Only to the demon Prahlāda in Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s incarnation as Nṛsimha did he give *bhakti*, and even then it was *jñāna-miśra-bhakti*.”

18–19. “Although Hanumān, Jāmbavāna, Sugrīva, Vibhīṣana, Kevaṭa, Daśaratha and others attained pure *bhakti* during the advent of Śrī Raghunātha, at that time there was not even the briefest mention of the topmost pure *bhakti*.”

20. “Now your maternal cousin Kṛṣṇa has bestowed *mukti*, *bhakti* and the topmost pure *bhakti* to many.”

21. “Those demons who Kṛṣṇa personally killed or had killed by Arjuna or others, although they deserved to descend into hell, became liberated by his glorious mercy.”

22–3. “When Viśvāmitra, Gautama, Vasiṣṭha and other sages who were engaged in performing austerities, chanting *mantras* and the cultivation of knowledge in a quest for the four objects of human pursuit went to Kurukṣetra and prayed to Śrī Kṛṣṇa for *bhakti*, by his mercy they all became steadfast in devotion.”

24. “Even immobile living entities like trees and vines who are in the mode of ignorance by birth exhibited symptoms of ecstatic love for Śrī Kṛṣṇa and began showering liquefied *prema-rasa*.”

25. “O cousins of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, how can I possibly describe the unprecedented, extraordinary appearance of the beauty, loveliness and sweetness of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s form?”

26. “Because it is unprecedented, upon seeing it even he himself becomes wonderstruck. His pastimes, qualities, divine love, glories and pastime-places are also extraordinary.”

27. “I think that if Śrī Kṛṣṇa had not descended to this world, then the highest aspect of his *bhagavattā* (nature as the Supreme Personality) would never have been revealed.”

28. “Because the aggregate of his special glories and various wonderful sweetnesses have now reached their pinnacle, his *bhagavattā* is being fully displayed.”

29. “For now forget descriptions of his mercy; even his allotment of punishment is praiseworthy! In this present advent, Kaṁsa, Kāliya and Pūtanā bear witness to this, and in the Lord’s previous incarnations, Bali and others bear witness to this fact.”

30. Śrī Parīkṣit said: Singing in this way, Nārada grasped his tongue, which was greedy to sing Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s glories, between his teeth and instructed it, “Aho! You are describing his glories (although you are unqualified to do so)?”

31. “O tongue, if you will instead describe the glories of his dear devotees as far as you are capable, it will be my immense good fortune.”

32. “And O exalted Paṇḍavas, who could have the audacity to think that their tongue could possibly describe the special love and mercy Śrī Kṛṣṇa has shown each of you?”

33. “When mother Kuntī heard just a single sentence of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s affectionate consolation from the mouth of Akrūra, she became immersed in a current of divine love.”

34. “Hearing her lamentations pierces the chests of even the stoutest men. She loved you all so much because you are very dear to Śrī Kṛṣṇa.”

35. “After having resided in Hastināpura for a very long time, the very life of the Yadus, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, was thinking to go to Dvārakā. At that time, Kuntī-devī humbly spoke many prayers and convinced him to remain there in her home.”

36. “Śrī Kṛṣṇa bestowed upon Yudhiṣṭhira the ultimate fame of both the Earth planet as well as heaven, and although Kṛṣṇa was himself the cause of Jarāsandha’s death, he gave all the credit to Bhīmasena.”

37. “Arjuna became renowned for his friendship with Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Aho! Even hundreds of Purāṇas could not describe his glories.”

38. “Everyone knows that Nakula and Sahadeva love Śrī Kṛṣṇa so much that they recommended that he be worshipped first at the Rājasūya-yajña.”

39. “At the Rājasūya-yajña Śrī Kṛṣṇa himself sprinkled water on Draupadī’s hair and addressed her as ‘Priya-sakhī’. By protecting her from the dangers presented by Atri-putra Durvāsā, Duḥśāsana and others, he eradicated all her grief.”

40. “He accepted his meal in the home of Vidura, he performed Bhīṣma’s funeral festival, and please consider how many times he took your side in disputes.”

41. “Aho! It is greatly astonishing that the prayers saturated with both *jñāna* and *bhakti* that were offered by the ladies of your palace are now sung by the greatest poets (such as Vyāsa)!”

42. “Although Bhagavān really bestowed mercy only upon Prahlāda and his grandson Bali, and as Rāmacandra upon Hanumān alone, he has bestowed his loving mercy upon you as well as upon all of your friends and family members.”

43. “In the assembly of the Kauravas, Śrī Kṛṣṇa said before me and others, ‘A friend of the Paṇḍavas is a friend of mine, but an enemy of theirs is also my enemy because the Paṇḍavas are my very life.’”

44. “Aho! It is only due to my insolence that I try to describe your virtues, because only Śrī Kṛṣṇa himself is capable of knowing and describing them. I think that he has descended to this world solely for your sake.”

45. Śrī Parīkṣit said: After a moment’s embarrassed silence, Śrī Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira sighed, and surrounded by his mother, brothers and wives, said:

46. “O Nārada, crest-jewel of eloquent orators, after deliberating on this for a very long time, we have concluded that Śrī Kṛṣṇa has not been fully merciful to us.”

47. “Seeing the calamities that have befallen us, materialistic men will lose their proclivity towards and faith in *kṛṣṇa-bhakti*.”

48. “This thought causes us great distress, because Kṛṣṇa is our life and soul; without him we are like men without food or fish without water.”

49. “For this reason I prayed to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, ‘O Lord, please use this Rājasūya-yajña to show both devotees and non-devotees the value of *bhakti*.’”

50–1. ““Seeing the wonderful, pure and extraordinary material and spiritual opulences of your devotees, the people of this world will develop faith in *bhakti* and perform *bhajana* of your lotus feet. Then all of their misery and fear will be eradicated and they will attain eternal happiness.””

52–3. “Now that he has killed our non-devotee enemies and given us the kingdom, our grief is greater than before because for the sake of this kingdom, our worshipful *gurus* like Bhīṣma and Droṇācārya, our sons headed by Abhimanyu and numerous other saintly persons have died.”

54. “I wish for the company of devotees of Viṣṇu more than I wish to remain alive. Separated from them I cannot for a moment find even a particle of happiness.”

55. “Now we only enjoy the happiness of seeing Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s lotus face after long intervals when he has some specific business with us.”

56. “Now he resides in Dvārakā, always giving pleasure to his dear relatives, the fortunate Yādavas.”

57. “Although you personally saw how he became our charioteer, messenger and servant, he did not do these things for our sake. It was only to remove the Earth’s burden, destroy sins and protect religious principles.”

58–9. Śrī Parīkṣit said: Then Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s dear friend Bhīma laughed aloud and said, “O Nārada, disciple of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, no one can understand the vast ocean of Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes. He is the cause of illusory *māyā* and the *guru* of all skilful cheaters. When has he not been clever in his words and deeds? We know all of this well, and therefore do not trust him.”

60. Śrī Parīkṣit said: O mother, then my grandfather Śrīmān Arjuna, who is the dear friend of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, repeatedly sighed and spoke these grief-stricken words:

61. “O Nārada, the mercy that your beloved Śrī Kṛṣṇa bestowed upon us has merely become the cause of our suffering.”

62–3. “When on the battlefield Bhīṣma and other dry *jñānis* who were intent on discharging their religious duties as *kṣatriyas* hurled many powerful weapons meant to pierce both my armour and my heart, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who carries the Sudarṣana *cakra* in his hand, saved me by intercepting them and allowing them to instead fall on his own transcendental body.”

64. “Even now when I think of this, I cannot extract the arrow of grief from my heart. Therefore, O *brāhmaṇa*, how can I possibly be happy?”

65. “That action which brings pain to a dear one is not symptomatic of either love or kindness.”

66. “When I backed away from fighting Bhīṣma, Droṇa and others, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the greatest philosopher, taught me something that convinced me to fight.”

67. “Because those instructions are appropriate for them, hearing them gives pleasure to the dry *jñānis*, but for those like me for whom the glories of *bhakti* are our very lives, those instructions are painful.”

68. “When I reflect on the meaning of those instructions, I do not become happy; they were only a trick to cheat me.”

69–70. “My firm faith is always directly in Mahāprabhu Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is boundlessly merciful, always true to his word and the best of friends (and not in following *varṇāśrama* and other similar instructions found in *Bhagavad-gītā*). No one but that Parabrahma, whose human form is immensely enchanting, is dear to me.”

71–2. Śrī Nakula and Sahadeva said: “Although Śrī Kṛṣṇa gave us the strength to remain calm amidst numerous calamities, vanquished our enemies, enabled us to perform the *aśvamedha-yajña* and increased our fame, kingdom and piety, which are all unattainable by others, we do not consider that he was merciful to us.”

73. “However, he delighted us by accepting the offering of first worship at the numerous *rājasūya-yajñas*, and we consider that to have been his mercy upon us.”

74. “O *brāhmaṇa* Nārada, now that he has abandoned us, how can we sustain our lives? It has become exceedingly difficult for us to even receive his *darśana*!”

75. Śrī Parīkṣit said: Hearing all of this, Draupadī became overwhelmed in grief. Struggling to compose herself, she still continued to cry as she spoke these words in a voice choked with emotion:

76–9. “I hope that as my dear friend Śrī Kṛṣṇa many times previously saved me from being shamed, vanquished my enemies and was merciful to me, he will continue doing for all time. Now that my father Drupada, brothers headed by Dhṛṣṭadyumna, and sons have fallen on the battlefield, knowing it all to be the desire of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, I do not lament. My hope is that to console me over the deaths of my relatives, he will again sit by my side and help me regain my composure by speaking many eloquent words. On this pretext I will attain my innermost cherished fruit.”

80. “I pray that he will come to console me with sweet, charming nectarean words while gently smiling.”

81. “But this hope seems very remote indeed; it is my great misfortune that he doesn’t come here as he used to. O sage, where is his mercy upon me?”

82. Śrī Parīkṣit said: Then grieving Kuntī, for whom Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s *darśana* is her very life, began shedding tears as she remembered his mercy and mercilessness, and said:

83–5. “Although I am a widow with sons, Śrī Kṛṣṇa time and again quickly rescued me from numerous calamities. Therefore I considered that he was more merciful to me than he was to his own mother. But now, in both my own home and in the homes of others, when I hear the wailing of the women whose relatives have been killed, in my heart I feel that in reality he has given us very little mercy.”

86. "I shall abandon the prosperity of this kingdom that denies me of his *darśana* and pray for those calamities that bestow sight of him to come again."

87. "Thinking, 'Because I have given the Paṇḍavas a secure kingdom, they are now happy' he has abandoned us and now resides permanently in Dvārakā."

88. "Now I have lost hope that he will ever return here, and if I were to quickly perish, I would consider it his great mercy."

89. "The rope of hope, that above all Kṛṣṇa consider us his dear friends, has been severed by the friction of his intimate relationships with the Yādavas."

90. "Therefore go to Dvārakā and take *darśana* of the Yādavas, who are the foremost devotees and who are always immersed in an ocean of inconceivable divine bliss. O Bhagavān Nārada, you know their incomparable glories well, so what use is there in me describing them?"

91. Śrī Parīkṣit said: O mother, wife of the son (Abhimanyu) of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's sister (Subhadrā), then Devarṣi Nārada quickly went to Dvārakā, and after offering prostrated obeisances, he entered the palace, where from a distance he saw the exalted and highly fortunate Yādavas.

92. Adorned with their own bodily beauty and wearing garlands of *pārijāta* flowers, they were comfortably seated on their appropriate seats in the Sudharmā assembly house.

93. As a festival of splendid, celestial singing and dancing was taking place there, poets were offering them wonderful prayers.

94. Joking amongst themselves, they were blissfully celebrating. The charming effulgence of their forms eclipsed the sun.

95. Wonderfully decorated with varieties of exquisite ornaments, even those who were older appeared youthful.

96. Their desire to drink the nectar of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's lotus face never being satiated, they were surrounding Ugrasena Mahārāja and respectfully awaiting the auspicious arrival of Śrī Kṛṣṇadeva.

97. Countless millions of them were rapt in hearing and speaking about Śrī Kṛṣṇa with their greedy hearts and eyes fixed on the pathway leading from his residential quarters.

98. Becoming aware of Nārada's presence, the Yādavas hastily ran to him and lifting him up, led him by the hand into the assembly hall.

99. Although they offered Nārada a splendid throne to sit on, he preferred to sit on the floor, and seeing this, all the Yādavas also sat surrounding him on the floor.

100. When the Yādavas brought paraphernalia to offer *pūjā* to Devarṣi Nārada, he offered *praṇāma* to that paraphernalia, stood up and with folded hands humbly said:

101. “O Yādavas, being the recipients of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s great mercy, you are supernaturally extraordinary! Please bless me so that I will be able to always wander throughout the universe singing your glories.”

102. “Aho! The Yadu dynasty is the most glorious! The Yādavas are more glorious than the residents of Vaikuṅṭha, and by their mercy this Earth planet is now even more radiant than Vaikuṅṭha.”

103. “O Earth, now all your labour has borne fruit due to the Yadu dynasty taking birth, residing and enjoying pastimes on your surface, and because Svayam Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa also resides in their homes, enjoying pastimes that he has never performed before.”

104–5. “O Yādavas, through receiving his *darśana*, conversing with him, touching him, following behind him, sitting with him, eating with him, sleeping with him, arranging for him to marry your own daughters and sharing many other intimate instances with him, you have bound Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is more dear to you than your own souls, with unbreakable bonds of love. In this way Śrī Kṛṣṇa has eradicated your desires for residence in the heavenly planets and liberation while increasing your *bhakti*.”

106. “By enjoying pastimes with you, he has even forgotten residing in Vaikuṅṭhaloka, and he has bestowed upon you an immense, indescribable happiness that is newer and newer at every moment.”

107. “Even while sleeping, sitting, walking, conversing, bathing, eating and performing other activities, you are so engrossed in *kṛṣṇa-prema* that you cannot even remember your family members.”

108. “O Mahārāja Ugrasena, you are the king of kings – who can possibly describe the glories of your wonderful good fortune?”

109. “Aho! It is very astonishing to see how Svayam Bhagavān himself becomes subjugated by the wondrous love of his devotees!”

110. “O Yadurāja, when you are seated on your throne, Śrī Kṛṣṇa stands before you like a servant and respectfully says:

111. “O Deva, your servant is present before you; please order me’. For this reason I time and again offer *praṇāma* to you and to anyone who is related to you in any way.”

112. Śrī Parīkṣit said: Then the Yādavas, who are all followers of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the worshipful deity of the *brāhmaṇas*, bowed down before the great sage Nārada, touched his feet and said:

113. “O Nārada, you are worshipful to even our supremely worshipful Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Therefore why do you bow down like a lowly person before us, who ourselves are so lowly?”

114. “O you who are even more expert than Bṛhaspati in speaking eloquently, it is only by the power of Śrī Kṛṣṇa that what you have just said about us is not untrue.”

115. “By having even the slightest scent of a relationship with him, what perfection could a person not attain? He is an ocean of mercy and the best friend of all.”

116. “Mere remembrance of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is an ocean of transcendental glories, fulfils all ambitions. He is the solitary destination for the fallen, bestowing upon them a fruit superior to the four objects of human pursuit.”

117. “However, amongst us the real object of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s mercy is Uddhava, who is his minister, disciple, servant and dear friend.”

118–19. “Śrī Kṛṣṇa sometimes leaves us and goes somewhere, and even upon his return we continue to suffer because we never know when or where he will go next. But Uddhava always remains with him and serves him.”

120. “Sometimes Bhagavān even sends Uddhava in his place, such as when he sent him to free Sāmba from the Kauravas.”

121. “Daily Uddhava receives opportunities to eat, play and sport with Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and he alone regularly obtains Kṛṣṇa’s *mahā-prasāda* remnants.”

122. “Sometimes while Uddhava is joyfully massaging his lotus feet, he happily enters into sleep with the Lord’s feet in his lap.”

123. “Sometimes Uddhava accompanies Bhagavān in his confidential pastimes, and in this assembly he is the best minister. By giving superb advice and brilliantly speaking comical words, he gives pleasure to us all. Śrī Kṛṣṇa himself praises him and he fulfils all our desires.”

124. “Who can describe his immense good fortune? Since childhood he has been immersed in the *rasa* of service to Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet, and for this reason many ignorant people have proclaimed him a madman.”

125. “Aho! By perpetually serving Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet he has become so wonderfully *rasika* and eminent that even in his present body he has abandoned his golden complexion and adopted a dark complexion similar to that of Śrī Kṛṣṇa himself.”

126. “He is more handsome and also more dear to Kṛṣṇa than Pradyumna is. Wearing yellow silk garments, earrings, garlands of forest flowers and necklaces that have all at one time been worn by Śrī Kṛṣṇa, he delights us by bewildering us into mistaking him for Śrī Devakī-nandana himself, the sight of whom attracts the hearts of his dear devotees.”

127–8. Śrī Parikṣit said: O mother, hearing this description of Śrī Uddhava’s immense good fortune, Nārada Muni was delighted and he exhibited various symptoms of ecstatic love. As he rose and began to walk in the direction of Uddhava’s home, Mahārāja Ugrasena said:

129. “O Bhagavān Nārada, we have already told you that Śrī Uddhava, without a specific order from Śrī Kṛṣṇa, does not leave his company for even one moment.”

130. “Even though I have prayed for it, I cannot always remain in the Lord’s company; responsibility for this temporary kingdom robs me of that great attainment.”

131. “Although I am following his order to manage this kingdom and am experiencing some meagre happiness from doing so, the false prestige that comes with this position cheats me.”

132. “Uddhava, however, is very happy. Because he possesses the good fortune to always serve at the Lord’s side, he is never cheated by Śrī Kṛṣṇa.”

133. “Now please go there and make this request to him on my behalf: ‘Today the time for arrival in the assembly hall has long passed; by bringing your master Śrī Kṛṣṇa here, please give the royal assembly its Lord.’”

Chapter Six – The Most Dear Devotees

1. Śrī Parīkṣit said: O mother, upon hearing the glories of Śrī Uddhava, Nārada became immersed in the *rasa* of *mahā-prema* and forgot everything, even playing the *vīṇā* that he held in his hand.

2–3. Appearing like a man possessed by ghosts, he walked along the magnificent path to Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s inner residence, which, having been to Dvārakā many times previously, he was familiar with.

4. Sometimes he stumbled, sometimes he fell to the ground, sometimes he stood motionlessly, sometimes he trembled, sometimes he staggered, sometimes he cried out in a distressed voice, sometimes he danced and sometimes he exhibited all the symptoms of ecstatic love simultaneously.

5. O mother, now please carefully help me to keep my own composure, enabling you to hear further.

6. On that day, Śrī Kṛṣṇa was despondent for some reason and was therefore still sleeping in his bedroom.

7–8. At a little distance Śrī Uddhava was seated near the doorway, and Śrī Baladeva, Śrī Devakī, Śrī Rohiṇī, Śrī Rukmiṇī, Śrī Satyabhāmā and all the queens, Kāṁsa’s inimical mother Padmavatī and all the maidservants were also there.

9. As they were sitting there quietly, they became struck with wonder upon seeing Nārada’s unprecedented, uncommon behaviour.

10. After rising and with great difficulty making Nārada regain his composure, they washed his face, which was drenched with tears of love, and softly and slowly said to him:

11. “O *brāhmaṇa*, we have never seen you like this before – what is the cause of this condition of yours? Please sit quietly for a moment.”

12. Śrī Parīkṣit said: Then Nārada, who was trembling and whose bodily hairs were standing erect, with great difficulty opened his crying eyes, offered obeisances and said with a faltering voice:

13. “Please lead me to that captivating receptacle of the supreme good fortune, Śrī Uddhava. And if you cannot, then simply bring me a particle of his foot-dust, which will make my heart peaceful.”

14. “No devotee of either ancient times or modern times has attained the mercy of Bhagavān that he has. Therefore Bhagavān himself has said, ‘Uddhava is the best of devotees and an extension of my very self.’”

15. “Aho! Neither his ancient sons such as Brahmājī, his modern sons such as Pradyumna, his brothers headed by Baladeva, his intimate friends headed by Śiva, his wives headed by Lakṣmī-devī or even his own transcendental form are as dear to him as Uddhava is.”

16. “Bhagavān’s own descriptions of the glories of Uddhava’s immense good fortune are found throughout the Purāṇas.”

17. “And just today the Yādavas sang of the extraordinarily wonderful mercy that Śrī Kṛṣṇa has shown Uddhava.”

18. “Passing through the gateway of my ears and entering the temple of my heart, those words have plundered the wealth of my peaceful composure.”

19. Śrī Parīkṣit said: Knowing the intention of Nārada’s heart, in a perplexed state Śrī Uddhava at once rose and taking Nārada’s feet to his chest, began embracing them.

20–1. At that time remembrance of those devotees who had received the entirety of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s mercy arose in his heart, and thinking of their great treasure of *kṛṣṇa-prema*, he became helpless and began weeping. After regaining his composure with great difficulty and being joyful with transcendental envy, he said to Nārada Muni:

22. “O all-knowing one, O best of the truthful, O best of the great *munis*, because you are the original *ācārya* of the path of *bhagavad-bhakti*, whatever you speak is certainly true.”

23. “All that you have said and more is true of me; I know this and others also know.”

24. “But when I recently went to Vraja I experienced something that pulverised my pride in my own good fortune.”

25. “From this experience I came to understand the wonderful sweetnesses of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, his mercy, his love and his beloved devotees.”

26. “Upon receiving *darśana* of the Vrajavāsīs I considered myself fortunate and considering that I had then become the object of his great mercy, I became immersed in the ocean of divine bliss.”

27. “What I repeatedly sang after going to Vraja, expressing my desire to take birth as a blade of grass there, is well known to everyone. O best of sages, humbly bowing down before you time and again, I implore you to not desire to hear this narration that is saturated with *rasa* (first because Rukmiṇī, Satyabhāmā and others are nearby, and secondly because if Śrī Śyāmasundara himself hears it, he will become overwhelmed in *vraja-bhāva*).”

28. Śrī Parikṣit said: Understanding the meaning of Uddhava’s words, Śrī Rohiṇī, who stayed in Gokula for a long time and was dearly loved by the people there, tearfully said:

29–30. “O Uddhava, best of those who are known as *hari-dāsa*, there is no need to say more. Please don’t revive the memory of the Vrajavāsīs. By forgetting this memory, I have finally experienced some momentary happiness. Being immensely unfortunate, the Vrajavāsīs don’t possess even a scent of good fortune, and submerged in an ocean of anguish, they are being burnt by the gruesome sorrow-flames of a submarine-volcano.”

31–2. “When Śrī Vasudeva brought me here from Vraja, Śrī Yaśodā cried so bitterly that it melted stone and shattered thunderbolts. And who can possibly describe the condition of the other women there, who were like the living dead?”

33. “When your master Śrī Kṛṣṇa returned from the hermitage of his spiritual master, being a fool I briefly and sadly narrated the plight of the Vrajavāsīs to him.”

34. “But his heart was not melted even a little (so he did not go there), and knowing you to be expert in delivering clever messages, he sent you there instead.”

35. “Why then do you say that the Vrajavāsīs are the greatest objects of your master’s mercy?”

36–8. “Please listen to what I saw with my own eyes: Since Kṛṣṇa arrived in Vraja, from the repeated attacks of demons beginning with Pūtānā and ending with Keśī, from Indra, Varuṇa and other demigods, from serpents and other fearsome creatures, and from the breaking of the old cart and the *arjuna* trees, what calamity meant to destroy Vraja did not occur? Still the Vrajavāsīs never minded.”

39. “Being enchanted by Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s sweetnesses, they always wished solely for his welfare without a thought for their own.”

40. “Due to their natural love, everything they did was exclusively for the pleasure of Śrī Nanda-nandana.”

41. “Even at that time your master did not do anything for them, so what can I say about what he does now that all his objectives have been accomplished?”

42. Śrī Parīkṣit said: Hearing this, the insolent and senile mother of wicked Kāmsa, Padmavatī, shaking her head, said:

43. “Alas! From childhood Kṛṣṇa was made to take the cows of those merciless cowherd men out to graze in a forest of brambles.”

44. “They didn’t even give him shoes to wear! And when tortured by hunger he ate a little butter, the cowherd women tied him up!”

45. “And those cowherd women used to constantly shout accusations at him, yet knowing it to be his unhappy fate, he simply tolerated it. So tell me – what more can he possibly do for them?”

46. Śrī Parīkṣit said: But the highly intelligent Rohiṇī, who is very grave and very dear to everyone in Vraja, disregarded her words and continued:

47. “After killing all of the Yādavas’ enemies, Śrī Kṛṣṇa ruled over their capital Mathurā, and now he happily resides in Dvārakā as the king of kings.”

48. “Because he conquered all the demigods, he has become worshipful to even them, but it is very regrettable that your master does not even remember the Vrajavāsīs.”

49. Śrī Parīkṣit said: Unable to tolerate these words, Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s beloved queen Rukmiṇī, who always resides at his chest in the form of a golden line and who is the dear daughter of King Bhīṣmaka, said:

50. “O Mother Rohiṇī, you don’t understand that his heart is softer than butter. Otherwise, how could you speak in this way?”

51–2. “Sometimes while sleeping at night he lovingly calls out in a sweet voice the names of many cows, sometimes he calls his cowherd friends, and sometimes he pretends to hold the flute to his mouth as he assumes his enchanting threefold bending posture. Sometimes he calls out, ‘Mother, give me some butter!’ and sometimes he calls out to me, ‘O Rādhā! O Lalitā!’ Sometimes he tugs at my garment and says, ‘O Candrāvalī! Why are you doing this?’ Sometimes he sheds so many tears of love that it drenches his pillow.”

53. “Sometimes while dreaming he suddenly rises and weeps in anguish. Seeing his distress, we become plunged into an ocean of immense sorrow.”

54. “Last night he saw something in a dream that has made him depressed and he merely cries in anguish. Covering his lotus face with a cloth, he lies motionless as if sleeping and has not performed any of his daily duties.”

55. Śrī Parīkṣit said: Then Śrī Satyabhāmā, surrounded by many other queens, jealously said, “O Rukmiṇī, why do you utter such nonsense, saying that he only becomes like this at night?”

56. “Even when awake he is dazed and behaves just as he does when sleeping. We are his wives in name only; in reality even the maidservants of the *vraja-gopīs* are more dear to him than we are.”

57. Śrī Parīkṣit said: Unable to tolerate these words, Rohiṇī-nandana Śrī Balarāma, who is the friend and very life of the residents of Gokula, angrily said:

58. “Girls! Because we are all engaged in conversing about the plight of the Vrajavāsis, my brother Kṛṣṇa is simply exhibiting his expertise in cheating by pretending to be afflicted.”

59. “In an effort to console them, I went to Vraja and stayed for two months, but by neither words or actions was I able to pacify them.”

60. “Seeing that they would not be pacified without Kṛṣṇa himself coming, I made them various promises. That appeased them somewhat, and on the pretext of quickly returning with Kṛṣṇa, with great difficulty I returned here.”

61. “Arriving here I fretfully said to Kṛṣṇa, ‘On any pretext go to Vraja just once and save the lives of the residents there.’”

62. “His mouth replied, ‘I am going just now’ but the thought of it never reached his heart because you can understand a person’s heart by their actions.”

63. Śrī Parīkṣit said: Hearing this, Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa suddenly rose from his bed and being subjugated by the *prema* of his dear devotees, cried loudly as he went outside.

64. Appearing to be distressed solely for the purpose of showing mercy to others, with tears streaming from his blossoming lotus eyes he said in a choked voice:

65. “What you have said is true; though struck by a great thunderbolt, my heart of stone does not shatter.”

66. “I have forgotten their extraordinary love for me and how they nurtured me for so long in my childhood.”

67. “What to speak of being even a little benevolent towards them, being cruel I have brought immense suffering to their soft hearts.”

68. “O brother Uddhava, you know everything and are the most dear to me. Tell me at once – what should I do? Quickly deliver me from this ocean of anguish.”

69. Śrī Parīkṣit said: Then Devakī, who loved her son and was Yaśodā’s dear friend, said, “Kṛṣṇa, you should give your dear friends in Vraja whatever they desire.”

70–2. Padmavatī, who is Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s elderly maternal grandmother and Ugrasena’s senile queen, feared that the kingdom may be given to the Vrajavāsīs and felt insulted because Śrī Rohiṇī did not listen to her. Therefore, to protect her husband’s kingdom and thinking to change the mind of Kṛṣṇa, the sole shelter of the Yadu dynasty, and help him to regain his composure, she skilfully spoke these joking words:

73–5. “O Kṛṣṇa, why are you feeling such remorse? Please listen to my advice: Śrī Gargācārya will calculate every morsel of food you two brothers ate while residing in Nanda’s house for those eleven years, and then my husband will send twice that amount to Nanda – I swear it. And according to his discretion, Nanda will decide if he wants to reimburse you for looking after his cows during that time.”

76. Śrī Parīkṣit said: Simultaneously hearing and not hearing these words and appearing as if he didn’t understand at all, Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa sorrowfully said to Uddhava:

77. “O best of scholars, you know all the aspirations of the Vrajavāsīs. Tell me at once what they wish of me.”

78. Śrī Parīkṣit said: Hearing Śrī Bhagavān’s words, Uddhava became very sad at heart and after a moment’s silence, sighed and sorrowfully said:

79. “The Vrajavāsīs do not desire the opulence of the king of kings, nor do they desire the celestial possessions of the residents of Svarga or anything of this world. They only want you.”

80. “Please be merciful and listen carefully to what I am saying, and then you may decide yourself what should be done.”

81. “Previously when the Vrajavāsīs saw the clothing and ornaments that you sent back there with Śrī Nandarāya, they were plunged into an ocean of grief and said to one another:

82. “Aho! It is calamitous that Śrī Kṛṣṇa thinks we desire these things and that giving them to us is his mercy!”

83. “Horrible, horrible are our life-airs, which have not yet evacuated our throats! And what more is there? Horrible also is Śrī Nandarāya, who has left Śrī Kṛṣṇa there and brought back these useless articles!”

84. “Then your mother Śrī Yaśodā and all the Vrajavāsīs, thinking that you were not ever returning, became like living corpses and began fasting until death.”

85–6. “And Śrī Nandarāya, considering that he had committed a great offence, became anguished and could not speak for three days. Then he concluded that the Vrajavāsīs were certainly going to perish, so hundreds of times he repeated your promise that you would be returning very soon, and utilising all his skill in persuasion, he swayed them by saying:

87. “My son Kṛṣṇa has sent these articles as indications of his love for you. He is true to his word; he will return immediately after completing his duties there.”

88. “Hearing these words from Śrī Nandarāya, all the simple-hearted Vrajavāsīs became faithful, and after re-appraising your love, placed all those clothes and ornaments on their bodies.”

89. “They believed that when you returned there and saw them wearing those clothes and ornaments, you would realise them to be obedient to you and therefore be even more merciful to them.”

90. “But when you didn’t go there and instead sent me with a message, all the Vrajavāsīs became as if dead.”

91. “Seeing their condition, I promised them that you would certainly return, and with great difficulty it was as if I brought them back to life.”

92. “To attain you they have abandoned all sensual pleasures, and to know what their condition is like right now, ask your elder brother.”

93–4. Śrī Parikṣit said: Fearing separation from Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the faces of Devakī, Rukmiṇī and the other queens withered in sorrow, and lowering their heads they began shedding streams of tears. Seeing their condition, soft-hearted Śrī Kṛṣṇa became overcome with affection for them and indicated for a leaf to write on, a pen and a pot of ink.

95–6. “My dearest ones, after completing my remaining duties and comforting my friends here, I will quickly return.” To strengthen the faith of the Vrajavāsīs, he wrote this comforting letter of love with his own lotus hand.

97. Understanding the intentions in Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s action, Śrī Uddhava, who knows the hearts of the Vrajavāsīs, became grief-stricken and proclaimed:

98. “O Lord, understand this to be certain – without the auspicious return of your lotus feet, the Vrajavāsīs will perish. They do not desire anything but this.”

99. Śrī Parīkṣit said: Then, shaking her head and laughing, the senile mother of Kāmsa said, “O foolish Devakī, now, *yes now*, I have understood!”

100–1. “Those cunning cowherd men bewitched Uddhava by incessantly feeding him milk, and now with his help they want to bring your son back to that dangerous, inaccessible forest of brambles, which is inhabited by wild animals, just to protect their domestic animals!”

102. Śrī Parīkṣit said: Unable to tolerate these heinous words, Śrī Rohiṇī, the mother of Balarāma and the dear friend of Yaśodā, became furious and said:

103. “O mother of Kāmsa, what is this about Kṛṣṇa *being exploited* to protect cows? If the Vrajavāsīs do not see him for even one second, they cannot sustain their lives.”

104. “When sometimes Kṛṣṇa would take shelter behind a tree where the *sakhās* could not see him, they would weep and loudly cry out, ‘Hey Śrī Kṛṣṇa! Hey Śrī Kṛṣṇa! Return here quickly!’”

105. “When Śrī Kṛṣṇa would take the cows to graze in the forest, in separation from him the Vrajavāsīs would consider the day to be as long as Brahmā’s night and every moment to be like a *yuga*. Time and again they looked at the path by which he would be returning, at the sun for indications that it was beginning to set and for signs of dust being raised by the calves’ hooves. And when the vibration of his flute became audible, they entered a state of maddened divine love.”

106. “In reality, on the pretext of taking the cows out to graze, Śrī Kṛṣṇa regularly went to those charming forests with his elder brother and the cowherd boys solely for the purpose of enjoying many pastimes.”

107. “Even now the numerous ponds there, which are fragrant with the scent of blue lotuses and adorned with the humming of intoxicated bumblebees, ripple from the stirring of the aquatic birds.”

108. “From being in contact with Vraja-bhūmi the Yamunā is wonderfully radiant, and not only her, but the many other rivers flowing there, which have descended from Vindhyācala and other mountains, are also magnificently splendid.”

109. “Being enveloped in *bāluka* flowers and soft, fresh grass, both banks of all those rivers are immensely splendid. Having abandoned their natural enmity, the birds who reside there sport blissfully and intimately.”

110. “The shrubs, trees and vines there, bent over with the weight of exquisite fruits, flowers and newly blossomed shoots, are splendidous, and the flocks of peacocks and cuckoos produce a sweet melody. Even Brahmājī eulogises this Vraja.”

111. “Because in Vraja or at Govardhana there is no danger of the cows being killed or stolen, there is no need for someone to protect them. In the morning the cows, buffaloes and other animals go voluntarily to the forest where they eat grass and drink water to their hearts’ content, and then automatically return to their homes in the evening.”

112. The old hag Padmavati said: “O garrulous child, if that is so, then why have we heard that now, for want of protection, all the cows are very nearly dead?”

113–4. Śrī Parīkṣit said: Hearing this Śrī Gopāladeva became distraught, and the affliction in his heart caused his lotus face to wither. Anguished in concern for the cows, he looked towards the face of Baladeva, from whose eyes tears were flowing and who knew both the past and present news of Vraja.

115. Understanding his brother’s feelings and remembering Vraja, Rohiṇī-nandana Baladeva could not maintain his composure, and weeping, clearly said:

116–7. “O Kṛṣṇa, what to speak of just the cows? Your beloved deer, birds, the *bhāṇḍira*, *kadamba* and other trees, vines, groves and grass have also given up their lives for your sake. Even Govardhana Hill has shrunk and the rivers headed by the Yamunā have gone dry.”

118. “O brother, sustained by your promise and hopeful of someday receiving your *darśana* again, only a few humans remain alive there. You don’t want to hear any more.”

119. “If You are not kind to them now, then Yamarāja will certainly devour them all.”

120. “It is a matter of great sorrow to them that you removed the poison from Kāliya-hrad (because otherwise they would be able to give up their lives by drinking it). Now please hear another cause of their grief.”

121. “The Yamunā has very little water remaining and is almost completely dry (so they are unable to drown themselves in it). Govardhana Hill, which you held with your lotus hand, has shrunk (otherwise they would give up their lives by jumping from the top of it).”

122. “The Vrajavāsīs have given up eating and drinking altogether, but because they still drink the nectar of your name, their lives do not leave them. Now their only destination is to be consumed by fire in the great dry forest.”

123. Śrī Parīkṣit said: Hearing this, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who due to having a soft, compassionate nature cannot tolerate the suffering of others, wrapped his arms around Śrī Balarāma's neck and bitterly wept as if he were the most miserable person, his tears washing away the *candana* and other ointments decorating his body.

124. O mother, then at that moment both Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Śrī Balarāma fainted and fell to the ground. Seeing this unprecedented spectacle of anguished crying, Rohiṇī, Uddhava, Devakī, Rukmiṇī, Satyabhāmā and all the other residents of the palace's inner chambers became grief-stricken and cried out again and again.

125. Hearing this unprecedented sound of anguished crying emanating from the inner chambers, Śrī Vasudeva, Śrī Ugrasena and all the Yādavas quickly ran there crying out in distress. Seeing the condition of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Śrī Balarāma, they became devastated and cried very loudly, and when Śrī Gargācārya, the *brāhmaṇas* and all the residents of the city came, they also cried in the same way.

Chapter Seven – The Ultimate Devotees

1. Śrī Parīkṣit said: O mother, at once the vibration of the distraught weeping of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and his associates pervaded the entire universe, giving birth to numerous dreadful calamities.
2. Knowing that no one besides Śrī Kṛṣṇa could restore peace to the universe, four-headed Brahmā came there accompanied by his associates, all the demigods and the personified Vedas and Purāṇas.
- 3–4. Brahmā saw that his father and spiritual master, Mahā-Nārāyaṇa Śrī Kṛṣṇa, tormented by love for his dearest devotees, had fallen into an unprecedented condition. He could understand that the Lord was now anxious to manifest the hidden glories of the sweetness of his devotees' love for him. Astonished, Brahmā could not keep his composure and momentarily cried out.
5. After carefully composing himself, he began thinking of a way to bring his master back to a peaceful condition. After some time a plan arose within his heart.
6. Then, after loudly calling Garuḍa, who was standing near Śrī Bhagavān weeping, to come to him, Brahmā carefully said to him:
- 7–8. “Nearby, situated between Mount Raivata and the ocean, Viśvakarmā constructed a Śrī Vṛndāvana that is adorned with *mūrtis* of Śrī Nandarāya, Śrī Yaśodā, other cowherd people and many cows. It is so splendid it seems that it is directly the Śrī Vṛndāvana that is situated within Mathurā-maṇḍala.”
9. “While Śrī Kṛṣṇa and his elder brother are in this condition, very carefully and slowly take them there. Please take Rohiṇī there also, but no one else.”
10. Śrī Parīkṣit said: After Brahmā had helped him to regain his composure with great difficulty, Śrī Garuḍa very gently and skilfully placed them both on his back.
11. Brahmājī helped the Yādavas and all the other residents of Dvārakā to regain their composure and sent them back to their own places. As Garuḍa was carrying Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma along, Balarāma regained consciousness somewhat.
12. Arriving there, where it seemed that the *gopas* and *gopīs* were directly present, Garuḍa gently placed Śrī Kṛṣṇa on a bed.

13–14. Unable to leave Kṛṣṇa while he was in that unconscious state, Uddhava, Padmavatī, Devakī, who loved her son dearly, and queens headed by Rukmiṇī and Satyabhāmā also went there, but at the request of Brahmā they stood at a distance and watched from a hidden position.

15. Considering himself an offender (due to having caused Śrī Kṛṣṇa to faint), Śrī Nārada, along with the Yādavas and the demigods, did not go there.

16. Instead, attired like a *yogī*, Nārada remained hidden in the sky from where he could witness the sweetness of Bhagavān’s pastime.

17. Śrī Garuḍa also remained hidden in the sky, providing shade for his master with his wings.

18. Then Śrī Baladeva, the crest-jewel of the clever, fully regained consciousness and within a moment understood Brahmājī’s intention.

19–20. He quickly wiped Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s, as well as his own, lotus face, gently placed a flute in his brother’s belt, a horn-bugle and a stick in his lotus hands, a garland composed of *kadamba* flowers around his neck, a crown adorned with a peacock feather on his head, and earrings composed of fresh *guñjā* flowers in his ears.

21. Having attired Śrī Kṛṣṇa in his forest dress with these objects fashioned by Viśvakarmā, Balarāma forcibly lifted Śrī Kṛṣṇa up from bed and loudly said:

22. “O Kṛṣṇa, O Brother! Get up, get up! Wake up and see! It is late! The cows are already entering the forest!”

23. “Your friends headed by Śrīdāmā are waiting for you, and overcome with affection for you, your parents cannot even speak (to awaken you)!”

24. “And seeing your lotus face, the *gopīs* are whispering in each others’ ears (about how you are not awakening due to having spent the entire night with them) and are definitely cracking jokes at your expense.”

25. Śrī Parikṣit said: Lovingly calling Śrī Kṛṣṇa in this way, Balarāma forcibly lifted him up and shook him.

26. Upon Baladeva’s immense effort to awaken him, after some time Śrī Kṛṣṇa finally regained consciousness. Struck with wonder and saying “Excellent! Excellent!” he quickly stood up.

27. Fully opening his lotus eyes, he smiled as he repeatedly gazed in all directions, and seeing the *mūrti* of Nanda before him, he became shy and offered obeisances.

28. Seeing to one side the *mūrti* of Śrī Yaśodā, who out of affection was gazing intently at his lotus face, Śrī Kṛṣṇa laughed and gleefully said:

29. “O Mother, this morning I have seen many peculiar dreams, which all seemed so real!”

30. “I went to Mathurā and killed Kāmsa, and by conquering Jarāsandha and other kings I gave happiness to the demigods.”

31. “I had a great city named Dvārakā constructed on the shore of the ocean, and I cannot quickly describe to you all the rest.”

32. “Due to the obstacle of these long, enchanting dreams that seemed like ages, I was not able to rise at the customary time.”

33. “O Brother, if you will not consider it to be a lie, when we go to the forest I will tell you in detail about these highly astonishing dreams that I have seen.”

34. Śrī Parikṣit said: After speaking thus, Śrī Kṛṣṇa respectfully offered obeisances to his mother. Then the intelligent Rohiṇī, knowing his desire to take a lunch to the forest, said:

35. “O child, because you are her only son, today your mother is worried because you slept for so long. What is the need of speaking any more to her?”

36. “The cows and your *sakhās* have already gone far ahead and you should quickly follow them. I will prepare your lunch and have it sent to the forest.”

37–8. Śrī Parikṣit said: Hearing these words from the affectionate Rohiṇī, Śrī Kṛṣṇa offered obeisances to her and laughing, like a thief carefully snatched the fresh butter that was placed in his mother’s hand. Then he called Śrī Balarāma, and because his brother had already gone ahead with the cows, out of love for him Śrī Kṛṣṇa did not eat the butter at that time.

39. Then with polite words he requested both his mothers to arrange for his midday meal. After going further ahead, he spoke some joking words to the *gopīs*.

40. After stopping the cows with a vibration from his flute, he smiled as he came to Śrīmatī Rādhikā, who was standing with her friends, and spoke these joking words:

41. “O queen of my life, having now met your exclusive devotee in this secluded place, why do you not speak? Are you feeling jealous today?”

42. “Yes, now I understand. Knowing everything, you have ascertained what I saw in my dream this morning.”

43. “You must know how I left you, went to another place and married many princesses, but please listen to the reason for it: they were extremely anxious to be married, and if I had not fulfilled their desires, they would all have certainly perished. I also begot many children and grandchildren.”

44. “What has happened, happened; now I must quickly proceed to the forest. O giver of satisfaction, tonight I will make you blissful.”

45. Śrī Parikṣit said: Saying this Śrī Kṛṣṇa threw flowers on that *mūrti* of Śrīmatī Rādhikā and, after looking in all directions, kissed and embraced her. Then he proceeded until he joined the cows and *gopas*.

46. When Śrī Devakī saw Śrī Kṛṣṇa going along playing the flute and dressed in his wonderful, remarkably enchanting forest attire, none of which she had ever seen before, although she was elderly, out of love milk began to flow from her breasts.

47. And seeing him like this for the first time, the queens headed by Rukmiṇī and Jāmbavatī became bewildered by *mahā-prema*, fainted and fell to the ground.

48–9. Overcome with amorous desire, with open arms old Padmavatī and Satyabhāmā tried repeatedly to run to Kṛṣṇa to kiss and embrace him, but the highly intelligent Śrī Kālindī, who had seen Kṛṣṇa attired like this before, kept her composure with great difficulty and, along with Śrī Uddhava, forcibly pulled them both back.

50. As he continued along herding the cows, Śrī Kṛṣṇa saw the ocean, and mistaking it for the Yamunā, he began calling his friends to come and enjoy blissful sports in the water.

51. “O *sakhās!* Where have you all gone? Hey Śrīdāmā! Hey Subala! Hey Arjuna! Quickly and gleefully run here!”

52. “After making the cows drink the sweet, pure and cool water of the Yamunā, we will enjoy water-sports!”

53. Saying this, Śrī Kṛṣṇa herded the cows along until they reached the shore of the ocean, which was resounding with crashing waves.

54. Glancing in all directions, he saw his own great city of Dvārakā situated on the shore of the ocean, and struck with wonder said, “What is this? Where am I? Who am I?”

55. In great astonishment he prattled and gazed at the ocean and the city again and again. Then Śrī Baladeva said to him:

56. “O Vaikuṅtheśvara, my Lord! Please understand who you are – beseeched by the demi-gods you have descended to remove the Earth’s burden.”

57. “Therefore please annihilate the demons, protect the saintly persons and perform the sacrifice of your cousin, Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira.”

58. “You made Yudhiṣṭhira the emperor and by your great prowess you frighten the demons headed by Anuśālva.”

59. “Now please take the Yādavas there and kill they who solely out of enmity for you torment your dear devotees headed by Yudhiṣṭhira.”

60. Śrī Parīkṣit said: Hearing these words of Śrī Baladeva, which were meant to help him regain his composure and bring him to a different *rasa* (that of heroicism), Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s mood changed.

61. Becoming angry, he said, “O Brother, who is this sordid younger brother of Śālva? Alone I will go there now and kill him!”

62. “I swear to you that what I have said will come to pass.” Due to having become aware of this topic, he abandoned his previous state of being spellbound in separation and regained his composure.

63. Again he looked around in all directions, and then realised that he was the master of Dvārakā and the king of the Yādavas.

64. The thought “Was I not sleeping in the palace?” came to his memory, and then he saw the flute in his hand and also his brother’s forest attire.

65. Next, remembering how he left the palace and how he was taking cows out to graze, he became simultaneously wonderstruck and doubtful, and began laughing.

66. Then Śrī Balarāma, knowing Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s heart, smiled and told him how and why Brahmājī had arranged everything.

67. Looking at his brother’s face, Śrī Kṛṣṇa became embarrassed and smiled. Then Śrī Balarāma cleansed the dust from Kṛṣṇa’s limbs and had him bathe in the ocean.

68. Then the knower of Śrī Bhagavān’s intentions, Śrī Garuḍa, came there. Śrī Kṛṣṇa climbed upon him and, unseen by anyone, returned to his own palace.

69. Afterwards the all-knowing Śrī Uddhava brought Śrī Devakī, Rukmiṇī and the other queens back to consciousness and led them to Śrī Bhagavān in the inner chamber of the palace.

70. Devakī greeted her son with words of blessing and then, aware of the time, quickly went to prepare his meal.

71. Śrī Rukmiṇī and the other queens were all present there hiding behind pillars, but Satyabhāmā was not there and noticing this, Śrī Kṛṣṇa asked Uddhava about her.

72–3. Śrī Hari-dāsa (Uddhava) said: “O Lord, when you were present at the Śrī Vṛndāvana that was constructed near Mount Raivata, your *bhāva* was such that the ignorant could not understand it. As she stood with your queens and witnessed this *bhāva* from a distance, the senile and wicked Padmavatī said:

74–5. “O impious Devakī! O unfortunate Rukmiṇī! O lowly Satyabhāmā! O worthless queens headed by Jāmbavatī! Seeing this you must surely now renounce your pride and perform severe austerities to become maidservants of the cowherd girls!”

76. “Hearing these vile words, the intelligent Devakī, who carried in her womb you who are the foundation of all the worlds, said:

77–8. “O half-witted Padmavatī, what is so astonishing about this? In our previous lives Vasudeva and myself performed austerities to attain Śrī Bhagavān as our son, and as a result he who is the master of those who bestow benedictions has now become our son. But Śrī Nandarāya and Yaśodā prayed to Brahmā for *kṛṣṇa-bhakti*.”

79. “By the power of the boon that they received from Brahmā, who is the best of devotees, they and their associates attained a glory even greater than ours.”

80. “They both lovingly nurtured Śrī Kṛṣṇa in various ways. Therefore it is perfectly proper that Śrī Kṛṣṇa has this type of *bhāva* towards them, and that *bhāva* is also dear to me.”

81. “Then Śrī Rukmiṇī joyfully spoke, and upon hearing her words, the love of all the devotees increased.”

82. “The *gopīs*, who abandoned their husbands and children and who are indifferent to the pleasures of this world or the next, being afflicted with *prema*, served Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the *rāsa* dance in an indescribable, confidential way.”

83. “By their immense *prema*, the *gopīs* have attained Śrī Kṛṣṇa in a *bhāva* that is not attainable by us even if we executed the topmost *sādhana*s.”

84. “The *gopīs*’ love for Śrī Kṛṣṇa is superior to ours, because although we are fortunate enough to have become his wives, while engaged in performing activities related to our occupational duties, daily rituals, children, grandchildren and homes, we serve him with awareness of his majesty, whereas the *gopīs* serve him solely with pure *bhāva*. Therefore we should not be envious of them; on the contrary we should praise that *bhāva* which brings him under the control of his dear devotees and thereby further magnifies his great glories.”

85. “All the other queens approved of these words, but the daughter of Satrājita, Śrī Satyabhāmā, could not tolerate them and fled to the chamber of jealous love.”

86. Śrī Parīkṣit said: Then Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Lord of the *gopīs*’ lives, became angry and ordered, “Bring that foolish princess here at once!”

87. Through her jealous devotional service, Satyabhāmā, the best of intelligent girls, was solely trying to please her master Śrī Kṛṣṇa, but because he is exclusively *rasika* for the *prema* of the *gopīs*, he was not at all pleased.

88. When Satyabhāmā heard his order from the maidservants, she got up, cleansed her body and quickly went there.

89. Embarrassed and frightened, she hid behind a pillar, and when Śrī Kṛṣṇa saw her, he angrily and loudly said:

90–1. “O narrow-minded daughter of Satrājita, just as you became jealous many times before, such as when Rukmiṇī received a *pārijāta* flower, you are now jealous upon seeing the pinnacle of *prema* that the Vrajavāsīs possess for me. O insignificant girl, do you not know that whatever I do is in accordance with the wishes of the Vrajavāsīs?”

92. “I swear that if the Vrajavāsīs thought it good for me to leave all of you and go there, I would do it at this very moment.”

93. “What Brahmā said as he offered prayers is not false; I am incapable of repaying my debt to them, and am therefore a great debtor.”

94. “If out of love for them I were to go and reside there, I do not see that it would be for their welfare.”

95. “Upon seeing me their intense love for me would overflow and in great distress they would become spellbound. What to speak of forgetting their bodies and bodily relations, they would even forget their very selves!”

96. “Their suffering would not be mitigated. Upon seeing me, even whatever activities I could perform for their happiness would merely double their agony because they would then be anguished in fear of being separated from me again.”

97. “Not seeing me now, sometimes, being afflicted by a blazing fire of separation, they become like corpses and sometimes, becoming maddened, they experience various sweet *bhāvas*.”

98. “Sometimes, upon seeing the dense darkness, which is the same colour as me, they mistake it for me and begin kissing and embracing it. To whom can I describe all of this (because you are not even qualified to hear it!)?”

99. “Understanding that my being there and not being there are the same, I do not go there. Now listen to the reason why I married you and the other princesses.”

100. “O proud and jealous girl, when separated from the Vrajavāsīs I began residing in Mathurā, I had no desire whatsoever to marry.”

101–2. “But when from the hand of a *brāhmaṇa* I received a pathetic letter from Rukmiṇī saying that if I did not accept her she would give up her life, I pulverised the pride of those wicked kings by snatching her as they looked on and then accepted her hand in marriage.”

103. “When, from seeing her, intense remembrance of the *vraja-gopīs* comes to me, I become anguished.”

104–5. “O Satyabhāmā, I thought that by marrying all of you, who are similar in number and qualities to the sixteen thousand one hundred *gopīs* who worshipped the goddess Kātyāyanī to attain me, my heart would be somewhat pacified.”

106. “But know for certain that my great happiness and my glory have not accompanied me here. Abandoning me, they both have remained in Vraja, which factually is the only qualified place for them.”

107. “In Vraja, I was so immersed in an ocean of bliss by enjoying supremely wonderful pastimes with the charming people there that I had no awareness of when it was night and when the day was dawning.”

108. “While happily playing in my childhood I killed many demons, subdued the Kāliya serpent and banished him from Vraja, and held Govardhana Hill in my left hand.”

109. “There I was so immersed in that ocean of bliss that I considered speaking with or even looking at Brahmā and the demigods who were offering me prayers and obeisances to be painful. What more can I say, while there I even forgot my mission on behalf of the demigods.”

110. “What to speak of only the Vrajavāsīs, at that time with my handsome form, attire, unprecedented nectarean flute-melodies and the sweetness of my *prema*, I enchanted the entire universe.”

111–12. “The result was that Brahmā, Mahādeva, Indra, the Siddhas, Candra and all the demigods who travel in airplanes, the cows, bulls, calves, deer, trees, birds, vines, grass, rivers, clouds, all moving and stationary living entities, and the conscious and unconscious became immersed in flowing streams of *prema* and exhibited symptoms of ecstasy, abandoning their own natures and adopting just the opposite natures.”

113. “To ascertain if what I am saying is true or untrue, ask Kālindī because she personally witnessed the blissful pastimes I enjoyed with the Vrajavāsīs.”

114. “Here, even with playful, joking pastimes I cannot inspire that *bhāva* within my relatives the Yādavas.”

115. “Because here it is very difficult to break the pride of jealous girls like you, out of shame I have put aside my dear flute.”

116. “*Hāya!* It is very regrettable that not only are the blissful pastimes that I enjoyed there not possible here, I also cannot even describe them here!”

117. “There is one Śrī Śukadeva who is as dear to me as the Vrajavāsīs are. His heart fully saturated with *mahā-prema*, he will narrate those pastimes that I performed in Vraja to his equally qualified disciple Śrī Parikṣit, whom I protected in the womb.”

118. Śrī Parikṣit said: Fearing that by continuing to glorify the immense good fortune of Vraja in this way, Śrī Kṛṣṇa would again become overwhelmed in *bhāva* as before, the best of ministers, Śrī Uddhava, inspired the queens to come closer by giving a hand signal.

119. Then Śrī Rukmiṇī and the other queens as well as Satyabhāmā quickly went to him, grasped his lotus feet, and by offering him sincere prayers while shedding tears, they gradually pacified their husband.

120–1. Next Śrī Uddhava brought in Devakī and Rohiṇī with Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s meal, and after also bringing in Śrī Balarāma, who was freshly bathed, he informed Śrī Kṛṣṇa that Nārada was standing at the door.

122. Śrī Nanda-nandana, being the omniscient witness within everyone’s heart, smiled and said, “Why has he stopped there today? Why doesn’t he come near as before?”

123. Śrī Uddhava smiled and replied, “O Prabhu, due to fear and shame he does not come.” Then Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the worshipful deity of the *brāhmaṇas*, personally led Nārada inside and said to him:

124. “My dear friend Nārada, topmost of *rasika* devotees! O you who are forever engaged in inspiring love for me within others, you have done me a great favour.”

125–6. “Although before I was anguished because my heart was burning in the blazing forest fire of separation from my most beloved devotees, that pain of separation is even more glorious than the happiness of meeting with them. Because it immerses one in an indescribable and enchanting ocean of *prema*, only the *rasika* devotees can understand it.”

127. “When the anguish of separation ends, one feels an immense happiness similar to that when they are directly meeting their beloved. Perpetually realising their desired object within the heart, they experience complete satisfaction.”

128. “Therefore one will actually desire this *bhāva*, and if somehow this *bhāva* is lost, one will become deeply upset. Because separation brings deep remembrance of one’s beloved, it is considered to be auspicious.”

129. “Remembrance of the beloved of one’s life is like the bestowal of life itself, and forgetting them is worse than death.”

130. “Although one can never forget the beloved of his life, still special remembrance of his beloved brings a joy equal to that of the bestowal of life itself.”

131. “Today you have done me a great favour. I am very pleased with you, so please choose your most cherished benediction from me.”

132. Śrī Parikṣit said: Calling out “*Jaya! Jaya!*” Nārada Muni began performing *kīrtana* on his *viñā* of the names related to the Vraja pastimes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the giver of boons.

133–4. O mother, having wandered all the way from Daśāśvamedha-ghāṭa in Prayāga to Śrī Dvārakāpurī, and having spoken to numerous devotees from the first *brāhmaṇa* up to the residents of Dvārakā, Śrī Nārada, knowing them all to be the recipients of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s complete mercy but desiring to hear it directly from his lotus mouth, blissfully requested from the supremely munificent Lord this enchanting benediction:

135. “O Śrī Kṛṣṇacandra, may I never become satiated with your mercy, devotion performed unto you, love for you and the bliss of performing *bhajana* unto you.”

136. Śrī Bhagavān said: “O Nārada, crown-jewel of the skilful, what kind of benediction is that? My mercy, devotion and love are already like that by nature.”

137–8. “O sage, having wandered from Prayāga-tīrtha to here, you have seen and heard from many of my devotees, all of whom are liberated and the objects of my mercy to varying degrees.”

139. “Still none of them are ever satiated, so therefore take another cherished benediction from me.”

140. Śrī Parikṣit said: Then Śrī Nārada began blissfully dancing and, as if begging alms, requested two exalted benedictions from he who is the crown-jewel of the munificent.

141. “O you who after giving himself away in charity still thinks that he has not given enough! Now all my endeavours have become successful because I have come to know who is the best object of your mercy.”

142. “O king of the munificent, there is something that I have desired for so long, and I will consider attaining it your ultimate mercy.”

143. “O swan who resides on the lake of the Vrajavāsīs’ *prema*! First I request that, being intoxicated by drinking the sweeter than sweet nectar of the names related to your beauty and pastimes that have arisen from the ocean of Gokula, I may perpetually wander throughout the universe delighting everyone.”

144. “(My second request is that) May those who even once faithfully narrate or hear your *vraja-līlā* or touch the places where you have performed those pastimes attain *prema-bhakti* for your lotus feet, which are tinted with the *kuṅkuma* from the *gopīs*’ breasts.”

145. Śrī Parikṣit said: Then Śrī Gopīnātha very respectfully raised his lotus hand and blissfully said, “So be it.”

146. Hearing this, Nārada Muni became immersed in a great ocean of supreme bliss, and by singing and dancing in various ways, delighted Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

147. Then, as Devakī and Rohiṇī looked on, Nārada accompanied Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma in enjoying delicious foodstuffs and drinks that were served by Rukmiṇī.

148. Śrī Uddhava was reminding the Lord of something, Satyabhāmā was fanning him, and the other queens pleased him with services that were appropriate for that specific time.

149. After they rinsed their mouths, Śrī Kṛṣṇa worshipped Nārada Muni by anointing him with *candana* and decorating him with a fragrant garland and numerous ornaments.

150. Saying “I should proceed to Prayāga to gratify the sages there who are eagerly awaiting me,” Śrī Nārada took Kṛṣṇa’s permission to go.

151. Then *bhakti-rasika* Nārada, who in his travels personally experienced the glories of *bhakti*, blissfully playing his *viṇā* and singing, went to Prayāga.

152. Hearing about the glories of *bhakti* from Nārada’s mouth, the *munis* there, who were expert in extracting the essence, completely renounced their own non-devotional *sādhanas*.

153. In accordance with Nārada’s instructions, with supreme humility they began worshipping the lotus feet of Śrī Madanagopāla.

154–5. O Mother, with *prema-bhakti*, singing of *nāma-saṅkīrtana* and desiring the *dāsyabhāva* of the *gopīs*, like him you also please worship that adolescent cowherd Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who in the nectar-ocean of the *rāsa-līlā* is surrounded by *gopīs* who are fully enchanted in love for him.

156. As a fly is incapable of holding Mount Sumeru in its mouth, similarly I am incapable of describing even one of the *gopīs*’ glories.

157. Aho! Eternally immersed in *rasa*, my spiritual master (Śukadeva Gosvāmī) always sings the names of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and his beloved queens headed by Rukmiṇī.

158. But fearful of being scorched by the intense heat of the blazing fire of their paramount *prema*, he is unable to utter the names of the *vraja-gopīs* headed by Śrīmatī Rādhikā. If he were to touch even a spark of that fire by uttering their names, special remembrance of them would arise within him and he would immediately become distraught and unsteady.

159. O mother, by lovingly taking shelter of Śrī Gopinātha and the *gopīs* in accordance with what I have spoken here, by their mercy you also will be able to know something of their glories.

160. Whoever faithfully relates or hears this great narrative, wherein the objects of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s mercy have been assessed, will soon attain *kṛṣṇa-prema*.

Part Two

The Glory of Śrī Goloka-dhāma

Chapter One – Renunciation

namaḥ śrī kṛṣṇāya bhagavate vāsudevāya

1. Śrī Janamejaya said: Yes, overcome with *kṛṣṇa-prema*, my father collected the deep and rare essence of all the scriptures and taught it to his mother, Śrī Uttarā.
2. But O best of the *munis*, having drunk that nectar which is like the essence of the *Bhāgavatam* ocean and which is scented with the fragrance of the lotus flower of your mouth, I am still not satisfied.
3. O wise one, please be merciful and relate more of the nectarean conversation between mother and son, who both relished the nectar of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet, or any other essential conversation that is saturated with *rasa*.
4. Śrī Jaimini said: O King, by their own power no one can know this subject matter nor can anyone describe it, and even those who have personal experience of Brahman and who are all-knowing cannot know it.
5. By the mercy of that ocean of *śrī-kṛṣṇa-bhakti-rasa*, Śukadeva Gosvāmī, I sat near Śrī Parīkṣit and Uttarā and directly heard their conversation.
6. O greatly fortunate Janamejaya, the Vedas order that a *guru* should reveal deep subject matters to a qualified disciple. Therefore I will speak the glories of Śrī Goloka-dhāma, so please listen carefully.
7. When your grandmother Śrī Uttarā heard that narration which is verified as the best by those who are the full recipients of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's mercy, she became exceedingly blissful.
- 8–9. Then she began to think that there must be a place superior to even Vaikuṅṭha, where the *gopīs* enjoy the supreme fruit of their *bhakti* to the lotus feet of Śrī Gopīnātha. But by her own intelligence she was unable to come to a conclusion, so she asked Śrī Parīkṣit:
10. Śrī Uttarā said: *Grhastas* who practise pious activities desiring to enjoy the fruits of their work attain the three worlds of Bhūḥ, Bhuvaḥ and Svaḥ, and *brahmacāris*, *vānaprasthas* and *sannyāsīs* attain the four higher worlds of Mahaḥ, Janaḥ, Tapaḥ and Satya.
11. According to the fruit of their respective occupational duties, after enjoying there for some time they again return to take birth on this Earth planet. Some of those who have attained Maharloka and other higher planets become liberated with Śrī Brahmā.

12. Some *yogīs* enjoy on Arcira and other planets and gradually become liberated, whereas the ascetics who possess transcendental knowledge attain liberation at once.

13. After enjoying according to their wishes, Bhagavān's devotees who desire to enjoy the fruits of their labour eventually become purified and attain eternal residence in his *dhāma*.

14. But Bhagavān's devotees who are devoid of material desires at once attain Vaikuṅṭha, which is *sac-cid-ānanda* and very rarely attained by even the liberated souls.

15. There they experience in many ways the happiness of directly serving the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and, cursing impersonal liberation, they frolic with him.

16. Some of them are *jñāna-miśra* devotees, others are *śuddha-bhaktas*, others are *prema-bhaktas*, others are supreme *prema-bhaktas* and others are *premātura-bhaktas*, who are completely lost in loving devotion.

17. Due to this gradation of loving sentiments, the fruit they receive is not the same, but still, in Vaikuṅṭha no kind of gradation is visible.

18. Even *sārūpya-mukti*, *sāmīpya-mukti* and the other *muktis* appear to be equal. Therefore we have never heard of a higher and more desirable place than Vaikuṅṭha.

19–20. In different sections of Vaikuṅṭha, according to their respective sentiments, the devotees worship their favourite Lord and experience the zenith of the happiness of their particular *rasa*. But my question is, in which world do the devotees of Rāsa-bihārī Śrī Kṛṣṇa attain eternal residence and what is their condition there?

21–2. My heart cannot be satisfied if those devotees who, being indifferent to any other *sādhana* and *sādhya*, desire only *rādhā-dāsyā*, and who perpetually sing her *nāma-saṅkīrtana* and who are immersed in love for her, attain merely the same Vaikuṅṭha as do so many other devotees. This is a matter of great sorrow! And I cannot tolerate that this is the final destination for exalted devotees like Śrī Nandarāya and Śrī Yaśodā.

23. Millions of varieties of the most sublime glories consummate in them, in the same way as rivers ultimately reach the ocean.

24. There must certainly be a suitable place for them that is superior to Vaikuṅṭha. If there is such a place, then please describe it and deliver me from this doubt.

25. Śrī Jaimini said: Being delighted with this beautiful question from his mother, Śrī Parīkṣit offered obeisances to her and, shedding tears and with the hairs of his body standing erect in ecstasy, began to reply.

26. Śrī Parīkṣit said: O mother, Śrī Kṛṣṇa rescued you from death, and you cannot tolerate separation from him. Only you are capable of asking such a question, which has never been asked by anyone before.

27. Śrī Kṛṣṇa gave me an exalted birth in your womb as the grandson of Arjuna, who was the husband of Subhadrā and your dear friend.

28. Holding the club and disc in his lotus hands, Śrī Kṛṣṇa protected us both from the *brahmāstra* while I was in your womb. By appearing before me in that human-like form, which is visible only to the topmost devotees, he inspired me to continue searching for him through the course of my life.

29. He bestowed upon me the best of virtues, and he made me the successor to great souls like Ikṣvāku. By making me punish Kali, he spread my fame through the entire world. After giving me the great wealth of a king, on the pretext of a *brāhmaṇa*'s curse he made me renounce that wealth.

30. It was Śrī Kṛṣṇa who in the form of a disciple of that Śamīka *brāhmaṇa* told me of that dear curse by which I was saved from the dark well of household life and given the intelligence to sit at the banks of the Gaṅgā for such an extended period of time.

31. At that assembly of exalted sages, in the form of Śukadeva Gosvāmī he instructed me on the real established truths by which my fear was eradicated and I was overjoyed. Now that same Śrī Kṛṣṇa gives me the company of his dear devotees and makes me drink the nectar of their narrations.

32. Having received his causeless mercy, I offer obeisances unto Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and in accordance with the curse of that *brāhmaṇa*, which I have fully accepted, my final day has now come. Respecting his words, with a steady mind I will give the answer to your question, an answer that is the essence of all the Vaiṣṇava scriptures.

33–4. Although I could satisfy you by answering your question with the words of the Śruti, Smṛti and scriptures, instead, by the mercy of my *guru*, Śrī Śukadeva, I will first relate a historical narration that will destroy all of your doubts. Then afterwards I will speak those essential verses of the scriptures.

35–8. In ancient times there was a poor *brāhmaṇa* who resided at Prāgjyotiṣapura in Assam. He had no knowledge of the meaning of the scriptures, but merely desiring material wealth, he would faithfully offer *pūjā* to Kāmākhyā-devī every day. Being pleased with his *pūjā*, in a dream the goddess bestowed upon him the ten-syllable *gopāla-mantra*, along with instructions on its use in meditation. She also told him that by the influence of that *mantra*, one could attain the service of the lotus feet of the *mantra*'s deity, Śrī

Madanagopāla. Receiving that *mantra* as if it was a great treasure, on the goddess's order the *brāhmaṇa* always chanted it in a solitary place. By its influence his material desires faded and he felt great joy in his heart.

39. Even though that *brāhmaṇa* did not know the real meaning of the *mantra*, still he thought that besides that *mantra* there was no other spiritual *sādhana* or *sādhya*.

40. Renouncing his home and begging just enough to maintain his bodily existence, he began wandering to holy places until he arrived at Gaṅgāsāgara.

41. There at the banks of the Gaṅgā he saw many *brāhmaṇas*, who were mostly householders, who were expert in all branches of knowledge and who were engaged in their respective religious duties.

42. From those *brāhmaṇas* he heard about the regular and casual religious duties by which one attains Svarga.

43. Seeing the *brāhmaṇas*' firm faith in their many rituals, faith in those rituals also arose in him. He accepted instructions from those *brāhmaṇas* and began performing those rituals himself.

44. To honour the goddess's order, he would still daily retire to a solitary place and chant his *gopāla-mantra*. By the influence of the *mantra*, in his heart he soon felt dissatisfaction with those rituals.

45. Feeling indifferent towards those ritualistic activities, the *brāhmaṇa* travelled to Kāśī where he saw mostly *sannyāsīs* who had come from many different lands and who were expert in debating the monistic theory of Advaitavāda.

46. First of all he offered obeisances to the deity of Śrī Viśvanātha Mahādeva. Then he went to each and every one of those *sannyāsīs*' monasteries, where he offered *praṇāma* to them, spoke with them and lived with them for some time.

47. Those *sannyāsīs*' intelligence was very pure and they spoke of liberation as if it was in the palms of their hands. Hearing this, the *brāhmaṇa* considered their philosophy to be the topmost.

48–9. By continuing to hear the words of those *sannyāsīs*, wherein the acceptance of *sannyāsa* and the attainment of liberation were extolled, and by bathing at Maṅikarṇikā-ghāṭa, receiving *darśana* of Śrī Viśvanātha and eating with those *sannyāsīs* many delectable foodstuffs that were acquired without any difficulty, the *brāhmaṇa* also desired to take *sannyāsa*.

50. But out of veneration for the goddess and because he was feeling some exultation from it, he did not desist from chanting his *gopāla-mantra*. Then one night in a dream he saw the deity of his *mantra*, Śrī Madanagopāla.

51. Being attracted by his enchanting form, he felt the supreme blissfulness, and from that day on, he performed no other religious activity besides the chanting of his *mantra-japa*.

52. Now he was bewildered concerning what to and what not to do. Then that very night Viśvanātha and Kāmākhyā-devī appeared to him in a dream and gave him these instructions:

53. “Hey fool! Don’t take *sannyāsa*! Go at once to Śrī Mathurāpurī! And from there proceed to Vṛndāvana, where you will become completely gratified.”

54. Hearing this he became very anxious to go to Mathurāpurī. Repeatedly chanting “O Mathurā! O Mathurā!” he travelled in the direction of Mathurā until he arrived at Prayāga.

55. There at Prayāga, the king of all holy places that is adorned with the lotus feet of Śrī Mādhava Bhagavān and beautified by the presence of both the Gaṅgā and the Yamunā, he saw thousands of *sādhus* and *mahātmās* who had come to bathe at sunrise in the month of Māgha.

56. That *brāhmaṇa* saw how Prayāga was beautified by *sādhus* who in all directions were perpetually singing *nāma-saṅkīrtana*, playing musical instruments, offering prayers and obeisances, and crying and dancing with great love as they offered *pūjā* to Śrī Bhagavān Viṣṇu.

57–8. Because of not knowing anything about *sādhana-bhakti*, upon beholding all of this the ignorant *brāhmaṇa* was astonished and called out to those Vaiṣṇavas, “O singers! O reciters of prayers! O you who fall on the ground like sticks! O musicians! O you who call out Rāma and Kṛṣṇa! O you who are crying! O you who wear beautiful *tilaka* on your foreheads! And you who wear beautiful garlands!”

59. “Steady yourselves and be quiet for a moment! What are you doing and who are you worshipping with such reverence? Tell me.”

60. Hearing this, some of the newer Vaiṣṇavas laughed at him, others said, “Hey fool! Be quiet!” and others who were kind to the fallen said:

61. “O son of a *brāhmaṇa*, you don’t know anything, you are a fool – they are all devotees of Śrī Viṣṇu Bhagavān. Don’t call out to them in that manner again!”

62. “Having accepted initiation from a *guru*, in accordance with the regulations of our respective *mantras* we perpetually worship Śrī Viṣṇu Bhagavān.”

63. “O *brāhmaṇa*, some of us worship Śrī Nṛsimha, some worship Śrī Rāmacandra, and some of us worship the many forms of Śrī Gopāla.”

64. Śrī Parīkṣit said: Hearing this the *brāhmaṇa* was embarrassed, and then he humbly and cheerfully asked, “Where does your Īśvara reside? What is his form? And what benediction can he give?”

65. The Vaiṣṇavas said: “That Īśvara resides everywhere – inside, outside, in all places. There is no one equal to him.”

66. “He is the *īśvara* of the *īśvaras* of all the worlds, and he resides in the heart of all living entities. He enchants the mind and his form is *sac-cid-ānanda*. In his original form he eternally resides in Vaikuṅṭha-loka, and he even gives his very self to his devotees.”

67. “The Śrūtis and Smṛtis sing of his glories. Who can describe him? Just stay here and continually hear the readings of the Purāṇas.”

68. “Take *darśana* of the deity form of Śrī Jagadīśvara, Śrī Mādhava Bhagavān, and offer obeisances to him. By these activities you will quickly come to know everything.”

69. Śrī Parīkṣit said: After this the *brāhmaṇa* took *darśana* of Śrī Mādhava Bhagavān and offered *praṇāma* to him. He saw that this god was similar in appearance to the worshipful deity of his *mantra-japa*, Śrī Madanagopāla.

70. There he began hearing readings from the Purāṇas with those Vaiṣṇavas, and he also took *darśana* of the many deities of Viṣṇu whom those Vaiṣṇavas worshipped.

71. Still the ignorant *brāhmaṇa* could not understand that his worshipful Lord, Śrī Madanagopāla, and those Vaiṣṇavas’ worshipful deity, Śrī Mādhava Bhagavān, were the same Lord of all the universes.

72. Instead, in his mind he began to think, “This Śrī Mādhava Bhagavān worshipped by these Vaiṣṇavas is actually Jagadīśvara, and my worshipful deity is someone else.”

73. “This Mādhava Bhagavān has four arms, which hold the conch, disc, club and lotus, but my worshipful Lord is not like this. Therefore how can I accept that they are the same person?”

74. “My Lord does not have the form of half-man and half-lion, nor does he possess a form like those of Vāmana, Mīna, Kūrma or Varāha.”

75. “And he is also not Śrī Rāmacandra, who is a king and carries a bow in his hand. But the Gopāla deity that some of the Vaiṣṇavas here are worshipping bears some resemblance to my Lord.”

76. “Still, I don’t consider that my Lord is Jagadīśvara, because he does not possess the symptoms that I have heard described in the *Māgha-māhātmya*.”

77. “Decorated with forest flowers, my worshipful Lord holds a flute to his mouth and along with his cowherd boy friends, takes the cows out to graze. Because of being a great debauchee, he always enjoys pastimes with the *gopīs* that violate the religious principles of the pious.”

78. “Still, by the influence of the goddess I have attained divine bliss from worshipping him. Therefore I will never leave my worshipful Lord or the chanting of his *mantra*.”

79. Thinking in this way, the *brāhmaṇa* retired to a solitary place and began chanting his *mantra-japa*. Then, by the influence of the association of those Vaiṣṇavas, he received direct *darśana* of his worshipful Lord.

80. He fainted in ecstasy, and after some time when he regained consciousness and saw that the time for chanting his *japa* had passed, he became sombre.

81. He thought, “How did this calamity come about? This is a great hindrance! The night is finished but I have not completed my *mantra-japa*!”

82. “Did I fall asleep? Or was I possessed by a ghost? Aho! Just see how wretched my nature is, that even upon the occurrence of this sorrowful event, in my heart I am somehow feeling great elation!”

83. One day, while lamenting in this way, he went without eating and eventually fell asleep. Then Śrī Mādhava Bhagavān consoled him by appearing to him in a dream and giving him this instruction:

84. “O *brāhmaṇa*, remember the words of Śrī Umāpati Viśvanātha! Following along the banks of the Yamunā, proceed to Śrī Vṛndāvana.”

85. “Going there you will find unparalleled ecstasy, and don’t stop anywhere along the way!”

86. The next morning the *brāhmaṇa* gleefully began his journey, and eventually he reached Mathurāpurī, where he bathed in the Yamunā at Viśrānta-ghāṭa.

87. After proceeding to Śrī Vṛndāvana, he saw that the residents there were cows and cowherd men just as he had pictured them in his meditation. Then he became completely overjoyed.

88. As he wandered about that land which is decorated with cows, he didn't see many people. Then, from the eastern direction of Keśī-ghāṭa, the sound of someone crying became audible.

89. He moved in the direction of that sound, and as he got closer he could understand that it was someone lovingly chanting *nāma-saṅkīrtana*. But still not seeing anyone, he began searching for that person.

90. Because of the dense darkness of the forest he could not see anyone, but he concluded that the sound must be coming from the banks of the Yamunā, so he immediately went there.

91. There, inside a grove of *kadamba* trees, he saw a handsome youth with delicate limbs dressed as a cowherd boy.

92. In the bewilderment of mistaking him for his worshipful Lord, in great jubilation the *brāhmaṇa* cried out “*Gopāla! Gopāla!*” and offering obeisances, fell on the ground like a stick.

93. Then that youth, who was the crown-jewel of the all-knowing, came to his external senses. He could understand that this *brāhmaṇa* was born in Mathurā, resides in Kāmākhyādeśa and is a worshipper of Śrī Madanagopāla.

94. Then the youth emerged from the *kuñja*, lifted up the *brāhmaṇa*, offered obeisances to him, embraced him and sat him by his side.

95. After that the youth, named Gopa-kumāra, satisfied his guest with suitable hospitality. Then, to make faith arise in the *brāhmaṇa*, he related some of the experiences that the *brāhmaṇa* had experienced in his journey.

96. Then realising that this Gopa-kumāra was his most intimate friend, the *brāhmaṇa* was euphoric and faithfully related his entire life's story.

97. Knowing Gopa-kumāra to be the most exalted personality and the knower of all, the *brāhmaṇa* humbly said:

98. “O Gopa-kumāra, at Gaṅgāsāgara, Kāśī and other places I have heard about many *sādhana*s and *sādhyas*, but until now I have never been able to conclude which ones are appropriate for me.”

99. “Even though on the order of the goddess I have been daily chanting my *mantra-japa*, I don’t even understand it or what the nature of its fruit will be.”

100. “Therefore, considering my life useless, I desire to die, but only by the mercy of Śrī Viśvanātha and Śrī Mādhava Bhagavān am I still living.”

101. “By their mercy I have come here today and joyfully met you, who like my worshipful deity are all-knowing and very kind. I am very fallen, so please be merciful and deliver me.”

102. Śrī Parikṣit said: Śrī Gopa-kumāra respectfully heard these words from the *brāhmaṇa*, and silently began to think, “This *brāhmaṇa* has already become gratified and all of his desires have been fulfilled.”

103. “The only thing that remains for him is to have direct *darśana* of the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Therefore now there is no special necessity of him continuing to chant his *mantra-japa*; instead he should just chant *nāma-saṅkīrtana*.”

104. “There is no greater *sādhana* than this for worshipping the lotus feet of Śrī Madanagopāla. Of all modes of worship, *nāma-saṅkīrtana* is the foremost, and it bestows a fruit beyond what one could even desire.”

105–6. “Performed while faithfully taking *darśana* of Śrī Madanagopāla’s *līlā-sthalis*, it gives rise to a type of *prema* that renders *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma* and *mokṣa* trivial and that even overpowers Śrī Madanagopāla himself. There is no other *sādhana* greater than this mode of worship.”

107. “Therefore, to enlighten this *brāhmaṇa*, I will first tell him my own life story, by which all of his doubts will be eradicated.”

108. “Although it is the opinion of exalted souls that one should not describe his own glories, still I will speak of my own experiences because there is no other story that will be as beneficial for this *brāhmaṇa*.”

109. Coming to this conclusion, the highly experienced Gopa-kumāra began to tell his own wonderful life story to the *brāhmaṇa* with great care, like a great sage speaking the Purāṇas to an assembly of other sages.

110. Śrī Gopa-kumāra said: On this topic there are many historical narrations, but instead I will describe what I can remember of my own experiences while absorbed in an ecstatic trance.

111–12. O best of the *brāhmaṇas*, previously I was the son of a Govardhana milkman. At that time I appeared just as I do now, as a young cowherd boy, and accompanied by other *gopas* I would take the cows out to graze all around Mathurā-*maṇḍala* – at Govardhana, on the banks of the Yamunā and here in Śrī Vṛndāvana.

113–14. In this forest we used to see an exalted *brāhmaṇa* who was very effulgent and very renounced. He would wander here and there repeatedly chanting Śrī Kṛṣṇa *nāma-kīrtana*. Sometimes he would sit in meditation on *japa*, sometimes he would dance, sometimes he would laugh and sometimes he would cry out.

115. Sometimes he would collapse and becoming maddened, would roll on the ground, and sometimes he would cry very loudly.

116. Sometimes he would faint, sometimes the streams of tears from his eyes and the saliva from his mouth would turn the dusty cowpath to mud, and sometimes he would lie unconscious as if dead.

117–18. All of us curious cowherd boys would always go to see him. Knowing us to be *gopas*, he would offer *praṇāma* to us with great devotion, heartily embrace us and begin kissing us. Considering us his dear friends, he could not easily leave us.

119. I would serve him by bringing him milk and other things. One day, finding me alone on the banks of the Yamunā, he mercifully embraced me and said:

120. “O child, if you desire the perfection that is desired by all, then after bathing in this Keśi-ghāṭa accept from me the *prasāda* of Śrī Jagadīśa.”

121. Because that *brāhmaṇa* was self-satisfied, indifferent to all material objects and the crown-jewel of the kind-hearted, after I had bathed he taught me the same (ten-syllable *gopāla-*) *mantra* that you chant.

122. As he began to teach me the rules and regulations for chanting this *mantra* and how to meditate on it, overcome with *prema* he cried like a woman afflicted with intense separation from her lover and fainted.

123. When he regained consciousness, out of fear that he may faint again, I did not dare ask him anything. Then he stood up, and with a heavy heart, left there.

124. I did not know what the nature of my *mantra* was, what fruit it could bestow or how it should be chanted.

125. Out of reverence for the words of that *brāhmaṇa*, I would go to a solitary place where only the *mantra* would always come from my mouth.

126. Chanting the *mantra* in this way by the influence of that great personality, my heart gradually became purified. I became free from lust, anger and malice, and I developed faith in the *mantra*.

127. Remembering his words, I concluded that this *mantra* would lead me to Śrī Jagadīśvara. Therefore I was very pleased and chanted it constantly.

128. My only desire being to know what Śrī Jagadīśa was like and when I would receive his *darśana*, one day I renounced my home and family and went to the bank of the Gaṅgā.

129–30. There, from a distance I heard a conchshell, and I pursued that sound until I saw a *brāhmaṇa* who was offering *pūjā* to a *śālagrāma-silā*. I offered obeisances to him and asked, “O Svāmī, who are you worshipping?” Then he laughed and said, “Don’t you know, boy? This is Jagadīśvara.”

131. Hearing this I became as joyful as a poor man who finds a treasure or as someone who is reunited with a deceased friend.

132. I repeatedly gazed at that Śrī Jagadīśvara and faithfully offered prostrated obeisances to him. Being merciful, the *brāhmaṇa* gave me the *silā*’s *tulasī* garland as *prasāda* and his *caraṇāmṛta* to drink.

133. After this, when the *brāhmaṇa* was preparing to return home, he placed Śrī Śālagrāma Bhagavān in a box to rest. Seeing my Śrī Jagadīśa in this condition, I became upset and shedding tears, lamented:

134. “Hāya! Hāya! This is an outrage! You have bound Parameśvara in a box! He has not eaten, so how will he sleep?”

135. O exalted Mathurā *brāhmaṇa*, I really did not know that somewhere there may be another form of Jagadīśvara besides that Śrī Śālagrāma.

136. Knowing that my distress and grief were not feigned, that *brāhmaṇa* became embarrassed and consoling me, humbly said:

137. “O new devotee, I am poor, what can I do? I can only offer whatever I myself have to eat to Jagadīśvara.”

138–9. “If you desire to see great festivals of his *pūjā* performed with pomp, then go to the nearby city of the king of this land, who adores the worship of Śrī Viṣṇu and who is very saintly. There you will receive the *darśana* of that Jagadīśvara which is so rarely attained.”

140. “There you will be satisfied and experience the supreme blissfulness in all respects. But for now come to my home and accept the *prasāda* of Śrī Viṣṇu.”

141. Hearing these words from the *brāhmaṇa*, I became overjoyed and even though I was hungry, I didn’t go to his home. I offered *praṇāma* to him and following the path that he had showed me, proceeded to that city.

142. In that city was a massive temple, which was exuding unprecedented, tumultuous sounds from the *pūjā* of Śrī Jagadīśa. Hearing those sounds from a distance, I inquired from the people there and came to know that it was the temple of Śrī Jagadīśvara Bhagavān.

143. Then I became extremely eager to have his *darśana*, and without being restrained by anyone I ran straight inside. There I received the *darśana* of that four-armed Bhagavān, who held the conchshell, disc, lotus and club in his lotus hands.

144. His form was immensely beautiful, his complexion was like that of a fresh raincloud and he was attired in yellow silken garments. His spectacular youthful form was adorned with a garland of forest flowers and golden ornaments, his lotus face was like a full moon, his gentle smile was like nectar and his eyes were like lotuses.

145. As he majestically sat on an elevated and beautiful throne, his loving servants were worshipping him with varieties of rare and excellent paraphernalia and singing and dancing before him.

146. Receiving his *darśana*, I felt supremely blissful and repeatedly offered prostrated obeisances to him. Silently I thought that I had finally fulfilled my long-cherished desire.

147. I considered that my birth had become successful and that I would never leave there. Then by the mercy of the Vaiṣṇavas I happily began residing there.

148. There I saw great festivals of Śrī Viṣṇu’s *pūjā*, took his *prasāda*, heard the glories of his *pūjā* and continued to carefully chant my *mantra-japa* while sitting in a secluded place.

149. But O *brāhmaṇa*, remembrance of the splendour of Vraja-bhūmi and the bliss of playing with other cowherd boys never receded from my heart.

150. Passing many days there in great happiness, I developed a great yearning to worship Śrī Bhagavān in that way.

151. The king there was sonless, and even though I was a foreigner, seeing my good character he considered me to be his adopted son. After some time, he passed away.

152. Inheriting his kingdom, I joyfully began performing the *pūjā* of Śrī Viṣṇu Bhagavān. I increased the offerings of food, and many more *sādhus* and *mahātmās* began taking *prasāda* there daily.

153. Although engaged in this way, I remained detached and renounced as before. I continued chanting my *mantra-japa* and took only enough *prasāda* to sustain my bodily existence.

154. Although I divided the kingdom amongst the friends and relatives of the king, everything in relation to managing a kingdom began to cause me great unhappiness.

155. Sometimes I was fearful of other kingdoms, and sometimes being obliged to follow the orders of the emperor, my independence was curtailed, and that also brought me great unhappiness.

156. And sometimes when, seeing that the *prasāda* of Śrī Jagadīśvara Bhagavān had been touched by a non-*brāhmaṇa* or had been taken outside the temple, an exalted soul would become doubtful and refuse to accept it, this also brought me great sorrow.

157. At that time I was so unhappy it was as if my heart had been wounded by an arrow. Even though for all these reasons I was feeling extremely detached from the kingdom, I could not leave the Lord whom I had been desiring to see for such a long time.

158. At that time some exalted *sādhus* who were touring holy places came from the southern provinces, and they said to me:

159. “At Puruṣottama-kṣetra, on the shore of the ocean at Nilācala Hill, Śrī Bhagavān Jagannātha is directly manifest in a wooden form.”

160. “He possesses great opulences, he is very affectionate to his servants, he personally protects the kingdom of Orissa and his glories are self-evident.”

161. “There Śrī Lakṣmī herself cooks for him, and after himself eating, merciful Śrī Jagannātha gives his remnants, which are difficult for even the demigods to obtain, to his devotees.”

162. “Those remnants are known as *mahā-prasāda*, and everyone there accepts them without consideration of whether they have been touched by anyone of a low-caste or if they have been taken somewhere.”

163. “Aho! How can we describe the glories of that *dhāma*? Anyone who merely goes there never takes birth again, and even a donkey who enters it becomes a four-armed resident of Vaikuṅṭha.”

164. “Merely by receiving *darśana* of the lotus-eyed Bhagavān, one’s life becomes successful.” Śrī Gopa-kumāra said: In this way I heard from those *sādhus* about the wonderful glories of that place, which I had never heard of before.

165. Then I became exceedingly eager to obtain his *darśana*. At that very moment I renounced the kingdom and everything and, singing *kīrtana* of Śrī Jagannātha Bhagavān, set out for the province of Orissa.

166. Quickly arriving at that holy place, I offered prostrated obeisances to the residents there, and by their mercy I entered the temple.

167. Then from a distance I saw the moon of Śrī Puruṣottama Bhagavān’s face, which was beautified by large lotus eyes, on whose forehead the jewelled *tilaka* was glistening, whose lustre was like that of an enchanting cloud, whose red lips were resplendent and whose gentle smile was like moonlight bestowing his limitless mercy upon everyone.

168. Impulsively I desired to go before him, but the impact of divine love stopped me. The hairs of my body stood erect and I began trembling. I was shedding tears in such a way that I could hardly see anything, and with great difficulty I finally reached the Garuḍa-stambha.

169. Śrī Bhagavān was attired in splendid garments, ornaments and garlands, and his *darśana* expands the divine bliss of the eyes and heart. Sitting gracefully on a beautiful *śimhāsana*, he was enjoying many kinds of wonderful foodstuffs.

170. He was glancing at the devotees who were singing, playing instruments, dancing, offering prayers and offering *praṇāma* before him. Receiving *darśana* of that Śrī Jagannātha, who is the refuge of great glories, I fainted and fell to the ground.

171. After some time, when I regained consciousness, I opened my eyes and again received his *darśana*. Then like a madman I raced forward to embrace him, calling out:

172. “Today I have attained the *darśana* of he who I have been desiring to see for such a long time! Aho! Receiving *darśana* of this Jagadīśa, today my life has become successful! This is my very Lord!”

173. As I was going forward to embrace him, the guards struck me with sticks and prevented me from going any closer. Becoming thoughtful, I felt ashamed, but still I considered even having been beaten to be Prabhu’s mercy. Then I went outside and received *mahā-prasāda*.

174–5. O *brāhmaṇa*, after taking *prasāda* I immediately re-entered the temple. What I saw there brought me so much joy and astonishment that my heart could not fully assimilate it, so how could my mouth possibly describe it? In this way I joyfully spent the entire day there.

176. In the evening, after great festivals of decorations and offerings of *puṣpāñjali*, I left the *mandira*.

177. Enjoying ever-new festivals there with the *sādhus* and *mahātmās* in this way, I was not aware of how the time was passing, and I even forgot the pain of separation from Vraja-bhūmi.

178. Śrī Jagannāthajī is supremely merciful to his servants. He gives them various orders, and I heard about this from others and also directly experienced it myself.

179. Then I found nothing other than receiving his *darśana* to be pleasurable, and I even lost the desire to hear those readings from the Purāṇas that describe Śrī Jagannātha's glories.

180. Whenever I would feel any bodily or mental pain, taking *darśana* of the lotus-eyed Śrī Jagannātha Bhagavān would at once eradicate it.

181. Considering that I had received the ultimate fruit of my *mantra-japa*, I became a little indifferent towards chanting it. In this way I blissfully resided in that holy place for a long time.

182. After some time I began to yearn to perform some confidential service to the Lord, and when I could not attain such service, I was very unhappy.

183–4. The king of that land was the primary servant of Śrī Jagannātha. Whenever there was a festival, he would eagerly come to see the glorious face of Śrī Jagannātha and his entourage, which included horses and elephants, would fill the gardens. Therefore indigent people like myself could not receive *darśana* of the Lord.

185–6. As I was feeling sadness in my heart due to this, one day I saw my spiritual master, who had given me the *mantra* in Vṛndāvana, standing before Śrī Jagannāthadeva. He was overwhelmed in *prema* and therefore I was unable to speak with him, and because my heart was absorbed in taking *darśana* of the Lord, I did not see when he disappeared.

187. I searched for him everywhere until one day I found him alone on the shore of the ocean, singing *nāma-sankīrtana* and dancing in ecstasy.

188. I offered prostrated obeisances to him, and looking towards me, he blessed me. Then he embraced me, and knowing what was in my heart, mercifully said to me:

189. "O child, no matter what you desire, just continue chanting your *mantra* – by its influence you will receive a fruit beyond what you could even desire."

190. “Understand that chanting this *mantra* is service to Śrī Jagannātha. Have faith in my words and never abandon your *mantra-japa*.”

191. “By the influence of this *mantra* you will attain eternal life in this very same form as a cowherd boy and your heart will become qualified to experience the ultimate attainment.”

192. “You will see me sometimes here and sometimes in Śrī Vṛndāvana.” After giving me these instructions, he suddenly left.

193. Feeling separation from Śrī Gurudeva, I became very distraught. But when I went to take *darśana* of Śrī Jagannātha, I again became peaceful, and from that moment I began rigorously chanting my *mantra-japa*.

194–5. Whenever I craved to see Vraja-bhūmi, by the glories of Śrī Jagannātha the gardens of that holy place appeared like those of Vṛndāvana, the ocean appeared like the Yamunā and Nilācala Hill appeared like Śrī Govardhana.

196. In this way I happily resided there. Every day, after receiving Śrī Jagannātha’s *darśana*, in accordance with Śrī Gurudeva’s order I would chant my *mantra-japa* to attain my desired perfection.

197. Soon afterwards the king passed away, and due to being very renounced, his elder son did not accept the kingdom.

198. Then the ministers prayed to Śrī Jagannātha to indicate who should sit on the throne, and he gave the order that whoever had the signs of a king on his hands and feet should be made the king. Seeing that I possessed these signs, they made me the king.

199. I expanded the various festivals of *pūjā* for Śrī Jagannātha, and of the twelve great festivals observed in the twelve months, I especially expanded the Ratha-yatra festival.

200. On the occasion of that festival, all the saints and *mahātmās* from the world over gather together there and becoming maddened, sing, dance and play musical instruments while receiving *darśana* of Śrī Bhagavān.

201. Offering all royal opulences and the kingdom itself to the lotus feet of Śrī Jagannātha, I remained indigent and served him as I pleased.

202. Sometimes Śrī Jagannātha jokes with his beloved eternal servants and sometimes he enjoys loving pastimes with them.

203. And when the frolicsome Śrī Bhagavān performs the pastime of becoming motionless, his servants become wonderstruck and blissful.

204. Sometimes I desired that I would also experience that blissfulness, but I was a newcomer and I was not exclusively attached to Śrī Jagannātha alone. So how could I become a recipient of that mercy?

205. Whenever I thought of the immense good fortune of the Orissan devotees, the desire to attain the same special mercy that they possessed arose in my heart.

206. Sometimes, upon hearing the *nāma-saṅkīrtana*, prayers and songs being sung before Śrī Jagannātha, remembrance of Vraja would come to me and I would become anxious to go there.

207. But by the influence of the company of the *sādhus* and taking *darśana* of the lotus-eyed Śrī Jagannātha, all of my sadness was eradicated and my desire to go to any other place abated.

208. But since I had become the king, in my heart I did not feel the same divine jubilation from receiving *darśana* of Śrī Bhagavān as I had before.

209. Even though I executed the great festivals and performed many kinds of *bhajana*, I did not feel the same unrestrained happiness because I was always surrounded by a royal entourage.

210. Placing the burden of the kingdom on the king's sons, relatives and ministers, I became aloof as before.

211. Chanting my *mantra-japa* in a secluded place and serving the lotus feet of Śrī Jagannātha according to my desire, I happily resided there.

212. But because the citizens continued to show me great respect, I did not find living there agreeable and decided to leave.

213. One morning I went before Prabhu to seek permission to go to Śrī Vṛndāvana, but upon receiving *darśana* of his lotus face I forgot everything.

214. In this way one year passed. Then one day I heard the glories of Mathurā superbly described by some people who had just come from there.

215. I was anguished, and when I went to sleep that night, Śrī Jagannātha, who cannot tolerate the sufferings of his devotees, appeared to me in a dream and bestowed these instructions upon me:

216. "O Gopa-kumāra, just as this Puruṣottama-kṣetra is dear to me, so is Śrī Mathurā, but since it is my birthplace, it is even more dear to me."

217. “That Mathurā-maṇḍala is adorned with the places of my childhood pastimes. Just as I reside here, I also reside there, wandering here and there enjoying pastimes.”

218. “Why are you anguished with a wavering heart? Go there, and after some time you will surely receive *darśana* of my form as a cowherd boy.”

219. The next morning some of Śrī Jagannātha’s *pujārīs* came to my home and gave me the Lord’s order in the form of a garland. Placing the garland around my neck, I took one last look at the Śrī Nīlācakra and after offering *praṇāma* to it, proceeded to the province of Mathurā.

Chapter Two – Knowledge

1. Śrī Gopa-kumāra said: O exalted Mathurā *brāhmaṇa*, arriving in Mathurā, I bathed at Viśrānta-ghāṭa and then proceeded to this Śrī Vṛndāvana, where I freely wandered around Govardhana and on the banks of the Yamunā.

2. Sustaining my life by drinking milk, being unnoticed by my previous friends and relatives and chanting my *mantra-japa*, I happily passed some days there.

3. Then intense desire for the *darśana* of my beloved Śrī Jagadīśa arose inside me, and not seeing him in Śrī Vṛndāvana, I began to remember Puruṣottama-kṣetra.

4–5. Aggrieved, I set out for Orissa to attain the *darśana* of Śrī Jagannātha. But on the way, on the banks of the Gaṅgā, I met some *brāhmaṇas* who were devoted to religious duties and knowledgeable in many kinds of scriptures. They told me, “Above this world is the residence of the demigods, which is called ‘Svarga’.”

6. “It is beautified by the presence of countless airplanes, and is devoid of faults such as fear, sorrow, old-age, disease and death.”

7. “Those who perform great pious deeds in this world attain that destination. The king there is Indra, who is the elder brother of Śrī Jagadīśa (Śrī Vāmana Bhagavān).”

8–9. “Although the lower planets such as Pātāla are glorious with the presence of different incarnations of Śrī Viṣṇu Bhagavān including Śeṣa, and in Bhauma-svarga (the Earth planet) with its many continents there are always varieties of great festivals for the *pūjā* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, this Svarga is superior to both of them because of being situated above them.”

10. “There Śrī Viṣṇu Bhagavān is directly manifest in the form of Aditi-nandana. His name is Upendra and hear from us of his wonderful glories.”

11. “There, Śrī Upendra Bhagavān climbs upon Śrī Garuḍa and travels here and there enjoying pastimes such as killing troublesome demons. With his enchanting pastimes and his sweet words, he perpetually delights the demigods, who worship him understanding him to be their own brother.”

12. Hearing this from those *karma-kāṇḍi brāhmaṇas*, my heart became very anxious to achieve the *darśana* of Śrī Upendra Bhagavān. Aspiring to attain entrance into that realm, I chanted my *mantra-japa*. Shortly thereafter an airplane came, and boarding it with great jubilation, I was taken to Svarga.

13. There I saw the same Śrī Viṣṇu Bhagavān whose *mūrti* I had seen previously in the temple of the king on the bank of the Gaṅgā. His form was *sac-cid-ānanda*, he was surrounded by the demigods and he was sitting on the splendid *śimhāsana* of Garuḍa's shoulders. While sweetly playing the *vīṇā*, Śrī Nārada was eloquently offering him prayers.

14. Feeling that I had finally received *darśana* of the Lord who I had been yearning to see for so long, I was fully gratified. From a distance I offered obeisances to him, and then with kind, affectionate words, he called me, saying:

15. "O Gopa-kumāra, you have come to this Svarga, it is very auspicious! Abandon this offering of *praṇāmas* and without fear come to me."

16. On the Lord's order, Śrī Indra sent some demigods who respectfully lead me there and carefully sat me down.

17. As I resided in the gardens named Nandana, they gave me celestial refreshments like heavenly nectar by which I was elated. There I did not see any type of fear, sorrow, disease, death, withering or old-age.

18. There were some defects there, but enjoying the *darśana* of Śrī Jagadīśa, I did not consider them.

19. With all the opulences of Svarga, Śrī Indra daily worshipped Śrī Upendra as his brother, master and protector.

20–1. Silently I considered Indra to be greatly fortunate because Śrī Bhagavān had removed all disturbances and bestowed upon him mastery over the three worlds. With great pleasure he was worshipping Śrī Upendra Bhagavān with celestial gifts, and Prabhu was personally accepting them.

22. Beholding the immense good fortune of Indra, in my heart I began to think, "When will Śrī Bhagavān also be merciful to me in this way?" With this aspiration I chanted my *mantra-japa* and began residing there.

23. After that, because of having seduced the wife of a *muni* (Gautama), out of shame and fear of being cursed, Indra went somewhere and hid (in the stem of a lotus).

24. The demigods searched for him in many ways, but could not find him. In the absence of Indra, the three worlds were overrun with disturbances.

25. On the order of Śrī Viṣṇu Bhagavān, Śrī Bṛhaspati told the demigods to install me in the post of Indra. Next, with Mother Aditi's approval, I was enthroned.

26. Then, showing respect to Mother Aditi, Śacī, Śrī Guru Bṛhaspati and the *brāhmaṇas*, I always expanded *bhakti* to Śrī Viṣṇu Bhagavān throughout the three worlds.

27. Just as when before I had been made king but by the influence of *bhakti* I still remained indigent, in the same way I resided in that Nandana garden with great simplicity.

28. But I did not abandon the chanting of my *mantra-japa*, because to have done so after all it had brought me would have been ungrateful. So even there I did not forget Vraja-bhūmi.

29. Due to being distraught with sorrow out of separation from Vraja-bhūmi, my face withered. When Śrī Upendra Bhagavān saw this, he time and again stroked me with his lotus hand and pleased me with the sweet nectar of his words.

30. Considering me to be his elder brother, to please me Śrī Bhagavān ate the foodstuffs that I offered to him.

31. By this I forgot the unhappiness of separation from Vraja. I satisfied him with offerings of ever-new varieties of foodstuffs and by loving him as one would a younger brother.

32. Seeing that I had again become robust in spirit, he left there for another place. I did not know where that Śrī Upendra Bhagavān permanently resided, so in Svarga I could not always see him.

33. Due to this I was overcome with grief. I desired to go to Nīlācala and see Śrī Jagannātha, who always resides there in a motionless form and who is very affectionate to those who take shelter of him.

34. Knowing my condition, Śrī Viṣṇu Bhagavān returned and was merciful to me as before, thereby mitigating my suffering. After that I no longer burned in anticipation of imminent separation from him and was always hopeful of again receiving his *darśana*.

35. O *brāhmaṇa*, in this way I happily passed one year of the demigods in the post of Indra.

36. Then one day Bṛḡu and other great sages, who were mercifully on their way to purify the holy places of the Earth with the touch of their lotus feet, unexpectedly arrived there.

37. Seeing them, all of the demigods, sages, Śrī Bṛhaspati and even Śrī Viṣṇu Bhagavān himself offered *pūjā* to them. Witnessing this, I was struck with wonder.

38. Because I was a newcomer and because my heart was absorbed in the blissfulness of serving Śrī Viṣṇu Bhagavān, at first I did not understand who they were, but after being enlightened by my own subordinate demigods, I also worshipped them.

39. After giving me their blessings and praising me, Śrī Bhṛgu and the other sages happily left there. Then when Śrī Upendra Bhagavān also left there, I asked the demigods:

40. “Demigods are worshipped by human beings, so who were they who even you were worshipping? What are their glories? And where do those great renunciates reside?”

41. Because of being very proud, out of envy and shame those demigods did not reply, but Guru Śrī Bṛhaspati said:

42. “Above this Svarga is Maharloka, which is attained by those who perform great pious deeds. Even when the three worlds are annihilated in the final dissolution, it is not destroyed.”

43. “Just as the happiness of being Indra is millions of times greater than the happiness of being an Earthly king, in the same way the happiness of being a *prajāpati* is millions of times greater than the happiness of being Indra. Śrī Bhṛgu is the original *prajāpati*.”

44. “Experiencing immense pleasure, they reside in that Maharloka. With great fire sacrifices they always directly worship Śrī Yajñeśvara Bhagavān at every step.”

45. Śrī Gopa-kumāra said: O *brāhmaṇa*, at the very moment of hearing this I became uninterested in retaining the post of Indra. I desired to attain the *darśana* of Śrī Yajñeśvara Bhagavān, who is worshipful to even the worshipful demigods and who is served by Śrī Bhṛgu and the other *prajāpatīs*.

46. Aspiring to see him, I chanted my *mantra-japa* and very soon I was taken upwards by a celestial airplane until I had arrived at that world.

47. There I experienced faultless and indescribable opulences, happiness and *bhagavad-bhajana* that I had not experienced anywhere in the three worlds.

48. There great sages conduct thousands of fire sacrifices with great devotion, and Śrī Yajñeśvara Bhagavān appears in the sacrificial arenas and enjoys the pastime of accepting the offerings.

49. The effulgence of that personification of *yajñas* is like that of millions of suns, and his beauty enchants the minds and hearts of the entire world. Extending his hands and accepting the offerings, he fulfils the internal desires of the worshippers by offering them benedictions.

50. Upon receiving his *darśana*, at first I forgot my duty to show him reverence, but then I blissfully offered him prostrated obeisances. Then, with soft words of kindness, he called me to come near him and with his own hand he gave some of his *mahā-prasāda*.

51. Receiving it, I attained unprecedented bliss, and by his abundant mercy my desire to attain *darśana* of Śrī Jagadīśa was completely fulfilled.

52. Wandering here and there with those kind-hearted sages, I saw in each and every household that same personification of sacrifice, Śrī Jagadīśvara (personally appearing in the fire sacrifices being performed there).

53. Therefore I considered that I had become completely gratified and with great delight I began residing there. Then those great sages said to me:

54. “O Gopa-kumāra, you are the son of a *vaiśya* (only *brāhmaṇas* reside in this world). Therefore we will bestow upon you the status of a *brāhmaṇa* – quickly accept it.”

55. “Become a great sage and like us worship with fire sacrifices Śrī Yajñeśvara, whom you have been desiring to see for such a long time.”

56. Śrī Gopa-kumāra said: O *brāhmaṇa*, hearing this, I silently thought, “There is great happiness in being a *vaiśya* because then I can serve both my Lord and his *brāhmaṇa* devotees.”

57. “These sages are devoted exclusively to fire sacrifices. If I become a sage like them, then my faith in my *mantra-japa*, which was given to me by my *gurudeva* and which is the direct bestower of spiritual results, will become diminished.”

58. Therefore I humbly showed respect to them but did not accept the status of a *brāhmaṇa*. I continued to live there enjoying the great happiness of the *prajāpatīs*.

59. In that world there are no faults such as sorrow or fear, nor is there any material enjoyment. There are only festivals of fire sacrifices always being performed out of love for Śrī Yajñeśvara Bhagavān.

60. However, when the sacrifices were completed and Bhagavān would disappear, I would become very dismal. And when he would again appear in the sacrificial arena, I would become happy.

61. At the end of one thousand *catur-yugas* or at the end of one day of Brahmāji, there is a cosmic dissolution and the three worlds burn. At that time the heat makes it impossible to reside in that Maharloka, so the sages took me with them to Janaloka.

62. Because of being night at that time in Janaloka, there were no fire sacrifices and Śrī Yajñeśvara Bhagavān could not be seen. For me the burning heat of not seeing him was greater than the heat of the dissolution!

63. Then in my heart I desired to go see Śrī Jagannātha at Puruṣottama-kṣetra, which is eternally shaded by a *banyana* tree and is not destroyed at the time of the cosmic dissolution.

64. But instead I returned from Janaloka to Maharloka, where I continued to chant my *mantra-japa* in solitude. By its influence I was anguished with the desire to see Vraja-bhūmi.

65–6. But when Śrī Yajñeśvara Bhagavān again appeared in the sacrificial arena, with great love he called me to come near him. Then he accepted my offering by which all of my anguish was mitigated in the same way as the rising sun dissipates the darkness. Then, although I could not see him at night, being pleased in the hope of again seeing him I did not desire to go to any other place.

67. Once, an immensely effulgent, naked boy who appeared to be only about five years old came there from the higher planets.

68. Seeing him, all of those sages headed by Śrī Bhṛgu abandoned their sacrifices, stood up, offered obeisances to him with great devotion and worshipped that great personality who was fixed in meditation in the same way as they worshipped Śrī Yajñeśvara Bhagavān.

69. After that naked boy had left, I asked those *mahārṣis*, “Who is he? Where does he live? And why did you worship him?”

70. They replied, “His name is Sanata-kumāra. In qualities he is our elder brother and is more exalted than us. He maintains the great vow (of celibacy) and he is the original *guru* of those who are *ātmārāma* and *āptakāma* (those who are self-satisfied and have no unfulfilled desire).”

71. “He resides in a planet above this Maharloka called Tapaloka with his three brothers and Kavi, Hari, Antarikṣa, Prabuddha, Pippalāyana and the other Yogīndras.”

72. “Only *naiṣṭika-brahmacārīs* reside in that Tapaloka. Auspiciousness is always present there, and the happiness experienced by those *naiṣṭika-brahmacārīs* is millions of times greater than the happiness of us *prajāpatis*.”

73. “He is worshipful in the same way as Śrī Yajñeśvara Bhagavān is, and especially householders like us should abandon our rituals to worship him.”

74. Śrī Gopa-kumāra said: O *brāhmaṇa*, hearing this I thought, “What kind of happiness is there in that world? How many of these *yogīs* are there? And how do they worship Bhagavān?”

75. Desiring to see them, with a steady mind I began chanting my *mantra-japa*, and then I became supremely radiant and quickly went to that Tapaloka.

76. There I saw Śrī Sanaka, Śrī Sanandana and Śrī Sanātana, as well as the fourth, the very same Śrī Sanata.

77. In that world there were many *yogīs* like themselves who were showing them respect. They were blissfully conversing on spiritual topics that were difficult for people like myself to understand.

78. Although the four Kumāras did not appear like Śrī Bhagavān, still, upon receiving their *darśana*, I was naturally euphoric.

79. When those *yogīs* who were always fixed in meditation went to their respective domiciles, I understood that here also, just as in Svargaloka, Śrī Jagadīvara must be present somewhere in a manifest form, so I began wandering here and there searching for him.

80. But I could not see him anywhere. Then I asked those great *munis* about this, but even upon my repeatedly offering them obeisances and prayers, they did not even look at me.

81. Because they were all *naiṣṭika-brahmacārīs*, they normally remained absorbed in *samādhi*. They were self-satisfied, all of their desires were fulfilled and they were served by numerous types of mystic perfections.

82–3. Even though my great desire to see Śrī Bhagavān was not fulfilled, by the influence of the association of those *yogīs* I could not desire to go to another place. But out of reverence for the order of my spiritual master and because having seen how it directly bestows spiritual results, I did not abandon my *mantra-japa*.

84. Because that place was naturally pleasing to the heart, the chanting of my *mantra-japa* was even more blissful and my desire to see Bhagavān increased even more.

85. Knowing that I desired to go to Nilācala to see the eternally manifest Śrī Jagannātha, Śrī Pippalāyana said to me:

86. “O Gopa-kumāra, why do you desire to leave this great place and go to another? Why do you wander here and there to see Parameśvara with your eyes?”

87. “Please make your mind steady in *samādhi*, and then you will automatically receive *darśana* of that Parameśvara, who is always directly situated within and without.”

88. “The form of that Paramātmā Śrī Vāsudeva Bhagavān is *sac-cid-ānanda*. When your heart has become completely purified, he will appear there – there is no other way to see him.”

89. “When Śrī Bhagavān is seen by the eyes, he is actually being perceived by the purified consciousness, because he only appears in that condition when a devotee’s senses are inactive.”

90. “The actions of the nose, ears, eyes, and other senses are dependent on the actions of the mind, and therefore, when happiness is transmitted into the mind, all the senses automatically become pleased.”

91. “Without the action of the mind, all the actions of the senses are fruitless, because the actions of the senses can only be experienced through the mind.”

92. “When sometimes Bhagavān is overpowered by special affection for his devotees and appears to the eyesight of a devotee (as he did to Dhruva and Prahāda), even then he is really made visible by the devotee’s transcendental knowledge.”

93. “And although by his great compassion Śrī Bhagavān appears to a devotee’s external vision, the blissfulness of that *darśana* can only be felt by the devotee’s mind, because the mind alone is the place where blissfulness is experienced.”

94. “Even when Śrī Bhagavān disappears the blissfulness of his *darśana* remains in one’s mind. Therefore the mind is the best receptacle for experiencing that bliss.”

95. “The blissfulness experienced in one’s mind increases in accordance with how much of Śrī Bhagavān’s mercy one has received, but the happiness felt by any of the external senses cannot similarly expand.”

96. “Seeing Śrī Bhagavān in meditation is equal to seeing him directly. When seen in meditation, he can bestow the same special mercy that he does when seen directly. Śrī Brahmā is evidence of this.”

97. “Direct *darśana* of Śrī Bhagavān is the giver of pleasure only to the devotees; his *darśana* inspires only fear and other faults in Kāmsa, Duryodhana and those like them.”

98–9. “The supremely blissful form of Śrīmān Nārāyaṇa delights all of the senses, but when Madhu, Kaiṭabha and other wicked demons saw him, they did not abandon their heinous natures, which were giving pain to everyone.”

100. “Even though he is the very form of divine bliss, to show the glories of *bhakti* and to delight his devotees, Śrī Bhagavān can make the impossible (hiding the bliss of seeing him from demons) possible because he is the Supreme Controller and possessor of all potency.”

101. “Of the nine processes of *bhakti*, *smaraṇa-bhakti* (remembrance) is the foremost because within it the actions of the best of the senses, the mind, are offered to the Lord.”

102–3. “The concentrated mind is able to give, according to the devotee’s specific taste, the most confidential *prema-bhakti*, which is superior to the four objects of human pursuit and which is unquestionably the best method for overpowering Śrī Bhagavān.”

104–5. “That *prema* is attained only by the mercy of Bhagavān. It is the greatest treasure of the devotees, it is saturated with varieties of blissful sweetnesss and its glories are indescribable. That wonderful entity called *prema* arises when special transformations take place in one’s consciousness.”

106–7. “If you consider concentrating the mind to be too arduous, or if you desire to make your eyes successful by receiving his direct *darśana*, then please go to Bhāratavarṣa where the *īśvara* of this world is manifest as Śrī Nara-Nārāyaṇa at Gandhamadana Mountain (Śrī Badrikāśrama).”

108. “Being fixed in *samādhi*, we always see him within and without, and therefore we never feel pangs of separation from him. Knowing this, the Lord has now gone to Śrī Badrikāśrama.”

109. “To benefit the people of the world with his instructions, he is performing severe austerities there in the form of an archery-teacher *brahmacārī* with matted locks of hair.”

110. Seeing that I desired to go there, the four Kumāras said to me, “Please go!” Then they showed me numerous forms of Śrī Bhagavān.

111. The first assumed the form of Śrīmān Nārāyaṇa, the second assumed the form of Śrī Viṣṇu, the third assumed the form of Śrī Yajñeśvara and the fourth assumed various forms of Śrī Bhagavān.

112. Seeing them I began trembling in fear, and offering *praṇāma* with folded hands said, “O Bhagavān, who are kind to the poor, I have committed a great offence, please forgive me!”

113. Then the four Kumāras touched my head, by which I also was cast into *samādhi*. There, too, I saw those same forms of Bhagavān that they had showed me, and even after my *samādhi* had broken, by the influence of meditation I continued to see those forms with my external vision as if they were present before me.

114–15. By continuing to chant my *mantra-japa*, my natural conviction was strengthened and that brought me great happiness. But remembrance of the sweetness of Vraja-bhūmi made my heart anxious and sometimes I entered a state similar to deep sleep, which was an obstacle to my *japa* and to receiving *darśana* of Śrī Bhagavān.

116. When I lamented and wished to go to Nīlācala, the great sages who reside in that place consoled me and asked about the cause of my discontent.

117. When I woefully described my feelings to them, they praised me, but I could not understand why and considered that I was very unfortunate.

118. Then, by the power of the practice of meditation, I began to directly see within and without and everywhere the form of Śrī Jagadīśvara Bhagavān.

119. Sometimes I saw the four Kumāras assume forms of Bhagavān in their meditation. Witnessing their absorption in meditation, I was supremely elated.

120. And when I did not see them exhibiting those forms of Bhagavān, I did not become unhappy in the hope of seeing them again. In this way I happily remained there for some time.

121–2. Once, the elderly grandfather of all and the supremely opulent Śrī Brahmā, sitting upon his swan while mercifully going to see some of his devotees at Śrī Puṣkaradvīpa, came there. Seeing him, the four Kumāras humbly offered him obeisances and worshipped him with great devotion.

123. Śrī Brahmā blessed them and affectionately smelled their heads. After giving them some instructions (on the secrets of *bhakti*), he quickly left for Puṣkaradvīpa.

124. When I asked the four Kumāras about him they laughed and said, “O cowherd boy, even upon coming to this Tapaloka you don’t know who he is?”

125. “He is the father of even the *prajāpatis*, Śrī Brahmā. He is the creator of the universe and our father. He was self-born and gloriously holds the most exalted position. He protects and guides the entire universe.”

126. “He resides in Satyaloka, which is situated above all other worlds and which is attained by those who faultlessly follow their *dharma* for one hundred births.”

127. “Śrī Vaikuṅṭhaloka is also there, where Śrī Jagadīśvara Bhagavān is eternally present as the Supreme Personality in a thousand-headed form.”

128. “We have heard that Brahmājī is that Supreme Personality’s son because he appeared from his navel-lotus. It is our opinion that there is no difference between them; it is just that Brahmājī performs the pastime of also assuming the form of the Supreme Personality.”

129. Śrī Gopa-kumāra said: When I heard all of this, I desired to go to Satyaloka to attain *darśana* of the Supreme Personality. Therefore I fixed myself in *samādhi* in that Tapaloka and began chanting my *mantra-japa*.

130. At the very moment I opened my eyes I saw that I had automatically arrived in Brahmaloaka, and saw before me Śrī Jagadīśvara Bhagavān.

131. His divine, auspicious form was enormous, and he possessed thousands of heads, arms and legs. His complexion was like that of a blue cloud, he was decorated with varieties of ornaments, his glory was like a great treasure and a lotus flower was emanating from his navel. He was reclining on Śeṣanāga and was delighting the eyes and hearts of all.

132. Śrī Lakṣmī was massaging his feet and he was lovingly glancing at Śrī Garuḍa, who was standing before him with folded hands. Śrī Brahmā was worshipping him with all of his opulences, and he was showing affection to Brahmājī in different ways. Śrī Nārada was dancing and singing with *prema-bhakti* and he was attentively listening.

133. Śrī Bhagavān was gradually and thoroughly teaching Śrī Brahmā the very essence of the confidential path of *bhakti*. In this way he was splendidly manifest in his own abode.

134. Hearing those instructions, Śrī Brahmā was overwhelmed with jubilation, and in a soft voice he eulogised those instructions as he offered *praṇāma* again and again.

135. Beholding all of this, I fainted in ecstasy. Then Śrī Lakṣmī approached me and caressing me in many ways, brought me back to consciousness. Showing me affection as if I were her own son, she led me to her husband.

136. Gazing at Śrī Bhagavān and repeatedly offering obeisances, I said to my mind, “O mind, today your desires have been completely fulfilled! Stay here and enjoy with great pleasure!”

137. “This world is devoid of all kinds of lamentation, sorrow and fear. It is the greatest treasure, saturated with divine bliss and worshipped by all other worlds.”

138. “O brother, as Jagadīśvara should be, he is directly present here in that form which is the pinnacle of glory.”

139. “Experience the affection of Śrī Lakṣmī and with your eyes gaze upon the Lord. Abandon your sorrow of separation from Mathurā and Vraja-bhūmi and your desire to go there and just reside here.”

140. “If you desire that Śrī Jagadīśvara Bhagavān will love you as he does Brahmājī, then chant the *mantra* given to you by Śrī Gurudeva and this desire will also be fulfilled.”

141. Then Śrī Bhagavān performed the pastime of taking rest. After that, Śrī Brahmā re-emerged from the Lord’s abode and took responsibility for creation of the fourteen worlds, which rest on the Lord’s navel-lotus.

142. Seeing both the wonderful form of Śrī Bhagavān and all the universes situated on his navel-lotus, and how Brahmājī was overwhelmed with divine love upon hearing confidential instructions from the Lord, I began happily residing there.

143. When the night of Brahmājī came and the dissolution of the three worlds was to take place, Śrī Bhagavān would take Brahmājī and happily recline on Śeṣanāga.

144. By the power of Brahmāloka I saw with great astonishment how at that time the residents of Janaloka and other planets offered many extraordinary prayers to Śrī Bhagavān.

145. When sometimes Śrī Bhagavān would go somewhere, I would grieve, but when he would return, my grief would be destroyed at the root.

146. After some time, one day Śrī Brahmā touched some foam (that was on the ocean of cosmic devastation) out of curiosity, and then a massive demon emerged from it.

147. Out of fear of that demon, Brahmājī went and hid somewhere. Later Śrī Bhagavān killed that demon, but overcome with fear, Brahmājī would not return to his abode. Then Śrī Bhagavān appointed me to the post of Brahmā.

148. Then I created Vaiṣṇavas for the propagation of *bhagavad-bhakti* and appointed them to all the important administrative posts such as Prajāpati and Indra.

149. In place after place I arranged for horse sacrifices for the worship of Śrī Bhagavān to be performed, by which all the universes were immersed in divine bliss.

150–1. Due to occupying the elevated post of Brahmā, all of the personified Vedas, Purāṇas, histories, sacrifices, Tantras and holy places were present and ready to serve me. Important sages were offering me varieties of prayers. Although I was surrounded by all of these alluring opulences, I did not abandon my indigence.

152. But caught up in the waves of the ocean of the responsibilities of being Brahmā, I did not feel the happiness of *bhagavad-bhakti* in the way that I had before and I became very worried.

153. And when I heard that my life span was only of two *parārdhas* (many millions of years), I became fearful of the influence of time. When I chanted my *mantra-japa* to eradicate that fear, remembrance of Vraja-bhūmi gave me great pain.

154. But when Śrī Jagadīśvara Bhagavān would show me parental affection, I was elated and my distress was mitigated.

155. Due to serving him as a son serves a father in such close proximity, I sometimes offended him, but he always forgave me.

156. Knowing that I was still anxious at heart, Śrī Lakṣmī delighted me by consoling me with motherly affection. In this way I resided there for a very long time.

157. Once, I heard some residents of Satyaloka greatly praising a *jīva* who had attained liberation (*mukti*) while residing in Bhāratavarṣa (present-day India). I asked them about this wonderful occurrence.

158. After hearing from those all-knowing sages about the exalted nature and rarity of *mukti*, I inquired from them about the method for attaining it.

159. The numerous Upaniṣads, who were present there in the form of goddesses, along with the Vedas and Smṛtis said, “Liberation is attained by knowledge alone – there is no other way.”

160. Then some Purāṇas and Tantras gravely said, “Even that knowledge, which is so difficult to acquire, is easily attained through *bhagavad-bhakti*.”

161. “Only by the cultivation of *bhakti* is liberation easily attained.” Then, to confirm this, some Śrutis and Smṛtis also expressed their opinions.

162. Having not heard a satisfactorily clear explanation from those Śrutis and Smṛtis, some important Upaniṣads became angry and clearly established this point by saying, “By *bhakti* liberation can certainly be attained!”

163. Hearing this, some confidential Upaniṣads, Tantras and great Purāṇas smiled and remained silent.

164–5. On the topic of whether liberation is easily attained only by chanting *mantra-japa* of Śrī Bhagavān's names, some Vedas, Purāṇas and Tantras engaged in a furious debate. Unable to tolerate this, the great Purāṇas and the *tantric* Upaniṣads covered their ears and left the assembly.

166. Next the important Purāṇas and Upaniṣads were accepted as mediators, and they gave their verdict that the *tantric-sāstras* were victorious (in their notion that liberation can be easily attained by chanting *bhagavad-mantra-japa*). This assessment was also very near and dear to me.

167. Now understanding their intention, I humbly praised *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and the other great Purāṇas who had earlier become displeased and left, and brought them back to the assembly.

168. When I very respectfully inquired from them concerning the established truths concerning liberation, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* along with the most exalted Śrutis and Tantras that proclaim Vaiṣṇava conclusions said:

169. “O Gopa-kumāra, who have attained the post of Brahmā, even though this topic that you have inquired about is more confidential than the greatest treasure, impelled by your virtues we will explain it.”

170. “We are solely committed to *bhagavad-bhakti*. In some places we have also described liberation and the methods for attaining it, but that was merely to expose their faults and to advise that they should be rejected.”

171. “In the course of describing the glories of *bhakti*, in some places we have also sometimes praised *mukti*, but not as the ultimate attainment because there is not even a scent of real happiness in liberation.”

172. “Just as one considers himself to be happy upon being freed from a disease or when sleeping soundly, in the same way liberation is imagined to be real happiness. Only the ignorant, who don't know the truth, aspire for liberation.”

173. “If by any means one merely chants or hears even the dim reflection (*abhāsa*) of the name of Śrī Bhagavān, he attains liberation, so how can the glories of the pure name of Bhagavān be estimated?”

174. “Factually, only those who are devoid of good sense find liberation attractive. Please listen carefully as we explain to you the opinion of the Vedas and Purāṇas.”

175–6. “Some hold the opinion that vanquishing all types of suffering is liberation. Some hold that eliminating actions committed out of ignorance is liberation, and others consider that overcoming illusory *māyā* and receiving direct perception of the soul is liberation. But there is no real happiness in any of these. The happiness experienced upon realising the soul to be a particle of *sac-cid-ānanda* is in reality very meagre.”

177. “Those who consider realising the soul to be liberation say that the pure soul is Brahman, which is without qualities, solitary, formless and inactive.”

178. “Bhagavān is Parabrahma, Paramātmā and Parameśvara. He is the embodiment of *sac-cid-ānanda* and an ocean of glories.”

179. “The simultaneous presence and absence of qualities, as well as a host of other contradictions, are harmonised in him. Brahman is famous as the bodily effulgence of Śrī Bhagavān; that is the difference between them.”

180. “Śrī Bhagavān is the embodiment of complete happiness, and through engaging in *bhakti* to his lotus feet, the *jīva* can certainly experience that complete happiness.”

181. “Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet are not only the very embodiment of happiness, but as sugar is full of sweetness as well as being the origin of sweetness, they are also the original foundation of happiness, whereas Brahman can also be said to be the embodiment of happiness, but not its original foundation.”

182. “The form of the *jīva* is *parabrahma*, and Śrī Bhagavān is also *sac-cid-ānanda parabrahma*.”

183. “But those who know the truth say that the *jīvas* are parts of Śrī Bhagavān, just as sunrays are parts of the glaring mass of the sun.”

184. “Even upon attaining perfection the *jīvas* remain eternally different from him, just as sunrays are different from the sun, sparks are different from the fire and waves are different from the ocean.”

185. “By the potency named Mahā-Yogamāyā, which is beginningless and arranges Śrī Bhagavān’s pastimes, the difference between the *jīvas* and Parabrahma Śrī Bhagavān has been established eternally.”

186. “It is the opinion of great personalities that due to being *sac-cid-ānanda*, the *jīvas* are non-different from Parabrahma himself, but due to being his parts, they are also different from him. Therefore, even upon attaining liberation, they remain different from him.”

187. “The *jīvas* are also forms of *sac-cid-ānanda*, but due to the influence of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s *māyā*, which is beginningless and the very embodiment of ignorance, they forget their own intrinsic forms and wander in the realm of birth and death.”

188. “When the *jīva* realises his real form, his bewilderment is eliminated and he becomes liberated. Then he factually experiences that he is a spiritually blissful particle of Śrī Bhagavān.”

189. “It is well known everywhere that according to the specific *sādhana* one performs, the corresponding fruit will be attained. The happiness of liberation achieved by realising one is a spiritual particle is only partial happiness.”

190. “Those who, due to being tormented by material bondage and being unable to taste *rasa*, desire impersonal liberation, greatly praise that *mukti*, just as those who desire residence in Svarga greatly praise Svarga even though it is temporary.”

191. “But in reality the ultimate happiness is automatically attained by those devotees who are engaged in serving the lotus feet of Śrī Bhagavān.”

192. “In an effort to depict the supreme glory of the happiness arising from that service, we have employed the word ‘ultimate’, meaning that it is simply unlimited.”

193. “Even though it is unlimited and supremely glorious, the happiness of *bhakti* is perpetually increasing, but the happiness of impersonal liberation does not increase; it is enclosed within certain limits.”

194–5. “Due to being of a different class, all *jīvas* are different from Parabrahma, but in truth, due to being his parts they are also non-different from him.”

196. “Therefore this *siddhānta* of simultaneous difference and non-difference, which is perfectly logical, is our unanimous opinion.”

197. “Many ancient histories also support this view; therefore one should not imagine these evidences to be exaggerations.”

198–9. “Those who consider them to be exaggerations or myths reveal their atheism and are cast into an insurmountable hell.”

200. “Aho! How can impersonal liberation be praiseworthy, when it is condemned by the scriptures and attained by demons who murder *brāhmaṇas* and cows?”

201. “Devotees and demons are opposite to one another in all respects, so their final destinations (*sādhya*) and methods for attaining those destinations (*sādhana*) must certainly also be opposite.”

202. “By practising the supreme *sādhana* of *śrī-kṛṣṇa-bhakti* one becomes saintly, and this *sādhana* bestows the supreme result, the Lord’s two lotus feet.”

203. “Those exalted souls who are acquainted with the truth and who relish the mellows of *bhakti* say that the nectar of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet is the utmost *sādhya*.”

204. “It cannot be attained through fruitive activity (*karma*), the cultivation of impersonal knowledge (*jñānā*) or renunciation (*vairāgya*), but only through the mercy of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.”

205. “*Karma* obstructs *bhakti*, *vairāgya* dries it up and *jñāna* destroys it, but when they are purified and employed in the service of *bhakti*, they can be beneficial in certain circumstances.”

206. “By receiving the mercy of Śrī Bhagavān and associating with devotees, even self-satisfied sages abandon their attachment to Brahman and enter the path of *bhakti*.”

207. “By the potency of Śrī Hari even liberated souls attain transcendental bodies of *sac-cid-ānanda* by which they worship him with spiritual senses.”

208. “The state of being self-satisfied (*ātmārāma*) is attained only by renunciation of the false ego, and those who are acquainted with the truth say that this is actually very simple.”

209. “Although liberation and the state of being *ātmārāma* are secondary fruits of *bhakti*, devotees never accept them because they are opposed to devotion.”

210. “The supreme fruit of *bhakti* is *prema*, and the nature of *prema* is that it is never satisfied. Therefore those who are *rasika* hold the opinion that secondary fruits such as liberation are deplorable.”

211. “The fact that the state of being *ātmārāma* can even be attained without *bhakti* is not unsettling in any way (because this type of self-satisfaction is so trivial anyway); rather, *rasika* devotees are of the opinion that it simply acts to magnify the glory of *bhakti*.”

212. “By performing the external devotion related to one’s own specific *dharma*, one’s consciousness is purified and the state of being *ātmārāma* is attained, so the fruit of this external devotion is trivial. But by practising internal devotion, such as hearing and chanting, the supreme fruit of *prema* is attained.”

213. “When those who have become *ātmārāma* worship the lotus feet of Śrī Bhagavān, without obstruction they quickly become fixed in *bhakti* and experience the supreme happiness.”

214. “In *bhakti*, the devotee who experiences its pleasure (in various serving mellows), what he is experiencing (Śrī Bhagavān with his variegated forms and pastimes) and the activities of the senses by which he experiences it (such as hearing and chanting) are all always manifesting in various ways.”

215. “In their *samādhi* those who are *ātmārāma* experience only the uniform happiness of the void. Because the mind remains inactive in that state, their happiness cannot expand. However, because devotees’ senses, minds and intelligence all remain active, in their purified hearts a vastly superior happiness shines, just as the sun reflects more brilliantly on a crystal mountain.”

216. “Therefore the happiness of *bhakti*, which is attained by the sweetness of the mercy of *bhakta-vatsala* Śrī Bhagavān, is superior to the happiness derived from the *samādhi* of impersonal liberation.”

217. “The happiness of impersonal liberation is completely opposed to the happiness of *bhakti*. The happiness of *mukti* is perpetually uniform whereas the happiness of *bhakti* is variegated, remarkable, saturated with the glorious playful sweetnesses of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and beyond the inference of those who don’t know the science of *bhakti*.”

218. “Even though he is one, by his own potency Śrī Bhagavān exhibits at every moment hundreds of new and fresh variegated sweetnesses of both himself and his *bhakti*, which are beyond the comprehension of non-devotees.”

219. “This sweeter-than-sweet variegatedness is what establishes him as Parabrahma and Parameśvara. It is also the pinnacle of his mercy towards his devotees by which he immerses them in the natural ecstasy of experiencing his sweetness, an ecstasy that mocks the happiness of Brahman realisation.”

220. “To infinitely enthrall his devotees with the experience of his various ecstatic sweetnesses, Śrī Bhagavān bestows upon them spiritual senses, just as he himself is transcendental yet accepts senses.”

221. “O Gopa-kumāra, may that Śrī Kṛṣṇa, whose various opulences, pastimes and qualities are all eternal and relished by his eternal servants, who is worshipped eternally, whose abode is eternal and whose non-dual Brahman is eternal, protect you.”

222. “Although the ignorant should not try to penetrate the exalted *rasa* of the soft lotus of *bhakti* with the hard thorns of logic, to delight those new *sādhakas* who are still attached to the conception of impersonal liberation by convincing them to enter the path of *bhakti*, we have put forth these arguments.”

223–4. “O Gopa-kumāra, if you consider impersonal liberation to be trivial and desire to attain the treasure of firm attachment for pure *bhagavad-bhakti*, then please chant your glorious *mantra* and now hear a very confidential secret that will delight your heart.”

225. “Outside this *brahmāṇḍa*, which is four billion miles in diameter, are eight coverings, each ten times greater than the preceding one.”

226. “Crossing those eight coverings, one attains eternal liberation, and due to the absence of material cause and effect, this area is also called Mahākālapura.”

227. “Scholars attempt to describe this indescribable area as either possessing form or being formless according to their own opinions.”

228. “By their own volition Śrī Bhagavān’s devotees also go there and receive *darśana* of the enchanting spiritual form of Parabrahma.”

229. “By the power of your glorious *mantra*, your long-cherished desire to go there will soon be directly fulfilled.”

230. “If you don’t want to wait for a very long time, then go at once to Mathurā-maṇḍala’s Vraja-bhūmi and chant your *mantra*.”

231–2. Śrī Gopa-kumāra said: O Mathurā *brāhmaṇa*, hearing the words of those *bhakti-sāstras*, my devotion for Śrī Bhagavān increased. But in my heart, I began to think, “This is a matter of great unhappiness – the glorious Śrī Bhagavān whom I should serve is here in the form of my father, so why should I leave him and go to another place?”

233. Seeing my despondency, the merciful and all-knowing Bhagavān personally gave me these instructions:

234. “Go to Mathurā-maṇḍala’s Vraja-bhūmi, which is very dear to me and is decorated with the various places of my pastimes.”

235. “Śrī Brahmā himself prayed to take birth as a blade of grass there, and even after all of this time, it is as splendid as ever.”

236. “There you will again meet your *gurudeva*, who is most dear to me, and by his mercy you will come to know everything.”

237. “You will soon see me again in Mahākālapura and you will be enchanted with divine bliss.”

238. “By the influence of my mercy you will freely wander here and there and experience hundreds of glorious wonders.”

239. “O my son, Gopa-kumāra, after some time all the desires of your heart will be fulfilled, and you will enjoy pastimes with me in Vṛndāvana according to your own free will.”

240. Being filled with both joy and sorrow, by his order and travelling at the speed of mind, I came at once to this enchanting Vṛndāvana.

Chapter Three – Worship

1. Śrī Gopa-kumāra said: Coming from Brahmaloḳa to this Earth, I saw that not even a trace of the way it had been before was visible.
2. But Śrī Mathurā-maṇḍala, Vṛndāvana, Govardhana, the Yamunā and all the stationary living entities there were manifest in exactly the same way as before.
3. Remembering Bhagavān’s order, I began wandering around this Vṛndāvana searching for my *gurudeva*. Then I saw him in a *kuñja*, and having become overwhelmed in *prema*, he had fainted.
4. Reviving him after many efforts, I offered obeisances at his feet. Seeing this, he embraced me, and due to being all-knowing, he understood the desire of my heart (to attain liberation).
5. After bathing, he taught me the regulations for meditation on the *mantra* that he had previously given me. Some instructions he spoke with his lotus mouth, and others he conferred through indication.
6. Then he said, “You are very dear to me, therefore I am giving you whatever wealth I have in my possession. By the power of these even more confidential instructions, you will be able to know and do everything.”
7. Being overjoyed, I fell at his feet, and in the meantime he vanished somewhere.
8. I was severely aggrieved in separation from him, but after steadying myself with great exertion, I began respectfully chanting my *mantra-japa* in just the way that he had taught me.
9. Then I saw that my body was no longer composed of five material elements, and piercing through the circle of the sun, I began seeing the numerous planets.
10. I saw that they were contaminated with many defects, decorated with only shadows of real happiness, and illusory, like what is seen in a dream.
11. Travelling at the speed of mind, I passed all of the planets, which had previously taken me ages to attain in sequence, in a single moment.
12. Then I arrived at the coverings of the universe, where the happiness and opulence are millions of times greater than those of Brahmaloḳa.

13. Those *yogīs* who attain liberation in successive stages go there to enjoy the next stratum of subtle material enjoyment.

14. In sequence they go to each material covering where they enjoy the immense pleasures available there according to their wishes before proceeding onwards to the next covering.

15–16. First I arrived at the covering of the Earth, where I saw Śrī Pṛthivī-devī, the goddess who possesses the opulences of that covering, worshipping Śrī Varāha Bhagavān, from whose pores the *brahmāṇḍas* emanate, with divine paraphernalia that are not available in this material world.

17. I saw how the entire material universe was present there in its unmanifest, subtle form.

18. After completing her worship of Śrī Bhagavān, Pṛthivī-devī welcomed me as a guest and requested me, “Please stay for some time and enjoy the pleasures available here.”

19. But at that time I felt as if something was pulling me upwards, so taking Pṛthivī-devī’s permission I passed through that covering and the next six coverings as well.

20–1. In their respective coverings I saw the massive personifications of water, fire, air, ether, false ego and the *mahat-tattva* worshipping their respective Lords who are Matsya, Sūrya, Pradyumna, Aniruddha, Saṅkarṣaṇa and Vāsudeva Bhagavān.

22. As each successive covering is manifest from the next most subtle element, each successive covering possesses a superior object of worship, superior paraphernalia for worship and superior glories.

23. I passed through each covering in the same way as I had the Earth covering until I reached the covering of material nature, which possesses a darkish hue that enchants the eyes and heart.

24. Seeing that this hue was similar to that of my worshipful Lord, I was overjoyed and did not wish to go any further.

25. Then, upon completing the worship of her Lord, Śrī Mohinī, the immensely beautiful Śrī Prakṛti-devī approached me.

26. As gifts, she placed before me *aṇimā* and the other mystic perfections, and just as Pṛthivī-devī and the deities of the other coverings had, she implored me to stay there for some time and enjoy the pleasures available there.

27. Then she affectionately said, “If you desire *mukti*, then you must appease me because I guard the door to it.”

28. “And if you desire *bhakti* to Śrī Viṣṇu Bhagavān, then you please accept me because I am his maidservant, sister, potency and the giver of *bhakti*.”

29. I did not accept the gifts that Śrī Prakṛti-devī offered me, but understanding her to be the potency of Śrī Viṣṇu, I offered obeisances to her and began wandering around to see that beautifully coloured covering.

30. I saw living entities who possessed only subtle bodies enjoying immensely beautiful material pleasures, which were superior in all ways to those available in all other worlds and which were self-manifesting.

31. Those subtle pleasures are beyond the reach of the mind and words, their opulences charm the heart and they are the very origin and cause of gross material pleasures.

32. After that, by the desire of Bhagavān, I crossed over that dreadful, extensive darkness and then I saw an extremely bright mass of light that made me partially close my eyes.

33. When I carefully and arduously fully extended my vision and looked further ahead, I saw Parameśvara, whose effulgence was like that of millions of suns.

34. He increases the divine bliss of the eyes and heart, he is all-pervading, he is decorated with varieties of sweetnesses that included all the symptoms of the Supreme Personality, and he is manifest in the immensely wonderful form of Parabrahma.

35. Even though being eternally situated above the modes of nature, that infallible Śrī Bhagavān possesses all virtues, and even though formless, he still possesses a form that delights the hearts of all, and although he enjoys as the presiding deity of nature, he is nonetheless separate from nature.

36. Being overwhelmed at that time by awe, fear and ecstasy, I could not discern what I was to do.

37. Although he is manifest only by his own wish, and he is beyond the perception of the material senses, still, by the power of his mercy, I was receiving his direct *darśana*.

38. I could not discern if I was seeing him with my eyes, with my mind, or surpassing the functions of both of them, with my very soul.

39. When one moment I saw him as being formless, I remembered the mercy of Śrī Jagannātha, but when the next moment I again saw that great effulgent form, I was overjoyed.

40. When sometimes I would begin to merge into that effulgence, by the merciful touch of the brilliant nails of his lotus feet I would be saved.

41. When sometimes I saw him surrounded by perfected souls in subtle bodies who were simultaneously different and non-different from him, just as the sun is surrounded on all sides by its own rays, I was delighted.

42. In this way I became immersed in divine bliss and became like those who are *ātmārāma* (self-satisfied) or *āptakāma* (who have no unfulfilled desire).

43. Considering with various types of logic, I concluded that this place was the supreme destination and the pinnacle of all spiritual fruits.

44. I was overwhelmed by the waves of the natural ecstasy of this realm, and the idea that there was any place superior to it disappeared from my mind.

45. But by the influence of the instructions of my *mahā-bhāgavata* Śrī Gurudeva and by the power of chanting my exalted *mantra*, my exclusive craving of “When will I receive the *darśana* of my worshipful Lord?” was never lost.

46. And by seeing that effulgent Supreme Personality for a long time, the craving for the *darśana* of my own worshipful Lord increased even more and special remembrance of him arose inside me.

47. Then I was not as satisfied as before from receiving the direct *darśana* of that presiding deity of the realm of liberation, and the inherent nature of that place made me fearful that I might sometime merge into him.

48. One day I was thinking, “Now I will go to Vraja-bhūmi and engage in the *sādhana* by which my desired fruit can be attained” and then suddenly the sounds of wonderful music and singing became audible.

49. Hearing it, I became pleased and began looking in all directions. Then I saw descending from an upper world an extraordinary personality riding on a bull.

50. The beautiful complexion of his celestial, auspicious form was like camphor and he had three eyes. He was naked and his forehead was adorned with a half-moon. He was holding a trident, his matted locks were holding the water of the Gaṅgā, his limbs were covered in ash and he was wearing a beautiful garland of bones.

51. Wearing exquisite ornaments and garments, the goddess Gaurī was sitting in his lap and he was being served with splendid paraphernalia by attendants who were similar to himself and whose forms and actions were immensely enchanting.

52. Seeing this, I was elated and struck with wonder. I thought, “Who is this, surrounded by his associates and splendidly situated above *mukti*?”

53. “His opulences surpass those of this realm of liberation, and though he is certainly a virtuous personality, he appears like a great hedonist.”

54. Overjoyed upon receiving his *darśana*, I offered obeisances to him and his associates and then he mercifully glanced at me.

55. Next I joyfully approached the leader of his associates, who was named Śrī Nandīśvara, and inquired from him about this great personality.

56. He laughed and said, “O cowherd boy who only worships Śrī Gopāla, you don’t know that this is Jagadīśvara Śrī Śiva Mahārāja?”

57. “He is the giver of both material pleasure and liberation, and he increases *bhagavad-bhakti*. He is worshipful to even the liberated souls and he is dear to the Vaiṣṇavas.”

58–9. “Being overpowered by the *bhakti* of his friend Kuvera, he has come from his own abode of Śivaloka, which is perfectly suitable for him and which is attained by those who perform *bhakti* knowing there to be no difference between Śrī Śiva and Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and accompanied by his beloved Śrī Pārvatī and his other principal associates, he is now going to adorn Kailāsa Mountain with his presence.”

60. Śrī Gopa-kumāra said: Hearing this, I was overjoyed and I desired to attain some special mercy from the very heart of that Mahēśvara.

61–2. Knowing this, Śrī Śiva gave an indication with his eyes to the exalted Nandīśvara, who then gave me pure instructions by which I easily understood that Śrī Śiva is non-different from and increases one’s *prema* for my own worshipful deity, Śrī Madanagopāla.

63. Then I cheerfully joined his associates, who all delighted me. Then Śrī Nandīśvara began describing Śrī Śiva’s extraordinary virtues, saying:

64. “In his one manifest form Śrī Śiva always resides in his own abode above this Muktiloka where his exclusive, beloved devotees always receive his *darśana*.”

65. “Śrī Śiva always delights his devotees by exhibitions of dancing and singing in his devotion for Śrī Bhagavān, from whom he is non-different.”

66. “Although he is Jagadīśvara himself, as if he were a servant he lovingly worships the thousand-hooded Śrī Śeṣa.”

67. O *brāhmaṇa*, although I was pleased to hear that Śivaloka was superior to all other worlds, still I felt some dissatisfaction in my heart.

68–9. Previously I could not discern the cause of my own despondency, but then, by the mercy of my *gurudeva* and the power of chanting my *mantra*, I quickly understood that I was suffering because I was not directly experiencing the glories and pastimes of the lotus feet of Śrī Madanagopāla.

70. Then I told my mind that it is this same Śrī Śiva who assumes the special form of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and performs such wonderful, variegated pastimes.

71–2. Seeing that my mind was not satisfied with this, I said, “O mind, although with Śrī Śiva you cannot experience that kind of pastime sweetnesses, still, by his mercy, all of your long-cherished desires will soon be completely fulfilled.”

73. In this way I satisfied my own mind. For some reason Śrī Śiva stopped there, and therefore I was able to happily remain with him for some time.

74. Then, from a distance, the extremely sweet sound of some *mahātmās* singing and playing music became audible.

75. Hearing this, Śrī Śiva was plunged into an ocean of bliss, and with symptoms of ecstatic love appearing on his body, he began to dance.

76. Then Śrī Pārvatī, who is the topmost of chaste women, along with Śrī Nandīśvara and others encouraged their master by singing and playing music.

77. Then I saw those *mahātmās* who had come. They had four-armed forms and their youthfulness was adorned by their beauty and sweetness.

78. The brilliance of their limbs, which were adorned with exquisite garments and ornaments, obscured the bodily lustre of Śrī Śiva’s associates. Singing the great fame of their Lord, Śrī Bhagavān, they were immersed in blissful *rasa*.

79. Their forms cannot be described in words, their garments and ornaments enchant the mind and they were accompanied by the four Kumāras, who I had seen previously in Tapaloka.

80. By the natural influence of their *darśana*, my mind was attracted and delighted. At that time I did not consider anything within or without dear to me besides the sight of them.

81. When after some time I regained my composure, being fearful and bashful I began to think, “I am not qualified to even desire within my heart to serve them, because their service would be very difficult for me to attain.”

82. Then this craving began tormenting wretched me: “By the mercy of Śrī Śiva, will they speak to me even once?”

83. “From where have they come? Who are they? Will they gratify me with a merciful glance?” What wonder is it that I was thinking like this? Even Śrī Śiva, upon embracing them, fainted in *prema*.

84. After this Śrī Pārvatī, who is the faithful follower of Śrī Śiva’s very heart, understood my mind and told Śrī Gaṇeśa to speak to me softly (so the other associates of Śiva could not hear).

85. Śrī Gaṇeśa said: “They are eternal associates of Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the master of Vaikuṅṭha. They have attained *sārūpya-mukti* (possessing the same form as the Lord) and they have come from Vaikuṅṭha.”

86–7. “Look! Some of them are going to the tiny universe of four-headed Brahmā, others are quickly going to the universe of eight-headed Brahmā, which is twice its size, and others are going to the universe of sixteen-headed Brahmā, which is twice as big again.”

88–9. “In this way there are Brahmās who possess millions of heads and suitably large universes, and being adorned with the appropriate garments, ornaments and opulences, these eternal associates of the Lord are proceeding towards those universes by their own volition.” In this way Śrī Gaṇeśa showed me numerous eternal associates, who enchanted my eyes and heart.

90–1. Then Śrī Gaṇeśa continued: “To protect from fear those who, at the time of dying, even once have the dim reflection of Śrī Bhagavān’s name upon either their tongue or entering their ears and to bestow refulgent *bhakti* upon them, these eternal associates wander everywhere by their own volition because *bhakti* is their singular dearest object.”

92. “These four *naiṣṭika-brahmacārīs* (the Kumāras) are Bhagavān’s incarnations as devotees. For the welfare of all the worlds, like those eternal associates they too always wander about.”

93. “Because the Master of Tapaloka, Śrīmān Nārāyaṇa, doesn’t always reside there, the residents there become like orphans. So these four brothers reside in Tapaloka to bring them happiness.”

94. “They have just returned from Vaikuṅṭha, where they received *darśana* of that Bhagavān who attracts everyone towards himself by the power of his personal qualities. By his audience they have become completely blissful and now consider even the happiness of impersonal liberation to be a mockery.”

95. “Having drunk the great *rasa* of devotion to Śrī Bhagavān in the company of the devotees there, they have now come here.”

96. “How can I eulogise that Vaikuṅṭhaloka, which possesses the eternal, limitless supreme happiness and the appropriate pinnacle of opulence, which is decorated with the various pastime-places (*līlā-sthālis*) of the lotus feet of Śrī Lakṣmīnātha?”

97. “The exalted devotees easily attain that Vaikuṅṭha by virtue of their *prema*, but for those who desire liberation, due to their very souls being contaminated with the deplorable desire to merge with the Lord, it is very difficult to attain.”

98. “When my father is thoroughly merciful to you, you will hear the glories of Vaikuṅṭha and also be able to go there and directly experience them.”

99. Śrī Gopa-kumāra said: O *brāhmaṇa*, then an intense desire to go to Vaikuṅṭha-dhāma arose inside me, and I began dancing on the waves of a shoreless ocean of anxiety.

100. Even after considerable deliberation, I concluded that I was not qualified to go there. Anguished, I began crying and then fainted.

101. Then Śrī Śiva Mahārāja, who is very merciful, who cannot tolerate the sufferings of others and who is universally dear to all Vaiṣṇavas, quickly lifted me up and comforted me, saying:

102. “O Śrī Vaiṣṇava, just as you desire to reside in that Vaikuṅṭhaloka, in the same way Pārvatī and myself also desire to always reside there.”

103. “That realm is very difficult to attain; even the liberated souls pray for it. Brahmājī, his sons headed by Bhṛgu and even myself aspire for admission there.”

104. “Those who have firm faith in the selfless and pure performance of their specific *varṇāśrama-dharma* responsibilities attain the mercy of Śrī Hari.”

105. “When one attains mercy that is one hundred times superior to that mercy, he attains the post of Brahmā, and when one attains mercy that is one hundred times superior to that, he attains my post.”

106. “And only when Śrī Bhagavān bestows mercy that is one hundred times greater than that upon someone do they attain Vaikuṅṭha.”

107. “O Gopa-kumāra, certainly you are qualified to go to Vaikuṅṭha, because you are the son of a Govardhana *gopa*, a devotee of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, a disciple of a *brāhmaṇa* who is a beloved devotee of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and you are devoted to your *gopāla-mantra*.”

108–9. “Of the four types of *mukti*, this is the place of *sāyujya-mukti*, impersonal liberation. This place is attained by those *sannyāsīs* who are absorbed in monism, whose hearts have become withered by the flames of the fire of the great misery of the material world, and who, not competent to discern what is valuable and what is worthless, only accept what is worthless.”

110. “For them, Śrī Kṛṣṇa ordered me to conceal the path of *prema-bhakti* to his lotus feet and thereby cast them into the ocean of delusion.”

111. “Those who are *rasika*, who are expert in relishing the divine bliss of *bhagavad-bhajana*, reject this impersonal liberation. Understanding it to be an impediment to your real welfare, you should also reject it.”

112. “You know that a *brāhmaṇa* resident of Dvārakā, who desired only the *rasa* of *kṛṣṇa-bhakti*, with special cleverness retrieved his sons from this world.”

113. “Even here you received *darśana* of Śrī Bhagavān, and that is the fruit of your exalted *guru*’s mercy upon you and your own fervent desire to receive his *darśana*.”

114. Śrī Gopa-kumāra said: Obtaining the mercy of Śrī Śiva Mahārāja, I was overjoyed. O *brāhmaṇa*, I wanted to inquire from him further, but due to bashfulness I could not.

115. Hearing the words of Śrī Mahādeva, those eternal associates of Śrī Bhagavān respectfully offered obeisances to him and with great humility said:

116. “O Bhagavān Mahādeva, you are non-different from Śrī Vaikuṅṭhanātha and Śrī Pārvatī is non-different from Śrī Lakṣmī.”

117. “You and your goddess Śrī Pārvatī are qualified to reside there, because you are renowned as the most intimate friend of Śrī Vaikuṅṭhanātha and are his most exalted incarnation.”

118. “Describing yourself as a fallen soul as you just did is natural for such an immensely beloved devotee of Śrī Bhagavān.”

119. “Because you taste *bhakti-rasa*, your glories are superior to those of all other incarnations and the Vaiṣṇavas eulogise you.”

120. Śrī Gopa-kumāra said: Ashamed to hear himself praised, Śrī Śiva Mahārāja became silent. Then those exalted, amicable eternal associates of Śrī Bhagavān embraced me and said:

121. “O Gopa-kumāra, you worship the exalted *mantra* of our master and you are very dear to Śrī Śiva, therefore we count you among the devotees.”

122. “Having taken birth in Bengal on the banks of the Gaṅgā and being a resident of Śrī Mathurā, the incarnation of Śrī Kṛṣṇa named Jayanta has become your exalted *guru*.”

123. “Understand one thing – you are the cause of our coming here. Now please hear what you should do for your own welfare: if you desire entrance into Vaikuṅṭha, then renounce everything and perform ninefold *bhakti*.”

124. “To know this ninefold *bhakti*, always hear the descriptions of Śrī Bhagavān’s pastimes that are narrated in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and other scriptures. When you lovingly hear these descriptions, they will quickly propel you to his realm.”

125. “Performance of any one of the limbs of this ninefold *bhakti* will bestow the supreme result, entrance into Śrī Vaikuṅṭha.”

126. “You may have heard the greatness of the other human pursuits, but upon deliberation of their results, they become insignificant and are disregarded by great souls.”

127. “Although the performance of even one limb of ninefold *bhakti* bestows entrance into Vaikuṅṭha, still *rasika* devotees, to taste the wonderful varieties of sweetnesses of *bhakti-rasa*, perform all nine.”

128. “By the faithful execution of devotional practices, *prema* for the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa automatically manifests.”

129. “That *prema* cures the disease of the heart, which is the various material desires that prevent one’s entrance into Vaikuṅṭha.”

130. “Wherever this kind of *bhakti* is performed becomes Vaikuṅṭha because there Śrī Bhagavān is present.”

131. “But still, in these places where *bhakti* is performed, one cannot always obtain the direct *darśana* of Bhagavān. Therefore the devotees always crave entrance into Vaikuṅṭha.”

132. “Besides Vaikuṅṭha there is no other place where all varieties of *bhakti* are resolutely performed without impediments (presented by material time or other material limitations) by countless devotees (all possessing forms of *sac-cid-ānanda*).”

133. “Do not think that *bhakti* is an activity of the material senses or mind; it is beyond the modes of material nature and spiritually, eternally blissful.”

134. “By the mercy of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, that *bhakti* is illuminated within pure souls who are transcendental to the modes of nature and who are *sac-cid-ānanda*.”

135. “By accurate discrimination, a *jīva* becomes pure and is transferred to Śrī Hari’s abode of Vaikuṅṭha, where he is delighted by the various ecstasies of the various devotional activities such as hearing (*śravaṇa*) and chanting (*kīrtana*).”

136. “The activities of *bhakti* are not merely actions of the material senses; *bhakti* is fully transcendental and grants one entrance into Vaikuṅṭha.”

137. “Even if someone who is indifferent to *bhagavad-bhakti* becomes purified by some other means, how can he possibly enter Vaikuṅṭha? He may attain impersonal liberation, but not residence in Vaikuṅṭha.”

138. “Only those who are limited to external vision consider the activities of *bhagavad-bhakti* to be the same as *karma*. In some places *bhakti* has been referred to as *karma*, but *bhakti* is transcendental and *karma* is material.”

139. “Perfected devotees who reside in Vaikuṅṭha or any other place possess bodies, minds and senses that are *sac-cid-ānanda* and perfectly suitable for relishing *bhakti*.”

140. “We eternal residents of Vaikuṅṭha, who are untouched by the material energy and who perpetually taste the varieties of *bhakti*, are evidence of this.”

141. “Although *bhakti* is not a manifestation of the activities of the material senses, to increase the new devotees’ inclination towards devotion, it appears as if it is.”

142. “The *mahātmās* who are fixed in devotion do not consider *bhakti* to be subservient to them; rather, they understand it to be the very embodiment of Bhagavān’s mercy.”

143. “If you desire to quickly receive *darsana* of Śrī Vaikuṅṭha, then immediately proceed to the exalted Vraja-bhūmi because it is the fulfiller of all types of desires.”

144. “To attain the lotus feet of Śrī Bhagavān, exclusively perform pure *bhakti*, which consists mainly of *nāma-saṅkīrtana*.”

145. “Then you will quickly attain that kind of *prema-bhakti* by which you will be able to enter Vaikuṅṭha and happily receive *darśana* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.”

146. “Some consider the most confidential, topmost method for attaining *prema* not to be *kīrtana*, but rather *smaraṇa* (remembrance). Their argument is that because *kīrtana* is performed only with the material tongue and with very little effort bestows spiritual happiness, how could it be the best?”

147. “They contend that *smaraṇa-bhakti* is the best because only after extensive efforts does the mind, which is the strongest, most restless and the king of all the senses, become subjugated and purified.”

148. “But because it engages the voice, ears and mind, and because it attracts others as it does oneself, we consider that *kīrtana* is better than trying to remember the Lord with the fickle mind.”

149. “It is the opinion of those who are attached to meditation that the voice is the conductor of all the external and internal senses, so if it becomes controlled, one becomes steadfast and can proficiently remember the lotus feet of Śrī Bhagavān; therefore the fruit of *kīrtana* is *smaraṇa*. They say that the special internal realisation of Bhagavān is called *dhyāna* (meditation), and to have actually established one’s relationship with him within the mind is called *smaraṇa*.”

151. “If by the power of his meditation one can experience all the devotional activities such as *kīrtana*, *śravaṇa* and taking *darśana* of the Lord within the mind, then that is superior to performing these activities with the outer senses.”

152. “For a *rasika* devotee, the particular *sādhana* which he thoroughly adores and from which he achieves complete happiness is the best for him, and that is what he should follow. It is the opinion of the exalted *mahātmās* that for him that is also the ultimate goal (*sādhya*).”

153. “From *kīrtana* the happiness of *dhyāna* increases, and from *dhyāna* the happiness of the sweetnesses of *kīrtana* increases. They increase one another, therefore we see that they are one and the same.”

154. “*Dhyāna* bestows happiness upon one in the same way as *kīrtana* does, because for those who are extremely attached to a particular object, when they experience that thing or anything related to it in their meditation, they become peaceful.”

155. “It is like when a man suffering from fever satisfies his intense thirst and becomes happy by merely mentally drinking cool, nectarean water.”

156. “They say that although by performing *kīrtana* of one’s beloved object one can also attain happiness in the same way as he can from meditation on it, the great souls sometimes feel shy to perform *kīrtana* of or to glorify their beloved object even in a solitary place.”

157. “But *dhyāna* can only be accomplished when alone in a solitary place, whereas *saṅkīrtana* can be accomplished when in the company of many others as well as when alone in a solitary place.”

158. “And of the many types of Śrī Kṛṣṇa *kīrtana*, the *kīrtana* of his name is primary. Because it is capable of bestowing the great wealth of pure love for him very quickly, it is considered the best.”

159. “The happiness that the tongue tastes while one chants Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s nectarean name with heartfelt love is incomparable – who can describe its glories?”

160. “Although all of Bhagavān’s names are equally glorious, by the *nāma-saṅkīrtana* of one’s favourite deity all cherished desires are quickly fulfilled and one becomes joyful.”

161. “Due to the existence of various tastes, there are those who have loving attachment for only one name of Bhagavān, but they also gradually find all of his names tasteful.”

162. “Manifesting in the sense of speech, the nectar of his names inundates all the other senses with their sweetness.”

163. “His names appear primarily on the tongue, and they delight both the chanter and anyone who hears them. Therefore *nāma-saṅkīrtana* is superior to *dhyāna*.”

164. “It is said that *nāma-saṅkīrtana* is the best and most powerful method for attaining the treasure of *kṛṣṇa-prema*, because like the most supremely magnetic *mantra* it pulls Śrī Kṛṣṇa towards a *sādhaka*.”

165. “Therefore those who are *rasika* consider that *saṅkīrtana* is the fruit of *bhakti*. It is always effectual in bestowing the treasure of love of God.”

166. “Some *rasika* devotees say that *śrī-nāma-saṅkīrtana* is the very embodiment of *kṛṣṇa-prema* because when one lovingly sings the name of his favourite deity, *prema* automatically arises.”

167. “Just as the *cātaka* bird laments upon not seeing a raincloud or as *cakavi* birds lament at night when separated from their husbands, devotees perpetually sing *nāma-saṅkīrtana*.”

168. “Bhagavān is an ocean of variegated *lila-rasa*, and only by his variegated mercy are the varieties of *saṅkīrtana* sweetnesss procured; they cannot be achieved merely by one’s own effort.”

169. “According to their own desire, the previous sins of staunch devotees are destroyed, but those who don’t worship Bhagavān must suffer the consequences of their actions.”

170. “But to conceal the great treasure of *bhakti*, the *mahātmās* who devoutly perform *nāma-saṅkīrtana* sometimes exhibit faults or that they are suffering in some way.”

171. “Although merely by performance of *nāma-saṅkīrtana* all of a devotee’s suffering and faults are destroyed, still some *mahātmās*, who are merciful just as Śrī Bhagavān himself is, accept suffering or exhibit flaws just to instruct ordinary people about proper conduct.”

172. “For example, Bharata Mahārāja, even though he possessed a thoroughly pure heart, showed the fault of detrimental association, Yudhiṣṭhira Mahārāja, being the embodiment of *dharma*, showed the fault of gambling, and the sinless Nṛga Mahārāja showed the fault of stealing from a *brāhmaṇa*, all just to give instruction to ordinary people.”

173. “O Gopa-kumāra, by the power of this conception, your *bhakti* will surmount the greatest of obstacles. We will also help you in all circumstances.”

174. “Śrī Kṛṣṇa must be very merciful to you, because even upon hearing the words of Śrī Pippalāyana and the other Yogīndras who reside in Tapaloka, your desire to receive the direct *darśana* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa was not stifled.”

175. “Although it is true what Pippalāyana and the others told you, that because Bhagavān’s form is *sac-cid-ānanda*, senses that are also *sac-cid-ānanda* are required to perceive it, by the potency of his mercy his form can also be seen by material senses.”

176. “Although some hold the opinion that Bhagavān is seen by the eyes of transcendental knowledge, when we see him with these very eyes we feel great happiness and consider it our glory that by the power of his mercy we see that transcendental Lord with our eyes.”

177. “Śrī Bhagavān can be seen by the power of his mercy or by the power of *bhakti*. Therefore even with the limited material eyes he can always be seen, just as he is in the mind by those proficient in meditation.”

178. “If Śrī Bhagavān’s mercy is not present, then even with the mind he cannot be seen in any way because he manifests of his own volition and is the controller of all. He is the embodiment of spiritual pleasure, so whichever method you worship him in will bestow complete happiness.”

179. “Even after directly seeing Śrī Bhagavān with the eyes, varieties of his mercy are experienced. Receiving his *darśana* is the ultimate fruit of *śravaṇa* and all other devotional practices, and the bliss it bestows is superior to that experienced even in *samādhi*.”

180. “The ultimate fruit of all *sādhana*s is the direct *darśana* of Bhagavān, and by the power of that *darśana*, *māyā* is destroyed at the root and *prema* increases.”

181. “Although Prahlāda and others perpetually see him within their hearts, still they always desire to see him with their eyes. The proof of this is that after seeing Śrī Bhagavān on the shore of the ocean, Prahlāda’s *prema* increased.” (This instance is described in the *Hari-bhakti-sudhodāya*).

182. “Some devotees close their eyes upon receiving the direct *darśana* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, but this is not meditation – they close their eyes simply because they are immersed in divine bliss. It is actually a symptom of ecstatic love like trembling.”

183. “*Dhyāna* is only possible when Śrī Bhagavān is not present before one; it is not possible in his personal presence. But *saṅkīrtana* can be performed in his absence as well as in his personal presence.”

184. “Śrī Bhagavān’s name is even more dear than his divinely auspicious form, because through it all the world is benefited. It can be easily worshipped and there is no other object as equally saturated with *rasa* as it is.”

185. “Therefore, obeying the order of Śrī Śiva Mahārāja, quickly go to Śrī Mathurāpurī, which is very dear to Śrī Kṛṣṇa and to which even we offer *praṇāma*.”

186. Śrī Gopa-kumāra said: Hearing these nectarean instructions – which delight the ears and heart – from those eternal residents of Vaikuṅṭha, I was overjoyed. I offered obeisances to them as well as to Śrī Śiva accompanied by Śrī Pārvatī, and at once I arrived here in this Vraja-bhūmi. How I came here is a mystery to me.

Chapter Four – Vaikuṅṭha

1. Śrī Gopa-kumāra said: O *brāhmaṇa*, when I came to this Vṛndāvana and began wandering here and there alone, I saw that the splendour of this land was beyond anything that I had ever seen within the entire *brahmāṇḍa*. Then I began residing in this forest, and this land enchanted me so much that I forgot going to Vaikuṅṭha and other worlds as well as everything that I had experienced there.
2. Playfully wandering in this way, I arrived in Mathurāpurī, where I heard *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and other scriptures from the *brāhmaṇas* there.
3. After they taught me well the methods of ninefold *bhakti*, I came to this very forest where I suddenly saw my exalted *guru*.
4. His appearance was splendid as before, and I offered obeisances to he who knows everything. Then he joyfully embraced me, blessed me and was very merciful to me.
5. By the influence of that mercy I realised deeper-than-deep truths of *bhakti*, and following his directions I began practising the limbs of *bhakti-yoga*.
6. Soon I became overcome with *prema* and completely helpless. At that time I could do nothing besides sing *śrī-kṛṣṇa-kīrtana*.
7. I could only repeat his names in this way: “Śrī Kṛṣṇa! Gopāla! Hare! Mukunda! O Govinda! O Nanda-kiśora! O Kṛṣṇa! O Śrī Yaśodā-tanaya! O Śrī Ballavī-jīvana! O Rādhikeśa! Be merciful to me!”
8. Calling out these names time and again, sometimes I danced, sometimes I cried and sometimes I wandered like a madman, completely forgetting my bodily existence.
9. Then one day I received direct *darśana* of the Lord of my life, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. I ran to grasp him, but overcome with *prema* I fainted and fell to the ground.
10. At that time some eternal residents of Vaikuṅṭha appeared there, and to take me to Vaikuṅṭha, had me board their airplane. When I fully regained consciousness, I began looking here and there and was completely astonished.
11. Everything appeared different to me, but when after some time I had regained my composure, I saw before me the same benevolent eternal residents of Vaikuṅṭha whom I had seen previously in Muktiloka.

12. The splendour and complexion of their bodies put to shame the radiance of the sun-god, Śrī Sūrya, and they were aboard a fitting, beautiful airplane.

13. As I reverentially offered obeisances to them, they embraced me and comforted me in many ways. They gave me hundreds of reasons why I should desire to accept a four-armed form like theirs.

14. I did not accept such a form, but by their influence, spiritual qualities similar to theirs manifested in my own form as a resident of Govardhana.

15. Then I saw that we were travelling upon a supremely blissful, extraordinary and inconceivable path to Vaikuṅṭha.

16. As we crossed the fourteen planetary systems such as Svarga and the eight material coverings, casting my vision towards them I felt ashamed (because of knowing that they were all temporary and full of misery).

17. As we passed by, the kings of each and every planet lifted up their heads and offered *pūjā* to me by holding handfuls of flowers and rice to their foreheads and then showering them upon me.

18. They offered *praṇāma* to me and praised me by chanting “*Jaya! Jaya!*” time and again. Passing all the worlds as we travelled along that path, I also saw with disdain insignificant *mukti*, and going above it I arrived at Śrī Śivaloka.

19. With great jubilation I offered obeisances to Śrī Śiva, who was accompanied by Śrī Pārvatī, and he delighted me with words of respect and love. After that I went to Vaikuṅṭha, which possesses varieties of glories that are beyond the reach of the mind and words.

20. Then those eternal residents of Vaikuṅṭha said to me, “Please wait here at the entrance for a moment while we procure from your master the permission for you to enter.”

21. “Remain here, and with eyes invigorated by the brilliance of *bhagavad-bhakti*, please behold the marvellous glories of Vaikuṅṭha and witness the waves of the ocean of astonishing wonders never seen or heard of before.”

22. Śrī Gopa-kumāra said: After they entered and I was remaining outside the gate, I saw someone come from another place and enter the city.

23. He was seated upon a magnificent airplane, his opulences were superior to those of hundreds of *brahmāṇḍas*, he was joyfully singing and his complexion and age were similar to those of the Lord.

24. Mistaking him for Śrī Bhagavān, I offered obeisances to him while saying time and again, “O Lord, please protect me!” He covered his ears and indicated that I should stop speaking in that way.

25. Then he said, “I am not even his servant, but merely the servant of his servants,” and went inside. After that another person, who was even more glorious and splendid than him, came there.

26. Seeing him, I thought that he was certainly Jagadīvara himself, who according to his desire must have gone to another place and was now returning to his own city.

27. When I reverentially praised him while offering obeisances as I had before, he affectionately spoke to me in the same way as the previous person had and also entered the city.

28. In the same way I received *darśana* of many people as they entered the city, some alone, some in couples, some in large groups, and their opulences and splendour were always more than the ones who had preceded them.

29. Upon seeing them, as before I was plunged into the ocean of reverence and began offering them obeisances and praising them, but with the nectar of affectionate words they stopped me from speaking in that way.

30. Some were carrying articles for the Lord’s service, such as parasols and *cāmaras*, and others, being maddened by the nectar of *bhakti*, were quickly proceeding in.

31. As their hearts and senses were intent on their specific services, they revelled in the variegated blissfulness of service.

32. Their limbs decorated the very ornaments that they were wearing, and they were all perfectly qualified to serve their master. Engaged in the Lord’s service, they were offering him *praṇāma* and singing varieties of songs.

33. Their majestic demeanours were amplifying their various opulences, and they were exceedingly eager to have *darśana* of the lotus feet of Śrī Lakṣmīnātha Bhagavān.

34. Some were accompanied by their family members, and others were carrying parasols and *cāmaras* and other paraphernalia. Others left both their family members and paraphernalia outside and proceeded in.

35. Some merged their family members and paraphernalia into themselves and becoming absorbed in meditation like solitary, destitute sages, they entered.

36. Others time and again assumed various attractive forms that were adorned with various ornaments and very enchanting.

37. Some assumed the forms of humans, and others assumed the forms of monkeys, demigods, demons and sages. Others bore the *tilaka* markings of one initiated into *varṇāśrama*.

38. Some were like Indra, Candra and other demigods. Some had three eyes, some four heads, some four arms, some eight arms and some had thousands of faces.

39. In due course I will tell you the cause of their variegated natures and appearances. All those who are tasting the *rasa* of *kṛṣṇa-bhakti* possess all beauty.

40–1. Because all of the residents of Vaikuṅṭha are beyond this material world composed of five elements, their infinite glories as well as those of Śrī Vaikuṅṭhanātha and Vaikuṅṭha itself cannot be described with examples drawn from this world.

42–3. But O *brāhmaṇa*, because you are residing within this material world and because you can only perceive and envisage material ingredients, I have utilised examples from this world to make you understand. If I have committed any offence in doing so, I pray that Śrī Hari will forgive me.

44. Although there appears to be gradation amongst the residents there, the glories of all of them are equal, and none of them are discordant.

45. There is no envy or other faults to be found in any of them; instead they possess thousands of genuine, natural and eternal virtues.

46. Although by external vision the residents of Vaikuṅṭha may appear to be similar to materialists eager for mundane pleasure, their lotus feet are worshipped by liberated souls.

47. Although they have transcended material forms, still, by their own desire, they assume various forms suitable for their master's pastimes.

48. And although in *tattva* they are all one, they appear in different forms. And in the same way, that very place and all of its airplanes and other paraphernalia are variegated.

49. Sometimes everything there seems to be made of gold and jewels, and sometimes everything seems to be composed of solidified moonlight.

50. The *tattva* there can be comprehended only by the mercy of Śrī Vaikuṅṭhanātha. There is no other method, because the material mind does not possess the capacity to grasp it.

51–2. Without personal experience of it, no one can understand it. Only this much can be said, that immediately upon receiving *darśana* of Vaikuṅṭha or anything related to Vaikuṅṭha, the happiness of impersonal liberation is rendered insignificant, as if by its own volition it vanishes out of shame.

53–4. When by the association of Vaiṣṇavas they come to know what is really valuable and what is worthless, even those who are *ātmārāma*, who are devoid of all desires and who have personally experienced the happiness of impersonal liberation, renounce the happiness of the Brahman and enter the path of *bhakti*. Having gone to Vaikuṅṭha myself, I have seen the reason for this very clearly.

55. As I was having *darśana* of the residents of Vaikuṅṭha as they were coming and going, I thought to myself, “If these servants are so splendid, then what kind of opulence must their master possess?”

56. I was so elated that I would sometimes sit and sometimes stand up again. Then those devotees who had left me at the entrance returned and led me inside the city.

57. There I saw more wonderful-than-wonderful splendour, which, what to speak of me, even if Śrī Śeṣa with his thousands of mouths described for the entire length Brahmā’s lifetime, could not reach its end.

58. Each gate of that Vaikuṅṭha was supervised by a gatekeeper similar in appearance to those residents who were leading me inside. Each one would lead me to the next gate, where after securing permission from his master, the next gatekeeper would allow me to enter.

59–60. As I passed through one gate and arrived at the next, I offered obeisances to the supervisor of the gatekeepers, thinking, “This must certainly be Jagadīśvara!” As before, with great reverence I time and again offered *praṇāma* and praised him.

61. Then those kind-hearted devotees who were leading me inside described to me the Lord’s uncommon symptoms (such as the mark of Śrīvatsa) and taught me how to glorify him.

62. Passing through various wonderful gates in this way, we soon arrived in the inner chambers, where there was one special palace surrounded by several other palaces.

63. No one can describe the many glories of that central palace. Its radiance was like that of millions of suns and moons, and its beauty enchants the eyes and heart.

64. In the centre of that palace was a beautiful golden *śimhāsana* that was studded with varieties of the best jewels. Spread over that *śimhāsana* was a beautiful swan cushion with a soft, white pillow on it that put to shame the brilliance of the full moon.

65. There I saw the eternally youthful Śrī Vaikuṅṭhanātha Bhagavān, joyfully reclining with his left elbow resting upon the pillow.

66. The beauty and sweetness of his limbs eclipsed the lustre of fresh clouds. He was wearing varieties of golden ornaments that were studded with jewels and that enhanced his exquisite garments, garlands and sandalwood paste.

67. His strong, broad four arms were adorned with bracelets and amulets, he was attired in two yellow silk garments and he was wearing beautiful earrings, the shadows of which dangled upon his cheeks.

68. His broad chest was radiant with the *kaustubha* gem, and around his conchshell-like neck was a necklace of pearls. His gentle smile made it seem as if nectar was oozing from the moon of his face, and his eyes were like blossoming lotuses.

69. It was as if his eyebrows, for the purpose of bestowing mercy upon his devotees, were dancing. To his left side was the becoming Śrī Lakṣmī, who in a marvellous fashion was giving him betel nuts, which he was joyfully accepting.

70. His chewing of betel was enhancing the natural lustre of his lips, and when that lustre combined with the radiance of his jasmine-bud-like rows of teeth, it increased the splendour of his smile. His joking words were enchanting his devotees' hearts and minds.

71. Śrī Bhūdevī, holding a cuspidor in her lotus hand, repeatedly worshipped him with her loving sidelong glances. The personifications of the *sudarśana-cakra* and other weapons, all carrying their own particular insignia on their foreheads, were serving him.

72. His servants' forms were similar to his own, and holding *cāmaras*, fans, slippers and other suitable paraphernalia, they were ceremoniously surrounding him and serving him with great respect.

73. With humble devotion, Śeṣa, Garuḍa, Śrī Viśvakṣena and other principal servants were holding their folded palms to their heads and offering him various types of prayers.

74. Before him Śrī Nāradaḥ was wonderfully dancing, singing and playing his *vīṇā*, and seeing this, the Lord's two beloved queens, Śrī Lakṣmī and Śrī Bhūdevī, sometimes laughed very loudly.

75. Sometimes that Śrī Vaikuṅṭhanātha, to bestow special blissfulness upon his devotees whose hearts were enraptured in him only, extended his lotus feet for them to serve, thereby amplifying the happiness and splendour of the entire scene.

76. Receiving *darśana* of Śrī Bhagavān in this way, I was so elated that I completely forgot all of the instructions that my companions had given me. Overcome with *prema*, I called out, “O Gopāla! O my very life!” and ran towards him to embrace him.

77. Then my companions withheld me from behind. In great helplessness I began piteously lamenting, and being completely overwhelmed in *prema*, I fainted before him.

78. Then my companions forcibly lifted me up and after some time, brought me back to consciousness. I wiped away my tears, the very embodiment of an obstacle to receiving the Lord’s *darśana*, and tentatively opened my eyes.

79. Then the crown-jewel of the kind-hearted, Śrī Bhagavān, in his deep, soft voice affectionately said, “My child, compose yourself, and quickly come to me.”

80. When I heard my master speak in this way, I attained the zenith of divine bliss and time and again danced like a madman. Then with great effort my companions made me calm down.

81. Śrī Bhagavān said: “My child, welcome, welcome. All auspiciousness to you! For a very long time I have been anxious to see you, and fortunately today we are finally meeting.”

82. “O dear friend, you have passed through many lives, but never in any birth did you come to me.”

83. “In each of your successive births I kept hoping that you would finally come to me, and this hope even made me dance like a fool.”

84. “O friend, I could not find any pretext whatsoever by which I could bring you to me and still honour the standards of religion.”

85–6. “When I realised that you may never come to me, being eager to bestow mercy upon you, I transgressed the perennial ethics of *karma* and arranged for you to take birth in this life at Govardhana, which is very dear to me. Then for you only I descended in the form of your *guru* named Jayanta.”

87. “Today you have fulfilled my long-cherished desire. Therefore you will permanently reside here, experiencing happiness yourself and also giving me happiness.”

88. Śrī Gopa-kumāra said: Drinking the sweet nectar of these words of Śrī Bhagavān, I became maddened and was unable to offer any prayers or to know what my immediate duty was.

89. Then I saw some cowherd boys who were decorated in the same forest dress as I was come before Bhagavān playing their flutes. They lovingly took me into their party and comforting and encouraging me in different ways, had me also begin playing my flute.

90. O *brāhmaṇa*, when I played my flute, which was born at Govardhana and is very dear to me, the ocean of mercy and crown-jewel of skilful artists, Śrī Mādhava, and his associates headed by Śrī Lakṣmi, were all very pleased.

91. Knowing it to be time for Śrī Bhagavān to take his meal, all of his associates left. I had no desire to leave, but still, on the order of Lakṣmī, they persuaded me and led me out.

92. Whenever the immense opulences of Vaikuṅṭha were offered to me, I shunned them. Keeping my own opulences (which had been automatically attained upon entering Vaikuṅṭha) hidden, I retained my nature as a common cowherd boy and began living there.

93. All of the opulences there are *sac-cid-ānanda* and possess their own free volition, and therefore they would manifest according to their will.

94. Therefore even when opulence is unmanifest there it is nonetheless automatically manifested, and when opulence is manifested there, indigence can also be simultaneously present – this is the extraordinary nature of Vaikuṅṭha.

95. So therefore, by dint of my previous practice, I humbly remained there, considering myself happy in worshipping Śrī Bhagavān.

96. At that time, in my heart I concluded that by the Lord's mercy I had received the ultimate result of all of my births' actions.

97. Aho! How wonderful! Such a rare kind of happiness, such a remarkable place, such a splendid master and such astounding mercy!

98. Then, by his mercy I attained the service of fanning him with a *cāmara*. Playing my flute, I felt great pleasure from receiving his *darśana*.

99. According to my previous tendencies, I time and again very loudly called out “O Kṛṣṇa! O Gopāla!”

100. Before him I sang many exquisite compositions describing his glorious pastimes in Gokula.

101. Then some residents of that place took me outside. Laughing, and with their hearts melted in affection, they began instructing me.

102. The residents of Vaikuṅṭha said: “Our master is the *īvara* of *īvaras*. Don’t call out to him in this way and don’t sing in this way. Sing elegant compositions describing his real, limitless glories.”

103. “Only to destroy the demons, protect the *sādhus* and kill Kāṁsa did he assume the form of a cowherd boy through the medium of his internal potency.”

104. “Devotees do not consider the pastimes that he performed in the material world to be the best. Glorifying these pastimes may be beneficial when one first takes up the path of *bhakti*, but after coming here to Vaikuṅṭha, it is not correct. Therefore you should not sing his names that are related to those pastimes.”

105. Then some other residents of Vaikuṅṭha said, “No one can comprehend Bhagavān’s mysterious pastimes. Accepting the dress of a cowherd boy is just one variety of his pastimes, and therefore, in our opinion, there is no fault in this type of *kīrtana*.”

106–7. Then some of the senior residents there became angry, and rebuking them all, said, “Hey! Why are you all speaking like fools? Being overpowered by his special affection for his devotees, Śrī Kṛṣṇa performed so many pastimes. Singing *sankīrtana* of them is highly virtuous and pleasing to Śrī Bhagavān.”

108. Śrī Gopa-kumāra said: At first I was ashamed, but upon hearing these words I felt some satisfaction. Still, my heart was not completely peaceful.

109. Because I could not receive *darśana* of the form and pastimes of my worshipful deity, Śrī Madanagopāla, I became dispirited.

110. Then at that very moment I saw the crown-jewel of the all-knowing, Śrī Vaikuṅṭha-nātha Bhagavān, in the form of Śrī Nanda-nandana, Śrī Lakṣmī in the form of Śrīmatī Rādhikā, Śrī Bhūdevī in the form of Candrāvalī and all the eternal associates there as cowherd boys.

111. But when I could not see Śrī Madanagopāla enjoying pastimes with his eternal associates of Vraja, I felt depressed.

112. Sometimes I would see Śrī Vaikuṅṭhanātha enjoying pastimes with cows in the gardens of Vaikuṅṭha, and sometimes I would see him as I did before, as Śrī Kṛṣṇa sitting majestically on his throne.

113. Still I was always aware of his opulences, and I also remembered that I had come to Vaikuṅṭha. Therefore, due to the presence of awe and reverence, my *prema* was restricted and I did not feel satisfied at heart.

114. In my meditation, I would embrace and kiss Śrī Gopāladeva and receive his special mercy, but there my desire to attain such direct mercy could not be fulfilled.

115. Sometimes Śrī Bhagavān would take some of his intimate associates and disappear somewhere, and then not seeing him, all the residents there would grieve.

116. I asked the residents about this secret, but they did not explain it to me clearly and kept it concealed.

117. The next moment Śrī Bhagavān reappeared there, and upon receiving his *darśana*, everyone's grief was mitigated. As before everyone was plunged into an ocean of divine jubilation.

118. The influence of that world eradicated the unhappiness brought about by my inherent nature just as the rising sun destroys the darkness.

119. Whenever my heart would feel unhappiness as before when I could not attain a desired object, I realised the cause of that unhappiness and the excellence of Vaikuṅṭha would eradicate it.

120. I persuaded my mind in this way: "O mind, there is no benediction greater than residence in Vaikuṅṭha, and there is no greater place. It is not proper for you to doubt this – what more could you possibly desire?"

121. "O restless mind, be reasonable and abandon this nature of yours. Deliberate on the hundreds of reasons why and conclude that there is no greater peacefulness than that which is found in this Vaikuṅṭha, and there is no greater place or any greater fruit to be attained."

122. In this way I tried very hard to convince my mind. Then at that very moment I saw how my own body was *sac-cid-ānanda*, and I experienced how serving Śrī Vaikuṅṭhanātha there in Vaikuṅṭha is the most wonderful, supreme happiness.

123. In this way, while residing in Vaikuṅṭha, sometimes my heart was troubled and sometimes it was pleased. Then one day I met Śrī Nārada in a solitary place.

124. He is very dear to the crown-jewel of the kind-hearted, Śrī Bhagavān, and is always immersed in the ocean of *bhakti-rasa*. I was elated upon receiving his blessing, and then he placed his lotus hand, which holds the *vinā*, on my head and said:

125. “O Gopa-kumāra, Śrī Vaikuṅṭhanātha Bhagavān has been very merciful to you, but still I see that your face is withered in sadness and you seem to be worried about something. How can anyone be unhappy here?”

126. “I have never seen this kind of sadness in anyone here; therefore I am very astonished! Please tell me, what is the cause of your unhappiness?”

127. Śrī Gopa-kumāra said: O *brāhmaṇa*, then to Śrī Nārada, who is my supremely intimate friend and like my own *guru*, I revealed my heart.

128. Hearing it, he took a long breath. Then he looked around in all directions, pulled me close to him and said affectionately in a soft voice:

129. “By your own reasoning you have concluded that there is no greater place than Vaikuṅṭha – this is undoubtedly correct.”

130. “But just as you experience the variegated pastimes of your worshipful deity in your meditation, you also desire to directly experience them here in Vaikuṅṭha.”

131. “Those pastimes of Śrī Bhagavān bestow great happiness and enchant the heart, but they can only be realised by special love. They are very confidential, and they are very rare even for us sages. Entrance into those pastimes can only be achieved by powerful *prema* like that of the people of Vraja.”

132. “Those pastimes only take place in one indescribable realm, which is situated above all other worlds and which always attracts the minds of its devotees. By devotion to Jagadīśa in the mood of opulence you have come here to Vaikuṅṭha; therefore how can you see these pastimes here?”

133. “Enacted here are Śrī Bhagavān’s pastimes in the highest limit of opulence. How can those supremely confidential pastimes be manifest here?”

134. “Therefore abandon all types of your unhappiness and please see Śrī Vaikuṅṭhanātha as non-different from your worshipful deity; don’t think of them as two different personalities.”

135. “Then even here you will be able to experience that great, ever increasing blissfulness by which the innermost desires of your heart will be fulfilled.”

136. Śrī Gopa-kumāra said: After this, my ears craved to hear more philosophical conclusions from Śrī Nārada's mouth.

137. But due to pride and bashfulness, I was unable to ask him. Still, Śrī Nārada, the topmost of all devotees and the knower of all, understood my mind.

138. Then, to please and gratify both my ears and his own tongue, he began briefly describing the sentiments that were hidden inside my own heart.

139. Śrī Nārada said: "O Gopa-kumāra, please don't consider the animals, birds, shrubs, grass and whatever you see here to be species in the mode of ignorance."

140. "They are all eternal associates of Śrī Bhagavān and their forms are *sac-cid-ānanda*. To taste the ecstasy of different varieties of service, they have assumed these various forms."

141–4. "According to the specific form and nature of Śrī Vaikuṅṭhanātha that they worship, devotees attain a form suitable for his worship. Some possess human forms, others forms of *munis*, others forms of demigods and others possess forms similar to those of Matsya, Kūrma, Varāha, Nṛsimha, Vāmana, Trilocana, Brahmā, Indra, Śeṣa, Caturbhuja, Sūrya, Candra, Vāyu, Agni and others. In accordance with whichever form of Bhagavān they worship with *bhagavat-buddhi*, they receive a body suitable for the worship of that particular deity."

145. "Devotees enter Vaikuṅṭha in the same final bodies, with their specific forms and sentiments, with which they worshipped the lotus feet of Śrī Bhagavān in the material realm."

146. "Because those forms and sentiments are very dear to Bhagavān, it is logical that the devotees would desire to accept them. "

147. "In Vaikuṅṭha all those devotees eternally receive *darśana* of the specific form Śrī Vaikuṅṭhanātha that is suitable for their sentiment of worship."

148. "In exactly the same way as before, those devotees attain eternally new and fresh divine blissfulness from their worship of Śrī Bhagavān, and especially here in Vaikuṅṭha they always directly experience that *bhajanānanda*."

149–151. "Those devotees who receive *darśana* of and serve their favourite Lord, who is always accompanied by his eternal associates, with their own special sentiments and unique characteristics, even upon coming to this Vaikuṅṭha they still desire to receive his *darśana* and serve him in precisely the same way as before. Therefore, possessing such exclusive attachment and suitable sentiment for one particular deity, they enter the appropriate part of Vaikuṅṭha and joyfully serve him there just as they had before."

152. “And upon entering Vaikuṅṭha, those devotees who have no exclusive love or attachment for any one specific form of Śrī Bhagavān may worship whichever form they desire.”

153. “When those who worship Śrī Lakṣmīpati Bhagavān through the eight-syllable *mantra* give up their present material bodies, they enter this Vaikuṅṭha.”

154. “Coming here, with free volition they experience a happiness superior to what they had known before. Although there is gradation concerning their particular *rasas*, they all experience the ultimate happiness.”

155. “Śrī Bhagavān appears as Śrī Nārāyaṇa, Śrī Dattātreya, Śrī Paraśurāma, Śrī Kapiladeva and as deities such as Śrī Jagannātha, who are all like jewels that decorate the Earth.”

156–7. “In Svarga and the other higher planets he appears as Śrī Viṣṇu Bhagavān, Yajñeśvara and other incarnations that you have personally seen. He also appears as Matsya, Kūrma, Varāha, Nṛsimha, Vāmana and others, and although there are differences in their names, forms and pastimes, in *tattva* they are one and they are all *sac-cid-ānanda*.”

158. “Don’t understand his having different forms and names to be similar to the *jīvas* under the influence of *māyā* having different names and forms. The varieties of Bhagavān’s incarnations appear by his *sac-cid-ānanda-śakti* to accommodate the variegated serving sentiments of his devotees.”

159. “The differences in his forms is not like the difference between reflections and the source of those reflections; in other words, you shouldn’t understand it to be like the sun’s reflections on bodies of water. Instead, as the one sun is simultaneously seen differently by the residents of different lands, the one Śrī Bhagavān appears in separate forms that are suitable for his devotees’ various serving sentiments.”

160. “Although knowledge and divine bliss are two separate things, they merge and become one in Brahman. In the same way, all of Bhagavān’s many forms are one in *tattva*.”

161. “Although devotees may see many separate forms of Śrī Bhagavān, his eternal associates and his *dhāma* in different lands or even in dreams, their variegatedness and oneness are both real. When any one form of Bhagavān is pleased, then all of his forms are pleased.”

163. “Solely to give happiness to his many devotees is Śrī Kṛṣṇa Bhagavān present in separate forms in many different places.”

164. “Śrī Brahmā experienced this very thing – how Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the killer of the Agha demon, is one but becomes many, and becoming many is still one – when he stole the cowherd boys and calves, and I also experienced it when I wandered through the palaces in Dvārakā.”

165. “Although the *śakti* of Śrī Bhagavān, who is simultaneously different and non-different, is inconceivable, still it can be known by his exclusive devotees.”

166. “When thousands of Śrī Bhagavān’s queens simultaneously offered him varieties of preparations, the one Śrī Bhagavān simultaneously ate them all in such a way that each queen thought, ‘He has accepted his meal from me first.’”

167. “When sometimes Śrī Bhagavān’s special potency enters a qualified *jīva*, he is known as a *śaktyāveśa-avatāra* and is considered by the wise to be similar to Śrī Bhagavān himself.”

168. “As Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa assumes different forms, so does his eternal beloved Śrī Mahā-Lakṣmī, who is also *sac-cid-ānanda*.”

169. “Śrī Lakṣmī is always present at his chest rendering service to him, and just as all incarnations emanate from Śrī Kṛṣṇa, all the Lakṣmī-incarnations emanate from that Śrī Mahā-Lakṣmī.”

170. “Amongst them, that Lakṣmī who is the giver of *aṇimā* and the other mystic perfections is shunned by those who desire liberation, those who are already liberated and devotees.”

171. “And concerning that Lakṣmī whose name is famous everywhere, even Śrī Bhagavān’s new devotees are more dear to him than she is.”

172. “Understand Śrī Bhūdevī and other dear ones like Yogamāyā to also be the *śakti* of Śrī Bhagavān.”

173. “Sometimes she is known as Mahā-vibhūti, sometimes as Yoga and sometimes as Yogamāyā.”

174. “This *śakti* nurtures his pastimes and is *sac-cid-ānanda*. She has no beginning and no end, and she is eternal, real and indescribable.”

175. “This *śakti* is the mother of variegated *bhajanānanda*, the divine bliss of serving Śrī Kṛṣṇa. She arranges the forms, appearances, ornaments and pastimes of his incarnations, stimulating ever-fresh and new *bhajanānanda*.”

176. “This Yogamāyā manifests the wonderful variety of devotees such as Śeṣa and Garuḍa, their various devotional activities such as hearing and chanting, and the variegated pastimes that take place in Śrī Vaikuṅṭha and other *dhāmas*.”

177. “Only Śrī Bhagavān’s pure devotees are capable of knowing this potency and her activities. She is beyond the reach of dry speculators and the ignorant.”

178. “Śrī Bhagavān’s two *śaktis* are known as *para* and *apara*, and this Yogamāyā is his *para-śakti*. Because she is his natural potency, in some places she is also known by the name Prakṛti.”

179. “Because she performs many different activities, the expansions of this *para-śakti* appear in various forms. Illusory *māyā*, which consists of the three modes of nature, is her shadow.”

180. “This *māyā* is the mother of the illusory world, and she is deluding and full of darkness. She has been creating the world of the *jīvas*’ bondage since time immemorial, but knowledge of one’s real internal form defeats her. Therefore she is known to be temporary and is beyond description.”

181. “She is personified as a goddess residing within the eighth material covering. But because she does not change her form to carry out her duties, she is also known as Prakṛti.”

182. “By transcending this *apara-śakti*, one attains *mukti* and *bhakti*. This *māyā* has created the material world to be like a phantasm.”

183. “But all the activities of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s *para-śakti* are real and permanent, like Kardama Muni creating an aerial mansion with his mystic power.”

184. “Whatever is done by Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s Yogamāyā, who is the bestower of the results of all *karma* and whose lotus feet are worshipped by the masters of *yoga*, is real and eternal.”

185. “This conclusion confirms that Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the source of all incarnations, the *avatāri*. He expands into many incarnations, and none of them are separate from him; like him they are all real and eternal.”

186. “Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s original form contains all incarnations and is adorned with unlimited varieties of glories, which are indicated by the word *bhaga*.”

187. “Performing varieties of sweet and enchanting pastimes, Śrī Kṛṣṇa exhibits his own special glories, which are superior to those of even Vaikuṅṭhanātha Śrī Nārāyaṇa and which can be experienced only when one’s heart is melted with *prema-bhakti*.”

188. “By serving their favourite Lord in their specific *rasa*, the devotees of each and every incarnation attain the supreme happiness.”

189. “Śrī Bhagavān bestows the appropriate fruit upon his devotees according to their particular mode of worship, and attaining that fruit, they are always satisfied.”

190. “Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes are characterised by the opulence of variegatedness, and his devotees relish the *rasa* of that variegatedness according to their particular taste. Varieties of opulences are exhibited in those pastimes, the intentions of which are deeper than millions of oceans. Therefore who could possibly comprehend those pastimes through logic?”

191. “This bestowal of fruits according to his devotees’ particular tastes confirms the immense glories of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s mercy. And even though they receive their results in this gradation, his devotees, engaged in their own modes of devotion and free from rivalry and other faults, attain the utmost happiness of service.”

192. “Because they are *sac-cid-ānanda* and not infected by any form of ignorance, his eternal associates don’t consider any lesser happiness to be great happiness, as worldly people consider material happiness to be great happiness, or as *jñānīs* consider the inferior happiness of liberation to be the ultimate happiness.”

193. “It is only imagination to think that devotees feel varying levels of happiness in their particular *rasas* – all of them consider that the happiness of their particular service is the utmost.”

194. “O Gopa-kumāra, some of those residents of Vaikuṅṭha have been Śrī Bhagavān’s associates eternally, and some have come here by attaining his mercy through the practice of *sādhana*.”

195. “Although the *bhajanānanda* is the same for both of them, some imagine there to be a difference between confidential or open service, or to be serving near to Śrī Bhagavān or at a distance from him.”

196. “Although there is equality between Śrī Bhagavān and his eternal associates due to their eternal natures, nonetheless their feeling that he is the master and they are the servants is both real and eternal.”

197–8. “Although Śrī Bhagavān and his eternal associates are both *sac-cid-ānanda*, the awareness of the indescribable sweetness of serving him eternally attracts them to his lotus feet, which themselves are an ocean of various sweetnesses.”

199. “Even if all the other *sac-cid-ānanda* incarnations were to be equated with the source of all incarnations, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, still he would be distinguished because of his indescribable, renowned glories. In the same way, even though Śrī Nārāyaṇa and his eternal associates are non-different, because of his sweet pastimes and grandeur, his superiority is automatically distinguished.”

200. “Some hold the opinion that Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa is Parabrahma, whose supremely auspicious form is *sac-cid-ānanda*, and his eternal associates are liberated particles of Brahman.”

201. “But to experience the divine bliss of *bhakti*, by Śrī Bhagavān’s transcendental pastime potency (*cit-vilāsa-sakti*) they assume forms according to their particular serving temperament.”

202. Śrī Gopa-kumāra said: O *brāhmaṇa*, then I asked Śrī Nārada, “O Master, on the Earth there are so many deities of Bhagavān. In your opinion, are they all solidified forms of *sac-cid-ānanda* as Śrī Jagannātha is?”

203. Previously Śrī Nārada had said that even though all incarnations are *sac-cid-ānanda* and non-different, being merciful they are present in different places in different forms according to their own desires.

204. Therefore, if someone abandons all forms of *sādhana* and somehow begins offering *pūjā* to one of these deities, not only is there no fault in it, but there will be a great gain.

205. Next I asked him, “Why then in the Purāṇas do we find so many statements that contradict this? Because these statements have emanated from the lotus mouths of great personalities, certainly they cannot be said to be unauthoritative.”

206. Hearing this, Śrī Nārada, the original *guru* of the path of *pūjā* to Śrī Bhagavān, got up, and joyfully embracing me, began to reply.

207-208. Śrī Nārada said: “Those deities that I described before are all directly Bhagavān, and the glories of offering *pūjā* to them are such that, whether the deity has self-manifested or been installed by a devotee, if a devotee abandons his *varṇāśrama* responsibilities to engage exclusively in *pūjā*, he is not at fault.”

209. “Instead their *pūjā* is very virtuous. This deity worship is called *uttama-bhakti* and bestows a great result.”

210. “What to speak of the glories of offering *pūjā* to the deity of Bhagavān, if one offers respect to even a piece of straw with *bhagavad-buddhi* (awareness of Bhagavān’s presence in everything), or once hears or chants even the semblance of *bhagavan-nāma*, their innermost desires will be fulfilled and perfection will be attained.”

211. “Still there has been said to be faults in offering *pūjā* to the deity, who has been installed by Vedic *mantras*, who is the object of all devotional activities and who inspires direct remembrance of Bhagavān.”

212. “It is impossible for those devotees who are engaged in offering *pūjā* to the deity of Bhagavān to ever disrespect any Vaiṣṇava. Even if an offence is committed to a *sādhu* due to absorption in *pūjā*, the *sādhu* will never take offence, but rather will praise that devotee’s actions greatly.”

213–5. “There are those who worship the deity considering that he is composed of material elements and therefore different from Bhagavān himself. They not only disrespect devotees, but they disrespect all *jīvas* in general. Proud of their worship, they don’t recognise the authority of the Vedic injunctions. Such devotees are less intelligent *kaniṣṭha-adhikārīs* and they do not attain the real fruit of *pūjā*.”

216–8. “Although the fruit attained through this type of *pūjā* is superior to the fruit of ordinary pious activities, it is not suitable for *bhagavad-bhakti*. Therefore exclusive devotees have criticised this type of *pūjā* in the Purāṇas and other places, but it does not mean that all *pūjā* is deprecated.”

219. “If this kind of *kaniṣṭha* Vaiṣṇava continues to perform his *pūjā*, then by the influence of that *pūjā* his heart will gradually become purified.”

220. “By the mercy of Śrī Bhagavān’s devotees, who always accept only the virtues of others, after some time all of such a *kaniṣṭha* devotee’s faults will be eradicated and he will become an *uttama* devotee.”

221. “In the beginning materialistic devotees who offer *pūjā* attain their desired fruit, but by the influence of *bhakti* they eventually attain the real fruit of devotion from their *pūjā*.”

222. “Because when in the stage of having material desires devotees don’t receive the real fruit of *bhakti* from their *pūjā*, the pure devotees have criticised their *pūjā*, and for the same reason, the *pūjā* of such *kaniṣṭha* devotees has also been deprecated in the Purāṇas.”

223. “*Uttama* devotees consider the ultimate fruit of *bhakti* to be receiving *darśana* of Śrī Bhagavān’s lotus feet and the divine bliss of enjoying pastimes with him.”

224. “Those devotees cannot tolerate a moment’s delay in receiving his *darśana*, and Śrī Bhagavān is also unable to leave them for even one second.”

225. “Therefore the many material fruits and even liberation are easily attained, but *bhakti* is not so easily attained.”

226. “By the mercy of *bhakti* even Śrī Bhagavān himself is brought under the devotees’ control. He is Maheśvara, the supreme controller, yet being controlled by his devotees, his independence is restricted. Therefore he does not easily give that *bhakti*.”

227. “But my opinion is that when Śrī Bhagavān comes under the control of his devotees, there is no fault in it, nor does it cause him any unhappiness. He is *bhakta-vatsala*, especially affectionate to his devotees, so therefore he receives great pleasure from it and it actually expands his great fame.”

228. “And especially, sometimes the crown-jewel of heroes, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, abandons his nature as being the topmost of those who are self-satisfied and as being the greatest mystic, but he never abandons his quality of coming under the control of his devotees. Therefore this one quality is the pinnacle of his *bhagavattā*, his nature of being the Supreme Personality.”

229. “When *prema-bhakti* reaches its mature state, an indescribable, immense wealth of *mahābhāva* arises, which if analysed with the vision of *tattva*, is seen to dance ecstatically on the very head of the kingdom of all happinesses.”

230. “The external symptoms of this *mahābhāva* are great unhappiness and sorrow, and even though internally they are feeling an indescribable ecstasy, Śrī Kṛṣṇa cannot tolerate seeing these external symptoms in his dear devotees. Therefore he does not easily bestow this *prema-bhakti*.”

231. “Another reason is that upon seeing *premi* devotees’ symptoms of sorrow and pain with their external vision, worldly people become confused and do not desire to engage in *bhakti*. They even laugh at such devotees, and therefore Śrī Bhagavān doesn’t easily bestow such *prema-bhakti*.”

232. “Just as glass and gold are easily obtained but attaining *cintāmaṇi* is extremely rare, in the same way the pleasures of Svarga and *mukti* are easily attainable but this *prema-bhakti* is very rare.”

233. “Sometimes Śrī Bhagavān bestows this *prema-bhakti* upon those intelligent persons who exclusively desire it and who are free from material desires.”

234. “I am not able to describe the real nature of that *prema-bhakti*. Even if I were to describe some of its more moderate symptoms, it could easily be misconstrued. Therefore the devotees who composed the scriptures did not describe it, because it would appear repugnant to foolish people who have no knowledge of *tattva*.”

235. “Only those who taste *rasa* can know the sweetness and exaltation of that *prema-bhakti*. O Gopa-kumāra, you are an eternal resident of that place (Goloka), therefore by Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s mercy you also will soon understand this confidential matter.”

236. Śrī Gopa-kumāra said: O *brāhmaṇa*, these words of Śrī Nārada increased my yearning for the *darśana* of the lotus feet of my worshipful Lord, Śrī Gopāla, and for the special sentiments of that type of *prema-bhakti*.

237. But at that very moment, thinking that both of these hopes were very difficult to attain, I was plunged into an ocean of sorrow. Then Śrī Nārada consoled me by saying:

238. “Although this is a very deep secret and it should not be revealed here in Vaikuṅṭha, compelled by your impatience I will speak.”

239. “A short distance from here is Ayodhyāpurī, where Śrī Raghunātha resides. Some distance from there is Śrī Dvārakāpurī, which like Mathurā is supremely beautiful and very dear to Yadupati Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Go there and receive *darśana* of your worshipful Lord.”

240. “But before going to Ayodhyā, listen carefully to an excellent procedure approved by the *rasika-mahātmās* who serve the lotus feet of Śrī Raghunātha.”

241–2. “Although by worshipping the source of all incarnations, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, everything can be attained, still I will tell you how to achieve the special *rasa* of the lotus feet of Śrī Raghunātha.”

243. “O Sītāpati! O Lakṣmaṇa-jyeṣṭha-bhrataḥ (elder brother of Lakṣmaṇa)! O Prabhu! O Śrī Hanumān Priyeśvara!’ – meditate on the renowned form, qualities and opulences of Śrī Raghunātha that are described in the Vedas by performing *kīrtana* in this way.”

244. “(If you contend that ‘I am an exclusive devotee of Śrī Gopāla, so how can I have loving devotion for Śrī Raghunātha?’ then listen –) One should perform the appropriate rituals to attain his own worshipful Lord. Wherever one detects even a scent of his worshipful Lord, even a supremely exclusive devotee whole-heartedly loves that place.”

245. “If upon receiving *darśana* of the lotus feet of Śrī Raghunātha your eagerness to receive *darśana* of your own worshipful Lord is not eclipsed, then Śrī Raghunātha himself, whose heart is always melted with compassion, will happily send you to Dvārakāpurī.”

246. “Going there while singing the *nāma-saṅkīrtana* of your Lord, you will receive *darśana* of that charming Lord of your life, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who you have been longing to see for such a long time, as he is surrounded by the members of the Yadu dynasty.”

247. “Śrī Ayodhyā and Śrī Dvārakā are special provinces of Vaikuṅṭha; therefore there is no necessity of taking Śrī Vaikuṅṭhanātha’s permission to go there.”

248. “On the order of that Śrī Vaikuṅṭhanātha, who is the knower of all, I have come here. You should know that everything I am speaking is nothing but his direct order.”

249. “To bestow mercy on a great devotee, Bhagavān Śrī Vaikuṅṭhanātha has gone somewhere at this time. Because you will not be able to tolerate the delay until his return, it is proper for you to promptly proceed from here.”

250. Śrī Gopa-kumāra said: O *brāhmaṇa*, hearing these words from Śrī Nārada, I became very pleased. Offering obeisances to him time and again and accepting his auspicious blessings, in accordance with his instructions I left there.

251. Then from a distance I saw many restless monkeys jumping about and chanting “*Rāma! Rāma!*”

252. Those monkeys snatched the flute from my hand. As I went along with them, I saw humans who were even more beautiful than the residents of Vaikuṅṭha.

253. The conduct of those human beings was first class. When I went to offer *praṇāma* to them, they became very embarrassed and prevented me. Then I accompanied them from outside into the first chamber of the palace.

254. Then I saw Śrī Sugrīva, Aṅgada, Jāmbavāna and some more very beautiful human beings surrounding Śrī Bharata, who was happily sitting with Śrī Śatrughna. Seeing Bharata, I mistook him to be Śrī Raghunātha himself, and when I began offering him prayers, he covered his ears. Saying that they were all only Śrī Rāmacandra’s servants, he stopped me praising him.

255. As I was standing before Bharata with folded hands, fearful that I had committed an offence, Śrī Hanumān came running there and forcibly took me to an inner chamber. Then I saw the humanlike Śrī Rāmacandra, whose splendour was supremely wonderful.

256. He was joyfully sitting like a royal emperor on a raised, enchanting *simhāsana* in the middle of a remarkably beautiful palace. He was adorned with all the symptoms of a great personality, and the sweetness of his qualities was even more exalted than that of Śrī Nārāyaṇa.

257. That special sweetness captivates the heart and mind. He was holding a bow in his lotus hand, and the shy glances from his lotus eyes were enchanting. His pastimes are those of the king of kings, and he was articulating the principles of religion.

258. Overcome with the bliss of seeing him, I fainted and fell before him as if I was offering a *daṇḍavat-praṇāma*. Then it seemed as if his mercy lifted me up, and I began meticulously gazing at him.

259. Leaving me there, to perform his service Śrī Hanumān jumped over to Śrī Rāma. Present at his left side was his beloved and perfectly becoming Śrī Sītā, and to his right was his younger brother Śrī Lakṣmaṇa and other associates.

260. Sometimes Śrī Hanumān fanned Śrī Rāma with a beautiful white *cāmara* while singing of his virtues, and sometimes with folded hands he kneeled before him offering prayers of various wonderful verses that he had composed himself.

261. One moment he held a white parasol, another moment he would massage the Lord's feet and at another time he would simultaneously perform two or three services.

262. Blissfully chanting “*Jaya! Jaya!*” I offered obeisances to Śrī Rāma time and again. Then, with his heart melting, he satisfied me with his soft, supremely wonderful nectarean words.

263. Śrī Bhagavān said: “O dear friend Gopa-kumāra, out of love for me you have come here, it is very auspicious! Now take rest, and do not make me unhappy by time and again offering *praṇāma* – I am your old friend!”

264. “Rise! Rise! Abandon this awe and reverence – all auspiciousness to you! I am eternally conquered by your love.”

265. Śrī Gopa-kumāra said: Then, on the Lord's order, Śrī Hanumān quickly approached me, lifted me up and placed me near the Lord's footstool.

266. Then in my heart I felt that not only had I finally received that fruit which I had been craving for so long, but that I had received something beyond what I could even desire and which I had not found anywhere up until that day.

267. In the same cowherd boy dress as before, for some time I joyfully resided there.

268. There I witnessed Śrī Raghunātha's regal pastimes and his fitting religious conduct.

269. But I did not see varieties of sweet pastimes like those of my worshipful Lord, nor did I experience mercy like his.

270. Seeing that I was sad there, Śrī Hanumān narrated to me the glories of Śrī Rāmacandra's lotus feet.

271. Directly experiencing those glories, the unhappiness of my heart was mitigated and I began to see in Śrī Raghunātha the attributes of my worshipful Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

272. But when by the influence of my previous practice I remembered Vraja-bhūmi, my heart became anxious with the hope of experiencing the pastimes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

273. Seeing my unhappiness, the best of Śrī Raghunātha's counsellors, Śrī Hanumān, comforted me with his wonderfully skilful logic.

274. But when my separation brought on some special sorrow, Śrī Raghunātha himself, who knows the minds and hearts of all living entities and whose own heart is always soft with kindness, consoled me with his sweet, loving words. Saying "O Gopa-kumāra, joyfully proceed to Dvārakāpurī!" He immediately sent me there with the king of the Ballūkas, Śrī Jāmbavāna.

Chapter Five – Divine Love

1. Śrī Gopa-kumāra said: O *brāhmaṇa*, when I arrived at Dvārakāpurī, I saw the sons of several Mathurā *brāhmaṇas* divided into groups with the sons of the Yādavas and playing.
2. In those Yādavas I saw an abundance of sweetness that I had never seen anywhere in all of my travels to other worlds.
3. In the divine bliss of receiving their *darśana*, I forgot to offer them obeisances, but still those all-knowing, youthful Yādavas heartily embraced me.
4. Knowing me to be the son of a Govardhana *goṣa*, their hearts melted in affection and grasping my hand, they led me inside the palace.
5. From a distance I saw Śrī Bhagavān majestically sitting on a beautiful cushion placed on a magnificent, golden *simhāsana* that was studded with jewels.
- 6–7. He was even more well adorned with varieties of splendid sweetesses than the Lord of Vaikuṅṭha. As if a servant devoutly serving him, splendid adolescent youthfulness had accepted shelter of his entire attractive, two-armed form. With the sweetness of that form, he who is an ocean of wonderful pastimes was stealing away the hearts of his dear devotees.
8. Above him was a great white parasol, at his sides beautiful *cāmaras* were being waved, and in front of him, on a golden footstool, were his beautiful sandals.
9. All directions were adorned with the many kinds of weapons and paraphernalia suitable for he who is the king of kings. His servants and his opulences, such as his chariot, horses, treasures and *pārijāta* tree, were also all present there and ready to serve him.
- 10–11. To Śrī Kṛṣṇa's right was Śrī Vasudeva, Śrī Balarāma, Akrūra and others, and to his left were Gada, Sātyaki, the minister Vikadru, Kṛtavarma and the other Yādavas joyfully sitting on their respective thrones. In front of him was King Ugrasena. Playing on his *viṇā* and singing comical songs, Śrī Nārada was making Śrī Kṛṣṇa and his devotees laugh.
12. Śrī Garuḍa was standing before him offering prayers, and while massaging his feet, Śrī Uddhava pleased Śrī Kṛṣṇa by telling him loving secrets about Vraja.
13. Having *darśana* from a distance of he whom I had been desiring to see for such a long time, I became overwhelmed in *prema* and fainted. Then, his heart flooded with the nectar of affection, Śrī Kṛṣṇa ordered Śrī Uddhava to bring me to him.

14. Seeing that I was a *gopā*, Śrī Uddhava was very pleased. He quickly ran over to me, and after carefully lifting me up and bringing me back to consciousness, he took me by the hands and led me to Śrī Bhagavān.

15. As Śrī Kṛṣṇa rose and stepped towards me, with his own hand Śrī Uddhava placed my head at Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet.

16. Then the Lord of my life, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, stroked my body with his lotus hand as if he was cleansing me. Then he took the flute from my hand and began looking at it. As if terribly aggrieved, tears of love began flowing from his eyes, and then for some time he remained silent.

17. After asking after my welfare, he said, "No type of inauspiciousness is ever possible there (in Gokula)." Saying this he went into an extraordinary state until Śrī Uddhava came and began trying to help him regain his composure.

18. Śrī Uddhava indicated to him that all of the Yādavas such as Śrī Vasudeva and so many kings, demigods and sages were all sitting in the assembly.

19. Then somehow he opened his lotus eyes and, seeing all of those people seated before him, he composed himself and prepared to enter the inner chambers of the palace.

20. Having attained the *darśana* of the Lord of my life, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who I had been craving to see for so long, I was plunged into an ocean of divine elation. At that time I could not know what my duty was or what I was to say.

21. Then, as he came out of the assembly, Śrī Kṛṣṇa showed respect to the best of the Yādavas by giving them betelnuts, sandalwood paste and other gifts. Grasping my folded hands in his right hand, and accompanied by Śrī Balarāma and Śrī Uddhava, he led me into the inner chambers.

22. Then his 16,108 queens, accompanied by their maidservants and with their mother-in-law Śrī Devakī and Śrī Rohiṇī in front, with great happiness arrived there.

23–5. His principal queens such as Śrī Rukmiṇī, Satyabhāmā, Jāmbavatī, Kālindī, Mitravindā, Satya, Bhadrā and Lakṣmaṇā were all there. Other dear queens, who were headed by a younger Rohiṇī and who had all been freed from the prison of Narakāsura, who possessed suitable appearances and qualities, who were also accompanied by their maidservants and who were remaining reserved due to their shyness, were surrounding Śrī Kṛṣṇa in all directions. Also present there were his sons headed by Pradyumna and Sāmba. Taking them all, he entered his chamber, where, concealing his inner sentiments, he happily sat on a beautiful *simhāsana*.

26. At that time I saw Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who was still holding the flute he had taken from me, and his family members in such a way that Śrī Devakī was Śrī Yaśodā (Śrī Rohiṇī remained as she was), the queens headed by Śrī Rukmiṇī were the damsels of Vraja and his sons were all *gopas*. Seeing the object of my meditation in this way, I fainted in ecstasy.

27. Then that Śrī Kṛṣṇa (who was in the *bhāva* of Nanda-nandana), his heart overcome with compassion, quickly lifted me up and by time and again stroking my body with his lotus hands, brought me back to my senses.

28. Because Śrī Kṛṣṇa was remembering Vraja, even though it was time for lunch, he was not hungry. Then, at the insistence of his mothers, he performed his midday duties.

29. Then Śrī Devakī-nandana fed me with his own hands, and after that, to satisfy me, he himself also ate.

30. After having all of the boys sit in a circle and sitting Śrī Balarāma in the middle, he fed them with his own hands as he had previously in his childhood pastimes in Vraja.

31. Then Śrī Uddhava ate the Lord's *mahā-prasāda* remnants, and knowing Śrī Kṛṣṇa's desire, forcibly took me to his home.

32. There my senses fully returned to me, and pondering what I had experienced in the palace, in great ecstasy I time and again danced. I was thinking:

33. "Aho! It is so wonderful! Today all the desires of my heart have been fulfilled! I have received *darśana* of the hero of Vraja, the object of my meditation who possesses all sweetnesses!"

34. Whenever I would accompany Śrī Uddhava to have *darśana* of the Lord, I would become so overwhelmed in divine elation that I could do nothing besides gaze at him.

35. Experiencing the varieties of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's constant mercy, I lived there in great jubilation.

36. If with her words and mind the goddess of speech herself cannot describe the euphoria I was feeling at that time, then how can others? Even if a devotee of Bhagavān with a life span as long as that of Brahmā were to describe it, he could never reach its limit.

37. The happiness of liberation is said to be very great, but millions of times greater than that is the happiness available in Vaikuṅṭha, and even greater than that is the happiness in Ayodhyā. But the happiness of Dvārakā cannot be described in any way.

38. By the power of either their words or their mind, who could possibly describe the divine bliss experienced by an exclusive devotee who after searching for so long has finally obtained his innermost cherished Lord in that Śrī Dvārakā? Only those who have experienced it themselves can possibly know it.

39. While I was residing there in this way, one day the Yādavas, whose hearts are always melted with the desire to see the residents of the universe happy within and without, said:

40. “O friend, the opulence of this Dvārakāpurī is superior to that of even Vaikuṅṭha, and since you have come here and will be staying with us, we do not think it is correct for you to remain in such simple attire.”

41. “This is causing us great unhappiness; therefore please dress and decorate yourself as we do.”

42. But, O *brāhmaṇa*, even though they insisted, in my heart I did not desire to dress like them and besides, I had not heard Śrī Bhagavān express such a desire. Therefore I remained there wearing modest dress, as if destitute.

43. When I saw Śrī Kṛṣṇa present in the assembly hall surrounded by all of his opulences, I was ashamed and afraid to approach him.

44. Sometimes I even saw him display his four-armed form, and I never at any time saw him display any pastimes related to Vraja.

45. Sometimes Śrī Kṛṣṇa would go alone to see his nearby relatives, the Pāṇḍavas.

46. Because my long-cherished desire was not completely fulfilled, I felt sad at heart. But when I would again see his beautiful form, qualities and sweetnesses, I would become pacified.

47. My tongue cannot possibly describe the jubilation I felt from hearing his nectarean, merciful words.

48. In this way I spent some time residing in the home of Śrī Uddhava. Whenever I felt unhappy, I carefully concealed it.

49. Once Śrī Nārada came there. Upon seeing him I offered obeisances, and with great glee and wonder, I said to him:

50. “O Nāradaḥ, of all devotees, you are the topmost! I have seen you in this same form, dressed as a sage and playing the *viṇā*, in Svarga, Vaikuṅṭha and all other worlds, and now here – what is the reason for this? I am very astonished!”

51. Śrī Nārada said: “O Gopa-kumāra, coming here you are astonished? You are really a cowherd boy – have I not already revealed this secret to you?”

52. “Just as the one Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa is present in different places in different forms, in the same way we servants of his also remain in separate forms.”

53. “In the same way Śrī Garuḍa simultaneously resides in Svarga and Vaikuṅṭha, Śrī Hanumān is simultaneously present in Kimpuruṣavarṣa and Ayodhyā, and Uddhava, myself and the Yādavas live in many worlds.”

54. “All of Bhagavān’s associates are eternal, and we serve him by assuming forms suitable for his pastimes. Even though we all have one form, in the same way as Śrī Bhagavān does, we assume different forms.”

55. “In the same way, Bhagavān’s appearance, name, pastimes and abode are one yet they expand into many, and they are all real and eternal.”

56. “O Gopa-kumāra, I am astonished that although your form is also *sac-cid-ānanda*, due to your playfulness you have not abandoned your previous nature. And even more astonishing is that even upon coming here, you are still not satisfied! Now also you appear very aggrieved.”

57. Then, grasping Śrī Nārada’s feet, I offered obeisances and humbly said, “O Master, you know full well the feelings of my heart!” Then, smiling, Śrī Nārada looked at Uddhava and said:

58. “O Uddhava, this is the son of a Govardhana *gopa*. He is searching for something that cannot be attained by myself or even you.”

59. “With great eagerness he has been wandering here and there in his search. His failure to attain it has brought him great grief, and in every world he has gone to, even here, he has not felt satisfied.”

60–1. “Therefore, O Uddhava, this is a matter of great sorrow! You are always a well-wisher of the residents of Vraja and he is residing with you, but still you have never made him understand that the happiness he is aspiring for and the *sādhana* for attaining it are both very rare! We are also always praying for it, but even for us it is very difficult to attain.”

62. Śrī Uddhava said: “This Gopa-kumāra took birth in Vraja-bhūmi in the home of a *gopa*. Because his demeanour is like that of a *gopa* and he has exclusive attachment for the worship of Śrī Gopāla, he is therefore superior to us.”

63. Hearing this Nāradaḥ was very pleased. He gleefully embraced Śrī Uddhava and said, “O Uddhava, quickly instruct him on how he can attain his worshipful deity!”

64. Śrī Uddhava replied, “O great sage, I am a *kṣatriya* by caste, and therefore I am not qualified to give instruction in your presence.”

65. Then Śrī Nārada laughed very loudly and said, “O Uddhava, even after coming here to Vaikuṅṭha you have not abandoned your identity as a *kṣatriya*?”

66. Then, smiling, Uddhava said, “What to speak of myself, even Lord Kṛṣṇa has not abandoned his caste-identity here.”

67. “Just as he observed the principles of eternal religion and household life, conquered enemies and showed respect to his elders and the *brāhmaṇas* in his manifest pastimes in the material world, he does here also.”

68. Hearing this Śrī Nārada was overjoyed and began laughing. In great wonder he jumped about and said in a loud voice:

69. “Aho! Just as the glories of the sweetness of Śrī Bhagavān’s pastimes are wonderful, in the same way the gravity of his devotees’ exclusive attachment for him is also wonderful.”

70. “How astonishing it is that just as he observed the principles of eternal religion and household life, conquered enemies and showed respect to his elders and the *brāhmaṇas* in his manifest pastimes in the material world, he also does here in Dvārakā, which is situated above even Vaikuṅṭha.”

71. “Being bewildered in experiencing these pastimes I cannot discern if we are now in the Dvārakā situated in the spiritual realm or the Dvārakā situated in the material world.”

72. “O Uddhava, you exclusively desire *prema-bhakti* for the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa; he is very dear to his devotees and his singular innermost desire is to fulfil the desires of his devotees. Therefore both of you are acting appropriately.”

73. “Your conduct is dissimilar to that of the residents of Vaikuṅṭha, nor is it like that of the residents of the material world. In the same way, Śrī Bhagavān also doesn’t expect from you conduct suitable for the mood of opulence, or worldly conduct either.”

74. “It is only an expression of your humility when you say, ‘I am a *kṣatriya*, I am not qualified to give instruction in your presence.’ This understanding is favourable for *bhakti* and always increases it. In the same way, Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s apparent worldly conduct is the increaser of his devotees’ *prema*.”

75. “Who can describe the glories of the intense eagerness for *prema* in its fully mature state, which makes he who is directly Parameśvara himself behave as your common friend?”

76. “Aho! I eulogise that *bhāva* which makes him behave as your common friend in which his awareness of his own opulences is forgotten and which gives birth to the ultimate divine love.”

77. O *brāhmaṇa*, speaking in this way, Śrī Nārada became overcome with *prema* and various ecstatic symptoms became visible on his body. For a moment he became silent, and then, seeing my grief and my desire to be instructed, he said:

78. “O Gopa-kumāra, you are the dearest beloved of Gopāladeva Śrī Kṛṣṇa. That Goloka, which is the crown jewel of spiritual realms, is very far away from here and is situated above all other worlds.”

79. “That Goloka is composed of Vraja-bhūmi and the district of Mathurā. The goddess of Goloka resides in that Mathurāpurī, but without its very heart, which is Vraja-bhūmi beginning with the Vṛndāvana forest, she simply cannot exist.”

80. “That Mathurā is primarily a land of cows, and therefore it is called ‘Goloka’. Although it is very obscure due to the presence of the places where Śrī Kṛṣṇa performed confidential pastimes, still, it is famous everywhere as ‘Goloka’.”

81. “That Goloka is attained only by those devotees who follow the Vrajavāsīs’ thoroughly selfless *prema* for Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the mellows of *dāsya*, *sakhya*, *vātsalya* and *mādhurya*.”

82. “Those devotees who see Śrī Bhagavān as the *parameśvara* cannot attain that *prema*, because fear and reverence are always present in such *aiśvarya-bhāva*.”

83. “*Prema* is only perfected when a devotee sees Śrī Bhagavān as his best friend in life. Even though that *prema* resembles worldly love, it does not exist in the material world, within the eight material coverings or even in Vaikuṅṭha.”

84. “The *prema* that is reciprocated between Śrī Kṛṣṇa and the Vrajavāsīs appears to be worldly and even sometimes transgresses the regulations governing worldly relationships. Still, that wonderful, transcendental *prema*, which is full of sweetness, is not adulterated with even a tinge of worldly love.”

85. “Therefore Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s and his devotees’ activities increase their mutual *prema*. But Vaikuṅṭha is a place of opulence, so that intimate *prema* is not possible there.”

86. “In the same way, Śrī Ayodhyā is also a place of opulence, and even more opulent still is Śrī Dvārakā, so therefore Śrī Kṛṣṇa has placed them separate from and very far away from that Goloka-dhāma.”

87. “There Śrī Kṛṣṇa and his eternal associates fully manifest happy pastimes and the very zenith of sweetness.”

88. “I must believe that only in Goloka does Śrī Bhagavān manifest the very essence of all of the hidden varieties of his *bhagavattā*, his status as the Supreme Personality.”

89. “That Goloka is situated above Vaikuṅṭha, therefore it is the crown-jewel of all worlds and its glories are the greatest of all.”

90. “Even the glories of the Mathurā and Gokula situated in the material world are superior to those of Vaikuṅṭha and all other worlds. Therefore who can describe those magnificent glories?”

91. “O friend Gopa-kumāra, at this time my restless tongue is itching to speak! Today I am revealing the jewel that I have long kept in the box of my heart.”

92. “When that Golokanātha Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa desires to enjoy varieties of loving pastimes, at the end of Dvārāpa-yuga in the twenty-eighth cycle of *yugas*, all of his incarnations enter into him as he descends at Gokula in his original form.”

93–4. “At the time of his descent, all of his numerous forms that are present in Vaikuṅṭha and other worlds merge into his original form. Abandoning Śrī Vaikuṅṭha and all other worlds and all of his paraphernalia and supreme opulences there, and even disregarding the eternally devoted Śrī Lakṣmī and exclusive devotees like myself, he goes there.”

95. “This is because that happiness which he does not attain through enjoying pastimes with numerous other devotees in numerous other worlds, he attains there in an independent and free manner by enjoying with the Vrajavāsīs, whose natures are so suitable for playful pastimes.”

96. “Receiving his direct *darśana* at that time, those greatly fortunate devotees are the recipients of his complete mercy, the ultimate *prema-bhakti*, which has never been bestowed upon any others at any other time.”

97. “O Gopa-kumāra, when Bhagavān descends into the material world, then sometimes the *darśana* of Śrī Vaikuṅṭhanātha will not be available in Vaikuṅṭha. You have previously experienced this yourself.”

98–100. “When Śrī Kṛṣṇa descends, then all of his incarnations merge into him. Therefore, when he appears in the Mathurā of the material world, detecting in him numerous varieties of glorious opulences and sweetnesses, the sages describe him according to their own sentiments and conceptions. Some say that he is Vaikuṅṭhanātha, some say that he is thousand-headed Śeṣa, some say that he is Nārāyaṇa, some say that he is Kṣīrodaśāyī Viṣṇu and some say that he is Śrī Keśava Bhagavān. Those that live on planets from where their particular worshipful deity has descended take his name and say that he has then descended to Mathurā.”

101. “But I believe that the Lord of Goloka himself, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, eternally adorns the Earth with his own *dhāma*, Śrī Vṛndāvana, and his unlimited varieties of pastimes.”

102. “There is no one here (in Uddhava’s home) who is opposed to the *bhāva* of Vraja; Śrī Uddhava is very dear to the people of Vraja, and you are also a resident of that land. Therefore I will now tell you some of the hidden glories of Śrī Goloka.”

103. “In that Vraja-bhūmi, Śrī Kṛṣṇa exhibits the zenith of his opulence, kindness, beauty, special affection for his devotees and sweet pastimes.”

104. “By its own qualities, that Vraja of Śrī Nandarāya has become the place of pastimes for the consort of Śrī Vaikuṅṭhanātha, Śrī Mahā-Lakṣmī, from whose sidelong glances all of the material world’s opulences have arisen.”

105. “Although each and every tree of Vraja-bhūmi, with their fruits, flowers and leaves, is capable of fulfilling all of one’s desires, still, they do not always exhibit their opulences, knowing that it would obstruct the Lord’s carefree pastimes.”

106. “In Vraja, Śrī Nanda-nandana exhibits such mercy that to the *rākṣasī* Pūtanā who approached him in the guise of a mother, he gave a motherly position in his eternal pastimes. And to her relatives like Aghāsura who were always malicious towards *sādhus*, in the course of his playing he gave liberation.”

107. “He allowed Mother Yaśodā to bind him by the waist to a grinding mortar with a cow-rop. When the *vraja-gopīs*, enticing him with their milk and yoghurt, asked him to dance, he did so according to their directions.”

108. “Although no one can describe the pure glories of the sweetness of his beauty, which astounds even himself, according to my capacity I am speaking. When the cows, birds, trees and creepers receive *darśana* of that beauty, they exhibit ecstatic symptoms such as crying and shivering.”

109. “O Gopa-kumāra, Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s beauty steals away the composure of the girls of Vraja, whose lotus feet are worshipped by the best of exalted ladies, and whose beauty, natural dispositions, qualities and activities are superior to those of Mahā-Lakṣmī.”

110. “When those *vraja-gopīs* receive *darśana* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, they curse the maker of eyelids, Brahmāji, they praise thousand-eyed Indra and they desire that all of their senses could become eyes.”

111. “How can I describe the various states that the people of Vraja attained when they received his *darśana*? How can I describe the glories of Vraja-bhūmi, where Śrī Kṛṣṇa revealed such a beautiful form? The residents of Dvārakā and other *dhāmas* are not capable of accepting the *bhāva* of the Vrajavāsīs.”

112. “Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s adolescent pastimes are symptomised by the brilliance of his youth and his varieties of skilfulness and other qualities. Resting on his enchanting adolescence, the splendour of his advancing age appears new and fresh at every moment.”

113. “In Vraja, Śrī Kṛṣṇa performed beautiful boyhood pastimes that no other incarnation had ever done before. Indeed, it was not even possible for other incarnations to perform those pastimes.”

114. “My tongue desires to perpetually drink the nectar of *śrī-kṛṣṇa-lilā*. But I am also afraid to try and cross that nectarean ocean of his pastimes, because an unqualified person should not undertake any task that is too difficult.”

115. “Who is that person whose heart would not be stolen away from even once drinking the nectar of his pastimes through their ears? Therefore my greedy tongue is renouncing its bashfulness and endeavouring to describe those pastimes.”

116. “When Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa was only three months old, while sleeping he broke an oxen-cart with his soft feet. While crying and crying for breast-milk, twice he showed Śrī Yaśodā the entire universe within his mouth.”

117. “His killing of Tṛṇāvarta, his crawling on the ground, his stealing of butter to delight the *gopīs* – O Gopa-kumāra, may these pastimes always protect you!”

118. “While standing before Śrī Yaśodā, his skilfully glancing here and there out of fear of the *vraja-gopīs*’ angry complaints, his eating clay out of curiosity, his playing with his mother as she churned yoghurt – may all these pastimes protect me.”

119. “Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s crying and crying and then breaking pots of yoghurt, his stealing butter from containers hanging on ropes, and then being distraught with fear, fleeing with his restless eyes looking here and there, are all very wonderful pastimes.”

120. “Śrī Yaśodā’s catching him and binding him to a grinding mortar, his breaking the Yamalārjuna trees by dragging that mortar and in that bound condition, his giving boons to Nalakūvara and Maṇigrīva – all these pastimes steal away my heart.”

121. “May that Śrī Kṛṣṇa who killed Vatsāsura and Bakāsura while playing and herding the calves in Śrī Vṛndāvana, who is the original *guru* of flute players, and who, while being decorated with *guñjā* and other forest flowers, imitates the sounds of Śrī Vṛndāvana’s animals and birds, protect me.”

122. “In the morning he took the cowherd boys and the calves to the forest of Vṛndāvana and enjoyed in various ways, and after some deliberation he entered the mouth of Aghāsura – I worship such sweet pastimes.”

123. “When he was enjoying lunch with the cowherd boys on the bank of the Yamunā, Brahmājī stole the calves. Then, with a mouthful of yoghurt and rice in his hand, he wandered here and there searching for them – this pastime attracts my heart.”

124. “When even Brahmā became bewildered upon seeing the sweetness of his pastimes, who can possibly describe them? How is it that even though he would later assume the forms of the calves and cowherd boys, yet he still searched for them as if perplexed?”

125. “Because Brahmājī comprehended the glory of Gokula where so many varieties of pastimes were performed, he respectfully offered prayers to that Vraja and to the embodiment of the *rasa* of *vraja-prema*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa.”

126. “How, in his pastime of taking the cows out to graze, Śrī Kṛṣṇa showed respect to Śrī Balarāma, how he extolled the splendour of Śrī Vṛndāvana and how he imitated the singing of the bees – please remember these kinds of beautiful pastimes.”

127. “In Tālavana he crushed Dhenukāsura and his friends and relatives, and then that evening when he returned to Vraja, he met with the *gopīs* – I am incapable of properly praising such pastimes, therefore I merely offer *praṇāma* to them.”

128. “Because the pastimes that Śrī Yaśodā-nandana performed in Kāliya-hrad are mixed with elation and sorrow, I am incapable of even remembering them, so tell me, how will I possibly describe them?”

129. “How did Śrī Kṛṣṇa angrily punish that wicked Kāliya-nāga, and how did he dance with great pleasure on Kāliya’s raised hoods?”

130. “The glories of how he defeated Kāliya and how he showed him mercy cannot be described by even Śrī Śeṣa. I offer obeisances to that serpent’s wives, who worshipped and offered prayers to Śrī Kṛṣṇa to secure Kāliya’s release.”

131. “He consumed a forest fire on the bank of Kāliya-hrad and an even greater one at Munjāṭavī, and to increase the fame of Śrī Balarāma, at Bhāṇḍiravana he played with the cowherd boys – may all these pastimes bestow auspiciousness upon everyone.”

132. “How in the monsoon season he performed pastimes while standing under a tree, and in the autumn season, seeing the lovely splendour of Śrī Vṛndāvana, how he made the young *gopīs*’ hearts burn with amorous passion – glory to all these pastimes.”

133. “Śrī Nanda-nandana’s beautiful forest attire and the sweet vibration of his flute stole away the hearts and minds of the entire world and captivated the damsels of Vraja – when will I receive direct *darśana* of these pastimes?”

134. “He stole the *gopīs*’ clothes and quickly climbed a *kadamba* tree. Then, to make them offer prayers with folded hands, he joked with them, and removing their clothes from his shoulder, returned them – when will I witness such pastimes?”

135. “I extol his pastime of delivering the wives of the *brāhmaṇas* who were performing sacrifices, where he begged from those *brāhmaṇas* and stole away the hearts of their wives, where he welcomed them with skilful words and then, along with the cowherd boys, ate the preparations that they had brought.”

136. “He worshipped Govardhana Hill, and by lifting it with his left hand, satisfied all of the *vraja-gopas* and pulverised the pride of Indra. After that, he consoled Indra and was coronated as ‘Govinda’ by all of the demigods.”

137. “Giving the residents of Vraja *darśana* of Vaikuṅṭha, bringing Śrī Nandarāya back from the abode of Varuṇa – I am incapable of describing such unlimited pastimes. How can his divine sweetness be described?”

138. “Who can describe the pastimes Śrī Kṛṣṇa performed in Vraja? Deliberating upon those pastimes confirms that they are superior to the pastimes of any other incarnation, and when narrations of those pastimes enter the ear, *prema* spontaneously appears.”

139. “The pastimes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa are superior to the pastimes of all other incarnations, and he who logically establishes this conclusion is fortunate indeed. I offer obeisances to those in whose hearts undivided *prema* has appeared merely by hearing narrations of a fraction of those pastimes.”

140. “Aho! Just as Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the most extraordinary of all incarnations, in the same way his flute, which like the most supremely beloved object always rests in his lotus hand, is extraordinary. My tongue is incapable of even touching its glories.”

141. “Still, by his mercy and according to my capacity, I will describe the glories of the flute, so listen carefully.”

142. “Because that enchanting bamboo flute has touched Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s *bimba*-fruit lips, its vibration can accomplish things that he could not with his own lotus mouth or through the words of the Upaniṣads, Vedas, Purāṇas and other scriptures.”

143. “Upon hearing that vibration, the demigods and perfected souls who were travelling in their airplanes with their wives all fainted in ecstatic love, and Indra, Śrī Śiva and Śrī Brahmā became mystified and forgot their knowledge of *brahma* (transcendental substance) – in other words, this doubt arose in them: ‘Is that which we meditate on *brahma*, or is this flute melody *brahma*?’”

144. “Upon hearing that vibration, the great sages’ *samādhi* was broken and symptoms of ecstatic love manifested on their bodies. That flute melody even interrupted the orbit of the moon and other planets, which are eternally travelling on the wheel of time.”

145. “How can I describe the good fortune of the cowherd men? In their thoughts and behaviour they were always indifferent to their bodies and everything related to their bodies, they had offered their very souls to the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, they were devoid of any worldly or other-worldly desires, and solely because their wives were very dear to Kṛṣṇa, they even offered *praṇāma* to their wives.”

146. “The sons of those *gopas* always accompanied Śrī Kṛṣṇa like his shadow. When, desiring to see the splendour of the forest, Śrī Kṛṣṇa would go away from them for even one minute, then not seeing him they would become extremely distraught. And quickly running to him, they would receive great satisfaction from touching him.”

147. “Hearing the vibration of the flute, the supremely exalted Śrī Rādhā and *vraja-gopīs*, who to meet with Śrī Kṛṣṇa had abandoned their husbands, sons, religious principles and shyness, attained *mahābhāva* in such a way that becoming spellbound in the simultaneously sweet and poisonous thoughts of him, they completely forgot their own selves and became motionless like pillars.”

148. “Please hear more of the astonishing wonders of that flute melody. When the cows, calves, bulls, deer, the birds who reside in trees, the birds and other living entities who reside in the water, the trees, rivers, clouds and other entities who are devoid of intelligence heard the vibration of the flute, they all abandoned their respective natures.”

149. “Upon hearing the melody of the flute, moving living entities became motionless and motionless entities like stone melted and began to move. In other words, the conscious became as if matter, and matter became as if conscious. Plunged into a great ocean of *prema-rasa*, they all exhibited symptoms of ecstatic love.”

150. “The pre-eminent stage of development of the secret essence of Śrī Bhagavān’s divine opulences is called the *rāsa-lilā*, where Śrī Bhagavān exhibited the zenith of his sweetness. Even with hundreds of hopes, Śrī Lakṣmī could not enter into that *rāsa-lilā*.”

151. “Aho! Whose heart would not be attracted by Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s sweeter-than-sweet skilful cleverness? With that shrewd cleverness he at first attracted those chaste ladies to him by calling them with the vibration of his flute, and then with cunning words he made them cry in sorrow.”

152. “I praise the way in which Śrī Kṛṣṇa at first concealed his feelings for them, but then, upon hearing their piteous words, within an instant revealed the sentiments of his heart and enchanted those beautiful girls of Vraja by enjoying various kinds of artful pastimes with them.”

153. “Who would not praise the disappearing pastime of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is expert at enjoying pastimes? By doing this he made even the supremely staid and sober girls of Vraja become so mad that they began conversing with trees.”

154. “*Hāya!* It is a matter of great sorrow – I fear that Śrī Kṛṣṇa, whose pastimes are difficult to comprehend, because how did he bestow the highest good fortune on his supremely beloved Śrīmatī Rādhikā, and how did he the next moment torment her by disappearing, leaving her alone and shelterless in an ocean of weeping?”

155. “When those *gopīs* were aggrieved and singing songs of sorrow, he appeared before them and bestowed divine bliss upon them all. After that he answered their questions and affirmed that he was indebted to them – may that Śrī Bhagavān protect you.”

156. “Next he performed the *rāsa-lilā*, wherein he skilfully displayed a succession of varieties of dancing and singing in a circular formation that were ingenious, full of unprecedented beauty, enchanting to the entire universe, and that are stealing my heart and mind away.”

157. “Only those who yearn to drink the nectar of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet can know the glories of the tasters of the *rasa* of his service, the beautiful girls of Vraja. Brahmā knows well the glories of those who have taken birth in Vraja, and Uddhava knows well the glories of the *vraja-gopīs*. Therefore Brahmājī prayed to take birth there, and Uddhavājī prayed to attain the dust of the feet of the beautiful girls of Vraja.”

158. “Only those who crave a particular thing can know the glories of those who have attained it. Therefore, craving to drink the nectar of Mukunda’s lips, the *vraja-gopīs* extol the abundant good fortune of the flute.”

159. “Śrī Kṛṣṇa is always so immersed in the *prema* of the Vrajavāsīs that even though Śrī Brahmā time and again offers him prayers and obeisances, he has no desire to even glance in his direction.”

160. “And that hero of Vraja, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, has no desire to speak for even a moment with devotees like myself, even though we have no other ambition besides his lotus feet. Therefore I think that those Vrajavāsīs must know some peculiar *mantras* and magical forest herbs by which they have subjugated Śrī Kṛṣṇa.”

161. “Who can describe the Vrajavāsīs’ attachment for him? They know him merely as the son of Nandarāya, and even though they serve him in various loving ways, they pass all of their time immensely distraught with dissatisfaction.”

162. “Those Vrajavāsīs are beyond the influence of time, and they are worshipful even to those of us who are spiritually enlightened, to those who are always enjoying the topmost bliss in Vaikuṅṭha, and to the Yādavas who reside in Dvārakā.”

163. “Śrī Kṛṣṇa actually did not enchant the Vrajavāsīs; it was *them* who enchanted *him* – it is true! Going to Vraja, on the pretext of offering prayers I had to remind him of his mission as Bhagavān (to kill Kāṁsa, etc.), which he had completely forgotten!”

164. “Next Śrī Akrūra, the intelligent well-wisher of the Yādavas, went to Vraja and with great difficulty took Śrī Kṛṣṇa to Mathurā.”

165. “Still, Kṛṣṇa is never able to abandon those Vrajavāsīs. Even though time and again he goes from Vraja to Mathurā, he permanently resides in Vraja and eternally enjoys pastimes there with the Vrajavāsīs.”

166. “Because Śrī Kṛṣṇa is very playful, for the purpose of seeing what mysteriously attractive activities the Vrajavāsīs perform while they are being tossed about on the waves of the *bhāva* of separation from him, he disappears, as when he sneaks out of one *kuñja* and hides in another, or when he leaves there on the pretext of being a resident of a foreign land.”

167. “My opinion is that Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the best of charitable persons, the crown-jewel of those who are generous. Therefore, to bestow upon his supremely beloved Vrajavāsīs an indescribable, extremely rare gift, he continually performs this pastime of disappearing.”

168. “Just as Śrī Kṛṣṇa performs pastimes in Vraja-bhūmi, he does also in Goloka. Therefore there is no difference between these pastimes, only that some are performed in the material world and others are performed in the spiritual world.”

169. “Although Śrī Kṛṣṇa eternally enjoys pastimes with Śrī Nandarāya and the other devotees in Goloka, those pastimes are not visible to everyone.”

170. “Just as Bhagavān has eternal associates like Śrī Garuḍa in Vaikuṅṭha, in the same way his eternal associates like Śrī Nandarāya are always present in Goloka.”

171. “In Goloka, all these devotees eternally enjoy according to their desires with the Lord of their lives, Śrī Kṛṣṇa.”

172. “By practising the *sādhana* for going to Goloka, even while residing in the material world *sādhakas* can receive the blissful *darśana* of Śrī Bhagavān and his pastimes.”

173. “Dear child, how is it that you are so anxious to have *darśana* of the lotus feet of Śrī Gopāladeva and his sweet pastimes?”

174. “My friend, know for certain that attaining this is very rare and the *sādhana* for attaining this is very difficult – this is my firm conclusion.”

175. “Ordinary species don’t know what is beneficial to them and what isn’t, but human beings are capable of deliberating on this.”

176. “Of them, so many are greedy for wealth and controlled by lust. Some may be following a religious method, but the ambition of most of them is merely promotion to the heavenly planets.”

177. “Of the religious people, there are some who perform selfless works, and some are even ascetics who aspire for liberation.”

178. “Of those who desire liberation, some are liberated *paramahamsas*, and of them, some are great personalities who are engaged in *bhagavad-bhakti*.”

179. “Of the devotees of Bhagavān, those fortunate souls who have *prema* exclusively for the lotus feet of Śrīmān Madanagopāla are very rare indeed.”

180. “In this way the gradation in *sādhakas* and their respective *sādhanas*, as well as the words of the scriptures that present these various *sādhanas*, should be understood.”

181. “Of those who are *premi-bhaktas* of the lotus feet of Śrī Gopāla, those who possess some special *bhāva* – meaning *gopī-bhāva* – are extremely rare. I am not qualified to describe them.”

182. Śrī Gopa-kumāra said: O *brāhmaṇa*, having spoken in this way, Śrī Nārada embraced Śrī Uddhava, and in a humble tone asked him, “You please say something.”

183. Then Śrī Uddhava, overcome with *prema* and time and again bowing his head, said, “I repeatedly offer *praṇāma* to the particles of dust of the lotus feet of the girls of Śrī Nandarāya’s Vraja.”

184. That instant Śrī Uddhava, who is also known as Hari-dāsa, became very emotional and holding a piece of straw between his teeth, touched Śrī Nārada’s feet and said:

185. “I pray to take birth as one of the bushes, creepers or herbs of Vṛndāvana on which the dust of the *gopīs*’ feet falls. The *gopīs* have performed the difficult task of abandoning their friends and family members, as well as the Vedic path, to exclusively worship the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, which are sought after by the *śrutis* and even the Vedas themselves.” (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.47.61))

186. After that, various symptoms of ecstatic love became visible in Śrī Uddhava, and being wonderstruck and jumping about, he said:

187. “The *vraja-gopīs* received such mercy from Śrī Kṛṣṇa that in the *rāsa-līlā* they were enthralled upon receiving his embrace. Such mercy has never been experienced by Lakṣmī-devī herself, who is always residing at the chest of Śrī Nārāyaṇa, or by the women of the heavenly planets whose lustre and fragrance resembles that of the lotus flower, what to speak of ordinary women.” (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.47.60))

188. Hearing this, Śrī Nārada was struck with wonder, and seeing that I was distraught, said:

189. “O Gopa-kumāra, Śrī Uddhava is the best of devotees. Time and again praising the dust of the *gopīs*’ feet, he prays, ‘When will I attain the good fortune of procuring the dust of the *gopīs*’ feet by taking birth as a blade of grass there?’”

190. “Even Śrī Rukmiṇī, who is famous as Haripriyā, who abandoned the religious principles of elite girls to attain Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and whose *prema* is so intense that upon hearing just one joke from Śrī Kṛṣṇa she almost died, could not attain even the scent of the *vraja-gopīs*’ good fortune.”

191. “When even such an exalted queen as Śrī Rukmiṇī could not attain the good fortune of the damsels of Vraja, then how could the best of the other queens like Kālindī and Satyabhāmā, who are like heavenly goddesses, and the other queens headed by Rohiṇī, possibly attain it?”

192. “I am very insignificant, so how will I describe the glories of those *vraja-gopīs*? Still, because my restless tongue is destroying my composure, I am speaking.”

193. “O Gopa-kumāra, friend of the Lord of Vraja, Śrī Uddhava is the best of all *premi* devotees. Procuring the special good fortune of the essence of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s kindness, he went to Vraja and received direct *darśana* of the entirety of the *gopīs’ prema*.”

194. “Receiving the special mercy of the *gopīs’* association, he even temporarily forgot the happiness of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s association. Therefore he knows full well the subject matter of the *vraja-gopīs* and all that he has said about them is true, because for one who has personally experienced it, no type of doubt can remain.”

195–6. “The elderly son of Śvaphalka, Akrūra, is Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s uncle, but his heart is dry with knowledge and devoid of kindness. But when he was made a messenger by Kāṁsa and was on his way to Vraja, he began to meditate on the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Describing the glories of those feet, he abandoned his insolence and glorified the damsels of Vraja, and by doing so, even his heart became compassionate.”

197–8. “Śrī Akrūra said, ‘I will offer a *daṇḍavat-praṇāma* to Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet, which are worshipped by Śrī Brahmā, Śrī Śiva, other important demigods, Śrī Lakṣmī, *munis* and devotees, with which, accompanied by the cowherd boys, he takes the cows out to graze in Vṛndāvana and which are tinged with the *kuṅkuma* from the *gopīs’* breasts. Then certainly he will place on my head his lotus hand, with which he bestows fearlessness upon those who, being distressed out of fear of the snake of time, take shelter of him.’”

199. “In that lotus hand Indra placed the fruits of his one hundred horse sacrifices and Bali Mahārāja placed the dominion of his entire kingdom, and during the *rāsa-lilā*, with that fragrant lotus hand he eradicated the *gopīs’* fatigue.” (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.38.17))

200. “Extolling the glories of the *vraja-gopīs* in his final moments, the righteous *naiṣṭika-brahmacāri* grandfather of the Kauravas and Pāṇḍavas, Śrī Bhīṣma, prayed:

201. “In the *rāsa-lilā*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa enthralled the *vraja-gopīs* with his beautiful songs, fascinating movements, captivating humour and loving glances. And when he disappeared, they became maddened and began imitating his pastimes.” (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (1.9.40))

202. “Receiving *darśana* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa as he was departing Hastināpura for Śrī Dvārakāpurī, the ladies of Hastināpura said amongst themselves:

203. “O Sakhī, the principal queens such as Rukmiṇī whose hands Śrī Kṛṣṇa has accepted must certainly have worshipped Śrī Bhagavān by observing vows, bathing in sacred rivers and performing fire sacrifices to be time and again relishing the nectar of his lips. What can be said then about the damsels of Vraja, who faint merely upon remembering the nectar of those lips?”

204. Śrī Gopa-kumāra said: O *brāhmaṇa*, after speaking in this way, Śrī Nārada embraced me and symptoms of ecstatic love such as trembling, hairs standing on end and profuse shedding of tears became visible in him. Then, between his teeth he clasped his tongue, which was restless to describe the glories of the *gopīs*, and dancing in various ways, he entered an extraordinary state.

205. After some time he regained his composure, and seeing poor me, he consoled me with sweet words and said:

206. “O Gopa-kumāra, everything that I have told you up to now is to always be kept secret, and especially in places where opulence is abundantly manifest it should be kept concealed.”

207. “That is why I did not reveal this subject matter to you in *Vaikuṅṭha*, but being enlivened by the sweetness of your *bhāva*, I have described something of it here.”

208. “O Gopa-kumāra, before myself, Śrī Uddhava and you, I swear that while residing here in this *Dvārakāpurī*, achieving *Goloka* is very rare and practising the *sādhana* for it is virtually impossible.”

209. “Regarding this, I will give you a very beneficial instruction, please listen: not far from this *Dvārakāpurī* is Śrī *Puruṣottama-kṣetra*, of which you previously received *darśana* in the material world.”

210. “There Śrī *Jagannātha* presides, accompanied by Śrī *Balarāma* and *Subhadrājī*. There he also performs those pastimes which he did previously at *Govardhana*, Śrī *Vṛndāvana* and the banks of the *Yamunā*.”

211. “There Śrī *Kṛṣṇa*, who is the source of all incarnations, performs the pastimes of all incarnations. In whatever form a devotee desires to see him, he grants him *darśana* in that very form.”

212. “That *Puruṣottama-kṣetra* is equally as dear to Śrī *Kṛṣṇa* as *Mathurā* is. Although the supreme opulence is manifest there, as in *Mathurā* the conduct of the residents there is very simple and charming.”

213. “O Gopa-kumāra, go there, and if after having received his *darśana* your desires are still not satisfied, then remain there and practice the appropriate *sādhana* for attaining your worshipful deity.”

214. “That *sādhana* is following the *prema* that the *Vrajavāsīs* possess for the lotus feet of Śrī *Gopīnātha* – besides this there is no other *sādhana*.”

215. “The sole cause of that *prema* is the mercy of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, which is bestowed upon some all at once, and which others attain gradually through the execution of *sādhana*.”

216. “It is like a generous donor who gives cooked food to some and merely the ingredients to others. In this way the scriptures delineate the path of *sādhana*.”

217. “By desiring to follow the *gopas* or *gopīs* of Vraja, considering Śrī Kṛṣṇa to be a common friend, son or husband, dismissing any sense of reverence towards him and taking shelter of his lotus feet, that *prema* can be attained.”

218. “That devotion in which meditating on or singing about the pastimes of Vraja is primary, and which is ornamented with the *saṅkīrtana* of your favourite name of Bhagavān, is the *sādhana* which makes *vraja-prema* arise.”

219. “Although by the association of devotees who are favourable to your particular *rasa* that *prema* automatically arises, still, you should carefully conceal it.”

220. “Therefore, remaining in a solitary place in Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s favourite sporting-ground of Vraja, you should always execute that *prema-sādhana*. By doing this you will certainly attain that *prema* very quickly.”

221. “That *prema* is far removed from the *sādhana*s of *karma*, *jñāna* and *yoga*, because no other *sādhana* can produce it. That *prema* is the very basis of humility.”

222. “Scholars define humility as when a person, even though possessing all good qualities, considers himself to be completely unqualified, worthless and unintelligent.”

223. “Therefore, by his words, activities and intelligence, it is the duty of a *sādhaka* to conduct himself in such a way that he will become fixed in humility. An intelligent man should not do anything that is opposed to humility.”

224. “Factual humility is the mature state of *prema*, and this state was exhibited by the *vraja-gopīs* when they were separated from Śrī Kṛṣṇa.”

225. “And fully mature humility always increases one’s *prema* – therefore humility and *prema* are each other’s cause and effect.”

226. “O friend, the real nature of *prema* is only known by *premi* devotees. Only when the heart is melted and when shivering and other symptoms of ecstatic love are manifest is there *prema*.”

227. “In this *prema*, the cool water of the Yamunā is like the flames of a forest fire, and flames appear to be like cooling Yamunā water. Poison is like nectar and nectar becomes like poison, and death seems pleasurable whereas maintaining one’s life seems harrowing.”

228. “In this condition a *premi* devotee cannot even clearly discern if they are in Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s company or are separated from him, or if that *prema* is full of divine bliss or great sorrow.”

229. “When the treasure of that *prema* arises, all the activities of the devotee become like those of a madman. Without this type of *prema*, the nine methods of *bhagavad-bhakti* cannot bestow happiness.”

230. “It is just as vegetables without salt, opulent preparations without hunger, scriptural readings without knowledge of the meaning and orchards without fruit cannot be pleasing.”

231. “In an ordinary way I have given some of the symptoms of the *prema* of devotees, because I am not able to give an elaborate explanation. How can I possibly describe the *prema* that the maidens of Vraja possess for Śrī Kṛṣṇa?”

232. “When Śrī Kṛṣṇa went to Mathurā, the *vraja-gopīs* experienced something more painful than the fire of the cosmic devastation. The sole cause of that suffering was *prema* and *this* is the very *tattva* of *prema* – don’t desire to know anything more than this.”

233. “If you attain the good fortune of receiving *darśana* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s beloved Śrīmatī Rādhikā, then you will achieve direct experience of the very embodiment of *prema*. Because Śrīmatī Rādhikā is directly the embodiment of *prema*, only she can describe it. Even if by their own strength someone desires to hear about this *prema*, which is saturated with both the supreme blissfulness and the supreme anguish, he will not be able to do so, because both the speaker and the listener will become spellbound.”

234. “Or if an incarnation of Śrī Kṛṣṇacandra and Śrīmatī Rādhikā combined who can propagate this kind of *prema* manifests, then, by receiving his *darśana*, you can also directly experience it. (Here Śrī Nārada indicates the incarnation of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who assumed the complexion and *bhāva* of Śrīmatī Rādhikā and who bestowed *vraja-prema* upon the souls of this world.)

235. “O Gopa-kumāra, for the perfection of your activities you should quickly proceed to Puruṣottama-kṣetra. You are the recipient of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s mercy in a way which we are not, because you took birth in that Vraja-bhūmi.”

236. (Unable to tolerate Śrī Nārada's assertion that Puruṣottama-kṣetra may be superior to Dvārakā) Śrī Uddhava said: "O Nāradaḥ, that Puruṣottama-kṣetra is dear to Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the same way as is this Dvārakāpurī, and as he exhibits his supreme opulence and performs pastimes in human form there, he does here also."

237. "There our master, Śrī Devakī-nandana, has assumed the motionless form of Śrī Jagannātha. He delights the residents of that place by eternally enjoying pastimes there."

238. "Whatever perfection can be attained there, can also be attained here; therefore there is no difference between these two worlds. However, going there and seeing and hearing about *vraja-līlā*, this Gopa-kumāra will become extremely unhappy."

239. "By receiving *darśana* of the lotus face of Śrī Jagannātha, by receiving his matchless *mahā-prasāda* and by observing the beautiful festivals there, his heart will indeed become very joyful, but he will not attain the ultimate humility."

240. "Without such humility, that *prema* by which one attains Goloka will not manifest, and until he attains Goloka, he will not be peaceful."

241. "O Nārada, you cannot tolerate the unhappiness of others, but still you are sending him to Puruṣottama-kṣetra? Why are you not sending him to the very ornament of Mathurā-maṇḍala, Śrī Gokula?"

242. "Seeing Śrī Vṛndāvana, Śrī Yamunā, Śrī Govardhana and other mountains there, automatically the ultimate humility and *prema* arise in the hearts of great souls."

243. "There, by crying out 'Hā Kṛṣṇa! Hā Kṛṣṇa!', the great torment of their hearts is eradicated as they eternally search for their beloved Śrī Devakī-nandana."

244. Śrī Gopa-kumāra said: O *brāhmaṇa*, hearing these logical words from the best of ministers Śrī Uddhava, Bhagavān Nārada became elated and said:

245. "O Uddhava, you certainly love the Vrajavāsīs, because you have given this Gopa-kumāra advice by which his innermost cherished desires will quickly be fulfilled."

246. "You know full well the glories of that Vraja-bhūmi! Tolerating the pangs of separation from your worshipful Śrī Kṛṣṇa, you resided there for a very long time."

247. Śrī Gopa-kumāra said: Looking in all directions and seeing that all indications were auspicious, Śrī Nārada, who is all-knowing and dear to the Vaiṣṇavas, said to me:

248. "O Śrīmān Gopa-kumāra, dear one of the hero of Vraja, your innermost desires will soon be fulfilled! O greatly fortunate one, I realised this right from the beginning!"

249. “Śrī Vaikuṅṭha is a place of happiness, Śrī Ayodhyā is even more full of happiness and this Dvārakāpurī is even more joyful, yet even upon coming here the unhappiness of your heart has not been mitigated. Even by receiving *darśana* of Śrī Bhagavān’s lotus feet in Svarga and other planets all of one’s unhappiness is eradicated, but even here you are unhappy.”

250. “I can see that the unhappiness you have felt in all of these places has acted only to increase your *prema* for the lotus feet of your Master, Śrī Gopāla. There is no other possible explanation for the cause of your unhappiness.”

251. “But you could not understand this. In all of those worlds that you visited, due to the absence of any agitation in your heart, with special *bhāva* you enjoyed taking *darśana* of whichever form of Bhagavān was present there.”

252. “Therefore, for fulfilling your long-cherished desire, immediately proceed to Vraja-bhūmi, which is included within Mathurā-maṇḍala and which expands the glory of the Earth planet.”

253. “There your unimpeded *sādhana* will bear fruit, transferring you to Goloka, which is situated above Vaikuṅṭha.”

254. Śrī Gopa-kumāra said: O *brāhmaṇa*, hearing those nectarean words from Śrī Nārada, I was elated and became very eager to go there. Then *mahātmā* Uddhava, discerning my internal desire to first take Śrī Bhagavān’s permission, said:

255. “O Gopa-kumāra, when desiring to go to another *dhāma*, it is necessary to receive Śrī Bhagavān’s permission. Vraja-bhūmi is very, very dear to him.”

256. “That *prema* which cannot be attained even by direct service to Śrī Kṛṣṇa in Dvārakā can be attained in Vraja-maṇḍala merely by residing there.”

257. “That is why, on the pretext of consoling Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s dearest devotees, I resided in that Vraja-bhūmi for such a long time.”

258. “I think that upon seeing your great eagerness my master will personally lead you to Vraja-bhūmi, because you are also very, very dear to him.”

259. Śrī Gopa-kumāra said: Drinking the nectar of his words, I became overcome with the supreme blissfulness. Then, for a moment I felt faint and closed my eyes.

260. At that time it was apparent that someone was taking me somewhere, and when I opened my eyes, I found myself in this very *kuñja*.

Chapter Six – Fulfilment of Long-cherished Desires

1. Śrī Gopa-kumāra said: O *brāhmaṇa*, coming to this Vṛndāvana and following Nārada's instructions, in a sweet voice I began chanting the names of my dearest Śrī Kṛṣṇa, as well as meditating on and singing about his pastimes.
2. Remembering the condition of my heart and the *bhāva* that arose inside me upon seeing his *lilā-sthalis* at that time, I feel a little bashful – how can I possibly describe that condition to others?
3. At that time, I felt extremely aggrieved and I passed my days and nights crying pitifully. I could not determine whether the spiritual practices that I had been observing for so long were giving me happiness or drowning me in an ocean of sorrow.
4. I could not determine whether I was residing in the middle of a forest fire or if I was submerged in the nectarean, cooling waters of the Yamunā.
5. Sometimes I thought that I must have fallen into the hands of a knave who was drowning me in that great ocean of unhappiness, where I could not trace even the scent of happiness.
6. Thus I resided in this way in this very *kuñja*, which is like an ornament of Vṛndāvana. Once, while drowning in the ocean of weeping, I fainted.
7. Then the crown-jewel of those who are merciful approached me, and with his nectarean lotus-hand in which he holds the flute, he wiped the dust from my body.
8. Next that great knave playfully tried to bring me back to consciousness by time and again shaking me. But it was the sweet fragrance emanating from him, the likes of which I had never before experienced, which, upon reaching my nose, brought me back to consciousness.
9. Receiving *darśana* of his lotus face, I quickly stood up in great confusion, and being overcome with divine bliss, I tried to grasp his beautiful yellow cloth.
10. But making playful melodies on the flute, that crown-jewel of heroes moved behind me and at that very moment, entered another *kuñja* and hid. I pursued him and began looking everywhere for him, but could not find him anywhere.
11. Being deprived of his *darśana*, I again fainted and fell into the current of the Yamunā. As the current that was carrying me along became very fierce, I was awakened.

12. Opening my eyes, I saw that I was rising in an airplane moving faster than the speed of mind along a celestial path until noticing that I had arrived at some other world.

13. After composing myself, I saw that I was in *Vaikuṅṭha*. Being wonderstruck, I was overcome with great bliss. Being carried along, I crossed *Ayodhyā* and other worlds.

14. In the end, I fulfilled my long-cherished desire of arriving at *Goloka*, which was situated above all of those other worlds. As *Govardhana*, the *Yamunā* and so on are situated within the *Mathurā-maṇḍala* of this world, in the same way they are all present there as well.

15. When I went to that *Mathurāpurī* and saw that it was identical to the *Mathurāpurī* of this world, I was struck with wonder and felt immense joy.

16. But there I heard that *Kāmsa* had imprisoned *Devakī*, *Vasudeva* and his own father *Ugrasena*, and had usurped the kingdom.

17. Being stricken with fear of *Kāmsa's* demon-friends, the *Yādavas* could not live freely and happily.

18. They were constantly being tormented by *Kāmsa*, so some fled to other lands, and some even took shelter of him and remained living there.

19. Hearing all of this, I did not stop there. I bathed in *Viśrānta-ghāṭa* and quickly proceeded to *Śrī Vṛndāvana*.

20. Although demigods, kings and even the eternal residents of *Vaikuṅṭha* could not go to that *Goloka*, I saw that the same customs practised in the India of this world were prevalent there.

21. Seeing how the sun rises there, how the residents there have the same forms, modes of behaviour and speak the same language as the people of this world, I was thoroughly astonished and submerged in an ocean of divine bliss.

22. Within a moment I saw people who appeared to be *gopas* wandering in the forest and elderly *gopīs* picking flowers.

23. The residents there were extraordinary – different from the residents of any of the other worlds I had previously visited. It seemed that someone had stolen their very hearts; they appeared to be very perturbed.

24. Merely by seeing them my sentiments became just like theirs. With great endeavour I composed myself and very respectfully asked them this question:

25–6. “You people are experiencing a divine bliss that is rarely felt in the hearts of even the best of *paramahansa* devotees, and for which the dear devotees of the Lord of Vaikuṅṭha are always praying. O kind-hearted ones, I am very fallen and have come to your shelter, so please be merciful and look in my direction. Please tell me, who is the king of this land? Where is his palace? And where is the path that will lead me to him?”

27. Next I said, “You people are fortunate. I am humbly asking, be merciful and please say something. If you are observing a vow of silence, then please convey something through the medium of hand gestures.”

28. “Oh, I understand – even upon hearing my aggrieved words you are not answering, so it must be that that knave (Śrī Kṛṣṇa) has cast a spell on you.”

29. It was the same way with whomever I saw there. Time and again I questioned them with great humility, but they never answered me. Moving on, I came to a place where there were many cows.

30. Looking around in all directions, I saw what appeared to be a palace, and it seemed to possess all varieties of sweetnesses.

31. All around that palace were *gopīs* singing songs as they churned yoghurt. Moving a little closer, I heard those sensational songs, as well as the tinkling of the *gopīs*’ ornaments.

32–3. Hearing this, I became unsteady in transcendental joy. Composing myself, I moved forward a bit, where I met an elderly man who was constantly chanting “*Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa*” with great eagerness and crying out of great love. With great effort and exercising all of my cleverness, I finally managed to get his attention and inquire from him.

34. With a choked-up voice he said, “This is the palace of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s father, the king of *gopas*, Śrī Nandarāya.” Hearing these words, I felt the full impact of divine bliss and fainted.

35. Instantly that kind, elderly man brought me back to consciousness, and racing forward I came to the entrance of the palace and sat down.

36. There I saw countless millions of wonders, the likes of which I had never seen or even heard of anywhere. Besides those who actually reside there, no one could possibly understand these wonders.

37. O *brāhmaṇa*, I could not determine if the residents there were immersed in some colossal divine bliss or were overcome with some great sorrow.

38. Hearing the cowherd women's mixture of singing and crying, I could not determine by my own intelligence if their singing was due to feeling immense joy, or if they were experiencing the most extreme sadness.

39. As I looked around at that world, I thought for an instant that, "I am in the material world."

40. But reflecting upon what I had seen before, I realised that I was present in Goloka, which is situated above the fourteen material worlds, the eight material coverings and all other spiritual realms.

41. After that, an elderly lady approached me, and after offering obeisances to her, I humbly asked, "Where is Śrī Nanda-nandana enjoying pastimes today?"

42. The elderly woman said: "This morning Śrī Nanda-nandana, accompanied by Śrī Balarāmajī and his *sakhās*, has taken the cows and gone to the forest to enjoy pastimes. He is the very giver of life to we residents of Vraja, and now that the evening is approaching, he will be returning here any moment."

43. "By the path near the Yamunā on which all of the residents of Vraja have now fixed their vision, and on which even the trees have turned their leaves with great eagerness to receive his *darśana*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa will definitely come."

44. Śrī Gopa-kumāra said: O *brāhmaṇa*, hearing this, it was as if I was suddenly bathed in streams of the supreme nectar. Then I also fixed my vision exclusively on that path.

45. Being filled with the supreme blissfulness, I became stunned and my legs could not move. When with great difficulty I moved a little forward, from a distance I heard a very sweet sound.

46. I heard the enchanting vibration of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's flute, which, being mixed with the mooing of cows and the singing of his divine pastimes, was making various extraordinary, transcendental melodies. That vibration is supremely attractive to the residents of Vraja.

47. By the influence of that vibration, streams of nectar began flowing from all of the trees. Tears of love began to flow from the eyes of the residents of Vraja, and milk began to flow from the breasts of Mother Yaśodā and the motherly *gopīs*. At that time the current of the Yamunā became stunned and began to flow in the opposite direction.

48. Hearing the melody of the flute, all of the residents of Vraja became maddened. Therefore I don't know if the flute exudes deadly poison or a shower of nectar. Is it hard like a thunderbolt or soft like water, is it hotter than a blazing fire or cooler than moonbeams?

49. Then I saw the ladies of Vraja exit their respective homes, some carrying in their hands articles for offering *ārati* to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, others carrying on their heads garlands, ornaments, sandalwood paste and delectable foodstuffs.

50. Some *gopīs*, not caring for anything else and due to being exceedingly anxious, were sometimes stumbling and falling as they ran to where the sound of the cows' mooing mixed with the vibration of the flute was coming from.

51. Some had placed their ornaments in the wrong places on their bodies, and due to their anxiety, others' belts and hair became untied. Others remained inside their homes, stunned and motionless just like trees, and some fainted and fell to the ground.

52. Some *sakhīs* who had fainted, from whose eyes tears were flowing and from whose mouths saliva was dripping, were being carried by their friends, who were exclaiming, "Sakhī, come and take *darsana* of the Lord of our lives, Śrī Kṛṣṇa!"

53. Singing Śrī Kṛṣṇa's names and pastimes, all of those *vraja-gopīs* quickly arrived at the bank of the Yamunā. They were beautified by their mottled clothes and ornaments and by the effulgence of their bodies. Their good fortune robs even Lakṣmī-devī of the pride she feels for her own good fortune.

54. As if I was being pulled by someone, I ran behind them and also quickly arrived there.

55. Then from a distance I saw Śrī Kṛṣṇa, whose lotus hand was beautified by the exquisite flute. Leaving behind his circle of friends and cows, he ran towards me, saying, "Hey Śrīdāmā, look! My friend Sarūpa (Gopa-kumāra's eternal identity), who is the sun that shines on the lotus flower of your family and who is most beloved to me, has come here!"

56. O *brāhmaṇa*, he was decorated with forest ornaments, around his neck was a swaying garland of *kadamba* flowers, and he was wearing yellow cloth, earrings in his ears and a crown adorned with a peacock feather. The fragrance of his body was spread in all directions, and a gentle, playful smile adorned his lotus face.

57. His lotus eyes were blossoming with merciful glances. He was decorated with various kinds of beautiful ornaments, and with the fingers of his lotus hands he repeatedly pushed back his restive locks of hair, which were decorated with dust raised by the cows.

58. It seemed that the splendour of the Earth was increasing as he touched it with his lotus feet. His gait was as if he was dancing, and the manner with which he was quickly lifting up and again placing down his lotus feet was captivatingly elegant.

59. The sweetness of youth was increasing his beauty, and the shining effulgence of his raincloud-like lustre was luminating all the directions. The eternal residents of Goloka can daily behold the ocean of his abundant wonderful glories.

60. Being impelled by the *prema* of this lowly person, he was forcibly drawn to me, and upon receiving his *darśana*, I fainted. As he was embracing me around the neck, he also suddenly fell to the ground.

61. In an instant I awoke, and when with great effort I freed myself from his embrace, what did I see but Śrī Kṛṣṇa himself lying on the ground unconscious, his tears of love making the dusty path muddy!

62. Then the *gopīs* arrived there and began saying, “Aho! Who is this? Where did he come from? And what has he done? He has put the Lord of our lives in this condition? *Hāya! Hāya!* Now all of us residents of Vraja have died!”

63. “Perhaps this newcomer is a servant of the deceitful Kāṁsa!” Crying out various kinds of lamentations and being very distressed, the *gopīs* surrounded Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

64. Running behind the *gopīs*, all the cowherd boys then arrived there and seeing Kṛṣṇa’s condition, began pitifully crying.

65–6. Hearing from a distance that frightening sound of crying, Śrī Nandarāya, Śrī Yaśodā, who dearly loved her son, and all of the elderly *gopīs* and their maidservants, became spellbound, and crying out “*Hāya! Hāya!*” and stumbling and falling as they were running, arrived there.

67. Next the cows, bulls, calves, black deer and other animals arrived there. Seeing Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s condition, they felt faint-hearted and also began crying.

68. The flow of tears from their eyes drenched their faces and out of great love they began slowly bellowing. Time and again they approached Śrī Kṛṣṇa, smelling him and licking him.

69. The birds were also grieving, and as they flew about in the sky they made a tumultuous sound, as if they were crying.

70. Their hearts filled with pain, the trees and plants at once dried up. What more can I say? At that time all of the moving and non-moving living entities became as if they were dead.

71. I was also plunged into a great ocean of sorrow, and feeling confused about what I had done, became very unhappy. Then I placed his lotus feet on my head and cried out in lamentation.

72. For some reason Baladeva, whose attire, ornaments and age were beautiful like those of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who was wearing blue cloth and whose body was a splendid white complexion, had remained at a distance, but then with great fear he came quickly running over.

73. Seeing the situation, Balarāma, the crown-jewel of the clever, also began crying. After a moment, he composed himself and began looking around in all directions, trying to find the cause of his brother's condition. Then he took both of my arms and carefully placed them around Śrī Kṛṣṇa's neck.

74. Next Śrī Balarāma made my hand stroke Śrī Kṛṣṇa's comely limbs. Then he had me call out very loudly with humble words to Śrī Kṛṣṇa and he also had me lift Kṛṣṇa up from the ground.

75. Then Śrī Kṛṣṇa opened his lotus eyes, which had been sealed due to their flowing streams of tears of love. As soon as he saw me, he was very pleased and began embracing me and kissing me. But then, looking around, he became embarrassed.

76. At that time Śrī Kṛṣṇa treated me as a friend more dear than his own life whom he was meeting again after a very long separation. Grasping my hand with his left lotus hand, he began asking after my welfare in various ways. Then, giving divine pleasure to all of the residents of Vraja, swaying like an intoxicated elephant he entered the village of Vraja.

77. The forest deer, who in separation from Śrī Kṛṣṇa were unable to go anywhere without him, desiring that they would again receive *darśana* of their master the next morning, remained at the entrance to the village of Vraja and spent the entire night there.

78. At that time all the birds were flying over Vraja to have *darśana* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. As darkness fell and they were no longer able to see him, they made crying sounds and left there.

79. At the insistence of Śrī Nandarāya, who is always enthralled with paternal affection, the two brothers did not stay to tend to the cows after milking them but went directly home.

80. Then Śrī Yaśodā, from whose eyes streams of tears of love were flowing, and whose body and clothes were moist from the milk dripping from her breasts due to maternal affection, quickly took Śrī Rohiṇī there and they time and again performed *ārati* to the entire forms of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma.

81. Offering *ārati* to Śrī Kṛṣṇa with even her braided hair, with great love she began embracing and kissing him. Her *prema* was so impulsive that at that time she was unable to decide if she should touch him to her forehead, or hold him inside her heart or even her womb.

82. Being compelled by my *prema*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa took me to his mother, Śrī Yaśodā, and had me offer obeisances to her. Seeing that her son loved me, with great happiness she loved me as if I also was her son.

83. Then all together many *vraja-gopīs* came there. Some came on some pretext, others came completely unconcerned about having any pretext.

84. Then as Śrī Yaśodā and Śrī Rohiṇī were making the arrangements to bathe the two brothers, the lascivious Śrī Kṛṣṇa began speaking like this:

85. “O Mothers, we are both extremely hungry. Please go and quickly prepare our meal, then call father and feed us all together.”

86. Hearing these pleasing words, the *vraja-gopīs* said, “O Vrajeśvarī, Yaśodājī! O Devī Rohiṇījī, you can abandon this task.”

87. “You go and quickly prepare their meals and we will swiftly and thoroughly bathe them.”

88. Śrī Yaśodājī said, “O girls, quickly bathe Balarāma first, and then send him to call Śrī Nandarāya to come for his meal.”

89. Śrī Sarūpa said: O *brāhmaṇa*, hearing this, the *gopīs* began highly praising Yaśodā. After that Yaśodā and Rohiṇī went to the kitchen, and after bathing Śrī Balarāma, the *gopīs* sent him to Śrī Nandarāya.

90. First those *gopīs* removed Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s many varieties of garments and ornaments in sequence, and then they cleansed his body with their own cloths.

91. Next, considering the flute to be their co-wife, they begged Śrī Kṛṣṇa for it and even tried to snatch it from his hand. Then, signalling me with his eyes, from a distance Śrī Kṛṣṇa tossed it into my open hands.

92. Then those *vraja-gopīs* anointed him with an excellent oil and began skilfully massaging him with their soft lotus hands.

93. Either because he was so very delicate or because he desired to play a joke, Śrī Kṛṣṇa winced and began making a sound as if he was in pain.

94. Śrī Yaśodā, to whom Śrī Kṛṣṇa alone is like her very life, hearing his anguished cry, immediately left the kitchen and arriving there asked, “What happened? What happened?”

95. But when she saw Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s smiling face, she returned to the kitchen. Then, laughing, but also a little fearful, the *gopīs* resumed massaging him and singing about his pastimes.

96. Then they playfully bathed him with clear, warm and fragrant Yamunā water from jewelled pots.

97. Next the *gopīs*, with various garlands, sandalwood paste, clothes and ornaments that they had brought from their own homes, according to their own particular tastes attired him as the best of dancing actors.

98. After that they secretly fed him some butter and other delicacies, and then they time and again offered him *ārati* with camphor and ghee lamps and then touched the offerings to their own heads.

99. Next, making a beautiful *candana* out of sandalwood, saffron and musk, they applied it to his neck, cheeks and forehead in various marvellous designs.

100. After that, seeing his loving sentiments for them, the *vraja-gopīs*’ hands would sometimes stop as they were applying *kājala* to the eyes of Śrī Śyāmasundara, but somehow they managed to complete the task.

101. Then Śrī Kṛṣṇa, by describing to the *gopīs* some of the pastimes he had enjoyed with them in the forest and speaking varieties of comical words, increased the happiness of their amorous feelings for him.

102. Displaying their mutual love in this way, their decoration of Śrī Śyāmasundara was not completed, because time and again he would spoil it by saying, “This is not satisfactory; remove it and do it again!”

103. Śrī Yaśodā, whose heart is always anxious for her son in maternal love, time and again left the kitchen to come there and see. Becoming angry, she spoke in this way:

104. “O youthful cowherd girls, because of your childish natures you are very restless! Why is it that you still have not completed his bathing and decoration?”

105. Śrī Sarūpa said: O *brāhmaṇa*, at that time the elderly *gopī* Mukharā saw how the *vraja-gopīs* had surrounded Śrī Kṛṣṇa and were gazing at him and eagerly joking with him.

106. Then she said to Yaśodā: “O daughter Yaśodā, happily come and see how these *gopīs* have made your dark son beautiful!”

107. Hearing these words from her own wet-nurse Mukharā, Yaśodā came out of the kitchen and seeing that she was joking, as if angry said:

108. “All natural beauty itself offers *ārati* to my Śyāmasundara’s lotus feet; therefore his beauty dances on the head of all the beauty of the entire universe.”

109. “Know for certain that all of the beauty of these *vraja-gopīs* combined is not qualified to offer *ārati* to even the tips of his toenails, meaning that without my Śyāmasundara, all of their beauty is worthless.”

110. Śrī Sarūpa said: O *brāhmaṇa*, in fact, how can Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s beauty, elegant loveliness, and sweetness be described? There is no object within the material world to which he can be compared, and what to speak of other incarnations, he cannot be compared to even the king of Dvārakā.

111. (He can only be compared to Śrī Rādhā.) As Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the crown-jewel of skilful heroes, in the same way Śrī Rādhā is the most prominent of heroines. And as Śrī Rādhā is the foremost heroine, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the leading hero.

112. After bathing, Śrī Nandarāya arrived with Śrī Balarāma to take their meal. Seeing this, the *gopīs* hid, and Śrī Kṛṣṇa came forward and joined his father and brother.

113–14. In the dining room, Śrī Nandarāya sat down on a golden throne. Sitting Yaśodā’s son at his left and the son of Rohiṇī at his right, they all began eating. At their insistence I also sat down, facing them.

115–16. At that time Śrī Rohiṇī sent their nicely decorated meals from the kitchen in a variety of golden and silver pots studded with jewels, and with great love Śrī Yaśodā began to serve it out. The king of enjoyers, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, then began taking a meal composed of the four kinds of foodstuffs (that is, those that are licked, chewed, sucked and drunk) and that had all good qualities.

117. Lifting morsels of food from the variety of bowls that were placed on his large golden plate, he was enjoying his meal.

118. In sequence, sometimes his mother Yaśodā, sometimes Śrī Nandarāya and then sometimes Śrī Balarāma would with great care place food in Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s mouth, and in this way he playfully ate.

119. In the course of eating he drank delicious drinks from filled cups and cool, pure water from a full pitcher.

120. First he ate beautiful and sweet *khira*, which was warm and mixed with ghee and sugar, and sweet cakes and a thread-like sweetmeat with *rotis*.

121. Next he enjoyed puddings that had been made with ghee, sweet curd-drinks and other sweets made from milk and yoghurt.

122–3. After that he ate thin, soft, white, fragrant and warm rice *pakorās*, and *poppars*, and varieties of vegetables and dahls with tasty condiments that were salted and had been spiced to taste either sweet or bitter.

124. In the end Śrī Kṛṣṇa ate many preparations that had been made from buttermilk and yoghurt, as well as salad that was spiced with hing and cumin, and he fed these preparations to me as well.

125. At the time of eating, the splendour of his lotus face, adorned with the beautiful movements of his red lips, charming tongue and cheeks, and the dancing of his bow-like eyebrows and his lotus eyes, cannot be described by words or even by the mind.

126. Next the *gopīs* placed before Śrī Yaśodā sweets made from milk, ghee and sugar that they had prepared and brought from their homes.

127. To bestow divine bliss upon the *gopīs*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa praised those sweets and in his own unique style tasted them again and again, and also fed me some with his lotus hands.

128. After that, Yaśodā placed some *manohara-laddus*, which had been brought by Śrīmatī Rādhikā and which had sugar-coated cardamom seeds and varieties of sugar candy in them, at Śrī Kṛṣṇa's left side.

129. Breaking off a little piece of those *laddus* with the nails of his forefinger and thumb and then lightly placing it on his tongue, Śrī Kṛṣṇa curled his face as if he had eaten something bitter like *nīma*.

130. Seeing this, Śrī Balarāma smiled, Yaśodā became angry at Śrī Rādhā and Śrī Nandarāya was surprised. At that time, the *sakhīs* that were in Śrīmatī Rādhikā's camp were very dejected, and the *sakhīs* who were inimical to her, such as Candrāvalī, were delighted.

131. Then Śrī Kṛṣṇa, knowing that I was born in the family of Śrīmatī Rādhikā's brother, threw those *laddus* on my plate. When I tasted those *laddus*, I found them very delicious, so I was astonished, thinking, "Why did Śrī Kṛṣṇa behave like this?"

132. Then, with slanted eyebrows, Śrīmatī Rādhikā looked exclusively at Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Holding his head down and smiling, Śrī Kṛṣṇa delighted her with a sidelong glance.

133. Seeing this, I understood that only for the purpose of bestowing divine bliss upon those who love him had the crown-jewel of the clever, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, performed this pastime.

134. After that, he sipped *ācamana* and in his own uncommonly wonderful manner, ate some fine betel nuts. While gazing at Śrīmatī Rādhikā, he then placed those partially chewed betelnuts in my mouth.

135. Next, being restless out of feelings of love, Mother Yaśodā recited some *mantras* for good digestion while stroking Śrī Kṛṣṇa's stomach with the palm of her left hand.

136. Then Śrī Nandarāya left for the cow-shed and the crown-jewel of the clever, Śrī Balarāma, went to sleep. Then, singing songs, Śrī Kṛṣṇa began wandering here and there in the courtyards of Vraja.

137. In this way he enjoyed pastimes for some time with the beautiful girls of Vraja, and then, out of respect for his mother's call, he entered his bedroom and lay down on his beautiful golden bed.

138. That bed was shining with the effulgence of priceless jewels and was as beautiful as the foam of milk. A supremely attractive white quilt was spread over it, and some very soft pillows that were like spotless full moons were placed upon it.

139. That bed had a canopy which was splendorously embroidered with pearls. His bedroom was adorned with many varieties of the most beautiful jewels and was fragrant with the aroma of *aguru* and incense.

140. Next, the crown-jewel of the skilful, Śrīmatī Rādhikā, prepared some seasoned and folded betel-leaf and began placing it in Śrī Kṛṣṇa's lotus mouth. Śrī Candrāvalī, Śrī Lalitā and the other *sakhīs* were massaging his feet in a very pleasing fashion.

141. One *gopī* was fanning him, another was standing to give him betelnuts, another was holding a cuspidor for the betelnut-remnants and yet another was holding a pitcher full of water.

142. One *gopī* was singing attractive songs about Śrī Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, which pleased him very much. Others were playing various musical instruments and others were joking with him.

143. In this way all of the charming girls of Vraja, being saturated with *prema*, were serving Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa fulfilled the internal desires of them all by bestowing upon them the remnants of his betelnuts in such a way that one *gopī* did not know that another had also received them.

144. In this way, the crest-jewel in the assembly of those who are cunning, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, bestowed celestial joy upon the *vraja-gopīs* according to their desires. Next, after being pleased by the loving words of Śrīmatī Rādhikā for some time, he lay down on his bed.

145. Next, Śrī Kṛṣṇa gave them an indication through a gesture by which they all became exceedingly joyful and went to their homes.

146. After that, Śrīdāmā appeared there and very respectfully led me to his home. What other pastimes Śrī Kṛṣṇa enjoyed that night, I cannot say.

147. I passed that night in great sorrow and upon awakening the following morning, I went directly to the home of Śrī Nandarāya. There I saw Śrī Kṛṣṇa lying on his bed sleeping, his body adorned with the marks of amorous pastimes.

148. Simple-natured Mother Yaśodā sat next to him and began lovingly caressing him in various ways, saying:

149. “Hāya! This boy of mine, having spent the entire day leading the cows out to graze, is exhausted. He is so tired that even though the sun has risen, he has still not yet awakened.”

150. “While he was running here and there, thorny bushes must have pricked him, inflicting these wounds all over him.”

151. “Aho! It is so sad! Being overcome with sleep he is not aware of any of this. And the *kājala* from his eyes has anointed all his limbs.”

152. “He is marked here and there with the spittle of his chewed betelnuts. Time and again turning in his sleep, he has broken all of his garlands, necklaces and other ornaments, but he is not aware of any of this!”

153. Śrī Yaśodā thought, “Certainly the *kuṅkuma*-tinted clay of the Yamunā has clung to his limbs. It is very regrettable, that even after being bathed it is still there, remaining with him as if a dear friend.”

154. “Those girls who bathed him last evening are very restless; they did not cleanse him properly.”

155. Śrī Sarūpa said: As Śrī Yaśodā was thinking in this way, the *vraja-gopīs* arrived there. As she revealed her thoughts before the *gopīs*, their faces were wonderfully adorned with expressions of fear, amusement and embarrassment.

156. After that, Śrī Kṛṣṇa got up from bed, and after bathing him, Śrī Yaśodā decorated him with various kinds of clothes and ornaments. Then he ate breakfast with Śrī Balarāma.

157. Next Śrī Kṛṣṇa relaxed for a while by happily conversing with the *gopīs*. Meanwhile Śrī Yaśodā performed activities to ensure that his journey to the forest for the day would be auspicious.

158. Although the *vraja-gopīs* felt agony in their hearts at the thought of being separated from him for the day, still they performed rituals for a safe journey while singing auspicious songs.

159. After that, Yaśodā sat Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Śrī Balarāma on stools and decorated them with ornaments suitable for the forest. Next she placed protective herbs, lion's claws and other amulets on their limbs.

160. Next she arranged for the elderly *brāhmaṇa* ladies and other *gopīs* to offer them their blessings. With great care Śrī Yaśodā arranged for all of the appropriate rituals to ensure an auspicious journey.

161. She also gave them some foodstuffs for their lunch. Herding the cows before them and playing the flute, Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Śrī Balarāma departed for the forest.

162. Meanwhile, taking their lunches, all of his cowherd boy companions exited their respective homes and joined them.

163. Śrī Kṛṣṇa and his *sakhās* were adorned by the melodies they played sometimes on flutes, sometimes on horn-bugles and sometimes on whistles made of leaves.

164. Taking *cāmaras*, flags, balls and *mṛdaṅgas*, Śrī Balarāma, Śrī Kṛṣṇa and the *sakhās* departed for the forest. Some were singing, some were dancing and some were praising Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who in eagerness to enjoy carefree pastimes in the forest, was very jubilant.

165. In front of Śrī Kṛṣṇa was Śrī Balarāma, and I was behind him. As if being pulled by a rope of *prema* and on the pretext of seeing him off, those who are unable to tolerate separation from him, the *gopīs*, were following behind him.

166. When some perspiration, which was due to the *prema* that arose in him upon seeing the *gopīs*, appeared on the face of her son, with milk flowing from her breasts Śrī Yaśodā wiped his face and followed him beyond the gates of Vraja village.

167. When Śrī Kṛṣṇa told her to return home, she took a few steps towards home, but then stopped and turned and looked towards her son.

168. She returned to him, and after placing some betelnuts in Śrī Kṛṣṇa's mouth and hand, she again started for home. But as before she turned and, gazing at her son, returned to him once more.

169. As they were going along, she fed him some sweet fruits and gave him some syrup to drink, and then again she started for home.

170. But again she returned to him, and time and again she set his clothes and ornaments neatly in order. Again she started to return home, but again she returned to him and pitifully instructed him like this:

171. “O my son, don’t go too far into this impassible forest, and don’t ever go to where there are thorns!”

172. With very humble words she made him vow to honour these instructions. Again she started for home, but after taking only a few steps, she returned to him yet again and said:

173–4. “O Balarāma, stay in front of your little brother! O Śrīdāmā, along with Sarūpa you remain behind him! O Ansumāna, you stay to his right, and O Subala, you stay to his left!” Begging them in this way with a blade of grass in her mouth, she looked upon Śrī Kṛṣṇa with great anxiety.

175. Śrī Yaśodā’s affection is more than that of a cow who has just given birth to a calf. Out of great anxiety for her son, she time and again left for home but then again returned to him.

176. After that, Śrī Kṛṣṇa offered obeisances to Śrī Yaśodā, touched her feet and embraced her. Giving her his word and reasoning with her in many different ways, he convinced her to return home.

177. She just remained standing there for a long while. Then she climbed a high ridge and stood there, motionless as if in a painting, watching Śrī Kṛṣṇa until he entered the forest. At that time milk was dripping from her breasts, and tears were flowing from her eyes.

178. Following behind Śrī Kṛṣṇa as he neared the forest, the *vraja-gopīs*’ throats became dried up due to thoughts of separation from him, and they were therefore unable to sing any longer. They began staggering here and there, and their vision became impaired due to the streams of tears flowing from their eyes.

179. Due to bashfulness and fear (because of the presence of others), they were unable to do or even say anything. Because of this, they were drowning in a great ocean of despair, and they had no means to cross over that ocean.

180. Because Śrī Kṛṣṇa had stolen away the eyes and hearts of the *vraja-gopīs*, who had followed him all the way from the village of Vraja, they were unable to return. With great difficulty Śrī Kṛṣṇa finally convinced them to return to their homes, but still they time and again turned to look at him as they were leaving.

181–2. Himself being overwhelmed in *prema*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa turned to them and with loving glances time and again solaced them. By the medium of his favourite messenger, the gestures made with his eyebrows, he forcibly terminated the fear that they felt because of his impending entrance into the forest and the bashfulness they felt due to the presence of their elders. Having become stunned in the same way as Yaśodā had, they also climbed a ridge and just remained standing and watching.

183–4. Śrī Nandarāya, whose naturally soft heart was full of affection, became benumbed upon seeing the maternal love of his wife Yaśodā. Seeing the residents of Vraja's immense *prema* for his son, accompanied by Upananda and other elderly *gopas* he followed Śrī Kṛṣṇa deep into the forest and he also could not leave him.

185–6. Although seeing many auspicious omens, and seeing that the cows and other animals and even he himself were all happy at heart, still, fearing the imminent separation from his son, he first embraced each of his sons separately, and then time and again embraced them both together. He repeatedly smelled their heads, and being overcome with great affection, tears of love flowed from his eyes.

187. Then Śrī Kṛṣṇa offered obeisances to Nanda and, reminding him of his duties, such as protecting Vraja, made him return. Still, gazing at his son, Śrī Nandarāya stood there motionlessly.

188. Only when Śrī Balarāma and Śrī Kṛṣṇa had gone so far into the forest that they could no longer be seen and the mooing of the cows and the sounds of horn-bugles could no longer be heard, did he return to Vraja.

189. Next, for bringing him the happy news of his boys from the forest, Śrī Nandarāya appointed some fast-footed servants as messengers. Then he took Śrī Yaśodā and the *gopīs*, who were still standing motionlessly on the ridges, back to Vraja.

190. Singing of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's sweetness, they all entered Vraja and spent the day eagerly awaiting to meet with him again at sunset.

191. Even Śrī Śeṣa with all of his *śakti* cannot describe the separation from Śrī Kṛṣṇa felt by the residents of Vraja at that time, so what intelligent man would dare try to describe this agonising topic?

192. After Śrī Kṛṣṇa made the *vraja-gopīs* return, the cowherd boys forcibly led him ahead and very soon they entered the wonderful forest of Vṛndāvana.

193. There they showed him the splendour of Śrī Vṛndāvana and skilfully described that splendour to him in such eloquent words that his sorrow due to separation from the *gopīs* was mitigated.

194. After that, what pastimes he enjoyed, and how the condition of all the moving and non-moving living entities in the forest became, my mind and heart cannot possibly comprehend, so how could my tongue portray them before others?

195. The Lord of Vraja, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, played with his friends while the cows grazed in a valley of Govardhana. Next he led the cows to the Yamunā, where he and his friends played in the water while the cows drank. Returning to the village at dusk, he enjoyed with the beautiful girls of Vraja as before.

196. Although the palace of Śrī Nandarāya is located at the tract of land known as Nandīśvara, still, in accordance with Śrī Kṛṣṇa's desire, those residents of Vraja consider that eternally residing within the *kuñjas* is far superior.

197. O *brāhmaṇa*, while residing there I experienced such divine ecstasy that it cannot be described – what could I possibly say?

198. Those who have analysed the nature of happiness have said that in comparison to the happiness attained by liberated souls, due solely to the glories of *bhagavad-bhakti* the pleasure attained by the residents of Vaikuṅṭha is greater.

199. Those thinkers have also concluded that due to the speciality of *rasa* available in Ayodhyā and Dvārakā, the happiness experienced by the residents there is greater than that of the residents of Vaikuṅṭha.

200. The blissfulness experienced by the residents of Goloka is the highest of all. If it cannot be measured by any means, then how can I possibly describe it?

201. Only those who reside there and are eternally experiencing that happiness can fully know it, and only those whose *prema* is like that of the Vrajavāsīs can know anything of it.

202. The eternal residents of Vaikuṅṭha are incarnations of the eternal residents of Goloka, and the demigods residing in the heavenly planets are reflected forms of the eternal residents of Vaikuṅṭha.

203. When Śrī Bhagavān Viṣṇu desires to incarnate on this Earth planet, then out of love for him the demigods also incarnate on this earth.

204. Just as the source of all incarnations, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, is non-different from his incarnations, the eternal residents of Goloka are non-different from their incarnations as eternal residents of Vaikuṅṭha.

205. Like Śrī Kṛṣṇa himself, the eternal residents of Goloka such as Śrī Nandarāya incarnate sometimes in partial form and sometimes in full form according to the time, place and purpose.

206–8. In this way, sometimes, being attracted by their respective *rasa*, the eternal residents of Goloka desire to appear in this world along with Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and sometimes they appear due to some pretext. At that time their incarnations merge into them. Therefore the sages have said that (on the pretext of having received from Brahmā the boon of having *vātsalya-prema* for Bhagavān) Droṇa and Dharā later appeared as Nanda and Yaśodā.

209. O *brāhmaṇa*, these conclusions are in accordance with what has been established by Śrī Nārada – have no doubt in them.

210. O Mathurā *brāhmaṇa*, please listen, and by the power of Śrī Kṛṣṇa I will tell you something very astonishing about Goloka.

211. There are millions of young, adult and elderly *gopas* residing in Goloka, and they all think, “I alone am the most beloved of Kṛṣṇa.”

212. I have personally seen how each and every one of them feels this way towards Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and also how Śrī Kṛṣṇa feels this way towards them.

213. Even though they love Kṛṣṇa in this way, they are never satisfied, but on the contrary, by their *prema*, various kinds of hankering for Kṛṣṇa are always increasing. This sentiment is the mother of humility, meaning to the degree that hankering for Kṛṣṇa increases, humility also increases, giving rise to constant dissatisfaction.

214. The millions and millions of *gopīs* in Goloka possess the supreme love for Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and in the same way Śrī Kṛṣṇa is also mercifully attached to them.

215. Therefore for hundreds of reasons it is clear that in Goloka or anywhere else there is no one as dear to Śrī Kṛṣṇa as the *gopīs*.

216. When Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s special love for a certain *gopī* is seen, it can be understood that she is the most dear to him.

217. Although all of the *gopīs* are forever enjoying the happiness of sporting with Śrī Kṛṣṇa according to their particular capacities, they never consider that they are the most dear to him.

218. Each and every *gopī* is always anxiously thinking, “Will I ever attain that good fortune by which I will become even the lowest of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s maidservants?”

219. O Svāmī, the topic of this *prema* is very profound! Even great personalities cannot understand it through their powers of reason; this is the naturally wonderful glory of this deep *prema* that overpowers one with *rasa*.

220. Once, when Śrī Nanda-nandana was wandering on the banks of the Yamunā, he heard that Kāliya-nāga had again come into his lake.

221. He at once went there alone and quickly climbing a *kadamba* tree, he leaped into the lake in such a way that great waves were created.

222. Then he began enjoying in the water in various ways by swimming and making splashing sounds. Hearing this, the wicked Kāliya-nāga came and wrapped his coils around Śrī Kṛṣṇa. By being in this condition, the frolicsome Śrī Kṛṣṇa showed something wonderful.

223. Upon not seeing him, the cowherd boys, whose company Śrī Kṛṣṇa had suddenly left, became as if they had died. With great distress they began searching for him, and seeing his lotus footprints, they followed them to the lake.

224. Seeing Śrī Kṛṣṇa in that helpless condition, they all fainted. Because they simply could not tolerate separation from him, whenever he would hide behind a tree, they would no longer desire to continue living.

225. The cows, bulls, calves and the other domestic animals from the village, and even the wild animals from the forest, all came to the shore of the lake, and seeing the lotus face of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, began screaming in agony.

226. Being extremely upset, the birds cried and cried as they flew overhead, and then they began diving with great force into the water. At that very moment all the trees and plants dried up, and in all directions there was pandemonium.

227. Just then an elderly man ran towards Vraja village, as if Śrī Kṛṣṇa had inspired him from within the heart to do so. Crying out very loudly “*Hāya! Hāya!*” he related the news to everyone.

228. Just before that elderly man arrived in the village, all the Vrajavāsīs, noticing that there was commotion all around, became fearful and to search for the very embodiment of auspiciousness for Vraja, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, they left the village.

229. Then the broken words of the elderly man were like a thunderbolt striking them.

230. For some reason, on this particular day Śrī Balarāma had remained at home. Seeing how the Vrajavāsīs had become like moving corpses hastily running towards the lake, he consoled them by saying, “It’s all a lie! It’s not true!”

231. With great difficulty he convinced Mother Rohiṇī to stay and look after the house, and then he also ran in the direction of the lake, joining those who had run ahead.

232. Quickly he arrived at the lake. When he saw the condition Śrī Kṛṣṇa was in, he could not keep his composure and becoming overwhelmed in *prema*, began crying.

233. His lamentations smashed even wood and stone, and for an instant he fell unconscious just as Śrī Yaśodā and Śrī Nandarāya had.

234. Then all the living entities present there let out such a cry of great pain that it seemed the whole universe was crying.

235. The resonance of that great cry brought Śrī Balarāma back to consciousness, and then with great difficulty the crown-jewel of the sober regained his composure.

236. At that moment Śrī Yaśodā and Śrī Nandarāya also regained consciousness, and upon seeing their son’s condition, they let out a great cry and impulsively tried to jump into the lake. But with his own hands, Śrī Balarāma forcibly prevented them.

237. Seeing how the residents of Vraja were benumbed as if they were corpses, Śrī Balarāma was overcome with grief and in a broken voice called out to Śrī Kṛṣṇa:

238. “O Bhagavān, these are not the eternal residents of Vaikuṅṭha, or the monkey residents of Ayodhyā such as Hanumān, or even the Yādava residents of Dvārakā like Uddhava! They are the eternal residents of Goloka, and you are their very lives! Now I am unable to save them!”

239. “O merciful one, abandon this pastime, otherwise O Kṛṣṇa, O friend of the residents of Vraja! They will certainly perish and then your soft heart will be aggrieved!”

240. O *brāhmaṇa*, at that time the *gopīs* were crying out various kinds of lamentations and being immensely aggrieved, were fainting again and again. After regaining consciousness and being mindless due to extreme anguish, to be with Śrī Kṛṣṇa they entered the lake.

241. Meanwhile, Śrī Kṛṣṇa concluded that pastime, and climbing upon the thousands of Kāliya-nāga’s raised hoods, extended his two lotus hands and called the *gopīs* there.

242. Then he helped his beloved *gopīs* quickly climb upon Kāliya's hoods, which were dazzling with their lines of splendid jewels. When those maidens of Vraja began wandering on those hoods, they became even more lustrous.

243. On that immensely wonderful dancing arena of Kāliya's hoods, playful Śrī Kṛṣṇa and the damsels of Vraja sang and danced in various ways and enjoyed the amorous pleasure of the *rāsa-līlā*.

244. Standing on the shore, Śrī Balarāma brought Śrī Nandarāya and the others back to consciousness. When Balarāma saw Śrī Kṛṣṇa dancing, he was delighted and struck with wonder (but Nanda and the others could not see these pastimes taking place).

245. Next Śrī Kṛṣṇa subdued Kāliya and playfully took away the upper garments from the serpent's wives as they were offering him prayers.

246. Then, making a long rope from these garments, frolicsome Śrī Kṛṣṇa bound it to the serpent's nose and held it in his left hand.

247. Then he forcibly rode the serpent like it was a horse, and with his right hand he played the flute with great pleasure.

248. Sometimes he smacked the serpent with the flute, as if it was a prod. By doing so he bestowed upon Kāliya mercy equal to that which was bestowed upon his own carrier, Garuḍa.

249. Kāliya's wives offered Śrī Kṛṣṇa priceless jewels, ornaments, garments, garlands and sandalwood paste, and after accepting them, he placed them on the serpent's hoods.

250. Then he took those articles, along with lotuses and other flowers from the Yamunā, and decorated himself and the *gopīs* with them.

251. Next Kāliya offered prayers with his countless mouths, and then Śrī Kṛṣṇa finally emerged from the lake. Seeing him, Śrī Nandarāya and the *gopas* began joyfully dancing.

252. Having performed such a sensational pastime, Śrī Kṛṣṇa took the *gopīs* and descended from the hoods of Kāliya, who was very pleased because he had received a type of mercy that even Garuḍa had never attained.

253. Next Śrī Nandarāya and the *gopas* offered *ārati* to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and embracing him again and again, they bathed him with their tears. Then, after giving Kāliya some instructions, Śrī Kṛṣṇa banished him from the lake.

254. After that, being delighted by a great festival of attractive music, singing and dancing celebrated by the *gopas* and *gopīs*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa entered Vraja.

255–6. Once two dear servants of the wicked Kāṁsa, Keśī and Ariṣṭāsura, came to Vraja. Keśī assumed the form of a fearful horse, and Ariṣṭāsura assumed the form of a bull, and they both began terrifying the cowherd boys and the cows.

257. Their bodies were so massive it was as if they could touch the sky, and when they both roared very loudly at the same time, all living entities became terrified and fell to the ground.

258. Because they were frightened of those demons, the dear friends of Śrī Kṛṣṇa forcibly prevented him from going near the demons. Still, after consoling them, with pride like that of a warrior he flexed his muscles and went before those demons.

259. First, with great ferocity the Keśī demon came before him, and Śrī Kṛṣṇa kicked him in such a way that he landed far away. Next Ariṣṭāsura came, and then Śrī Kṛṣṇa pierced his nose, passed a rope through it, and then brought him before the deity of Śrī Gopīśvara Mahādeva.

260. After that the Keśī demon attacked him again. Then the greatly valorous Śrī Kṛṣṇa forcibly jumped on it and climbed upon its back. To subdue him, he made the demon run in such a way that it was as if it was being trained. In this way his taming of the demon was immensely splendid.

261. Then quickly his countless cowherd friends also grabbed the horse with their hands and climbed upon it. Playing with the horse in a marvellous fashion, they made it jump here and there, sometimes in the sky and sometimes on the earth.

262. Having within an instant bridled the horse and brought it fully under his control, for the purpose of enjoying riding pastimes Śrī Kṛṣṇa kept it tied up with a rope in Vraja. He also kept the bull to pull carts.

263. Śrī Kṛṣṇa continued to live in Nandīśvarapurī with great jubilation, until one day, on the order of Kāṁsa, Śrī Akrūra arrived there to take him to Mathurā.

264. Who can describe how the condition of the residents of Vraja became at that time? Hearing this narration, even the wood and stone of other places cry and shatter.

265. In the evening, when the residents of Vraja heard the news of Akrūra's imminent arrival, they all lamented in various ways. Crying and crying, they fainted time and again.

266. Being fearful of the wicked Kāṁsa, Śrī Yaśodā hid Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who was more dear to her than her very life, in a secluded place and swore that she would never allow him to leave.

267. The next morning, with a great deal of reasoning, Śrī Akrūra convinced Śrī Nandarāya that Kṛṣṇa should go to Mathurā immediately. Crying, Śrī Nanda then comforted Śrī Yaśodā in many ways and brought Śrī Kṛṣṇa outside.

268. When the *vraja-gopīs* saw this, shamelessly they cried out with great distress, “*Hāya! Hāya!*” It seemed that as they were gazing upon Śrī Kṛṣṇa, their very lives were snatched away from them.

269. Then Śrī Yaśodā came outside. Wiping away her tears, she meekly grasped the hand of her son Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and as if consigning her invaluable treasure, placed it into the hand of Śrī Akrūra.

270. Then she said to Śrī Nandarāya, “I am placing the wealth of my life in your hands. I could trust no one but you – always keep him by your side, and return here and again place him in my hand.”

271. Being distressed out of love for her son, Śrī Yaśodā could speak no more and fainted. When she finally returned to her home without Śrī Kṛṣṇa, all the *vraja-gopīs* began wailing.

272. Even today, upon remembering the sound of that wailing, stone cries, dry wood melts and thunderbolts explode. If the residents of this world haven’t already given up their lives immediately upon remembering this, then they are certainly plunged into an ocean of sorrow.

273. Even though the *gopīs* were drowning in an ocean of immense anguish, simple-natured Śrī Yaśodā tried in many ways to comfort them. But they did not become peaceful, rather they became angry and said to her:

274. “O merciless Yaśodā, you have no intelligence! Placing your own son into the paws of a lion, you have returned alone to this desolate house, which is now fit to be set in flames?”

275. Abusing Śrī Nandarāya and the *gopīs* in the same way, being extremely distressed they began cursing Akrūra. Exiting the house, they were crying pitifully, and calling out to the beloved of their lives, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, they began running after the chariot.

276. Their bitter cries of intense anguish made Śrī Nandarāya, Śrī Baladeva, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Śrī Akrūra and all of those who were sitting in the chariot also cry. Seeing this, all the *Vrajavāsīs* fainted.

277. In an instant, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is the *gopīs'* only ambition, composed himself and seeing that the *gopīs* were on the verge of leaving their bodies, to save their lives descended from the chariot and unseen to anyone, led them into a *kuñja*.

278. Not seeing Kṛṣṇa on the chariot, Kāṁsa's messenger Akrūra felt very morose. Then with eloquent words he began to persuade Śrī Balarāma.

279. He described the suffering of Śrī Devakī, Śrī Vasudeva and the other Yādavas in such a way that it seemed it was all Śrī Kṛṣṇa's fault.

280. Then the son of Vasudeva and Rohiṇī, Śrī Balarāma, accompanied by his uncle Akrūra, began searching and searching for Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Coming across his footprints, they followed them until they arrived at the very *kuñja* where he was enjoying pastimes.

281. When Śrī Balarāma saw Śrī Kṛṣṇa surrounded by those *gopīs*, he stopped at a distance. Crying, Akrūra called out to Śrī Kṛṣṇa:

282. "The wicked Kāṁsa is constantly threatening your elderly and helpless parents! Lifting his sword to kill them, he terrifies them and due to this they are suffering greatly! They are your devotees, therefore you should protect them. It is not proper for you to disregard them."

283. "And all the other Yādavas, who know you as their only shelter, are also burning in agony! Their eyes are glued to the path, eagerly awaiting your arrival. It is not proper for you to leave them in this hopeless condition. And all of the demigods and *brāhmaṇas* are also terrified of Kāṁsa!"

284. "He constantly praises his own strength, by which he has defeated even the demigods! He considers that there is no one more powerful than himself! All of the big and small demoniac kings are forever worshipping him!"

285. Speaking in this way, Akrūra, whose very name means he whose activities are cruel, took a blade of grass in his mouth and offering obeisances to the *vraja-gopīs* one by one, humbly said:

286. "O goddesses of Vraja, don't be the cause of death at the hands of Kāṁsa of those who have taken birth in the Yadu dynasty! Be merciful and see that they are protected! Especially save the lives of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's poor mother and father, who are being held captive within Kāṁsa's jail."

287. The *gopīs* said: "O immensely cunning Akrūra, O liar! You are only a follower of Kāṁsa! How can his parents be there? He is the son of Nanda and Yaśodā! Don't take him there and annihilate Gokula! Don't be a murderer of women!"

288. Hearing about the cruelty of Kāṁsa, and realising that he really was the cause of his relatives' suffering, Śrī Kṛṣṇa consoled the *gopīs*. Being simultaneously enraged and heart-broken, and knowing well the opinion of Śrī Balarāma, he emerged from the *kuñja*.

289. Then Akrūra, knowing that he had also persuaded Śrī Balarāma, was delighted and he ran from there to bring the chariot.

290. Understanding that Śrī Kṛṣṇa was now definitely going to Mathurā, the *vraja-gopīs* gazed at his lotus face again and again. Being terrified of the fire of separation from him, they began wailing, and falling at his lotus feet, said:

291. "O Lord, being shelterless without you, we will not be able to maintain our lives for even one moment! Therefore O Prabhu, don't abandon your own maidservants! We will also go with you!"

292. "Without you, our homes are like fearful forests, and when with you, the forest has been our only home. Without you friends are enemies, and when with you, even enemies are like friends. Without you nectar is poison, and with you, poison is nectar. Therefore without you we will perish!"

293. "Not seeing your smiling lotus face, your enchanting lotus feet and your chest, which is the abode of all splendour, we will certainly die."

294. "When desiring to enjoy pastimes with the cowherd boys you enter the Vṛndāvana forest, only in the hope that you will be surely returning at dusk do we pass the day with great suffering."

295. "When, following the order of the wicked Kāṁsa and in the company of his dear friend, you have gone far away to that city, how – being aggrieved with many fears and worried about you suffering in such a distant place – will we manage to sustain our lives?"

296. "We don't know how difficult it will be for you to kill Kāṁsa and his followers, or how much time will be spent in relieving the distress of your dear ones there. We also don't know upon going there whether you will remember us or not."

297. In this way, in great distress those ladies spoke pitiful words, hearing which everyone present cried bitterly and fainted.

298. Somehow Śrī Kṛṣṇa regained his composure, and wiping the tears from both his and the *gopīs'* eyes, in a choked-up voice said:

299. “O *gopīs*, even though in reality he is very weak, that Kāmsa has the audacity to hate both me and the *sādhus*. Therefore without any exertion I will easily destroy him. Understand that I will be returning here very soon. O *sakhīs*, do not bring inauspiciousness by crying at the time of my journey.”

300. After this Śrī Nandarāya, all the *gopas*, Śrī Rohiṇī, Śrī Yaśodā and all the domestic animals arrived where Śrī Kṛṣṇa was speaking to the *gopīs*.

301. Akrūra quickly brought the chariot there, and then with great difficulty Śrī Kṛṣṇa forcibly dragged his vision away from the *gopīs*, and along with Śrī Balarāma, boarded the chariot.

302. Then the *gopīs*, being immensely distressed about the impending separation from him, began wailing and fainted, their tears turning the dust to mud. Seeing this, Śrī Yaśodā also began pitifully crying.

303. Then Śrī Nandarāya, even though at heart he was very sad, to complete the task at hand, eloquently solaced his wife, saying:

304. “O Yaśodā, don’t think that I am happily going to Mathurā! And I will never accept that he is anyone else’s son! I would never return to Vraja without him, nor would I ever be unnecessarily delayed in returning.”

305. “Do I not understand that without your son, myself and the other Vrajavāsīs could not live for even one moment? Therefore know for certain that as soon as Śrī Devakī and Śrī Vasudeva have been freed, I will be promptly returning here with your son.”

306. Time and again giving her his word in this way, Śrī Nandarāya comforted Śrī Yaśodā, and when she had become pacified, she began consoling the *gopīs* in various ways.

307. With great care Śrī Yaśodā sprinkled water on their heads and lifted them up. Then the *gopas* climbed upon the chariot, and Akrūra set the chariot in motion.

308–9. The *vraja-gopīs* could not tolerate even one second separation from Śrī Kṛṣṇa, so upon seeing the chariot begin to pull away, they cried out “*Hāya! Hāya!*” Being severely aggrieved, with their mouths dried up, their steps faltering and the broken sounds of their loud crying filling all the directions, they ran after the chariot.

310. Some grabbed the chariot, others fell under the wheels, some fainted and some were standing here and there, unable to even move.

311. Then the cows, bulls, calves, deer and other animals, crying out and their faces being soaked by their tears, surrounded the chariot.

312. Being distressed, the flocks of birds made a tumultuous sound and began flying over the chariot. The leaves of all the trees and plants suddenly withered.

313. The rocks of Govardhana ruptured and fell to the ground, dragging trees down with them, and the lotuses withered, snapped off their stems and began to flow away with the river's current.

314. When Śrī Kṛṣṇa saw the condition of his supremely beloved *gopīs*, he also became immensely distressed, and unable to stop crying, he became diligently engaged in wiping away his own tears.

315. On the pretext of preventing Śrī Kṛṣṇa from fainting and falling from the chariot, Akrūra, the elder of the Vṛṣṇis, grasped him around the waist, but he really did it to ensure that Śrī Kṛṣṇa didn't jump off.

316. When Akrūra saw that Śrī Kṛṣṇa appeared as if he had fainted, with the consent of Śrī Balarāma and Śrī Nandarāya he cracked his whip at the chariot's horses and made them gallop faster.

317. There were *gopīs* and cows and other animals lying on the ground here and there, and Akrūra had to swerve to avoid them while quickly moving away from there.

318. Then the *gopīs* lamented very loudly as they looked in the direction of the Lord of their lives, whom Akrūra had snatched from them just as a falcon snatches a piece of meat from a smaller bird.

319. Then Akrūra drove the horses so fast that the chariot could no longer be seen.

320. Then Śrī Nandarāya and the *gopas*, who were all sitting on their own carts yoked with great bulls, quickly pursued the chariot.

321. Akrūra drove the chariot to Brahma-hrad, where he offered prayers and tried to pacify Śrī Kṛṣṇa by making him understand various types of moral responsibilities.

322. There is no one who could possibly hear what the condition of the *gopīs* was at that time! *Hāya! Hāya!* Talk of it makes thunderbolts explode into fragments!

323. Śrī Parikṣit said: O Mother, woefully speaking in this way, Śrī Sarūpa began wailing and being overwhelmed with *prema*, fainted.

324. Himself crying in anguish, with great difficulty the Mathurā *brāhmaṇa* gradually brought Śrī Sarūpa back to his senses. Then he began to speak again:

325. Arriving in Mathurā, Śrī Kṛṣṇa satisfied all of the residents there. After killing Kāṁsa and his followers, he freed his parents.

326. Next he enthroned Kāṁsa's father Ugrasena as the king and comforted all of the citizens. He called back those Yādavas who had fled in all directions out of fear of Kāṁsa.

327–8. At the insistence of the Yādavas – who were still frightened of other kings who had been friendly to Kāṁsa – and to please them, who knew only him to be their very lives, he who is especially affectionate to his devotees, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, remained there in Mathurā city along with Śrī Balarāma. To console the residents of Vraja, he sent Śrī Nandarāya and the other *gopas* back to Gokula.

329. Śrī Bhagavān said: “O Father, to ensure that none of the residents of Vraja die in my absence, take all of the *gopas* and please go there at once.”

330. “After comforting those Yādavas like your friend Vasudeva who are feeling distressed at this time, I will also quickly return there.”

331. Śrī Nandarāya said: “Abandoning me, becoming the son of another and living in another place – I have never experienced any of this before! I vowed that I would never return to Vraja without you.”

332. “O son, please always keep us with you! Don't abandon us, don't send us away! When you desire to return to Vraja, at that time we will accompany you.”

333. “The Vrajavāsīs and your mother are sustaining their lives on the promise that I gave them. O son, and I also am alive only because of having heard your assurances that you would quickly return. When the Vrajavāsīs see that I have cruelly returned without you, they will certainly give up their lives!”

334. Śrīdāmā said: “O Lord, when, on the pretext of taking the cows out to graze we would go together to the forest and you would sometimes hide behind a tree or vine, for as long as we couldn't see you it was extremely difficult for us to sustain our lives. If you now send us back to Vraja and remain here for a long time, how will we remain living?”

335. O *brāhmaṇa*, hearing their distraught pleas, Śrī Kṛṣṇa became silent for a moment. Fearing that he may have wanted to go to Vraja, Śrī Vasudeva said:

336. “O brother Nandarāya, your son is only fully jubilant when he lives in Vraja in the company of his elder brother Balarāma, and living anywhere else will only bring him all kinds of unhappiness.”

337. “But now it is the appropriate time for them to accept the sacred-thread. Let them become *brahmacārīs*, go to another place to study for some time, and then they will return to Vraja.”

338. Seeing that Śrī Kṛṣṇa was agreeing with the words of Śrī Vasudeva, crying, Śrī Nandarāya left there.

339. Then, together with the other Yādavas, Śrī Kṛṣṇa began following Śrī Nandarāya. When the weeping cowherd boys embraced Śrī Kṛṣṇa one by one, he also began weeping very loudly.

340. Seeing that Śrī Kṛṣṇa was very distressed and thinking that he may have been again desiring to return to Vraja, Śrī Vasudeva and the other sober Yādavas convinced him with many logical arguments to turn back.

341. According to the desire of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Śrī Nandarāya and all of the *gopas* returned to Vraja. Hearing the news that Śrī Nandarāya had arrived, all of the residents of Vraja happily came to meet him.

342. Weeping, and with his face covered with his cloth out of grief and embarrassment, Śrī Nandarāya arrived there and with great despondency lay down on the ground.

343. Not seeing Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the residents of Vraja were devastated, and being bewildered, many kinds of fears arose in them. Their faces withered, their mouths dried up and they were unable to even ask about him. Then one elderly *gopa* who had come from Mathurā told them everything.

344. Then Mother Yaśodā and all the Vrajavāsīs, exclaiming “*Hāya! Hāya!*” began crying in agony. What their condition was at that time cannot be described.

345. Śrī Parīkṣit said: O Mother, speaking in this way, this pastime arose in the heart of Śrī Sarūpa, the best of youthful *gopas*, and being spellbound in sorrow, he fainted.

346. Then, with great difficulty, the Mathurā *brāhmaṇa* brought him back to consciousness somewhat. Thinking that he should not fall into such a senseless condition again, Śrī Sarūpa did not fully complete the narration.

347. But upon seeing that the Mathurā *brāhmaṇa* was very eager to hear the rest of the story, benevolent Śrī Sarūpa steadied himself with great difficulty and began to speak as follows:

348. After having sent Uddhava and others to Vraja, Śrī Kṛṣṇa told the residents of Mathurā that the Vrajavāsīs were exceedingly distraught in his absence and that they could not be pacified by any means.

349. Then, being overpowered by the *prema* of the residents of Vraja, he quickly returned there. Being enthralled by the mercy of the crest-jewel of the skilful, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Vrajavāsīs' very lives returned to them. He enjoyed with them in such a way that they forgot the root cause of their suffering, meaning they forgot that Akrūra had ever come and taken him away.

350. If any of them ever remembered his absence, they would think that while sleeping they had seen an ill-boding dream. Being frightened by this, they would weep and feel various types of sorrow.

351. Enjoying with Śrī Kṛṣṇa for a very long time, the Vrajavāsīs' senses became completely absorbed in him and they became so spellbound that they had no recollection of the past or any concern for the future.

352. O *brāhmaṇa*, after some time, in the same way as before Akrūra again came to Vraja with his chariot.

353. And when he began to take the very life of Vraja, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, away to Mathurā, the condition of the residents of Vraja became as it was before.

354. Again he went to Mathurā and killed Kāṁsa, and again he returned to Vraja and enjoyed pastimes with the Vrajavāsīs as he had before.

355. In this way, just as before time and again he goes to Mathurā, and then returns and enjoys in Vraja.

356. In this way, he who steals the hearts of devotees time and again performs wonderful pastimes in Goloka such as subduing Kāliya and lifting Govardhana.

357. Being bewildered by the deadly poison of *kṛṣṇa-prema*, the Vrajavāsīs always consider those amazing pastimes to have never happened before.

358. Therefore, by continuously experiencing union and separation, the *prema* of the Vrajavāsīs is forever increasing.

359. What to speak of his eternal associates, even newcomers like myself never consider if these pastimes have happened before or not.

360. For those who are immersed in the flowing ocean of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's enchanting sweetness and who are maddened in the craving for the treasure of *prema* for him, is there anything in all of existence that would *not* be forgotten?

361. Aho! It is very astonishing that Śrī Kṛṣṇa, although he is the crown-jewel of those who are all-knowing, becomes immersed in the ocean of his beloved devotees' *prema* for him and forgets his own nature as the Supreme. At that time he has no knowledge of what he has done and what he should do.

362. The pastimes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa are *sac-cid-ānanda* and eternal. When there is a necessity for a particular pastime, he appears with his eternal associates who are engaged in his service.

363. O *brāhmaṇa*, the pastimes of Goloka that I have described to you are extraordinary, and the current of the glories and sweetness of Goloka is greater than that of other worlds.

364. The Mathurā *brāhmaṇa* asked: "When Śrī Kṛṣṇa went to Mathurā, where did you stay and what was your condition? It was only after a great endeavour that you had finally attained his company!"

365. Śrī Sarūpa said: By the order of my master Śrī Kṛṣṇa, I stayed in that very Vraja, where Śrī Nandarāya and all of the other devotees share the same *bhāva* as him.

366. The nature of that Goloka is such that those who reside there never wish to leave it, even if they cannot have Śrī Kṛṣṇa's company there.

367. The sorrow that the residents there feel due to separation from Śrī Kṛṣṇa dances on the head of all of the happiness available in all other worlds, meaning that it is the highest form of divine ecstasy.

368. In this way I resided there, and having attained a result beyond even what I had desired for such a very long time, I was always feeling divine jubilation. The nature of *vraja-prema* is that one is never fully satisfied, but rather the desire to taste it forever increases.

369. Therefore with any of my senses I am unable for even one moment to leave the supremely enchanting lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, which are anointed with the *kunkuma* from the breasts of the *gopīs*.

370. That greatest mercy of firm attachment to his sweetness that Śrī Kṛṣṇa has bestowed upon this poor soul should not be spoken to others, yet by the order of Śrīmatī Rādhikā I have described it to you again and again.

371. Residing there for a very long time, I saw how this Mathurā-maṇḍala is the same as that Goloka.

372. Existing here in this Vraja-maṇḍala are *gopas*, *gopīs*, cows, animals, birds, insects, trees, mountains and Yamunā river just as I have seen there.

373. Here that same Śrī Kṛṣṇacandra is always enjoying unlimited varieties of pastimes in the same way as he does there.

374. Therefore sometimes I reside in that Goloka, and sometimes I reside here in this Vraja. As of yet I have not noticed any difference between these two worlds.

375. Only at the time of going there or coming here do they appear to be different, but due to my strong attachment for both places, I don't differentiate between them.

376. Leaving aside these two places, neither my vision, my hearing or even my mind ever go anywhere else.

377. I never consider in my heart that Svayam Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa or his devotees such as Śrī Nanda ever reside in any other place.

378. When sometimes I see the residents of Vaikuṅṭha, I see that they are also tormented by separation from Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

379. And when sometimes I don't see the sentiment of the residents of Vraja in them, I feel anguished. But from that anguish comes remembrance of the *bhāva* of Vraja, and then *prema* arises by which I feel divine jubilation.

380. Aho! I time and again offer obeisances to Goloka-dhāma and all of the eternal residents there such as Śrī Nandarāya, who are worshipful to the residents of all other worlds and by whose mercy I have been able to describe so many of the pastimes that take place there. Time and again I pray for a drop of their *prema*, which is the crown-jewel of all final attainments.

Chapter Seven – Bliss of the Highest Realm

1. Śrī Sarūpa said: In expanded form I have explained to you the supreme *sādhya* and *sādhana*. Now deliberate and decide upon your future course of action.
2. O best of the Mathurā *brāhmaṇas*, just as by the mercy of Devī I attained my innermost cherished fruit, you also can attain it – understand this to be certain.
3. And that which you haven't yet attained – meaning your Lord's direct *darśana* – you will also attain without delay, because I can see that he has bestowed all of his mercy upon you.
4. Even though the personal narrations of not only myself, but those of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and his eternal associates as well, are very confidential, I have nonetheless spoken them to you.
- 5–7. When one possesses a special *bhāva* for the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, he should not reveal it before others, even up to the point of not even thinking about it before others. When I was senseless in a state of special *prema*, even though I was unaware of my body or any external object whatsoever, sitting within my heart, Śrī Kṛṣṇa forcibly made me reveal those narrations to you.
8. I have recognised symptoms in you that indicate you have firm faith in those narrations, so therefore very soon you will attain the full result of hearing them.
9. This morning Śrīmatī Rādhikā herself gave me this order: “O Sarūpa, my devotee the Mathurā *brāhmaṇa* has entered one of my *kuñjas*.”
10. “First of all go there and enlighten him with instructions by which he can very quickly attain the mercy of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.”
11. Therefore, in accordance with her order, I have quickly come here, meaning that even before accompanying Kṛṣṇa to the forest for the day, I have come here. Being overwhelmed with joy at receiving an order from her, today I have abandoned the company of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, because even more pleasurable than directly associating with Kṛṣṇa is following the order of Śrīmatī Rādhikā.
12. Śrī Parikṣit said: Having heard so much, still, the wealth of *prema* – meaning ecstatic symptoms such as shivering – had not arisen in him, so then Sarūpa placed his hand on the *brāhmaṇa*'s head.
13. By the grace of such a great personality as Sarūpa, all of the realisations that Sarūpa himself had experienced arose directly within the *brāhmaṇa*'s heart.

14. That he immediately attained *bhagavat-prema* demonstrates the immense value in associating with a great personality. In the same way as Sarūpa had, within an instant the *brāhmaṇa* felt fully gratified.

15. The *brāhmaṇa* became submerged in the nectarean ocean of *prema* in the same way as Sarūpa was, and being overwhelmed by the waves of ecstatic manifestations, he cried out, “*Hā Kṛṣṇa! Hā Kṛṣṇa!*” With tears rolling down his cheeks, he implored Sarūpa, “Please give me at once the *darśana* of Śrī Kiśora-śekhara!”

16. Taking a blade of grass in his teeth, with great humility he offered obeisances to not only Sarūpa, but to all of the moving and non-moving living entities nearby, and said, “Where is Śrī Kṛṣṇa? Have you not seen him?”

17. Next he began singing enchanting *kṛṣṇa-nāma-saṅkīrtana* and grasping his spiritual master’s feet, began profusely shedding tears. Seeing the *brāhmaṇa*’s great love, Śrī Sarūpa, who was already immersed in the ocean of *prema*, became completely helpless.

18. The next moment, compelled by the full impact of *mahā-prema*, as if intoxicated they began wandering in the forest until entering a *kuñja* of thorny *karīla* bushes, where they both fell unconscious.

19. O Mother, at that moment, from a distance they heard, mixed with the mooing sound of cows, deep and very sweet melodies emanating from flutes, horn bugles, *viṇās* and some instruments composed of leaves.

20. Being awakened by that sweet sound, they both stood up at once and ran in the direction from which it was coming. Then they saw Śrī Gopāladeva himself, whose beautiful form was a resplendent darkish hue.

21. Having led the cows to the Yamunā so they could have a drink, Śrī Gopāla, accompanied by his many cowherd friends for the purpose of performing various kinds of pastimes, was dancing like a regal elephant and coming in their direction.

22. They saw that he was decorated in the dress of an adolescent and that he appeared like an ocean full of waves of loveliness. They saw he who fills the eyes and hearts of the entire universe with transcendental bliss and whose form exudes new and fresh sweetness from moment to moment.

23. His limbs were adorned by all of the auspicious markings, his ears were decorated with earrings made with *kadamba* flowers and on his head was a peacock-feather crown. His conchshell-like neck was adorned with a garland of pearls, and around his waist were splendid, yellow silk garments.

24. His broad chest was decorated with a magnificent, swaying necklace of *guñjā* flowers and *śrīvatsa*, the splendid insignia of Lakṣmī-devī. His slender waist was like that of a lion, his valiance was like that of a hundred lions, and it was as if the essence of all the beauty of the entire universe was worshipping his lotus feet.

25. He was adorned with garlands of *tulasī*, *kadamba* flowers, *guñjā* flowers and peacock feathers. His waist was embellished with a wonderful sash composed of multicoloured flowers, which increased the splendour of his marvellous hips.

26. There were golden armlets on his comely long arms, and the fingers of his lotus hands were feeling great elation as they held the flute to his *bimba*-fruit lips.

27. The sweet nectar of the vibration of the flute, which even astonishes himself, was enchanting all the living entities of the entire universe. His restless, playful lotus eyes were decorated with oblique glances.

28. The dancing of his bow-shaped eyebrows was increasing the *prema* of his loving devotees, and his splendid lotus face, which steals away the hearts of the sages, was gently smiling.

29. The tip of his nose, which appeared more beautiful than the sesame flower, was adorned with an elephant-king pearl. Sometimes he would push aside from his face his bumble-bee-like locks of curling hair, which were strewn with dust raised by the cows.

30. The half-moon forehead of Śrī Gopāla Kṛṣṇa, who is an ocean full of the waves of unlimited varieties of ecstatic pastimes, was adorned with *tilaka* composed of the clay of the Yamunā. His limbs were decorated with the pastes of a variety of multicoloured minerals found in the hills.

31. Sometimes he would assume his supremely attractive threefold-bending posture, and sometimes he would play varieties of comical melodies on the flute that would make his cowherd friends laugh. In this way he embellished the land of the forest with his own footprints.

32. He was also adorned by the presence of Śrī Balarāmajī, whose age, dress and ornaments were similar to his, whose complexion was golden and who was attired in white cloth. In the same way, the exceedingly beautiful *mūrti* of Śrī Gopāla was decorated by the presence of his cowherd friends, whose appearances were also similar to his.

33. Feeling the supreme transcendental bliss upon receiving the *darśana* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, both Śrī Sarūpa and the Mathurā *brāhmaṇa* at once fell down before him, as if offering prostrated obeisances. In the ecstasy of the moment, all of their intelligence, cleverness and everything was forgotten.

34. Being himself compelled by the *prema* of his loving devotees, Śrī Kṛṣṇa ran to them. Being lost in the intense potency of the transcendental bliss that he was feeling, he fell on top of them, embracing them with his long arms.

35–6. His soft heart melted with feelings of mercy, he bathed them both in his tears of love. After a moment he lifted them up, and with his own lotus hands he wiped away their tears and brushed the dust from their bodies. Time and again he embraced them. After taking them by the hands and sitting them down on the ground, he proceeded to satisfy the *brāhmaṇa* with the nectar of his words.

37. Śrī Bhagavān said: “O Janaśarmā (the *brāhmaṇa*’s eternal identity), having taken birth in Mathurā, you are the moon that rises from the ocean of the *brāhmaṇas*! Are you well in all respects?”

38. “O *brāhmaṇa*, by seeing you, myself and my friends have become well. Being attracted by your mercy, I have been constantly looking over at the path, waiting for you to arrive here.”

39. “It is highly auspicious that you have not forgotten me. O *brāhmaṇa*, it is my great good fortune that I am fully subordinate to you. Please remain here and enjoy as you desire.”

40. Śrī Parīkṣit said: O Mother, hearing this, that Mathurā *brāhmaṇa* named Janaśarmā became so overpowered by awe and transcendental bliss that he was unable to speak or even to gaze upon Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

41. Unable to see anything, he placed Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet on his head and began to cry out very loudly.

42. Being agitated due to not seeing any appropriate gift beyond his very self to give him, the crown-jewel of benefactors, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, removed the ornaments from his own body and decorated the *brāhmaṇa* with them so that he appeared just like Sarūpa.

43. In this way he was merciful to the *brāhmaṇa* Janaśarmā and granted him his own eternal spiritual form, similar in appearance to Kṛṣṇa’s own form. Having attained this form, he became fully gratified.

44. After that, with a vibration from his flute, Kṛṣṇa called together all of the cows, and with some wonderful noises made by his own mouth he enticed them to drink.

45. Next, with another vibration from the flute, he led all the cows to a place that was pleasurable to them and had them all sit down. Then, along with Śrī Balarāma, Śrī Sarūpa and Janaśarmā, he began playing in the water.

46. Śrī Kṛṣṇa and his cowherd friends were playing in such a way that sometimes they would defeat another boy in splashing, and sometimes Kṛṣṇa himself, who is the most expert player, would feel great happiness in accepting his own defeat.

47. Sometimes Śrī Kṛṣṇa and his friends would make attractive splashing noises with the current of the Yamunā. Sometimes they would swim with the current, and sometimes they would swim against it, and in this way they enjoyed a variety of pastimes in the water.

48. On one occasion the frolicsome Śrī Kṛṣṇa submerged his body in the dark water and hid his face amongst blue lotus flowers in such a way that he could not be seen.

49. The *darśana* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the very life and soul of the *sakhās*, so when upon searching and searching they could not see him anywhere, they became very upset and calling out, began weeping very loudly.

50. When, laughing, Śrī Kṛṣṇa appeared from behind that forest of lotus flowers, like blooming lotuses the eyes of the cowherd boys opened wide with transcendental pleasure.

51. After that they decorated one another with garlands of waterflowers strung on the stems of lotus flowers. Decorated in this way, they emerged from the water.

52. To enjoy lunch they all sat in a circle on an especially attractive and sandy bank of the Yamunā, and Śrī Kṛṣṇa sat Balarāma in the middle.

53. Playfully Śrī Kṛṣṇa danced amongst them in all directions as he served the cowherd boys the delectable foodstuffs that they had brought from their homes that morning.

54. Next he served them beautiful, delicious fruits according to their particular tastes. The cowherd boys had picked these fruits from the wish-fulfilling trees of Vṛndāvana, which at all times give the fruits and flowers of every season.

55–7. Śrī Kṛṣṇa served the cowherd boys mangoes, berries, apples, plums, grapes, oranges, coconuts, dates, jackfruits, pomegranites and other fully ripe and abundantly juicy fruits. And to bestow further transcendental bliss upon them, while appearing to sit next to each boy, sometimes he fed them and sometimes they also fed him.

58. First the cowherd boys tasted those fruits themselves, but next, selecting the fruits which were especially delicious, they very respectfully placed them in Śrī Kṛṣṇa's mouth with their own hands.

59. While making jokes, Kṛṣṇa praised those fruits, and by making comical faces as he was chewing, he enchanted the *sakhās* by making them laugh.

60–1. Next, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is the most expert at enjoying, drank from gourd cups full of various beverages, including pure Yamunā water, buttermilk and bitter and sweet nectar drinks, and also greatly pleased the cowherd boys by serving them these drinks.

62. After that they all sipped *ācamana* and then chewed fragrant betel nuts and leaves mixed with camphor which they had brought from their homes.

63-66. Next, he himself wore and also gave his friends to wear the varieties of wonderful garlands which they had strung using *tulasī*, *mālatī*, *cameli*, *motiyā*, *kunda*, *kubjaka*, *lavaṅga*, *ketakī*, *piyāvāsā*, *mādhavī*, two kinds of *juhī*, *campā*, *kanera*, *dāka*, *rāyabela*, *japā*, *damanaka*, *kadamba*, *morachalī*, *nāgakeśara*, *ṣunnāga*, *campaka*, *kutaja*, *aśoka*, *mandara*, *rāsata*, *arjuna* roses and other kinds of leaves and flowers.

67. Next they anointed their own limbs with pastes made from the powders of sandalwood, *aguru*, saffron and other fragrant substances that they had collected in the forest.

68. After that, they entered a *kuñja* that was scented with the aroma of a variety of fragrant flowers, where bees were pleasantly humming and where they arranged an excellent bed from soft and fresh leaves and flowers.

69. When Śrī Kṛṣṇa lay down and placed his head in the lap of his friend Śrīdāmā, all of the *sakhās* began serving him in their own ways. One began decorating his hair, another sang beautiful *rāgas*, another massaged his feet, another offered him prayers and another fanned him with great skill.

70. Making a variety of funny expressions with his lotus face, Śrī Kṛṣṇa made the *sakhās* laugh in such a way that even upon making a great effort to stop laughing, they could not. In this way Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma gave great happiness to the *sakhās* as they enjoyed pastimes such as their afternoon rest.

71. After that, with signals played on his flute and horn, Śrī Kṛṣṇa made all the cows stand up and then he led them to Govardhana, where he began playing with his friends while the cows grazed.

72. Then each *sakhā* exclaimed, “I will decorate him first!” and according to their own particular tastes, they decorated him with forest ornaments.

73. Then personally placing the *brāhmaṇa* Janaśarmā into the hands of Sarūpa, the giver of happiness to the residents of Vraja, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, entered Vraja in the early evening time and began enjoying pastimes with divine happiness as he had that morning.

74. Parīkṣit Mahārāja continued: O Mother, by the mercy of Śrī Gopīnātha, like that of a great saint your mind has now become fixed. Now deliberate on the answers that I have given to all of your questions and decide if you have been satisfied.

75. O Janani, now you should make a great effort to go to Goloka, which is a deep ocean of unlimited divine bliss. Simply by going there *sādhakas* always attain the favour of enjoying various sweeter-than-sweet pastimes with Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

76. Although these pastimes are not always visible to each and every person who goes to the Mathurā-maṇḍala on this Earth, they are certainly visible to those who have received the mercy of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's *premi* devotees. Therefore, O Mother, search for the dust of the feet of such *premi* devotees and place it upon your head.

77. O Mother, in enquiring about the place where Śrī Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet become anointed with the *kuṅkuma* from the *gopīs*' breasts and where he always bestows his loving company upon them, you asked a very sweet and profound question. In answering your question, I gave a description of Goloka by which all of your doubts will be eradicated.

78. That Goloka, the only place where undivided *prema* for the feet of Śrī Gopīnātha can be attained, is splendidly situated above even Vaikuṅṭha. It bestows a fruit beyond what any *sādhaka* could ever desire and meditation on the devotees who reside there bestows upon a *sādhaka* the treasure of unwavering *prema*.

79. O Mother, now hear the words of the great sages describing this – they will satisfy your heart.

80. In the *Harivamśa Purāṇa*, Indra says to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, “Above the heavenly planets (meaning Svarga, Maha, Jana, Tapa and Satya) is Brahmaloaka (meaning Vaikuṅṭha), where the Vedas and sages like Nārada reside, and where Umā and Śiva and the liberated souls can also go.”

81. “Situated above that Vaikuṅṭha is Goloka, which is nurtured by your eternally perfected devotees like Nanda and Śrīmatī Rādhājī. Like the great sky, that realm pervades all of existence.”

82. “One can only go to that realm, which is above all other worlds and which is your residence, in *samādhi*. Even upon asking Brahmājī, we demigods could not ascertain anything about it.”

83. “Those who are peaceful, who restrain their senses and perform pious activities attain Svarga, meaning they can go up to Satyaloka, and those who perform austerities and serve Bhagavān can attain Brahmaloaka, meaning Vaikuṅṭha.”

84. “But attaining Goloka, where cows, *gopas* and *gopīs* reside, is very rare indeed.”

85. “O Śrī Kṛṣṇa, O Dhīra, whenever that Goloka was saddened by my mischief (when I continuously showered rain upon Vraja for seven days), you foiled my attempts at causing a disturbance and protected it.” (Indra says this out of ignorance only; it is not possible for him to cause any sadness or disturbance there.)

86. In the *Skanda Purāṇa*, Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa said, “O Arjuna, though assuming many different forms in which I enjoy pastimes in this world and in Vaikuṅṭha, I also reside in the eternal realm of Goloka.”

87–8. Śrī Janamejaya said: O best of the Vaiṣṇavas, Jaiminijī, I have heard these verses before from the sage Vaiśampāyana, but having now heard them from your mouth, new understandings of their meanings have begun shining in my heart. Aho! Undeniably the glories of Bhagavān’s devotees are magnificent!

89. Fearing that these descriptions will now come to an end, my heart is feeling great sorrow, therefore now please give me such potent nectar by hearing which my heart will be fully pleased for all time.

90–1. Śrī Jaimini said: O my child Janamejaya, your father, Śrī Parīkṣit, feeling transcendental pleasure upon describing the glories of Goloka, next sang with wonderful and sweet *bhāva* numerous verses from two great epics that are the very essence of the Śrutis and Smṛtis. With great happiness I wander in this world singing these verses, thereby mitigating the pangs of separation from your father that I feel.

92. [Brahmā said:] I worship the *ādi-puruṣa*, Śrī Govinda, who resides eternally in Goloka with Śrīmatī Rādhikā, who embodies the *hlādinī-śakti*. They are accompanied by the *gopīs* and *gopas*, who are extensions of their very forms and who, due to being permeated with ever-blissful spiritual *rasa*, give them immense pleasure. (*Brahma-saṁhitā* (5.37))

93. I worship the *ādi-puruṣa*, Śrī Govinda, whose own residence of Goloka sustains and nurtures the realms known as Deviloka, Maheśaloka and Vaikuṅṭhaloka, which are situated below it. (*Brahma-saṁhitā* (5.43))

94. In Goloka, the *vraja-gopīs* are like the most illustrious goddesses of fortune, and their beloved is the Supreme Personality, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The trees there are *kalpataru*, the land itself is *cintāmaṇi* and the water is nectar. The talking is singing, the walking is dancing and the flute is Kṛṣṇa’s dear *sakhī*. There the effulgence of transcendental bliss expands in all directions. (*Brahma-saṁhitā* (5.56))

95. I worship that Śvetadvīpa, which is known to the pure saints who reside in this world as Goloka, where it is as if a transcendental milk-ocean is always flowing from the countless cows. And the nature of the time there is that it doesn't ever pass away, even for half a second. (*Brahma-saṁhitā* (5.57))

96. [The ladies of Mathurā said:] The land of Vṛndāvana is supremely pure and very fortunate, because the Supreme Personality, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, resides there, disguising himself with human traits. Decorated with a garland of forest flowers and playing the flute, he wanders about in the company of Śrī Balarāma, taking the cows out to graze and playing in different ways with great pleasure. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.44.13))

97. [Brahmā said:] O Bhagavān, how greatly fortunate are these cows and motherly *gopīs* of Vraja? Having assumed the forms of their calves and children, with great pleasure you have drunk the nectar of their breast-milk to your full satisfaction! All the Vedic sacrifices that have been performed from time immemorial up to the present day have not given you such satisfaction. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.14.31))

98. Aho! What can I say in glorification of the great good fortune of the *gopīs* of Nandārāya's Vraja, who have the personification of *paramānanda* and the eternal Brahman as their friend? (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.14.32))

99. O Acyuta, even though the glories of the great good fortune of the residents of Vraja are actually inconceivable, still we eleven presiding deities of the various senses, headed by Rudra, are also most fortunate, because the senses of these residents of Vṛndāvana are the vessels through which we always drink the sweet, fragrant intoxicating *rasa* of your lotus feet. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.14.33))

100. I would consider it my greatest possible good fortune to take birth as a blade of grass or any birth whatsoever in Gokula, where the dust of the feet of any of the residents of Vraja would fall on my head. Their very life and soul is exclusively Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the dust of whose lotus feet the Śrutis are still searching for to this day. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.14.34))

101. What could you possibly give to those residents of Vraja who have dedicated their homes, wealth, friends, wives, sons and very lives and hearts solely to you? I cannot understand this at all! My intelligence becomes bewildered when I think of how you gave your very self to Pūtanā and her family members merely because she approached you in the guise of a mother. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.14.35))

102. O Śrī Kṛṣṇa, until people become your devotees, their faults such as attraction and repulsion plunder their wealth like thieves, their homes remain prisons and bewilderment binds them like foot-shackles. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.14.36))

103. O Lord, although you are always transcendental to the material energy, you descend into this world and perform pastimes like those of an ordinary person solely for the purpose of bestowing great pleasure upon your surrendered devotees. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.14.37))

104. There are people who say, “I know everything about Kṛṣṇa.” Let them think that way, but what more can I say than this, that your opulences are beyond the reach of my mind, body and words. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.14.38))

105. O Śrī Kṛṣṇa, being the witness of my heart, you know everything. You alone are the master of this universe, and this entire universe is also situated within you. Therefore I offer this universe to you. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.14.39))

106. O Śrī Kṛṣṇa, you are like the sun that bestows *ānanda* upon the lotus-like Vṛṣṇi dynasty. And you are the moon that increases the oceans consisting of the Earth, the demigods, the *brāhmaṇas*, the cows and *dharma*. You dispel the darkness of irreligion and you are the destroyer of demons like Kāṁsa. O Bhagavān, you are worshipful to everyone. I offer obeisances to even the weeds of this Vraja. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.14.40))

107. [Śrī Kṛṣṇa said to Balarāma:] Today this land, along with all its green grass, has become fortunate due to receiving the touch of your lotus feet. And receiving the touch of the fingers of your lotus hands, the trees, creepers and bushes consider that they have attained the greatest treasure. Receiving your affectionate glances, the rivers, mountains, birds and animals are all feeling fully gratified. But most fortunate of all are the *vraja-gopīs*, who have been embraced to your strong chest, a favour that even Lakṣmī-devī herself always desires. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.15.8))

108. [The *gopīs* said:] O Sakhī, this Vṛndāvana is expanding the glories of the Earth planet because it is being adorned with the lotus footprints of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Hearing him play a soft and deep note on the flute, the peacocks have become maddened and begun dancing. Beholding this spectacle, all of the birds and animals who reside on the mountainside have abandoned their usual restive activities. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.21.10))

109. This Govardhana Hill is the best of all those who are known as Haridāsa because he is feeling great jubilation from the touch of the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma. With great respect Govardhana is worshipping them by providing all necessities such as caves, fruits, flowers and water for the pleasure of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma and their cowherd friends, cows and calves. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.21.18))

110. Seeing Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma taking the cows and calves out for grazing and playing their flutes in the afternoon sun, the clouds burst with divine love and like an umbrella shield their friend Śrī Kṛṣṇa from the sun while showering tiny drops of rain that are like a

shower of flowers. (Kṛṣṇa has been referred to here as a friend of the clouds because their natures are similar. Both are dark blue in complexion, and as Kṛṣṇa eradicates the heat of material existence by bestowing the nectar of his mercy, the clouds give relief from the heat of this world by showering cooling rain. Kṛṣṇa also plays soft and deep melodies on the flute that resemble the clouds' thunder.) (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.21.16))

111. O Sakhīs, when the rivers of Vṛndāvana headed by the Yamunā hear the vibration of Kṛṣṇa's flute, their currents completely stop and their waters begin to swirl as if they are overcome with desire. With their arms in the form of waves they reach out to touch and offer lotus flowers to his lotus feet. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.21.15))

112. See how the creepers and the branches of the trees of Vṛndāvana are drooping down due to their weight! They must have also taken Śrī Kṛṣṇa within their hearts, because tears of love in the form of currents of honey are dripping from them and the emergence of their fruits and flowers bear witness to their ecstatic rapture. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.35.9))

113. [Śrī Kṛṣṇa said to Balarāma:] O Ādi-puruṣa, although you are keeping your opulences hidden and are performing pastimes as a young boy here in Vṛndāvana, still the sages, who are the best of your devotees, have recognised you. Not wanting to be separated from you for even one moment, they have assumed the form of bees and are worshipping you by constantly singing your glories as the purifier of this world. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.15.6))

114. [The *gopīs* said:] It is very astonishing that Kṛṣṇa steals away the hearts of the swans, cranes and other aquatic birds with the supremely attractive vibration of his flute in such a way that approaching him, they sit down silently and worship him with their eyes closed and their minds fully concentrated on him. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.35.11))

115. O Amba (friend), the birds of Vṛndāvana are actually sages. They have taken positions on the branches of trees, which have new and fresh leaves, from where they can easily have *darśana* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Sitting there and hearing the sweet vibration of his flute, they become submerged in divine bliss and close their eyes. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.21.14))

116. These ignorant deer are also fortunate, because accompanied by their husbands they are standing motionlessly and listening to the vibration of Kṛṣṇa's flute. It is as if they are offering *pūjā* to the gorgeously attired son of Nanda with their loving glances. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.21.11))

117. For drinking the nectar of the vibration of the flute emanating from the lotus face of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the cows have raised their ears. The grass that they were chewing just remains in their mouths and milk begins to drip from their teats. The calves at once stop drinking their mothers' milk, and as they embrace Kṛṣṇa within their hearts, tears of love begin to glide down their faces. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.21.13))

118. Hearing the vibration of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's flute, the bulls, cows, and deer of Vṛndāvana approach him and become separated from their herds. They are unable to swallow the grass that they have taken into their mouths, and standing silently with their ears raised, they appear like animals in a painting. (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.35.5))

119. O Sakhī, we consider the Pulinda girls who collect grass and wood to be greatly fortunate, because by spreading the *kuṅkuma* that lies upon the grass on their faces and bodies, the desires that had arisen in their hearts from seeing that very *kuṅkuma* are pacified. In reality, that *kuṅkuma* was from the breasts of Śrīmatī Rādhikā, and at the time of enjoying pastimes with Śrī Kṛṣṇa, it became smeared on his lotus feet. Then, as they wandered in the forest, it fell from his feet onto the grass. (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.21.17))

120. [Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī said:] When Śrī Kṛṣṇa would sometimes wander far away to see the splendour of the forest, the cowherd boys would revel in running after him, saying, "I will be the first to touch him! I will be the first to touch him!" (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.12.6))

121. In this way the greatly fortunate cowherd boys enjoyed in various ways with Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who was seen as the Brahman effulgence by the *jñānīs*, as the supremely worshipful deity by his servants and as an ordinary boy by people in general (or those who had received his utmost mercy, due to being devoid of the mood of opulence, saw him merely as the son of Nanda). (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.12.11))

122. Great *yogīs* perform severe austerities for many lifetimes, and even when with great difficulty they have completely controlled their minds, they still cannot attain even one particle of the dust of the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. How then can I possibly describe the good fortune of the Vrajavāsīs, who daily received his direct *darśana*? (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.12.12))

123. When Śrī Kṛṣṇa would become fatigued from wrestling with the cowherd boys, he would accept the lap of one of his friends as a pillow and lie down beneath a tree on a richly decorated bed of flowers and leaves. (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.15.16))

124. At that time, one greatly fortunate *sakhā* would massage his feet and another would fan his body with a fan made of leaves. (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.15.17))

125. O Mahārāja, others would sing attractive songs appropriate for resting-time and all the cowherd boys' hearts would melt in affection for Kṛṣṇa. (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.15.18))

126. [Śrī Parīkṣit Mahārāja asked:] O *brāhmaṇa*, which supremely auspicious *sādhana* did Nandarāya perform, and which austerities did the supremely fortunate Yaśodā undergo to have her breast-milk drunk by Śrī Hari? (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.8.46))

127. [Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī said:] O Bharata, to fulfil the promise of his dear devotee Brahmā, the destroyer of evil, Svayam Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa, appeared as the son of Nanda and Yaśodā. In comparison to all of the other *gopas* and *gopīs*, this couple possessed the most love for him. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.8.51))

128. O Mahārāja Parīkṣit, when magnanimous Nandarāya returned from Mathurā, he took his own son Śrī Kṛṣṇa in his lap and experienced immense pleasure from repeatedly smelling his head. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.6.43))

129. When Kṛṣṇa saw Yaśodā labouring so desperately that her whole body was dripping with perspiration and the flower garland that was entwined in her braid was falling down, he became merciful to her and allowed himself to be bound. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.9.18))

130. Neither Brahmā, Śiva or even Lakṣmī-devī, who eternally resides at Kṛṣṇa's chest in the form of a golden line, have received such mercy from he who is the bestower of liberation as Yaśodā did. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.9.20))

131. The bestower of the objects of human pursuit including all varieties of liberation, Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa, drank with full satisfaction the milk of all those cows and motherly *gopīs*, whose breasts were dripping with milk due to their motherly affection for him. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.6.39))

132. O King, those cows and *gopīs* were always feeling maternal love for Kṛṣṇa, therefore after leaving their present bodies they could never re-enter the cycle of birth and death, the calamity that is imposed upon the ignorant. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.6.40))

133. The *gopīs* of Vraja would enjoy supreme pleasure from receiving the *darśana* of Śrī Govinda, but they would consider one moment of his absence to be like one hundred yugas. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.19.16))

134. Those *vraja-gopīs* who had fully given their hearts to Śrī Kṛṣṇa would imitate his manner of speaking and his activities. Since they had offered their very souls to him and always sang of his glories, they completely forgot themselves and their family interests. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.30.43))

135. [The ladies of Mathurā said:] Which austerities did the *vraja-gopīs* perform by which they could always drink through their eyes the nectar of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's form, which is the very essence of loveliness, which is unequalled or unsurpassed, which is perfect in itself and always appears new and fresh, and which is extremely rare and is always the exclusive shelter of fame, splendour and opulence? (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.44.14))

136. The *gopīs* are extremely fortunate, because their hearts are always so absorbed in Śrī Kṛṣṇa that while milking cows, churning yoghurt, applying *candana* and other decorations to their bodies, comforting crying babies, washing their floors, etc., tears of love flow from their eyes as they continuously sing about the purifying fame of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.44.15))

137. In the morning, Śrī Kṛṣṇa enters the forest of Vraja to take the cows out for grazing, and in the early evening he leads them back while playing his flute. At that time, upon hearing the vibration of the flute, those supremely fortunate *gopīs* quickly exit their homes and stand along the path where they receive *darśana* of his lotus face, which is smiling brilliantly and bestowing merciful glances. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.44.16))

138. [Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa said:] O *gopīs*, even if I endeavoured for the length of an entire lifetime of Brahmā, I would still be unable to compensate you. Because you have broken out of the tight shackles of family ties and served me honestly, you will have to let your own virtuousness serve as reparation. I am forever indebted to you. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.32.22))

139. O gentle Uddhava, please go to Vraja and pacify my father and mother, Śrī Nanda and Yaśodā. Deliver my message and eradicate the *gopīs*' pain of separation from me. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.46.3))

140. For those *gopīs* who have completely given me their hearts, it is as if I am their very lives. Since they have abandoned all forms of *dharma* for my sake, I desire that they will always be happy in all ways. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.46.4))

141. O dear Uddhava, I alone am most beloved to the *gopīs*, and since I have come here to Mathurā, they are considering that I am very far away from them. Remembering me, they are exceedingly enchanted, and time and again they become overwhelmed and fall unconscious. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.46.5))

142. My dearest ones, who consider me only to be their very lives and who are always absorbed in thoughts of me, are now suffering greatly, and only with great difficulty are they somehow sustaining their lives. I had told them, "I will be coming soon," and these words are acting as the preserver of their very lives. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.46.6))

143. O Uddhava, when Śrī Akrūra escorted myself and Balarāma to Mathurā, the *gopīs*, whose minds are always engrossed in loving attachment for me, felt great anxiety in separation from me. Besides me, they have no other source of happiness. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (11.12.10))

144. O Uddhava, I am the one and only beloved of the *vraja-gopīs*. Therefore when I performed the *rāsa* dance with them in Vṛndāvana, even those nights that were actually equal in length to the entire nights of Brahmā passed in what seemed to be half a moment only. And in my separation, they considered those same nights to be like millenniums. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (11.12.11))

145. The *gopīs* were so lovingly absorbed in me that they could not think of themselves or of anything of this world or the next, just as when *munis* become so engrossed in their *samādhi* that they forget their own names and forms or as when rivers merge into the ocean. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (11.12.12))

146. By the influence of the association of the *gopīs*, thousands of women, like those of the Pulinda tribe who had no knowledge of their real selves, also began loving me in the sentiment of a paramour. Eventually all of them also attained me, either in their present bodies or in their next births, so what then can be described about the glories of the *gopīs* themselves, who are so much greater? (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (11.12.13))

147. [Śrī Uddhava said:] In this world, the *gopīs* alone have perfected their embodied lives because they have attained the highest consummation of unalloyed *prema* – *mahābhāva* – for Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the knower of all souls. Their *bhāva* is hankered after by those who fear material existence, by great sages and by ourselves as well. For one who hasn't tasted the nectar of the descriptions of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, even taking birth as Brahmā is useless. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.47.58))

148. How amazing it is that these simple women who wander about the forest, seemingly spoiled by improper behaviour, have achieved the perfection of possessing *mahābhāva* for Paramātmā Śrī Kṛṣṇa! Still, it is true that the Supreme Lord himself bestows auspiciousness upon even an ignorant worshipper, just as the best medicine is effective even when taken by a person ignorant of its potency. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.47.59))

149. The *vraja-gopīs* received such mercy from Śrī Kṛṣṇa that in the *rāsa-līlā* they were enthralled upon receiving his embrace. Such mercy has never been experienced by Lakṣmī-devī herself, what to speak of the lustrous women of the heavenly planets, whose fragrance resembles that of the lotus flower? (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.47.60))

150. I pray to take birth as one of the bushes, creepers or herbs of Vṛndāvana on which the dust of the *gopīs*' feet falls. The *gopīs* have performed the difficult task of abandoning their family members, as well as the Vedic path, to exclusively worship the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, which are sought after by the Śrutis and even the Vedas themselves. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.47.61))

151. In the *rāsa-līlā*, the *vraja-gopīs* extinguished the burning fire of their separation from Kṛṣṇa by holding to their breasts his beautiful lotus feet, which are served by Lakṣmī-devī, worshipped by Brahmājī and upon which Śiva and the four Kumāras are always meditating inside their hearts. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.47.62))

152. I time and again offer *praṇāma* to the particles of dust of the lotus feet of the *gopīs* of Nandarāya's Vraja. The *gopīs'* singing of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's glories purifies the three worlds. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.47.63))

153. [Śrīmatī Rādhikā said:] O *sakhīs*, I don't know what pious activities the flute could have performed to be fully tasting the nectar of Kṛṣṇa's lips, which is actually meant for us! It seems that the blooming of the lotus flowers upon the river, who is actually the flute's mother because bamboo grows on her banks, bears witness to the ecstatic rapture she feels upon witnessing the great good fortune bestowed upon her son. And it is as if the trees, who are of the same family as bamboo, are crying tears of joy in the form of streams of honey, just as streams of tears flow from the ancestors who see that a devotee of Bhagavān has now appeared in their family. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.21.9))

154. [Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī said:] Glory for all time to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who because of residing in their hearts, is the ultimate resort of all *jīvas*, and who is famous for having taken birth as the son of Devakī. He is faithfully served by the members of the Yadu dynasty, he destroys everything opposed to the path of *dharma*, and he mitigates the suffering of all living entities, moving and inert. Adorned with the splendour of his soft hands, his lotus face infinitely increases the *prema-bhāva* of the *vraja-gopīs* and the queens of Dvārakā. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.90.48))

155. Śrī Janamejaya said: O Gurujī, I am now fully gratified! Undeniably today I have become fully gratified, because you have revealed to me the exceedingly secret glories of Śrī Goloka!

156. Śrī Jaimini said: O dear one, yes, you have truly become gratified, because anyone who faithfully hears, speaks or meditates upon this narration without question attains residence in Goloka-dhāma.

157. I offer obeisances to the lotus feet of Śrī Nanda-nandana, who is always eager to bestow causeless mercy, who is the ultimate spiritual master, who gives the inspiration to *jīvas* that makes *bhakti* arise in them and who is unlimitedly pleased with those who perform that *bhakti*.