

52. By (listening) to this there will be attainment of wealth to householders. To the recluses there will be attainment of devotion, spiritual knowledge, disaffection from worldly pleasures and others, as desired by them.

53. In this way I have narrated to you, O Brāhmaṇa, how Indra got back his prosperity. I shall tell you everything as to how Sage Nārada went to Śveta Dvīpa. Listen with concentrated mind.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

*Description of Goloka*¹

Skanda said:

1. Ascending the peak of Meru, Nārada with his divine vision saw Śveta Dvīpa and thousands of liberated souls thereof.

2. Concentrating his sight on Lord Vāsudeva, the great Yogī soared up that very moment and immediately arrived at that place.

3. Reaching the great Dvīpa (continent) Śveta, Nārada was delighted in his mind. He saw those very auspicious devotees who were white-complexioned and had the lustre of the moon.

4. He worshipped them with his head (bowed down), and was mentally adored by them. Being desirous of seeing the Supreme Brahman, he stood there embarrassed (lit. in a difficult situation).

5. Knowing that he (Nārada) was a devotee exclusively of Viṣṇu, those Bhāgavatas ('followers of the Lord') were delighted (i.e. satisfied) in their minds. While muttering the twelve-syllabled (Mantra of the Lord), they spoke to him:

The Śveta-muktas ('Liberated Śvetas') said:

6. O prominent sage! You are a devotee of Kṛṣṇa. Hence you (are able to) see us who are difficult to be seen even by Devas. What desire torments you?

1. This is the uppermost of the divine worlds. It is regarded as the upper lip of Viṣṇu, the lower lip being Brahma-loka (Mbh, *Śanti* 347.52). The description of Goloka in Mbh, *Anuśāsana* 83.37-44 is somewhat different from what is given here. This Goloka is the replica of the Vṛndāvana region where Kṛṣṇa spent his boyhood in the cowherd community. The same persons—cowherdess Rādhā, her companions, Kṛṣṇa's playmates, his Rāsa dance, cows etc., are super-divine in the Goloka of this Purāṇa.

Nārada said:

7. I am very eager to see Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Brahman himself, the ruler (of the universe). O great devotees who are dear to him, show him (to me).

Skanda said:

8. Then one white liberated soul, being directed by Kṛṣṇa in his heart, said, "Come, I shall show you Kṛṣṇa". Saying this, he proceeded ahead.

9. Then the highly delighted Sage Nārada went up with him by the path in the firmament, seeing the dwelling places of Devas.

10. Seeing the Seven Sages (*Ursa Major*) and the Polar Star, he was not attached anywhere there. He crossed the regions known as Maharloka, Janaloka, Tapoloka, O excellent Brāhmaṇa.

11. Then, after seeing the region of god Brahmā, the sage who followed the Śveta-mukta, found his way even through the eight sheaths (of the universe) due to the wish of Kṛṣṇa.

12. Having successively crossed (the sheaths of) the elements, viz. earth, water, fire, wind, and ether, Ego (*Ahaṁ*), *Mahat* and *Prakṛti*, each of which is ten times (larger) than the previous one,¹ he arrived at the wonderful Goloka.

13. It was the glorious abode, accessible only to those exclusively devoted to Hari. While going he saw the extensively wide and fathomless river Virajā.²

14. It has the fragrance of sandal due to the bath taken by multitudes of cowherds and cowherdesses. It appeared beautiful with lotuses white, red and blue in colour.

15. He arrived at its bank which was extensive, attractive to the mind, full of crystal-stones. It was beautified with excellent precious stones of white, green, red and yellow colour.

16. It was full of rows of wish-yielding trees. It was beautified with coral-sprouts. It was adorned with mines of precious stones, like *syamantaka*, sapphire and others.

1. It is a Purāṇic concept that our universe is enveloped by (sheathed in) the five elements, *Ahaṁkāra*, *Mahat* and *Prakṛti*. A Yogī has to pierce his way through them before attaining Brahman (symbolised here as Goloka).

2. According to *Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa*, Virajā was a cowherdess (a mistress of Kṛṣṇa) who was converted into a river by Rādhā's curse. In Vaiṣṇava Vedānta it is the river after crossing which one visualizes the Lord.

17. It was extremely beautiful with steps (of the *ghats*) studded with excellent gems of various kinds. It was occupied by swans, Kāraṇḍava ducks (and other aquatic birds) warbling sweetly.

18-19. Its splendid, translucent water was being drunk up by multitudes of wish-yielding cows, excellent elephants and horses. He crossed it. Having crossed in a moment the heavenly river which formed a moat round the Lord's residence, through the will of the Lord, he arrived at Mount Śataśṛṅga ('having a hundred peaks').

20. It was of gold and beautiful. It was ten million Yojanas in height. Its extent was hundred million Yojanas and was attractive to the mind.

21-22. It was adorned with (the growth of) thousands of wish-yielding trees and trees like Pārijāta and others, and creepers like Mallikā, Yūthikā (varieties of jasmine), cloves and cardamoms. It was beautified with trees such as golden plantain trees, and also multitudes of heavenly deer, elephants and sweet-warbling birds.

23. In his castle-like abode on the beautiful peaks, he saw mind-attracting *Rāsa-maṇḍapas* (i.e. halls for dance called *Rāsa*) of the Lord spread out.

24. They were surrounded by series of gardens, fragrant with flowers in full bloom. They looked beautiful with gem-set panelled doors in four directions.

25. They were furnished with wonderful arched doorways, and with thousands of pillars studded with jewels. They were provided with pillars of plantain trees and windows with wreaths of pearls suspended thereon.

26. They were provided with auspicious *Dūrvā* grass, fried grains, unbroken rice grains and fruits. The quadrangular places therein were sprinkled with sandal, agallochum, musk and saffron.

27. They were appealing to the heart, with various kinds of sweet sounds of musical instruments pleasing to the ears (and hence worth listening). He saw there crores of multitudes of cowherdesses.

28-30. They were adorned with invaluable garments and ornaments, with bangles studded with excellent jewels, girdles, anklets, armlets and rings. They were endowed with youth and loveliness of form and features, and with incomparably sweet voice. Their complexion was like that of Rādhā and Lakṣmī and (had) amorous hands. In the hall provided with various articles of enjoyment, they were amusing themselves and singing pleasing songs about Kṛṣṇa.

31. Sage Nārada saw a great forest called *Vṛndāvana* at the foot of that mountain, O Sāvarni.

32. It was the playground favourite with Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā. It was beautiful on account of the rows of wish-yielding trees and lakes with blooming lotuses.

33-37. It was beautified (lit. illuminated) with trees like mango, hog-plum, Kadamba, jujube trees, pomegranates, date-palms, betelnut trees, orange trees, coconut palms, sandal trees, rose-apples, citron trees, bread-fruit trees, walnut trees, plantain trees, Campaka trees, grape-vines, golden Ketakas. All these trees were bending down with the weight of fruits and flowers.

It was served by a gentle wind, wafting the cool and sweet fragrance of (flowers of) Mallikā, Mādhavī, Kunda, cloves, and jasmine. All around, it was wet with spring-water issuing from Śataśṛṅga. It was richly endowed with the beauty of the spring season. It was endowed with innumerable bowers, beautified with rows of lamps studded with gems and provided with materials suitable for amorous sports.

38. O sage, it was resonant with the sound of glorifications (or repetitions of the name) of Kṛṣṇa by cowherds and cowherdresses, with the lowing of cows and calves, the warbling of birds and jingling sound of various ornaments and the sound of the churning of curds.

39. It had thirty-two other forests, extremely beautiful with various kinds of trees, bending down with (the weight of) fully blossomed flowers and fruits, attracting the minds of spectators.

40-43. He was greatly delighted to see it. He arrived at the resplendent city (capital) of Goloka. It was a circular citadel (full) of jewels. It was beautified with royal roads. It appeared splendid with crores of mansions of devotees of Kṛṣṇa, with chariots studded with excellent jewels and decorated with a number of small tinkling bells. It was beautiful on account of crores of wonderful mansions, full of treasures of excellent precious stones, adorned with pillars of precious stones—all arranged in rows.

It appeared splendid with beautiful halls of sports. It was built with excellent precious stones* and was furnished with gem-set altars or quadrangles (lighted with) rows of lamps studded with excellent gems.

44. Its courtyard was sprinkled with liquid (mixed) with filaments of flowers, agallochum, musk and saffron and with heaps of (vessels containing) curds, Dūrvā grass, fried grains and plantain trees.

45. Auspiciousness was caused by gold pitchers full of water and arches constructed. In it a considerable number of elephants and horses

* *ratna-sāra-vinirmitaḥ* is probably a misprint for... *vinirmitam*.

were treading the royal roads paved with precious stones.

46. It was crowded with a number of lords of cosmoses who had come to have a sight of Śrīkṛṣṇa and with great gods such as Brahmā and Śaṅkara having articles of worship in their hands.

47. It was full of multitudes of cowherds and cowherdesses who were going to have a look of Kṛṣṇa. The sage was delighted to see that great road so crowded (with these).

48. Then, he reached the mansion of Kṛṣṇa which was beautiful and appeared marvellous to all. It was surrounded by rows of mansions of cowherds including Nanda and of Vṛṣabhānu and others.

49. It was provided with four gates and consisted of sixteen citadels with moats around them. Each gate of it was guarded by a crore of cowherds as gatekeepers surrounding it.

50. At the doors with jewelled pillars and panels in front of him, he saw successively the doorkeepers who were sitting there (on duty).

51-53. (They were) Vīrabhānu, Candrabhānu, Sūryabhānu the third (doorkeeper), Vasubhānu, Devabhānu and then Śakrabhānu after him; Ratnabhānu, Supārśva, Viśāla, and then Vṛṣabha, Aṁśu, Bala, Subala, Devaprastha, Varūthapa, and Śrīdāman. He bowed to him (Śrīdāman) and entered with his permission. In the great wide quadrangle (before him) he saw a great mass of splendour.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Manifestation of Vāsudeva

Skanda said:

1. O sage, he saw a more brilliant, heavenly splendour, similar to crores of crores of suns arisen (and shining) simultaneously.

2. It completely pervaded all the quarters, intermediate cardinal points, above and below. It is said to be imperishable Brahman, characterised by existence, knowledge and bliss.

3. It permeated both Prakṛti and Puruṣa and their evolutes. It was that brilliance which persons accomplished in Yoga, crossing (in ascendance) all the six Cakras (plexuses) within (their body), see in their heads (in the *Sahasrāra-Kamala*) with the grace of Vāsudeva.

4. It is by his brilliance that the sun, the moon, fire and stars are