Śrī Brhad-bhāgavatāmrta

by Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī

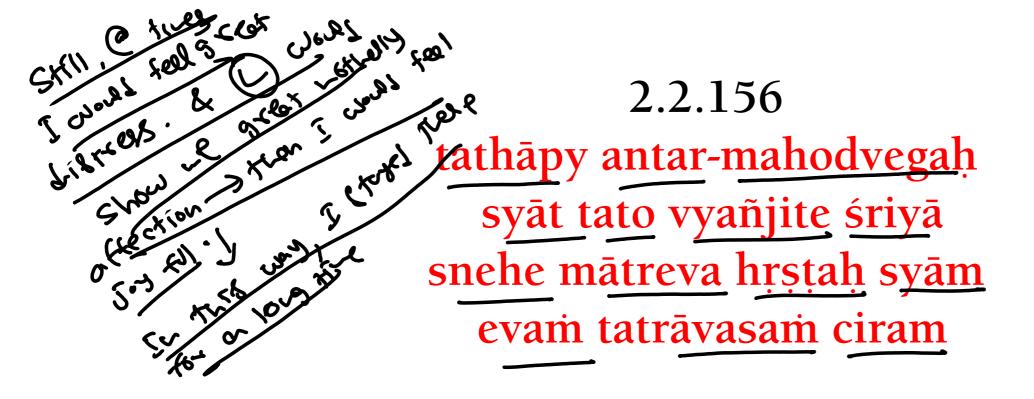
Volume-2

Śrī-goloka-māhātmya

The Glories of Goloka



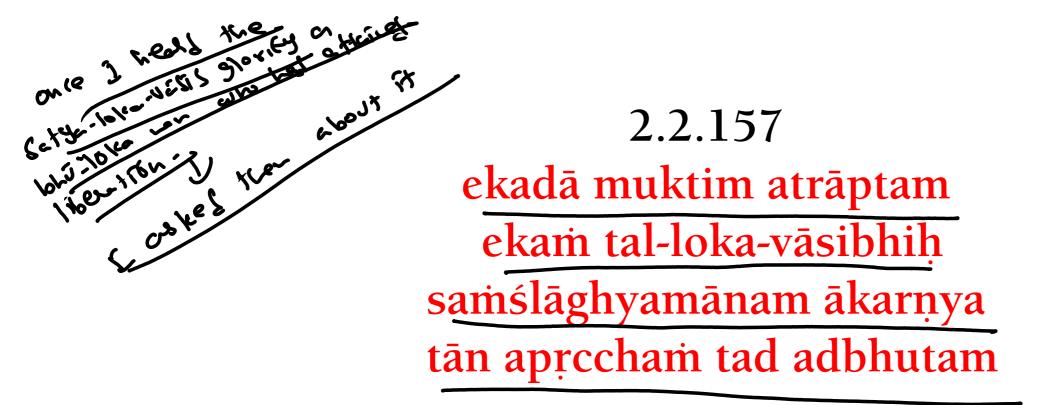
Jñāna: Knowledge



Still (tathāpy), at times I felt great distress in my mind (antarmahodvegah syāt). But when the goddess Lakṣmī (tato śriyā) showed me (vyañjite) motherly affection (mātrā iva snehe), I would again become joyful (hṛṣṭaḥ syāt). Thus I lived there a long time (evaṁ tatra āvasaṁ ciram). Although the Lord showed no sign of taking offense, Gopa-kumāra, realizing that he was not serving with the proper attitude, sometimes became disturbed.

Embarrassed by his own behavior toward his father, he would be consoled by his mother, Laksmī.

Thus he lived happily in Satyaloka, even when facing causes of distress.

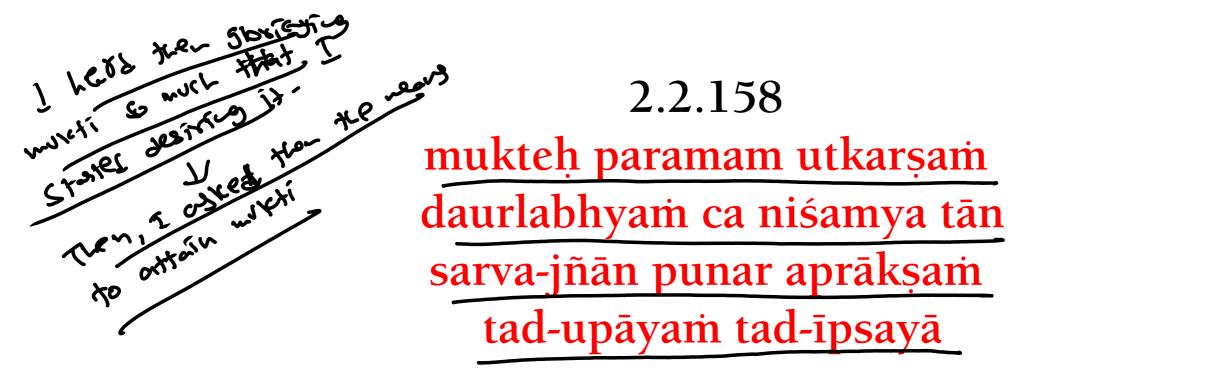


Once (ekadā), hearing (ākarņya) the residents of Brahmaloka (talloka-vāsibhiḥ) glorify (samślāghyamānam) someone (ekaḿ) who had attained liberation (muktim āptam) here on earth (atra), I asked them (tān aprcchaḿ) about that amazing event (tad adbhutam). In texts 157 through 230, Gopa-kumāra describes in depth the immediate cause for his leaving Satyaloka.

The sages on Satyaloka were talking about someone who had achieved mokṣa—mukti, or liberation—while living in Bhārata-varṣa.

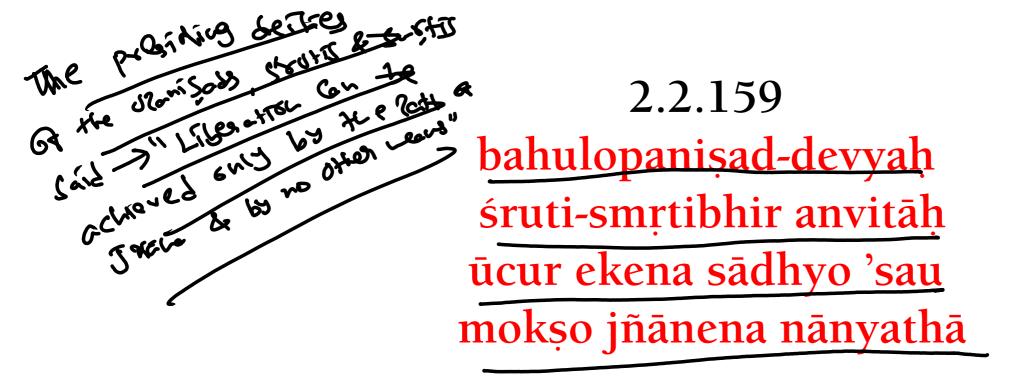
As they were praising that person, and the process of devotional service by which he had gained mokṣa, Gopa-kumāra, who had never heard of mokṣa, asked the sages, "What is this mokṣa?

Why are you glorifying someone so much for attaining it?"



I heard from those all-knowing sages (niśamya tān sarva-jñān) about the superexcellence (paramam utkarṣaṁ) and rareness (daurlabhyaṁ ca) of liberation (mukteḥ), and so I desired it myself (tad-īpsayā). I then asked them (punar aprākṣaṁ) how liberation could be attained (tad-upāyaṁ). Among the sages from whom Gopa-kumāra was inquiring were the personified Vedas, who surely were capable of giving him authoritative answers.

And Gopa-kumāra's newly acquired eagerness to become liberated qualified him as a fit candidate to hear from the Vedas about the means of attaining liberation



Many of the presiding goddesses of the Upanisads (bahula upanisaddevyah) answered (ūcuh), joined by śrutis and smrtis (śrutismrtibhir anvitāh). They said that only by knowledge (ekena jñānena) is liberation achieved (asau mokṣah sādhyah), and by no other means (na anyathā). The Upanisads are the essential philosophical portion of the śrutis, or Vedas.

They are described here as devyah, which means both "presiding deities" and "brilliantly effulgent."

Thus the Upanisads were present in person in Brahmā's assembly along with other revealed scriptures.

The srutis mentioned separately here are other sections of the Vedas,

particularly the Samhitās, Brāhmaņas, and Āraņyakas.

The smṛtis are the Dharma-śāstras, Purāṇas, Āgamas, and so on.

The majority of Upanisads, śrutis, and smṛtis declared that mokṣa, the most excellent and rarely obtained goal, can be achieved only by knowledge.

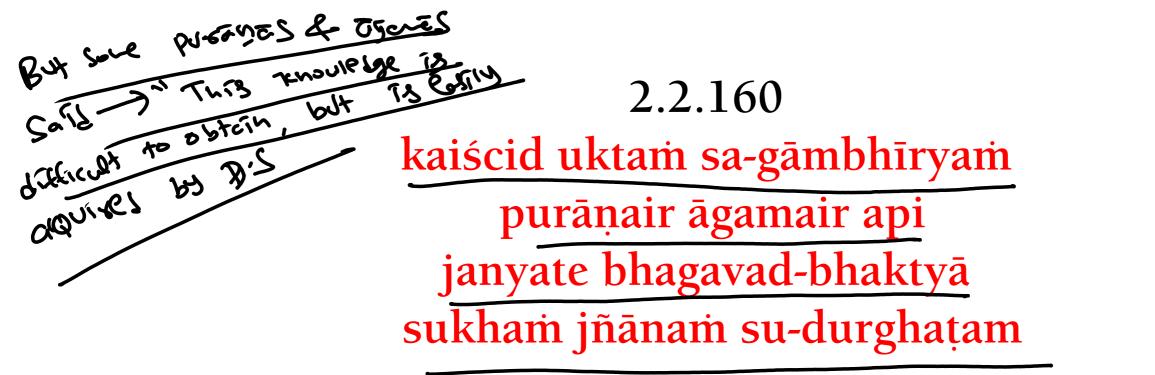
In the words of the Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad (3.8):

tam eva viditvāti m<u>r</u>tyum eti nānyah panthā vidyate 'yanāya

"Knowing Him (tam eva viditvā), one transcends death (ati mṛtyum eti). There is no other path (na anyaḥ panthā vidyate) for attaining this goal (ayanāya)."

G<u>opa-kumāra's narration will later reveal that the knowledge leading to</u> liberation arises only from devotional service; in fact, the cultivation of knowledge of the Supreme Person and His energies is itself a kind of devotional service.

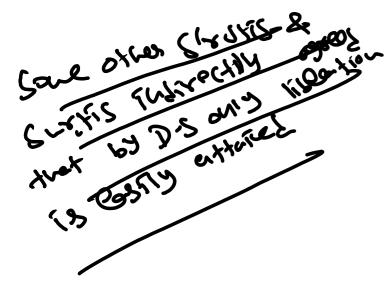
As long as knowledge remains impersonal, it cannot lead to true liberation.



But some Purāņas and Agamas (kaiścid purānair āgamair api) said gravely (uktam sa-gāmbhīryam) that this knowledge (jnānam), difficult to obtain (su-durghatam), is easily acquired (sukham janyate) by devotional service to the Personality of Godhead (bhagavad-bhaktyā). The Āgamas are tantras, textbooks on the methods of devotional worship.

Prominent among them are the Pañcarātras.

Some of the Āgamas and Purāņas teach the methods of pure devotional service very effectively, and these are the scriptures who at this juncture spoke up with unshaking conviction.



2.2.161 <u>kim vānusthitayā samyak</u> tayaiva su-labho 'sti sah śruti-smṛtīnām kāsāñcit sammatis tatra lakṣitā

Some other śrutis and smṛtis (śruti-smṛtīnām kāsāñcit) indirectly showed agreement among themselves (lakṣitā sammatis tatra) that by devotional service alone (tayā eva), properly done (samyak anuṣṭhitayā), liberation is easy to attain (saḥ su-labhah asti). In the opinion of the Vaiṣṇava Purāṇas and Āgamas, liberation is attained with special ease by devotional service that is free from material desires and properly executed in all essential details.

Such pure devotional service by itself (tayaiva) leads to liberation, without help from anything else.

As stated in the Brhan-nāradīya Purāņa (32.6, 4.30):

bhaktir dṛḍhā bhaved yasya deva-deve janārdane śreyāṁsi tasya sidhyanti bhakti-manto 'dhikās tataḥ

"By one whose (yasya) devotion is steadfast (bhaktir dṛḍhā bhaved) in Janārdana (janārdane), the Lord of lords (deva-deve), all superior benefits are gained (śreyāmsi taşya sidhyanti). Such is the excellence (adhikāh tataḥ) of the Lord's devotees (bhakti-manto)."

yathā mātaram āśritāh tathā bhaktim samāśritya sarvā jīvanti siddhayah "Just as (yathā) all living beings (jantavaḥ sarve) live (jīvanti) under the shelter of their mothers (mātaram āśrītāḥ), all perfections (tathā sarvā siddhayaḥ) live (jīvanti) under the complete shelter of devotional service (bhaktim samāśritya)."

jīvanti jantavah sarve

The "benefits" and "perfections" mentioned in these verses include liberation; though the verses do not specify this, it is implied.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa also says in the Bhagavad-gītā (11.54):

bhaktyā tv anyayā śakya aham evam-vidho 'rjuna jñātum drastum ca tattvena pravestum ca parantapa

Only by ananyā bhakti (ananyayā bhaktyā tu) it is possible to know Me, see Me, or even merge with Me (aham evam-vidho tattvena jnātum drastum pravestum ca śakyah), O Arjuna (arjuna).

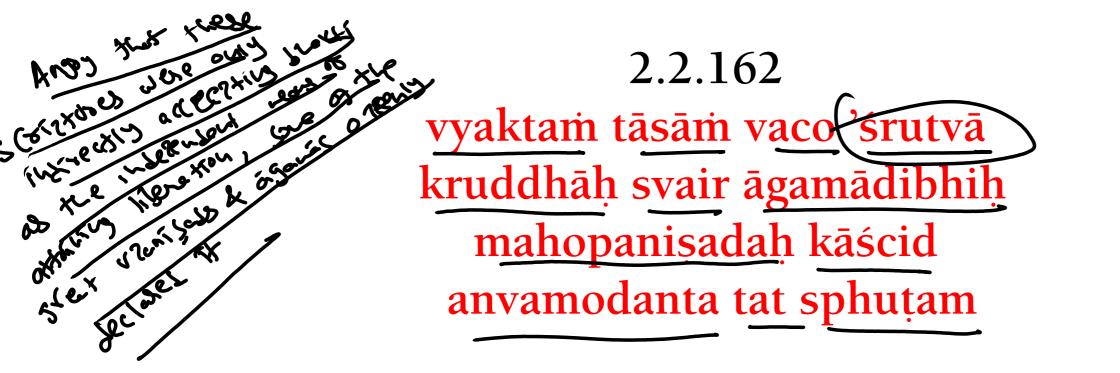
"Entering into the existence" of the Personality of Godhead—that is, entering His association—by its very nature includes liberation. The theistic śrutis and smrtis (among them some of the Dharmaśāstras) are in agreement about this understanding, and they indicated this by movements of their heads and by other subtle signs.

These scriptures do not promote pure devotional service explicitly, but one may discover the importance of bhakti in their purports.

Thus we read in the Padma Purāņa (Pātāla-khaņda 92.26):

apatyam draviņam dārā hārā harmyam hayā gajāķ sukhāni svarga-mokṣau ca na dūre hari-bhaktitah

"Wife ($\underline{d\bar{a}r\bar{a}}$), children ($\underline{apatyam}$), precious necklaces ($\underline{h\bar{a}r\bar{a}}$) and wealth ($\underline{dravinam}$), home ($\underline{harmyam}$), horses ($\underline{hay\bar{a}}$), elephants ($\underline{gaj\bar{a}h}$)—all happiness ($\underline{sukh\bar{a}ni}$), and moreover the attainment of heaven and liberation ($\underline{svarga-moksau ca}$)—when devotional service to Lord Hari is present ($\underline{hari-bhaktitah}$), none of these are difficult to obtain ($\underline{na d\bar{u}re}$)."



Angry (kruddhāḥ) at not hearing (aśrutvā) those śrutis and smrtis speak up (tāsām vacah), some of the great Upanisads (kāścid mahopanisadaḥ)—and scriptures like the Āgamas (āgamādibhiḥ) who follow in their footsteps (svaih)—openly affirmed (vyaktam anvamodanta) that devotional service is an independent cause of liberation (tat sphuțam). The more devotional of the Upanisads were angry at the other devotional scriptures who weren't bold enough to say what they knew, and so were certain Vaisnava Agamas and Purānas who took shelter of those Upanisads.

Together, therefore, these Upanisads, Āgamas, and Purāņas declared in no uncertain terms that liberation is effortlessly achieved by unalloyed devotional service to the Supreme Lord.

As stated in the Brhan-nāradīya Purāņa (1.79):

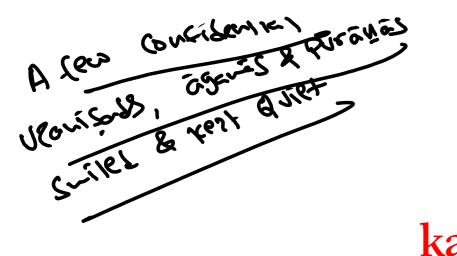
dharmārtha-kāma-mokṣākhyā puruṣārthā dvijottamāḥ hari-bhakti-parāṇām vai sampadyante na samśayaḥ

"O best of brāhmaņas (dvijottamāḥ), there is no doubt (na samśayaḥ) that those who are dedicated to Lord Hari's devotional service (hari-bhaktiparāṇām vai) achieve (sampadyante) all the goals of life (puruṣārthā), known as religiosity, economic development, sense gratification, and liberation (dharma-artha-kāma-mokṣa ākhyā)."

And in a prayer to the Personality of Godhead, we read in <u>Srī Viṣṇu Purā</u>ṇa (1.20.27):

dharmārtha-kāmaiḥ kiṁ tasya muktis tasya kare st<u>hitā</u> samasta-jagatāṁ mūle yasya bhaktiḥ sthirā tvayi

"What is the value of religiosity, economic development, and sense gratification (kim tasya dharma artha-kāmaiḥ) to one who has firm devotion for You (yasya bhaktiḥ sthirā tyayi), the root of all the worlds (samasta-jagatām mūle)? Liberation sits in the palm of his hand (muktih tasya kare sthitā)."

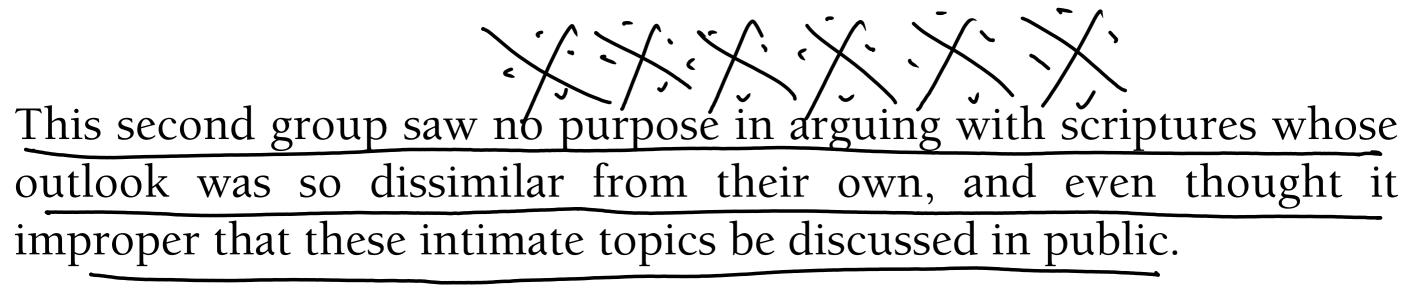


2.2.163 gūḍhopaniṣadaḥ kāścit kaiścid gūḍhair mahāgamaiḥ samaṁ mahā-purāṇaiś ca tūṣṇīm āsan kṛta-smitāḥ

A<u>few confidential Upaniṣads</u> (gūḍha upaniṣadaḥ kāścit) smiled (kṛta-smitāḥ) and kept silent (tūṣṇīm āsan), along with (samam) some confidential major Āgamas (kaiścid gūḍhair mahāgamaiḥ) and Purāṇas (mahā-purāṇaiś ca). The little-known most confidential Upaniṣads, like the Gopālatāpanī, smiled but said nothing, and so did certain Vaiṣṇava Agamas, like the Sātvata-siddhānta, and a few Purāṇas, like Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.

Some were thinking, "Just see the power of the Supreme Lord's illusory energy, which makes the essential meaning of scripture, which should be obvious, incomprehensible to vastly learned authorities."

Others were thinking scornfully, "Who are these sastras to presume that merely bestowing liberation is the true glory of bhakti?"



<u>Granted</u>, these scriptures thought, karma, jñāna, and moksa make up the ladder ascending to bhakti, devotional service, and so the glories of Vedic rituals, knowledge, and liberation culminate in the glories of bhakti. Nonetheless, when the main focus of discussion is on lesser spiritual methods, the importance of bhakti can only be hinted at; in such contexts, its superexcellence cannot be properly revealed.

With these thoughts in mind, the Bhāgavatam and a few other scriptures, following the lead of the confidential Upanisads, kept quiet.