Śrī Brhad-bhāgavatāmrta

by Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī

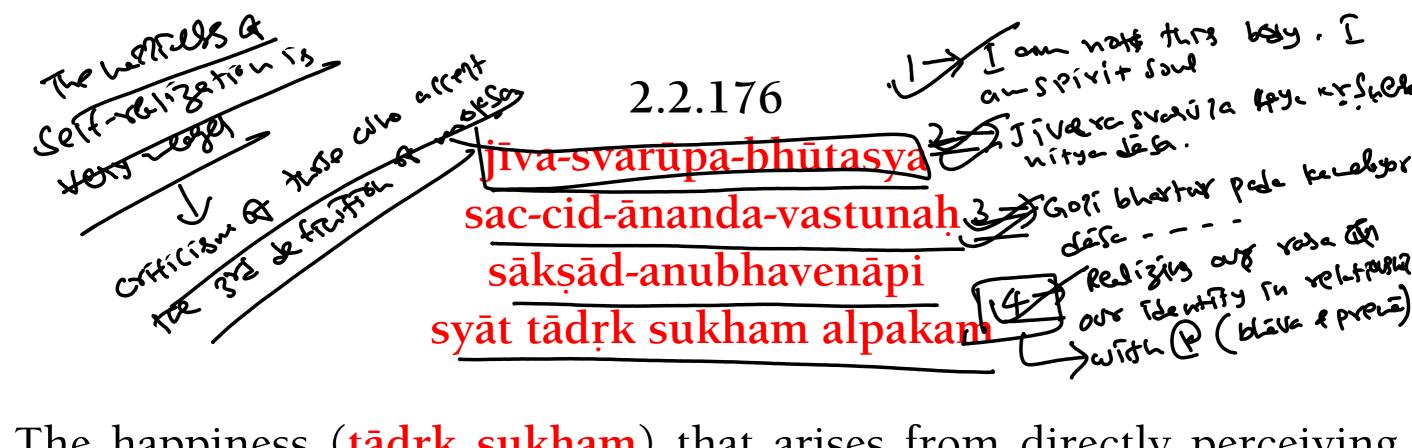
Volume-2

Śrī-goloka-māhātmya

The Glories of Goloka



Jñāna: Knowledge



The happiness (tādrk sukham) that arises from directly perceiving (sākṣād-anubhavenāpi) the true identity of the jīva soul (jīvasvarūpa-bhūtasya)—the entity composed of eternity, knowledge, and bliss (sac-cid-ānanda-vastunaḥ)—is actually meager (alpakam syāt). The moksa, or liberation, conceived in the first two ideas cited above—moksa as the end of misery or as the end of the causes of - Det yeste dulkthe niviti Det yeste dulkthe niviti Dettyz kalme Ksossel Dettyz kalme Ksossel Jestse-tyste angette rure tyzsef Suchsberge noksch misery—affords no positive happiness.

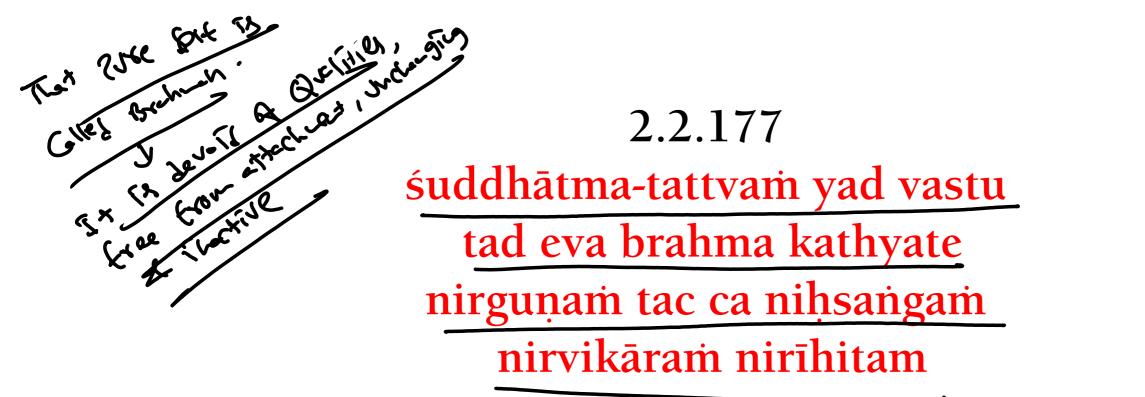
This was not difficult to show.

Furthermore, the happiness of self-realization presumed in the third theory of moksa, that of vivarta, is actually meager, as the bhaktiśāstras, in texts 176 through 196, now set out to prove.

Compared to the bliss of performing pure devotional service and realizing the lotus feet of the Personality of Godhead, who embodies all the perfections of Brahman, realizing the identity of the jīva soul brings very little happiness.

In fact, this so-called happiness of self-realization is nothing more than the negation of suffering; the scriptures refer to it as happiness only as a concession to the foolish.

But at least the "happiness" of perceiving the jīva soul serves as a standard of comparison by which to think of the joy of pure devotional service to the Supreme Lord.



That entity (yad vastu)—the reality of pure self (śuddha ātmatattvam)—is called Brahman (tad eva brahma kathyate). It is devoid of qualities (tad nirguņam), free from attachment (niḥsaṅgam), unchanging (nirvikāram), and inactive (nirīhitam). The impersonalists might now suggest that, in contrast to the small happiness of realizing the minute jīva, the relish of perceiving the impersonal Supreme in liberation is unlimited.

However, the bhakti-śāstras here point out that the Vivarta-vādīs' own definition of the Supreme leaves little room in Brahman realization for happiness.

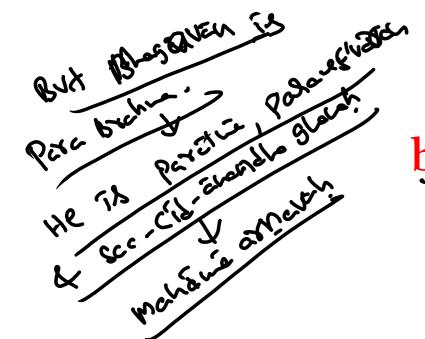
According to them, Brahman is devoid of qualities such as compassion.

It has no attachment to anything or anyone, including the pure Vaisnavas.

It undergoes no changes, such as the transformations of a heart melting in the ecstasy of love, and displays none of the dynamic varieties of opulence and sweetness shown by the Supreme Lord in His personal form.

It is also inactive, which implies that it has no wonderful allattractive pastimes.

T<u>hus the happiness of realizing Brahman cannot transcend the limits</u> of impersonalism



2.2.178

bhagavāms tu param brahma

parātmā parameśvaraķ

su-sāndra-sac-cid-ānanda-

vigraho mahimārņavaķ

But the Personality of Godhead is the Supreme Brahman (bhagavān tu param brahma), the Supersoul (parātmā), th<u>e absolute controller</u> of everything (parameśvaraḥ). His body is the concentrated essence of eternity, knowledge, and bliss (su-sāndra-sac-cid-ānandavigrahah). He is an ocean of superlative qualities (mahimā arṇavaḥ). Substantial happiness is not to be found in the impersonal conception of the Supreme, but rather in pure devotional service to the Personality of Godhead.

He is the complete Absolute Truth, param brahma.

He is also the Supreme Soul, the indwelling controller who regulates everyone's consciousness.

As such, He is the ultimate controller of everything, the ruler of even Brahmā and all the other demigods.

And as the Lord of Vaikuntha He is the most concentrated manifestation of eternity, knowledge, and bliss, which constitute His transcendental body.

He is an ocean—steady, deep, and infinitely wide—of countless inconceivable and amazing perfections.

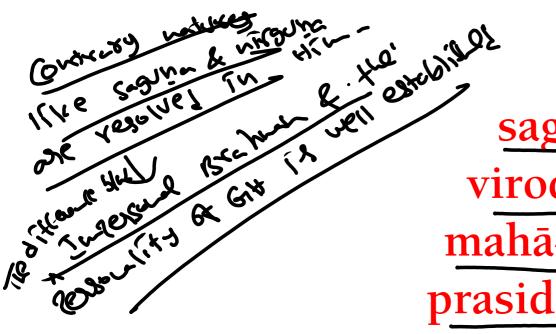
When the bhakti-śāstras refer to the full personal concept of the Absolute Truth, the term normally used is Para-brahman or param brahma, as in Bhagavad-gītā (10.12): param brahma param dhāma pavitram paramam bhavān ("You are the Supreme Brahman, the supreme abode, the supreme purifier").

When the spiritual reality is indicated in a more generic sense, it is usually called simply Brahman, as again in Bhagavad-gītā (14.27): brahmaņo 'hi pratiṣṭho 'ham ("I am the foundation of the Absolute").

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam ([10.87.1]) also says:

brahman brahmany anirdeśye nirgune guna-vrttayah katham caranti śrutayah sākṣāt sad-asatah pare

"How can (katham) the Vedas (śrutayah) directly describe (sākṣāt caranti) the Supreme Absolute Truth (brahmany), who cannot be described in words (anirdeśye)? O brāhmana (brahman), the Vedas are limited to describing the qualities of material nature (gunavrttayah), but the Supreme is devoid of those qualities (nirgune), being transcendental to all material manifestations and their causes (sad-asatah pare)." When the adjective param is seen with the term brahma, it may occasionally be intended to distinguish brahma the Supreme Truth from Vedic sound, which is also called brahma.



2.2.179

<u>saguņatvāguņatvādi-</u> virodhāḥ praviśanti tam mahā-vibhūtir brahmāsya

prasiddhettham tayor bhidā

Contrary natures (virodhāḥ), like having qualities and having no qualities (saguņatva-aguņatva-ādi), conjoin in Him (tam praviśanti). Since impersonal Brahman (brahma) is an infinite opulence (mahāvibhūtih) of the Personality of Godhead (asya), the difference between Him and Brahman (ittham tayor bhidā) is well established (prasiddhā). As rivers merge into an ocean, many opposite qualities converge in the Supreme Person.

The word ādi after saguņatva and aguņatva indicates more opposites—detachment and association, changelessness and change, inactivity and endeavor, oneness and multiplicity, nonduality and specific qualities.

<u>Conceived as impersonal Brahman</u>, the Supreme is devoid of qualities and other dualities.

Conceived as Paramātmā and Parameśvara, the Supreme displays characteristics such as having relationships with other living beings, possessing wonderful qualities, and so on.

Thus in truth the Supreme is full of qualities, many of them apparently contradictory.

Śāstra may sometimes say that the Supreme cannot be described in words and that He has no name, but the literal construction of these statements is refuted by the Vāsudevādhyātma:

aprasiddhes tad-guṇānām anāmāsau prakīrtitah aprākṛtatvād rūpasyāpy arūpo 'yaṁ pracakṣate

"Because His qualities are not well known (aprasiddheh tadguṇānām), He is said to have no name (anāmāsau prakīrtitaḥ). And because His form is not material (aprākṛtatvād rūpasya apy), He is said to have no form (arūpah ayam pracakṣate)." Māyāvādīs argue that the Personality of Godhead may have qualities but as products of Māyā those qualities are illusory.

Thus they want to reconcile His having qualities with their idea of reality, that the Supreme actually has no qualities.

In fact, however, the supreme powers of the Absolute Truth are eternal and real, not illusory like the material creation.

And therefore when the personal feature of the Supreme, Bhagavān, is said to be nirguņa, like Brahman, the sense is different, namely that Bhagavān transcends all material qualities.

<u>At the same time, like the material world, He has many different qualities,</u> and so He is also said to be saguna.

This seems contradictory, but it is possible by His inconceivable, amazing potencies.

The Supreme Person is indeed mahimārņava, the ocean in which all perfections converge. This is confirmed in many śāstras.

In the words of the Mokṣa-dharma (Mahābhārata, Śānti-parva 335.10–11):

yat kiñcid iha loke vai deha-bandham viśām-pate sarvam pañcabhir āviṣṭam bhūtair īśvara-buddhi-jaiḥ

īśvaro hi mahad bhūtam prabhur nārāyaņo virāt bhūtāntar-ātmā vijneyah saguņo nirguņo 'pi sah

"O ruler of the people (viśām-pate), whatever you see in this world (yat kiñcid iha loke vai) in connection with the material bodies of the living entities (dehabandham), whatever you see composed of the five elements (pañcabhir bhūtair **avistam**) born from the intelligence of the Supreme Lord (*iśvara-buddhi-jaih*) know all that to be the Supreme Lord Himself (sarvam iśvarah hi). Both possessing qualities and having none (saguno nirguno 'pi), He is the ultimate element of all creation (sah hi mahad bhūtam), the supreme master (iśvarah), the body of the universe (virāț), Lord Nārāyana (nārāyanah). Try to understand Him (vijñeyah) to be the inner Self of all creatures (bhūta antar-ātmā)."

a<u>sthūlaś cāṇanuś</u> c<u>aiva</u> sth<u>ūlo 'ņuś</u> caiva sarvataḥ avarṇaḥ sarvataḥ proktaḥ śyāmo raktānta-locanaḥ

aiśvarya-yogād bhagavān viruddhārtho 'bhidhīyate tathāpi doṣāḥ parame naivāhāryāḥ kathañcana guņā viruddhā api tu samāhāryāś ca sarvataḥ

"He is neither large nor infinitesimal (asthūlaś ca anaņuś caiva); yet He is larger and smaller than everything else (sthūlah aņuh caiva sarvatah). He is said to be devoid of color (avarnah sarvatah proktah); yet He is dark blue (śyāmah), and the corners of His eyes are reddish (rakta anta-locanah). By the play of His personal powers (aiśvaryayogād), the Supreme Lord (bhagavān) is known by contradictory designations (viruddha artho abhidhīyate). Yet He is the Supreme (tathāpi parame), and faults should never be ascribed to Him (doṣāḥ na eva āhāryāḥ kathañcana). In Him all contrary qualities combine (sarvataḥ viruddhā guņā api tu samāhāryāś)."