

Śrī Brhad-bhāgavatāmṛta

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Volume-2

Śrī-goloka-māhātmya

The Glories of Goloka

Chapter-2

Jñāna: Knowledge

The words & behavior of great souls should be accepted as standard evidence in all circumstances.

2.2.197

sadā pramāṇa-bhūtānām
asmākaṁ mahatām tathā
vākyāni vyavahārās ca
pramāṇam khalu sarvathā

We scriptures are always accepted as authoritative (sadā pramāṇa-bhūtānām). Our words (asmākaṁ vākyāni), and the words and behavior (tathā vākyāni vyavahārās ca) of great souls (mahatām), are standard evidence (khalu pramāṇam) in all circumstances (sarvathā).

In the opinion of some transcendentalists, the Absolute Truth, eternally one without a second, becomes differentiated only by the superficial covering of illusion, which makes the one Absolute falsely appear as many jīvas.

And when, by knowledge of reality, that false appearance is stripped away, only the Absolute Truth remains, manifest alone.

Thus when illusion is dispelled—the illusion that arises when circumstantial designations make the jīvas seem to separately exist—one attains mukti, in which one perceives, as before, the intense bliss of one's true identity as Brahman.

And so, by this reasoning, Brahman realization does constitute substantial happiness.

In mukti, furthermore, according to this view, there is no longer attraction to the false ego, even in its most subtle forms.

Indeed, even the very person who once relished false happiness from false ego no longer exists.

Thus in mukti real happiness is known, the happiness that comes from realizing the true identity of the self.

The proponents of devotion to the Personality of Godhead may believe that when the personal identity of Śrī Bhagavān, the embodiment of sac-cid-ānanda, is constantly revealed they can enjoy the most sublime and concentrated bliss, greater than that of liberation, and so they may claim that bhakti is greater than mukti.

But these beliefs are incorrect; the bliss of Brahman is perfect and complete.

Such are the views of impersonalists.

And in texts 197 through 204 the bhakti-śāstras refute such views.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam and other bhakti-śāstras offer many statements in refutation of the impersonalistic outlook. Here are but a few examples:

PROPE WITH THESE ALLITERATIONS

śloka śāstrāḥ

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ātmārāmāś ca munayo
nirgranthā apy urukrame
kurvanty ahaitukīm bhaktim
ittham-bhūta-guṇo hariḥ

Some sages who are ātmārāmas (ātmārāmāś ca munayah), beyond the scriptures, false ego and rules (nirgrantha apy), also practice (kurvanty) unmotivated, pure bhakti (ahaitukīm bhaktim) to the master of pure bhakti, Kṛṣṇa (urukrame), since he possesses qualities attractive to even them (ittham-bhūta-guṇo hariḥ). (Bhāgavatam 1.7.10)

devānām guṇa-liṅgānām

ānuśravika-karmanām

sattva evaika-manaso

vṛttiḥ svābhāvikī tu yā

animittā bhāgavatī

bhaktiḥ siddheḥ gariyasi

Uttama bhakti

Superior

Liberation

The Lord said: *Bhakti* to the Supreme Lord without material desires (animittā bhāgavatī bhaktiḥ), composed of actions of the senses (devānām karmanām) to reveal senses objects related to the Lord (guṇa-liṅgānām), which conforms to *guru's* instructions (ānuśravika), with mind dedicated exclusively to the Lord (sattva eva eka-manaso), and which includes actions on the spontaneous level (vṛttiḥ svābhāvikī tu yā), is superior to liberation (siddheḥ gariyasi). (Bhāgavatam 3.25.32)

nārāyaṇa-parāḥ sarve
na kutaścana bibhyati
svargāpavarga-narakeṣv
api tulyārtha-darśinaḥ

Devotees solely engaged in the service of Nārāyaṇa (**nārāyaṇa-parāḥ sarve**) never fear any condition of life (**na kutaścana bibhyati**). For them the heavenly planets, liberation and the hellish planets (**svarga apavarga-narakeṣu api**) are all the same (**tulyārtha-darśinaḥ**).
(Bhāgavatam 6.17.28)

duravagamātma-tattva-nigamāya tavaṭṭa-tanoś
carita-mahāmṛtābdhi-parivarta-pariśramaṇāḥ
na parilaṣanti kecid apavargam apīśvara te
caraṇa-saroja-haṁsa-kula-saṅga-visṛṣṭa-grhāḥ

“My Lord (**īśvara**), some fortunate souls (**kecid**) have gotten relief from the fatigue of material life (**pariśramaṇāḥ**) by diving (**parivarta**) into the vast nectar ocean (**mahāmṛta abdhi**) of Your pastimes (**carita**), which You enact when You manifest Your personal forms (**tava āṭṭa-tanoḥ**) to make known (**nigamāya**) the unfathomable (**duravagama**) science of the self (**ātma-tattva**). These rare souls, indifferent even to liberation (**apavargam api na parilaṣanti**), renounce the happiness of home and family (**visṛṣṭa-grhāḥ**) because of association (**saṅga**) with devotees who are like flocks of swans (**haṁsa-kula**) enjoying at the lotus of Your feet (**te caraṇa-saroja**).”
(Bhāgavatam 10.87.21)

mahatām madhudviṭ-sevānurakta-manasām abhavo 'pi phalguḥ

“Indeed, even liberation is insignificant (abhavaḥ api phalguḥ) for those (mahatām) whose minds are attracted (anurakta-manasām) to the loving service (seva) of Lord Madhudviṭ (madhudviṭ).”
(Bhāgavatam 5.14.44)

These authoritative statements of the Bhāgavatam and other bhakti-śāstras are supported by thousands and thousands of recorded statements by great saintly persons.

Vaisnavas like Śrī Nārada, Prahlāda, and Hanumān have expressed themselves unequivocally on this topic.

For example, in Śrī Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu (1.2.49) Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī refers to this well-known statement by Hanumān:

bhava-bandha-cchide tasmai
sprhayāmi na muktaye
bhavān prabhur aham dāsa
iti yatra vilupyate

“Even though liberation (muktaye) destroys the bondage of material existence (bhava-bandha-cchide), I have no desire (na sprhayāmi) for liberation (tasmai) in which I would forget (yatra vilupyate) that You are the master (bhavān prabhuh) and I am Your servant (aham dāsa iti).”

Recent authorities have spoken the same way.

For example, the all-knowing commentator on the important śrutis the paramahansa Śrī Śaṅkarācārya Bhagavatpāda has said, muktā api līlayā vighrahaṁ kṛtvā bhagavantam bhajanti:

“For pastimes, even those who are liberated accept new bodies to worship the Supreme Lord.”

This accords with the Vedānta-sūtra (1.3.2), which says that Brahman is “approached for shelter by persons who are liberated” (muktopasṛpya-vyapadeśāt).

Śrī Śukadeva, the four Kumāras, and others like them were attracted to narrations of the pastimes of the Personality of Godhead.

And Prahlāda, Hanumān, and others refused to accept mokṣa, even from the Lord Himself.

This evidence from scripture and the words and behavior of saintly persons is authoritative in all circumstances (sarvathā) and at all times (sadā).

It should never be dismissed as what in Vedic terms is called artha-
vāda, mere sectarian verve.

The statements of the bhakti-śāstras like Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam and of
great devotees like Nārada, Hanumān, and Śukadeva need no
authentication from other evidence; they are always perfect.

These are many
historical accounts
to support our statements.
∴ to say that these statements
are only exaggerated praise
is unreasonable

2.2.198

tathaitad-anukūlāni
purā-vṛttāni santi ca
naiva saṅgacchate tasmād
artha-vādatva-kalpanā

And many historical accounts (tathā purā-vṛttāni santi ca) support
these statements we have made (etad-anukūlāni). To presume
(kalpanā), therefore (tasmād), that our words are merely overstated
praise (artha-vādatva) is certainly unreasonable (na eva
saṅgacchate).

That devotional service is vastly superior to mere liberation is not an idea one should dismiss as artha-vāda, exaggeration, for it has been factually established by ancient histories recorded in the Purāṇas and other scriptures.

The consensus indicated by thousands of accounts from varied sources is too strong to disregard.

One such account concerns a brāhmaṇa resident of Dvārakā whose sons had all died at birth.

Unaware that in fact they had been taken away by Lord Mahā-Viṣṇu to the abode of liberation, the brāhmaṇa complained to Kṛṣṇa, and Arjuna offered to protect the son born next.

In another incident, the three sages Ekata, Dvita, and Trita went to Śvetadvīpa and made a great effort to achieve darśana of the Personality of Godhead.

But even though they were fixed in a level of Brahman realization virtually equal to that of the four Kumāras, they were unable to see the Lord. They were qualified for mukti but not bhakti.

The Fourth Canto of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam describes how Lord Viṣṇu visited King Pṛthu, the incarnation of the Lord's power of rulership.

When the Lord urged the king to choose the best benediction, Pṛthu Mahārāja extolled the Lord with excellent prayers and then said:

tvam-māyayāddhā jana īśa khaṇḍito
yad anyad āśāsta ṛtātmano 'budhaḥ
yathā cared bāla-hitam pitā svayam
tathā tvam evārhasi naḥ samīhitum

O Lord (īśa)! Since foolish people (yad abudhaḥ janah), injured by your māyā (tvam-māyayā āddhā khaṇḍitah), desire things other than worshipping you (anyad āśāsta ṛta ātmano), you should choose (without asking us) what is for our benefit (tathā tvam eva arhasi naḥ samīhitum), just as a father acts for the benefit of his son (yathā cared bāla-hitam pitā svayam).

The narration continues:

ity ādi-rājena nutaḥ sa viśva-drk
tam āha rājan mayi bhaktir astu te
diṣṭyedṛśī dhīr mayi te kṛtā yayā
māyām madīyām tarati sma dustyajām

After being praised by Pṛthu in this way (ity ādi-rājena nutaḥ), the
Lord, seer of the whole universe (sah viśva-drk), said (tam āha), “O
King (rājan)! May you have bhakti to me (mayi bhaktir astu te)! By
good fortune (diṣṭyā) you have placed me in (mayi te kṛtā) fine
intelligence (īdṛśī dhīh) by which one can cross (yayā tarati sma)
My insurmountable māyā (madīyām māyām dustyajām).
(Bhāgavatam 4.20.31–32)