Śrī Brhad-bhāgavatāmrta

by Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī

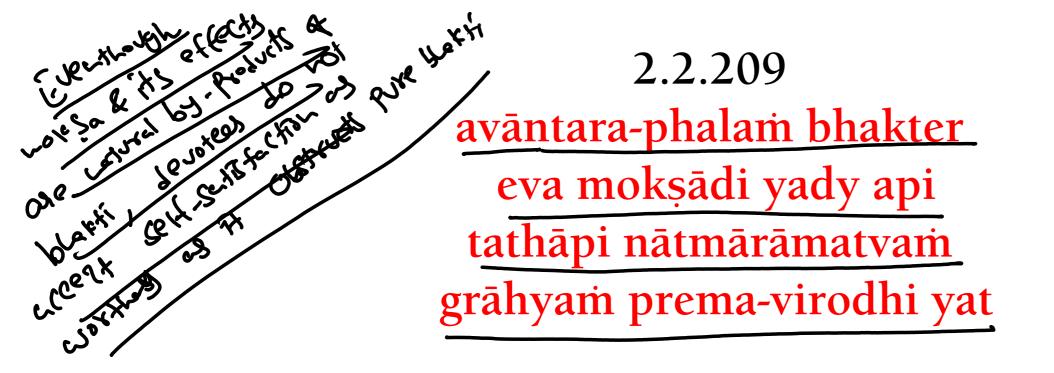
Volume-2

Śrī-goloka-māhātmya

The Glories of Goloka



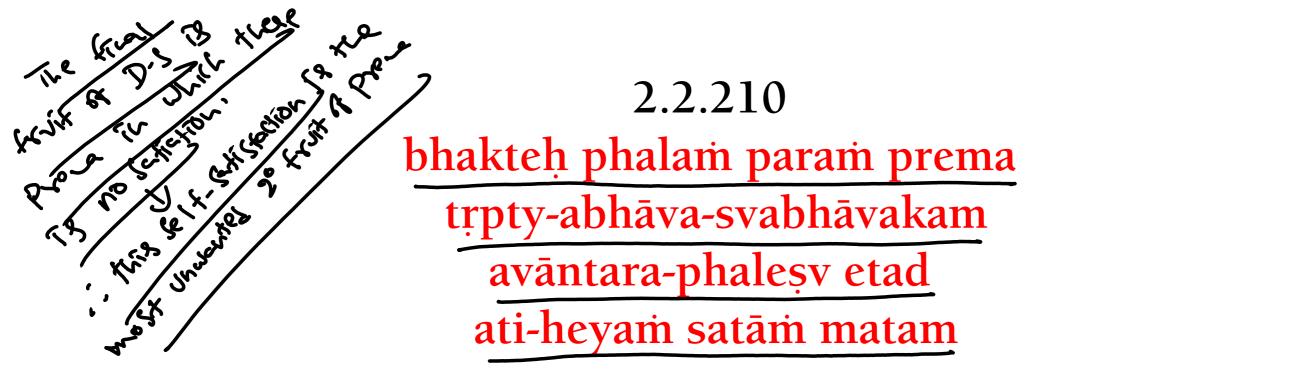
Jñāna: Knowledge



Even though (vady api) liberation and its effects (mokṣādi) are natural by-products (avāntara-phalam) of devotional service (bhakter eva) devotees do not regard satisfaction in the self as worth taking (tathāp) (na grāhyam atmārāmatvam), for it obstructs pure love of God (premā-virodhi yat). Don't they also have full knowledge and the mystic perfections of yoga?

Yes, their practices of hearing and chanting about the Lord and serving Him bring them these benefits automatically as intermediate results, just as a fire lit for cooking will first dispel darkness and cold. The self-delight of impersonal liberation, however, is not recommended for devotees of the Lord; they should avoid it even though they have it easily available.

Devotees should reject anything that obstructs or slows their progress toward pure love of God.

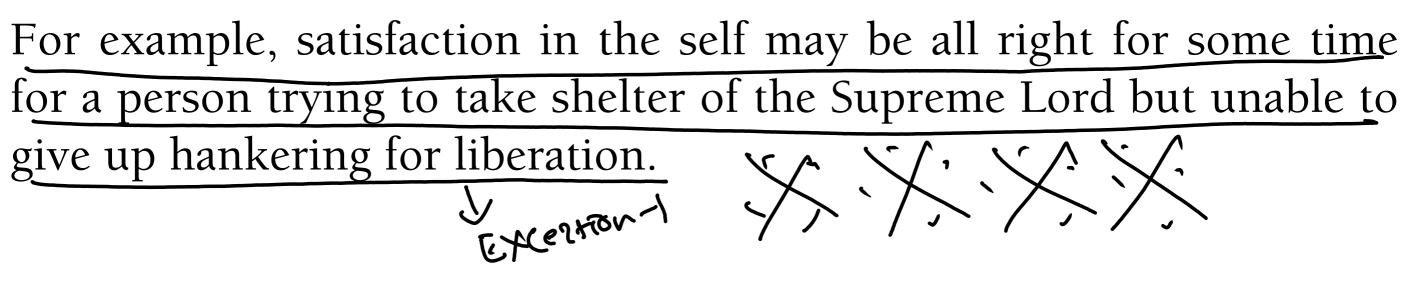


The final fruit of devotional service (bhakteh phalam param) is prema (prema), in which, by its nature (svabhāvakam), one will never be satiated (tṛpty-abhāva). Saintly authorities deem (satām matam) self-satisfaction (etad) the most unwanted (ati-heyam) secondary fruit of prema (avāntara-phaleṣv). A devotee who relishes prema is never satisfied with himself but always wants to surrender more and more for the satisfaction of his Lord.

Thus experts in the science of devotional ecstasies condemn selfsatisfaction as the most harmful impediment to bhakti.

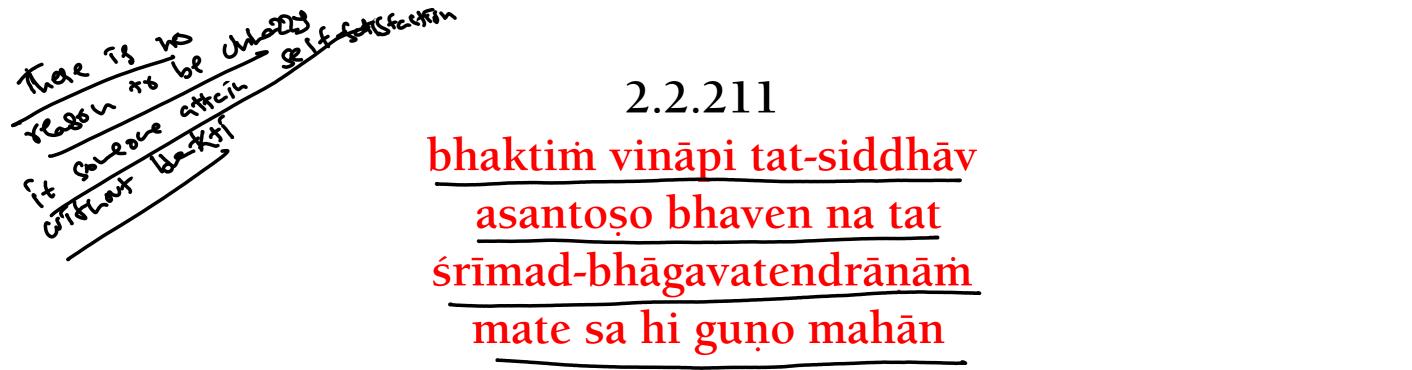
Of all the secondary fruits available to advancing Vaiṣṇavas, self-satisfaction is the one they should most carefully avoid.

There is room for only very few exceptions.



Or the offerings of self-satisfaction and other perfections that come with the attainment of Brahman may entice an ignorant nondevotee to begin devotional service.

These perfections are in fact opulences of the Supreme Person, and so they can attract certain kinds of persons toward Him.



There is no reason to be unhappy (<u>na tat asantoso bhavet</u>) if someone attains self-satisfaction (tat-siddhāv) without devotion to the Supreme Lord (bhaktim vināpi). The leaders of the saintly Vaisnavas (śrīmad-bhāgavatendrāņām) consider (<u>mate</u>) such an occurrence (sa hi) very good (mahān guṇah). What is wrong if something so useless and contemptible as ātmārāmatā, satisfaction in the self, arises when devotional service has not been performed?

Bhakti is a precious jewel, atmārāmatā but a piece of straw.

Wise devotees, therefore, are not bothered if satisfaction in the self is achieved without devotional service.

Compared to the magic touchstone of devotion for the Personality of Godhead's lotus feet, impersonal satisfaction in the self is abominable, a cause of misery only, like life in hell.

The great authorities in the science of devotional service are pleased to see this contrast between the rare treasure of bhakti and the worthless attainment of ātmārāmatā because it highlights the superexcellence of pure devotion.

And if someone foolishly strives for mukti but fails, that also is very

good.

2.2.212 fad-dhetuś citta-śuddhir vā quirification of heat Questified to meditate on the self sva-dharmācāra-bhaktitah 6K SUSA bāhyāyās tv alpakam bhakter āntaryāh su-mahat phalam Or, from another point of view (vā): Purity of heart (citta-śuddhir), which is the cause of satisfaction in the self (tad-dhetuh), may come about from performing one's prescribed duties (sva-dharmācāra) and this, after all, is a kind of devotional service (bhaktitah). Thus, the result (phalam) that comes from the external form of devotional service (bahyayas bhakter) is paltry (tv alpakam), and from the internal form (antaryah) sublime (su-mahat).

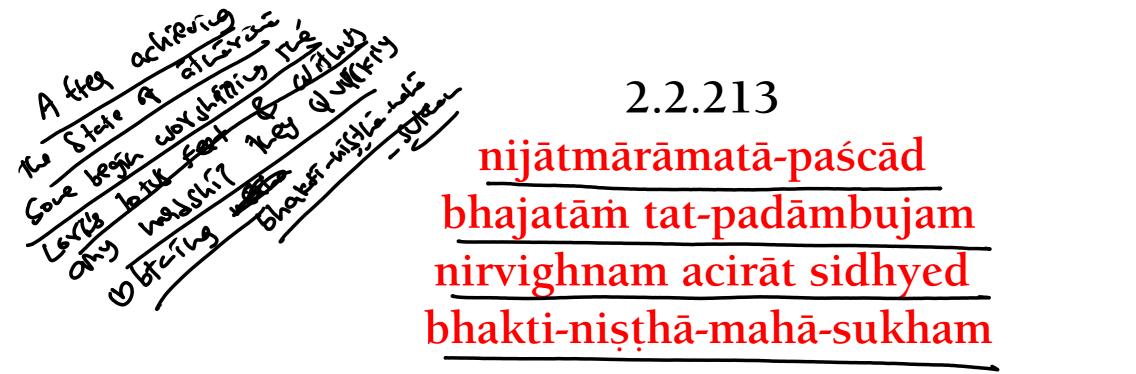
After all this discussion, some Vaisnavas may still insist on the principle that nothing at all can be achieved without at least a touch of bhakti.

To satisfy them, the bhakti-śāstras here look at the topic from another angle, as indicated by the word $va\chi$ or else").

The self-satisfaction aspired for by impersonalists arises from purified consciousness, which one may achieve by fulfilling one's duties within the varņāśrama system. And since performing such duties is a type of devotional service mixed with karma, it is true that even for an impersonalist success depends on bhakti.

In case someone objects that the fruit of devotional service cannot be satisfaction in the self but only love of God and nothing else, the bhaktiśāstras further say that following one's Vedic obligations is only devotional service in an external form.

As such it results in mere self-satisfaction, whereas the essential form of devotional service—through hearing and chanting about the Lord, remembering Him, and so on—bears the most desirable fruit, that of prema.



<u>After achieving impersonal self-satisfaction (nija ātmārāmatā-paścād)</u>, so<u>me begin worshiping the Lord's lotus feet (bhajatām tat-padāmbujam</u>), and without hardship (nirvighnam) they quickly obtain (acirāt sidhyed) the abundant happiness (mahā-sukham) of being fixed in devotional service (bhakti-niṣṭhā).

Of those who achieve satisfaction in the self, a rare few somehow particularly favored by the Supreme Lord give up their selfsatisfaction to worship Him.

They quickly reach the highest perfection.

Ordinary people, entangled in various miseries of material life, cannot at once succeed in devotional practice.

But self-satisfied impersonalists have already transcended the smallminded miserable existence of material life, so they can progress to joyful bhakti without delay. because anoattu-nivitti is average anoattu-

They quickly comprehend that what they knew before as the unnameable essence of liberated life—the reality of full eternity, knowledge, and bliss—is actually the all-attractive Personality of Godhead.

Some philosophers even hold that self-contented impersonalists are excellent candidates (uttama-adhikārīs) for bhakti.

<u>As the saying goes, gangā-snāna iva bhagavad-bhaktau sarve 'py adhikāriņaḥ</u>: "Just as for bathing in the Gangā, everyone is a fit candidate for the Supreme Lord's devotional service."

Nonetheless, in the opinion of Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī and his sampradāya, no material opulence, such as the ability to follow all the rules of varņāśrama, can qualify one for beginning the process of pure bhakti. In Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.14.8) Lord Brahmā confirms that pure devotion is easily attained simply by depending on the mercy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead (tat te 'nukampām su-samīkṣamāṇaḥ). There is no other means to attain it. By the Supreme Lord's mercy, one who practices bhakti, depending only on Him, will surely achieve complete happiness.

Devotion in practice gives birth to devotion in perfection.