



Nārada Bhakti Sūtra **Svāmī Tejomayānanda**

Talk 2

The title of our text is nārada bhakti sūtra, the exposition on devotion by Devarśi Nārada. Yesterday, I gave a brief life sketch about the greatness of this great Devarśi Nārada jī. Bhakti is going to expounded, so I don't have to speak about that now. But the word sūtra, we will just see.

One simple meaning of sūtra is a thread. When you see a garland of flowers or anything, one sūtra has to be there, on which the flowers are strung. Here this bhakti sūtra is a book in which all the principles, siddhānta, beauty of devotion are beautifully woven (together). They are called bhakti sūtra.

sūtra also means sūcanāt sūtra vidyā. sūcanā means it only briefly indicates something; an indicator, very brief. But then, we have to think over it and understand all its aspects. That is called sūtra, sūcanāt sūtram.

As far as the sūtra literature is concerned, then a few points are there. We know about the mantras of the Upaniṣad, the ślokaś of the Gītā or Rāmāyaṇa, and all that. But, Sanskrit is a very wonderful language. In this language, almost all kinds of subjects are given in the form of sūtras so that we can remember them easily. Including vyākaraṇa also, sūtra will be there. yogasūtras are there, brahmasūtra, (in the) pūrva mimāmsa (section of the vedas) the jaiminisūtras are there, bhakti sūtra.

Here the definition of a sūtra is – sūtra is that type of composition, it is not a poetry, it is not a śloka, it is not a big prose. But, minimum words are used. It is called alpākṣaram. But, brevity alone is not enough; there should be clarity also, asandhigdam. It should not be very vague kind of thing: no doubts, no vagueness. So, brevity and clarity. sāravat, it must be meaningful. Viśvatomukham, many, many aspects are there. astobham, one meaning is – unnecessary words should not be there, superfluous.



Sometimes the śloka and all, (for the sake of) pādapūrṇārtham (to complete the śloka) we say ca, vai and all that. Here nothing, not required. Also, astobham means akāṭyam, irrefutable. And anavadyam, nirdoṣa, flawless. Because sometimes there are grammatical mistakes. Sometimes, you say something, but the hidden meaning is different only, which is not very great. It has to be nirdoṣa, sūtram.

So what all things are there?

- minimum words
- but clearly meaning
- meaningful
- touching many aspects
- free from superfluous words
- akāṭyam, irrefutable
- and also nirdoṣa, flawless, of bhāvanā or other constructions

So, nārada, we have seen; sūtra also we have seen. Now bhakti we have to see. And Nārada jī is expounding on these things.

Generally what we find, the sūtras begin with the word atha. Now, as far as the yogasūtras are there, of Patanjali muni, it directly says, atha yogānuśasanam. But here it is, in vedantasūtras it is called, athāto brahmajijñāsa.

Now let us see what is the first sūtra here.

Sūtra 1. athāto bhaktimvyākhyāsāmaḥ

atha ato athaḥ, bhaktim vyākhyāsāmaḥ.

The word atha has got quite a few meanings. One meaning is, the very utterance of the word atha is maṅgalam, auspicious. Particularly in the Vedas, Om and atha, these two sounds are considered very auspicious. So, we are invoking auspiciousness. That is called atha.



(Another meaning of) atha means now. It also has got the meaning, thereafter. Meaning, after something.

Invoking that auspiciousness, atha, now, athaḥ, therefore bhaktimvyākhyāsāmaḥ. vyākhyāsāmaḥ is bahuvacana, which means, 'we shall expound the theme of devotion'. Sometimes some individual also speaks about himself in bahuvacanam; instead of saying I, they say 'we'. But here, vyākhyāsāmaḥ, because in this bhakti sūtra, Nārad jī has given the views of other ācāryas also. Therefore, plural number. 'We' stands for all these ācāryas also.

vyākhyāsāmaḥ, we shall 'expound', explain. It is not said that we will enquire, investigate. It is said, 'expound'. That means, whatever the experiences of people are there, of great men, according to that it will be expounded. What will be expounded? Bhakti, devotion.

athaḥ, therefore. When you say, 'therefore', there has to be some reasons. Why now suddenly you started describing? Now we shall expound! Why? Because we have now realised the need for it, therefore (we are expounding on it)! Up till now, you did not realise the need for it! Because our life goes on, very wonderfully. We say that all is well : I have got money, I have got family, I have got friends, and a very loving family is there, and all that which is there; and then we depend upon them also, and they also look after us and all. Therefore, we don't feel any need of all that.

One thing is true – loveless life is a joyless life. But, we get very satisfied with all this – the love of our relations, near and dear, friends, etc. And it goes on. We live in a peculiar kind of our own world. Then something can happen... something happens...

I am not going to tell the long story of Vālmīkī jī. He also thought... in his earlier life, he was looting all the pilgrims, yātris, travellers in the forest. Then Nārad jī came and said, "See, you are doing this, do you know you are incurring sin? Who will share that?" "Why! My family will share!" "That's what you think! Go and ask". 'Ah ha! Then you can run away?' "You can tie me down."



See, santa-mahātmās are such that to release an ignorant jivā from bondage, they are ready to get bound also, to a tree! He tied him and he went and asked (his family). (I don't want to elaborate too much, since everybody knows the story).

“I am incurring sin this way. Will you share that?”

‘No, no! That is your duty to look after us. How you do that, that is your problem!’ He got disillusioned. He woke up. And he said, now there is something more to life.

Strangely, he did not start beating them, because got some kind of awakening. He never thought.

In the Purānas, there is a story that an elephant, Gajendra, was caught by a crocodile. He tried his level best to release himself. All the other, the she-elephants, they also came. And the, samāptā mama yuktayaḥ! I can't release myself from all this! Only the prayer to God alone – nārāyaṇākhilagurorbhagavannamaste!

Unless in our life, we feel intensely that this (the world and its material objects) is not all that that is going to save me. This love, where we love all and are attached to material things, living beings, they are all wonderful and all that. But how much? What? Not that we have to hate them or any body... hating is not a good thing at all. Why should we hate anyone, or anything? But understand that this is not all the life.

Nārad jī told Vālmīki jī that now “Rāma nāma” only is going to save you.

That is called athaḥ. When we wake up from our sleep of ignorance and then all our dependence on worldly things, and we realise that is not what all that is. Then where I can find that?

Man feels that when he is in trouble, someone else is going to help. When a person goes to that person, that (other) person is already praying to someone else! That person is depending on someone else. So how can anybody help (anyone)? So, one beggar going to another beggar. He can only say, we both will go together! What else he can do?

What is bhaktim here? For now, we will only say ‘devotion’. But it has got many meanings – love, devotion, serving, dedicating, gaining.... so many meanings are there.



Now we saw, atha athaḥ bhaktim vyakhyāsyamaḥ. How all other ācāryas have also said about that bhakti, with that we shall try to understand what bhakti is.

Move on to second sūtra:

Sūtra 2. sā tvasmin paramapremarupā

sā means 'she', feminine pronoun. For who it is said sā? Arre, what was said in the first sūtra? bhaktim vyakhyāsyamaḥ. Naturally, this is the nature of bhakti? Immediately, our question would be and will be, 'Sir, you are going to tell us about bhakti. What is bhakti?' So it is said, sā, that bhakti, tvasmin - tvasmin means tu asmin. What is that bhakti? So the answer is – sā bhakti paramapremarupā. That means bhakti is prema rupā. But every kind of prema is not called bhakti. It is parama prema rupā. That which is parama prema, then that parama prema is called bhakti. Whenever we say love, (then it is) love for whom? Here it is said asmin. Asmin is also another sarvanāma (pronoun) only - 'this' (सर्वनाम). Parama prema for this, in this. What this, what is that 'this'? You find out! But you are writing, you have to tell, you know!

Interesting thing here. He is not saying śrī rāme parama prema, śrī kṛṣṇe parama prema, śrī śive! Nothing is said. Only asmin. It is sarvanāma, (you insert the name you like) whatever nāma you want!

parama-prema. Supreme love is another translation. Supreme love means unconditional love. This is one aspect. This love is not because of....something. If it is because of something, it is not parama then.

One young man and young woman were supposed to be in love with each other. The woman asked, "Do you love me because my father is going to give a lot of wealth?" He said, "Of course not! Even if your uncle was giving, I would have loved you!" Is that love? It is actually love for money.

This parama prema is called bhakti. This bhakti word is very interesting. That bhakti is always for someone else only. You see matr̥bhakti, pitr̥bhakti, gurubhakti, īśvarabhakti. All such words are there.



But ātmabhakti word is there? Have you heard of ātmabhakti? (No.) ātmajñānaṁ, ātmavicāraḥ, ātmaviśvāsaḥ, all such words are there. But ātmabhakti? Bhakti is always for someone else, someone higher than us. But when you say parama, unconditional. This prema, (is qualified by the word) parama shabda. paraḥ mīyate anena iti para prema. paraḥ - the supreme bhagavān, mīyate, jñāyate, prāpyate yena. That is called parama prema. That prema by which bhagavān comes. That is called parama prema. All our other premas, whatever we do, are good. They can purify the mind and take us higher, but paramātmā....

In śrīmad bhāgavat it is so beautifully said :

श्रीमद् भागवते महामुनिकृते किं वा परैरीश्वरः सद्योहृद्यवरुद्यतेऽत्र कृतिभिः शुश्रूषुभिः तत्सक्षनात् ।
śrīmad bhāgavate mahāmuniḥ kṛte kim vā parairīśvaraḥ sadyohṛdyavarudyate'tra
kṛtibhiḥ śuśrūṣubhiḥ tatksṣhanāt

This prema is such that when good people, sajjanas, when they only listen to this bhagavat kathā, that bhagavān is caught in their heart! By any other means, it may happen or not, but in this it will happen!

जिससे भगवान आपके हृदय में पकड़े जाते हैं, वही परम प्रेम है ।

That by which bhagavān comes to your heart as though you have captured Him and He stays there – हृदि अवरुद्यते ।

Sūrdāsa jī did not have vision of the eyes – he was prajñācakṣu. One evening, in the darkness, he was, as if, getting lost on the road, Bhagavān Bālakṛṣṇa comes, “bābā bābā, I will take you”. He was captivated. Who is saying this? Such sweet words. Slowly Sūrdāsa jī realised, madhurādhipati only can speak such madhur words. So, he started stretching his hands, trying to catch that Kṛṣṇa. And Kṛṣṇa, you know, it is difficult (to catch him), he just slipped away.

Sūrdāsa jī said, “aha, because I am weak physically and have some problem, taking me to be weak, You ran away! What big strength is that! But I have caught You in my heart, you try to get out from there, then I will consider you as really strong! Try!”



kiṁ vā parairīśvaraḥ sadyohṛdyavarudyate (caught in the heart). Unconditional love, not depending upon particular time, place, situation, circumstance; or you give me this, then I will love you, if you don't give, then I won't.... no such thing. All our other kinds of love can go on changing also.

So, which is that bhakti? The highest definition of bhakti, that is what Nārada jī has given. Because, that paramātmā you cannot limit to a particular name and form. People can worship Him in any form also.

One day I saw on the mirror, the company of the mirror was Supreme. Suddenly it struck me, supreme, if the last e you remove, it becomes suprema, सुप्रेम. Isn't it? What is supreme in life? It is suprema! Suprema is the supreme! And this suprema means bhagavān just comes to your heart, can't remain away from you.

I said ātmabhakti word we don't use – this is īśvara bhakti, paramātmā bhakti; paraḥ mīyate jñāyate, that love by which you come to know. In the Bhagavad Gītā, the Lord says, bhaktyā māmabhijānāti yāvānaśca cāsmi tattvataḥ. Then, he comes to know, where our love is, there only secrets of things are also revealed. This prema is parama prema. So now, we have to test: I got prema, prema, prema. In all these things, is this thing happening? Is it unconditional? Is this prema bringing God near to me or I am going near God? I just start loving. If that is happening, then that is bhakti!

sā tvasmin paramapremarupā, athāto bhaktim vyakhyāsāmaḥ.

This parama prema rupa is bhakti and then its svarupa is pointed out in the next sūtra, that we will see tomorrow.