

Narada Bhakti Sutra
A summary of Swami Tadatmananda's Discourse
December 5, 2006

To achieve the goal of uninterrupted *bhakti*, Narada, in the previous sutra (38) expressed the necessity for receiving the compassion of the great souls or a little bit of *Bhagavan's* grace. He continues with this topic.

Sutra 39: *Mahat-sangastu durlabho'gamyo'moghashcha*

Translation: But (To obtain) the company of some one great is extremely difficult, it is subtle, and infallible.

Commentary: Narada notes that finding a great soul, i.e., a proper teacher, is not only extremely difficult, but even when the opportunity arises it is not obvious; it is subtle. However, once an association is established with a teacher, the goal will be attained for sure.

The goal of uninterrupted *bhakti* is an extraordinary one, and so are the means to reach it. If one desires to be a world-class physicist, one needs to get the right means, i.e., a world-class education. Similarly, for uninterrupted *bhakti*, you need something that is extraordinary—you need a guru. Finding a Guru is *durlabha* (rarely found) as noted in the sutra. In fact, it's said that in this life three things are rare to achieve: the human birth, a desire for spiritual growth to achieve liberation (*moksha*) and, a right guru.

Uninterrupted *bhakti* does not imply becoming a *sanyaasi*. It means having a prayerful attitude towards everything one does, and thinking of God every moment. In other words, it is practicing karma yoga!

Just as light, when focused as a laser, is intensely more powerful than ordinary light, same way, mental energy totally focused on the Lord, and not dissipated to many different activities, will have the power to attain the state of uninterrupted *bhakti*.

Sutra 40: *Labhyate'pi tat-kripa yaiva*

Translation: Nevertheless it is attainable through God's grace.

Commentary: Even though finding a guru is extremely difficult, it can be found with the grace of God.

Sutra 41: *Tasmin tat-jane bheda-abhaavaat*

Translation: There is absence of (any) difference between Him and the one born of Him.

Commentary: One born of Him includes every one and everything meaning you and me and the teacher. And there is no difference between God and the one born of Him. Thus, between a teacher and God also there is no difference. The help you get from the teacher is help from God indeed! When you pray to God for food, you will not have it falling from the sky! God will send you help through some one. A guru is the same way-he is the blessing from the Lord to be reckoned as the answer to your prayers. And we have to be thankful to God for that.

Absence of a difference is to be understood with the perspective of the *Rishis* who stated that, "Everything indeed is God" (*sarvam kalvidam brahma*). It is with this perspective that we recognize divinity in every one. We bow down and touch the feet of people like our elders, teachers and saints. This is not worshipping a person. Hindus do not worship people! The act is symbolic of reverence for the divinity within every one, recognizing that the one receiving the gesture does not have the ego (*ahamkara* or sense of individuality) and the reverence bestowed upon that person is directed towards the Lord.

Sutra 42: *Tadeva saadhyataam tadeva saadhyataam*

Translation: That alone is to be sought after, that alone is to be sought after.

Commentary: The repetition in the sutra is to emphasize the point that teacher alone has to be sought after for the reason explained above.

Sutra 43: *Dussangaha sarvathaiva tyajyah*

Translation: Bad company must in all ways be shunned

Commentary: Association with great people, mentioned in sutra 39, has a great influence on us. We all need good company (*satsanga*) to keep ourselves on track of spiritual journey for several years. It is like a graduate student who needs to be in the company of other academics to help him reach his goal, rather than trying to go at it alone. *Dussanga* means association with people pursuing only the worldly goals and having no value for spiritual growth; such association will drag you down, and it is to be avoided in every possible way.

Sutra 44: *Kaama-krodha-moha-smriti-bhramsha-buddhi-naasha-kaarana-tvaat.*

Translation: Being the cause of desire, anger, delusion, loss of memory, loss of intellect, and utter ruin.

Commentary: Talking about *dussanga* (bad company), Narada says, that bad company is the cause of desire, anger, etc as enumerated in the sutra. Loss of memory implies a loss of sense of values, and loss of intellect is loss of reasoning power. This sutra clearly draws from the teachings of Bhagavad Gita, chapter 2, verses 62 and 63. In these verses, Lord Krishna describes how dwelling on sense

objects leads to attachment which in turn gives rise sequentially to desire, anger, delusion, loss of values, loss of reasoning, and finally complete ruin. Narada ascribes the same sequence of negative qualities to bad company, rather than to attachment as in Bhagavad Gita.

There is also a similar list of negative qualities known as six enemies: *kama*, *krodha*, *lobha*, *moha*, *mada*, and *matsarya* meaning desire, anger, greed delusion, pride, , and jealousy . These are subtle enemies, because they are hidden within us and they can destroy us. The only way to deal with them is to surround us with allies and friends, which means good qualities. We need to outnumber negative qualities by cultivating good qualities.

Sutra 45: *Tarangaayitaa apime sangaat samudraayante*

Translation: These, although starting as small waves, (become) like an ocean because of (bad) company.

Commentary: Because of bad company, the negative qualities, which start out as being small problems, like little waves, turn into huge problems like a big ocean.

Question Answer Session

Q: In reference to discussion of *navavidha bhakti*, discussed in the last lecture, if we relate to God as his friend or a servant, are we not limiting his vision as the one who is the whole creation?

A: Yes, in the beginning it is limiting His image, but it is extremely helpful, in developing a sense of devotion by developing a relationship. This devotion will then lead to the vision of God as the whole creation and its intelligence.
