

Narada Bhakti Sutra
A summary of Swami Tadatmananda's Discourse
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In the previous talk, Swamiji compared three kinds of love: *kama* (sexual attraction), *prema* (emotional love), and *bhakti* (roughly translated as divine love for God; although there is no exact English word). The object of love for the three is different. For *kama* the object is physical or physical craving, for *prema* it is emotional craving. *Prema* is conventional love, which is not an unconditional form of love, and it is rarely 100% selfless. Even parent's love is attachment and mixed with some desire.

All human conventional behavior is driven by desire. We fulfill desires through *kama*, meaning in this context, any physical satisfaction; and through *prema* for emotional satisfaction. Even when you give love, you are fulfilling your emotional desire. *Kama*, *prema*, and *bhakti* are utterly different from each other. *Bhakti* is much more than emotional love; it is a constant and an abiding love. Emotional love comes and goes; it is changing all the time. A devotee may have a "spasm" of devotion while praying at the altar, but after the prayer, the "spasm" is gone! This is a "spasmodic devotee", as Pujya Swami Dayananada puts it, in a lighter vein.

Rishis made the insightful discovery that we feel a need to pursue and fulfill our desires because we feel a sense of incompleteness. When we take account of ourselves, in terms of our physical, emotional, and spiritual status, we find ourselves lacking. This sense of lack prompts desires so as to get rid of that sense of lacking. What we really need is a sense of contentment, which means to feel okay exactly as we are, whatever our situation is. Fulfillment of desires through *kama* and *prema* will never give us that sense of contentment. But, *bhakti* will! *Bhakti* is to discover that you are already full. *Bhakti* addresses the "fundamental problem" which we define as a sense of incompleteness. And fulfillment of desires will not make one complete. Objects of *kama* and *prema* are out there; object of *bhakti* is the divinity that dwells within!

With this background we will start with the first sutra of the text (Narada's Bhakti).

(Note: double "aa" is used to indicate the long form of the vowel "a", in lieu of an "a" with a diacritical mark of an over line.)

Sutra 1: “*Athaato bhaktim vyaakhyaasyaamah*”; translation, “Now hereafter we will explain *bhakti*.”

Commentary: *Athah* (now) is an auspicious word, and it implies prayer. After (*ato*) recognizing that *kama* and *prema* are not enough, we will explain *bhakti*.

Sutra 2: “*Saa toasmin parama prema rupa*”; translation: “But, that *bhakti*, which is of the form of supreme (limitless) love is in this”.

Commentary: “But” introduces the other perspective, i.e., what is different from *kama* and *prema*. “*Parama prema rupa*” is that which has no boundary; it is infinite, it is limitless and unconditional. *Prema* can be a lot of love but never infinite. *Bhakti* is described as being located in “this”. It is very significant that the author has chosen the pronoun “this” which is grammatically neuter gender in Sanskrit rather than any name for *Bhagvan*. It refers to “this” which is near and within, without attributes, not that which is outside. Any attributes, or any names- *Bhagvan* or *Ishvara*- would be limiting the limitless “this” to whom *bhakti* is directed. Later in our study, we will see that such a form of *bhakti* is *sadhya bhakti* (goal directed) versus *sadhana bhakti* (means to an end); that understanding will further clarify the concept of “this”.
