



The Way of Divine Love

As Taught by Narada

Translated and with a commentary by

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This is a continuation of the Bhakti Sutras of Narada with Commentary—soon to appear in book form.

30. *Narada says that spiritual realization is its own fruit.*

Supreme love is identical with spiritual realization, which is its own fruit. Narada thereby indicates that the unfoldment of divinity which is within, is not the effect of any other cause. That which is the effect of any other cause is bound to be something finite, because causation works within relativity and finitude. Spiritual realization is something eternal and infinite.

My Master, Swami Brahmananda, used to say, "God is not a commodity that can be bought." Then, one may ask, what need is there of spiritual disciplines? What need of the Vedas or the Bible or other spiritual teachings? They also are within relativity and bound by the law of causation. In short, they are all within what the Vedantists call *maya*.

But we must remember that there are two aspects of *maya* — *vidya* and *avidya*. *Vidya* is that which ultimately leads us beyond *maya*, and *avidya* is that which

binds us more firmly to maya and greater ignorance. Scriptures, teachings, and spiritual disciplines belong to the vidya maya which leads us to freedom from maya. It is not that "illumined knowledge of God or supreme love" is simply the *effect* of these disciplines and teachings. God is already dwelling within and that Pure Knowledge which is one with supreme love is already there, being identical with God. But God, who is dwelling within, is covered by ignorance. Though spiritual disciplines as taught by the teachers and scriptures are finite, they remove ignorance, which is also finite. As the ignorance is removed, the divinity within us becomes unfolded. Sri Ramakrishna used the illustration of a thorn stuck in your flesh. You use another thorn to take it out, and then throw both away.

The Vedas teach that we must reach the stage when Vedas become no Vedas. And Shankara says: "The Vedas, the Puranas, all scriptures and all living creatures only exist because the Atman exists. How then can any of them reveal the Atman, which is the revealer of everything."

31. & 32. *A man cannot please a king by merely knowing about him and seeing his palace, nor can a man satisfy his hunger by the mere knowledge and sight of food, similarly a man cannot be satisfied by the knowledge or perception of God until love comes.*

The Bible tells us how some of Christ's disciples did not recognize his true nature, even though they were all living together, until he revealed himself to them. Jesus said to Thomas, "If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also; and from henceforth ye know him and have seen him.

"Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father: and how sayest thou then? Show us the Father. Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself; but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father in me; or else believe me for the very works' sake." [John 14:7-11]

Also let us remember that Jesus asked Peter, "Lovest thou me?" Thus it is that when love comes, God reveals himself. That Jesus was one with the Father, was also revealed by him to his disciples when he underwent transfiguration. One of the greatest indications of the truth that God incarnates as a human being, is that he transfigures himself before his disciples.

In the eleventh book of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, we find Sri Krishna revealing himself as God in his universal form to his beloved disciple and friend Arjuna. And he reveals himself to all those who love him dearly.

Sri Ramakrishna also underwent transfiguration before his beloved disciples many times. Years after his passing away, Swami Saradananda asked my Master to look at the model of a statue of Sri Ramakrishna, and see if he approved of it. Maharaj was then in a high spiritual mood, and he asked, "But which form of the Master?" Maharaj had seen Sri Ramakrishna transfigured into many forms; once, as a young boy, he saw him as Mother Kali and went into *samadhi*.

The Lord may come to us in many forms, but we

do not always recognize him, unless he reveals himself to us, and until we have deep love for him.

I shall relate a personal experience in this connection. Many years ago, four of us *brahmacharis* went on a pilgrimage to Badri-Narayana, in the Himalayas. One amongst us was Gurudas Maharaj [Swami Atulananda], who was a Westerner. Priests normally do not allow any Westerner to go inside the shrine of a Hindu temple. However, when we arrived we found many pilgrims seated in the courtyard of the temple; the doors were then closed. We also were seated in a corner of the courtyard with the other pilgrims. A few minutes later I saw a priest beckoning to me. As I approached him, he said, "Ask your friends also to come with me." He took us around by the side of the temple, opened the door and let us enter into the innermost shrine. When other pilgrims wanted to enter, he said, "No, it is not for you yet." And he shut the door. Then we saw this priest standing beside the deity. It did not occur to us then that as a general rule, no priest does this. He always stands facing the deity. After a few minutes of *darshan*, we were asked by the priest to go out, and then the door was locked again.

A little later, the head priest refused to allow us to enter the sanctum sanctorum, though he made arrangements for us to look at the deity, at a time when other pilgrims were not allowed to enter, so that our view would be unobstructed. And the head priest also gave us accommodation and sent us delicious sacramental food. We were there for three days and three nights as honored guests. During our stay we became acquainted with the few other priests who lived there.

But it seemed strange to us that we never saw the priest who took us to the innermost shrine. On our way back, we visited Swami Turiyananda, a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, who was then living at Almora in the Himalayas, and we reported the incident to him. He said excitedly, "Ah! You fools! Didn't you recognize the Lord? It was He who appeared in that form and led you to the innermost shrine!"

33. Therefore, those who desire to transcend all limitations and bondages (of birth, death, rebirth, of all the pairs of opposites in this relative world) must accept supreme love as the highest goal.

"God alone can fill our soul." In him alone is the immortal bliss. Until we reach this unitary consciousness, we remain subject to the bondages of birth and death, and to all the pairs of opposites—pleasure and pain, virtue and vice, and so forth.

When this supreme love arises, Brahman or God is experienced within the shrine of one's own heart, and the same Reality is seen in all.

Sri Ramakrishna said once to his disciples who were seated before him, "I see Rama, the supreme Being, seated before me in so many forms." And once my Master said to me, "I see God playing, wearing so many masks—the mask of a sinner or of a saint."

In the *Chhandogya Upanishad* we read, "The Infinite is below, above, behind, before, to the right, to the left. This Infinite is the Self. The Self [Atman] is below, above, behind, before, to the right, to the left. I am all this. One who knows, meditates upon, and realizes the truth of the Self—such a one delights in the Self, revels in the Self, rejoices in the Self."

Shankara, describing the state of an illumined soul who has attained unitary consciousness, says, "No matter what he is doing—walking, standing, sitting or lying down—the illumined seer whose delight is the Atman lives in joy and freedom."

This describes the illumined seer, who has attained the *supreme love*—the complete unfoldment of divinity. That must be the goal of all human beings.

CHAPTER V

34. *The great teachers describe in hymns and songs the following as the means of attaining supreme love.*

I have translated the Sanskrit word *acharyas* as "great teachers." The word has a deep significance. Who is said to be a spiritual teacher? He who has directly experienced the truth of God; he who has attained that supreme love, is the acharya, the real teacher. He is moved by compassion for his fellow beings, and helps the spiritual aspirants to realize the same truth. There is power behind the words he speaks. Mere book learning is of no avail.

To quote Shankara: "Erudition, well-articulated speech, a wealth of words, and skill in expounding the scriptures—these things give pleasure to the learned, but they do not bring liberation.

"Study of the scriptures is fruitless as long as Brahman has not been experienced."

Now the question arises, what need is there to practice spiritual disciplines? For we have already shown that supreme love or the experience of Brahman is not an effect or dependent upon any cause. It is

already an accomplished fact—the divinity is already there within each human soul. Only there is ignorance covering it. As we read in the Gospel according to St. John: “The Light shineth in darkness, but the darkness comprehended it not.” So *sadhana* or spiritual disciplines are needed only to remove this darkness or ignorance.

This truth is also emphasized in another way by the doctrine of divine grace. The *Katha Upanishad* states: “The Self is not known through study of the scriptures, nor through subtlety of intellect, nor through much learning. Whom the Self chooses, by him is he attained. Verily unto him does the Self reveal his true being.”

But whom does He choose? He who longs for Him. Sri Ramakrishna used to say, “Practice, practice the spiritual disciplines and then that longing and yearning for God will arise. The darkness of the night vanishes when the sun rises. Weep for him, yearn with a longing heart, and the sun of knowledge will arise and darkness will vanish.”

Shankara points out: “Faith, devotion, and constant union with God through prayer—these are declared by the sacred scriptures to be the seeker’s direct means of liberation.

“A buried treasure is not uncovered by merely uttering the words ‘Come forth.’ You must follow the right directions, dig, remove the stones and earth from above it, and then make it your own. In the same way, the pure truth of the Atman, which is buried under *maya* and the effects of *maya*, can be reached by meditation, contemplation and other spiritual disci-

plines such as a knower of Brahman may prescribe—but never by subtle arguments.”

From the quotation above, one might suppose that we reach that unfoldment through our own efforts. But as a matter of fact, through the practice of these disciplines we feel the grace of God. Every mystic who has had any kind of experience or realization, whether it is only an ecstasy, or the lower samadhi, or the highest transcendental consciousness, will admit that—such experience flashes on the consciousness with such suddenness that he knows it is coming from beyond, as if a big magnet were drawing his mind into that experience beyond normal consciousness. It is a direct experience of God and his grace.

Sri Ramakrishna used to say, “The breeze of grace is blowing, set your sail to catch that breeze.” And my Master often said, “If you take one step towards God, he comes down a hundred steps towards you.”

Also my Master used to declare, “A man may struggle for success in the world; in some field of life, he may succeed or he may fail. Yet even if he succeeds, it is only something fleeting. But in spiritual life, if a man struggles, there is never any failure—and he achieves That which is Eternal.”

Narada has defined the goal, the true nature of supreme love. Now he is going to give us the methods by which that goal can be reached. There are, however, many methods for attaining the goal. Narada summarizes all the various teachings of the acharyas, the illumined teachers, in the following aphorisms. One may adopt one, or several, or all of these methods to reach the goal.

They may be divided into two groups—negative

and positive. Both are necessary, but in the way of divine love more emphasis is laid upon the positive aspect of the disciplines. As Sri Ramakrishna used to say, "As you move towards the light, darkness is left behind." Or as we read in the *Srimad Bhagavatam*: "Be devoted to the Lord, fix your heart firmly on the Lord, and that will bring forth instantaneously vai-ragya, or dispassion, and jnana, direct revelation of the Lord."