

Text & Translation of Nārada's Bhakti Sūtra

The following text and translation of Nārada's Bhakti Sūtra is by William K. Mahony and available in his book, *Exquisite Love*.

Sutra 1

अथातो भक्तिं व्याख्यास्यामः ॥

athāto bhaktim vyākhyāsyāmaḥ

Now, therefore, we will speak of bhakti.

Sutra 2

सा त्वस्मिन् परमप्रेमरूपा ॥

sā tvasmin paramapremarūpā

It, truly, is of the nature of the highest form of love in this.

Sutra 3

अमृतस्वरूपा च ॥

amṛtasvarūpā ca

And it is of the nature of ambrosia.

Sutra 4

यल्लब्ध्वा पुमान् सिद्धो भवत्यमृतो भवति तृप्तो भवति ॥

yal-labhvā pumān siddho bhavatyamṛto bhavati tṛpto bhavati

Attaining it, a person becomes perfected, becomes immortal, becomes content.

Sutra 5

यत् प्राप्य न किञ्चिद् वाञ्छति न शोचति

न द्वेष्टि न रमते नोत्साही भवति ॥

yat prāpya na kiñcid vāñchati na śocati na dveṣṭi na ramate notsāhī bhavati

Having reached it, a person neither desires anything [else], nor grieves, nor hates, nor enjoys [anything else], nor is active [in pursuit of selfish ends].

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Sutra 6

यज्ज्ञात्वा मत्तो भवति स्तब्धो भवत्यात्मारामो भवति ॥

yaj-jñātvā matto bhavati stabdho bhavati ātmārāmo bhavati

Having known which, one becomes ecstatic, one becomes stilled, one comes to delight in the Self.

Sutra 7

सा न कामयमाना निरोधरूपत्वात् ॥

sā na kāmayaṁānā nirodharūpatvāt

It does not arise from desire because it is of the nature of calming control.

Sutra 8

निरोधस्तु लोकवेदव्यापारन्यासः ॥

nirodhastu lokavedavyāpāranyāsaḥ

This control is the consecration of worldly and sacred activity.

Sutra 9

तस्मिन्ननन्यता तद्विरोधिषूदासिनता च ॥

tasminnananyatā tadvirodhiṣūdāsinatā ca

And, in this, there is non-otherness and disinterest in that which goes against it.

Sutra 10

अन्याश्रयाणां त्यागोऽनन्यता ॥

anyāśrayāṇāṁ tyāgo'nanyatā

In this non-otherness there is relinquishment of [all other] refuges.

Sutra 11

लोकवेदेषु तदनुकूलाचरणं ताद्विरोधिषूदासीनता ॥

lokavedeṣu tadanukūlācaraṇaṁ tadvirodhiṣūdāsīnatā

Disinterest in that which goes against it [refers] to the performance of worldly and sacred activities that are favorable to that [love].

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Sutra 12

भवतु निश्चयदाढ्यादूर्ध्वं शास्त्ररक्षणम् ॥

bhavatu niścayadārḍhyādūrdhvaṁ śāstrarakṣaṇam

Even after [spiritual love arises in the heart], let there be a firm commitment to heeding the teachings.

Sutra 13

अन्यथा पातित्यशङ्कया ॥

anyathā pātityaśaṅkayā

Otherwise, there is danger of a fall.

Sutra 14

लोकोऽपि तावदेव भोजनादिव्यापारस्त्वाशरीरधारणावधि ॥

loko'pi tāvadeva bhojanādivyāpārastvāśarīradhāraṇāvadhi

Certainly, also, let there be the performance of worldly activities such as eating that are essential to supporting the life of the body until its end.

Sutra 15

तल्लक्षणानि वाच्यन्ते नानामतभेदात् ॥

tal-lakṣaṇāni vācyante nānāmatābhedaṭ

There are different descriptions of the characteristics of that [love] because there are various ways of understanding it.

Sutra 16

पूजादिष्वनुराग इति पाराशर्यः ॥

pūjādiṣvanurāga iti pārāśaryaḥ

According to the son of Parāśarya (that is to say, according to the sage Vyāsa) [bhakti] is an affectionate feeling in worship and other [practices].

Sutra 17

कथादिष्विति गर्गः ॥

kathādiṣviti gargaḥ

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According to Garga, [bhakti] is [expressed through the telling of sacred] stories and so forth.

Sutra 18

आत्मरत्यविरोधेनेति शाण्डिल्यः ॥

ātmaratyavirodheneti śāṇḍilyaḥ

According to Śāṇḍilya, [bhakti] is consonant with delight in the Self.

Sutra 19

नारदस्तु तदर्पिताखिलाचारता तद्विस्मरणे परमव्याकुलतेति ॥

nāradaṣtu tadarpitākḥilācārātā tadvismaraṇe paramavyākulateti

According to Nārada, however, it is when all of one's manner of action is of a consecrated nature and when there is supreme sense of being lost upon forgetting.

Sutra 20

अस्त्येवमेवम् ॥

astyevamevam

It is in these various ways [that bhakti is understood].

Sutra 21

यथा ब्रजगोपिकानाम् ॥

yathā vrajagopikānām

An example [of bhaktas would be] the cowherd women of Vraja.

Sutra 22

तत्रापि न माहात्म्यज्ञानविस्मृत्यपवादः ॥

tatrāpi na mātmyajñānavismṛtyapavādaḥ

Even in this case, there can be no objection regarding their forgetfulness of the knowledge of [God's] magnificence.

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Sutra 23

तद्विहीनं जाराणामिव ॥

tadvihīnaṁ jārāṇāmiva

For without that [knowledge, sentiments would be] like that of decadent lovers.

Sutra 24

नास्त्येव तस्मिंस्तत्सुखित्वम् ॥

nāstyeva tasmimstatsukhitvam

The happiness in such [selfish passion] is not happiness in this [the Beloved].

Sutra 25

सा तु कर्मज्ञानयोगेभ्योऽप्यधिकतरा ॥

sā tu karmajñānayogebhyo'pyadhikatarā

[The happiness of spiritual love] is greater even than [happiness derived from] action, knowledge and other forms of yoga.

Sutra 26

फलरूपत्वात् ॥

phalarūpatvāt

This is because [spiritual love is] the essence of the fruit [of these other forms of spiritual practice].

Sutra 27

ईश्वरस्याप्यभिमानिद्वेष्टादैन्यप्रियत्वाच्च ॥

īśvarasyāpyabhimānidveṣṭādainyapriyatvācca

Also, [this difference between devotional love and other sentiments is due to] the Lord's aversion to the arrogant and fondness for humility.

Sutra 28

तस्या ज्ञानमेव साधनमित्येके ॥

tasyā jñānameva sādhanamityeke

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According to some, knowledge alone is the means [to spiritual love].

Sutra 29

अन्योन्याश्रयत्वमित्येके ॥

anyonyāśrayatvamityeke

According to some, there is an interdependence between the various [means].

Sutra 30

स्वयम् फलरूपतेति ब्रह्मकुमारः ॥

svayam phalarūpateti brahmakumārah

According to the son of Brahmā [that is to say, Nārada], it is of the nature of its own fruit.

Sutra 31

राजगृहभोजनादिषु तथैव दृष्टत्वात् ॥

rājagṛhabhojanādiṣu tathaiva dṛṣṭatvāt

That this is so can be seen in the examples of a king, a home, eating, and so on.

Sutra 32

न तेन राजपरितोषःक्षुच्छान्तिर्वा ॥

na tena rājaparitoṣaḥ kṣucchāntir-vā

Not by this is a king satisfied or hunger appeased.

Sutra 33

तस्मात् सैव ग्राह्य मुमुक्षुभिः ॥

tasmāt saiva grāhya mumukṣubhiḥ

Accordingly, those who yearn for liberation should embrace this [love] alone.

Sutra 34

तस्याः साधनानि गायन्त्याचार्याः ॥

tasyāḥ sādhanāni gāyanty-ācāryāḥ

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Spiritual teachers sing of the means of [developing] this.

Sutra 35

तत्तु विषयत्यागात् सङ्गत्यागाच्च ॥

tat-tu viṣayatyāgāt saṅgatyāgāc-ca

One can attain that [spiritual love], however, from renunciation of sense objects and from the renunciation of attachment.

Sutra 36

अव्यावृत्तभजनात् ॥

avyāvṛtta-bhajanāt

From unceasing loving worship.

Sutra 37

लोकेऽपि भगवद्गुणश्रवणकीर्तनात्

loke 'pi bhagavad-guṇa-śravaṇa-kīrtanāt

Even while in the world, [spiritual love arises] from hearing and singing forth God's qualities.

Sutra 38

मुख्यतस्तु महत्कृपयैव भगवद्कृपालेशाद्वा ॥

mukhyatastu mahat-kṛpayaiva bhagavad-kṛpā-leśād-vā

Indeed, it is primarily through the compassionate grace of a great one, or through a portion of the compassionate grace of God.

Sutra 39

महत्सङ्गस्तु दुर्लभोऽगम्योऽमोघश्च ॥

mahat-saṅgas-tu durlabho 'gamyo 'moghaś-ca

Although companionship of a great one is difficult to attain, it is unfathomable, and it is unfailing.

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Sutra 40

लभ्यतेऽपि तत्कृपयैव ॥

labhyate 'pi tat-krpayaiva

It is only through grace that this companionship is gained.

Sutra 41

तस्मिंस्तज्जने भेदाभावात् ॥

tasmiṁs-taj-jane bhedābhāvāt

Because there is no difference between that and those arising from it.

Sutra 42

तदेव साध्यतां तदेव साध्यताम् ॥

tadeva sādhyatām tadeva sādhyatām

That alone is to be cultivated, that alone is to be cultivated.

Sutra 43

दुःसङ्गः सर्वथैव त्याज्यः ॥

duḥsaṅgaḥ sarvathaiva tyājyaḥ

Harmful association in every respect is to be given up.

Sutra 44

कामक्रोधमोहस्मृतिभ्रंशबुद्धिनाशसर्वनाशकारणत्वात् ॥

kāma-krodha-moha-smṛtibhramśa-buddhināśa-sarvanāśa-kāraṇatvāt

Harmful association is the cause of selfish desire, anger, delusion, lapse in remembrance, loss of clear wisdom and the ruin of all.

Sutra 45

तरङ्गायिता अपीमे सङ्गात् समुद्रायन्ति ॥

taraṅgāyitā apīme saṅgāt samudrāyanti

From small ripples of attachment swell [waves on a wild] sea.

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Sutra 46

कस्तरति कस्तरति मायां यः सङ्गं त्यजति यो
महानुभावं सेवते निर्ममो भवति ॥

kas-tarati kas-tarati māyām yaḥ saṅgaṁ tyajati yo mahānubhāvaṁ sevate nirmamo bhavati

Who crosses, who rises above, the [ocean of] illusion? One who lets go of clinging [to harmful associations], who serves those [immersed in] the great sentiment [of sublime spiritual love], who is free from the sense of “mine”...

Sutra 47

यो विविक्तस्थानं सेवते यो लोकबन्धमुन्मूलयति
निस्त्रैगुण्यो भवति यो योगक्षेमं त्यजति ॥

yo vivikta-sthānaṁ sevate yo lokabandham-unmūlayati nistraiguṇyo bhavati yo yogakṣemaṁ tyajati

...who abides in solitude, who dissolves bondage to the world, who becomes free of the three guṇas, who relinquishes [dependence on worldly] acquisitions and security...

Sutra 48

यः कर्मफलं त्यजति कर्माणि संन्यस्यति ततो निर्द्वन्द्वो भवति ॥

yaḥ karmaphalaṁ tyajati karmāṇi saṁnyasyati tato nirdvandvo bhavati

...who relinquishes the fruits of actions, renounces actions, becomes free of dualism.

Sutra 49

यो वेदानपि संन्यस्यति केवलमविच्छिन्नानुरागं लभते ॥

yo vedānapi saṁnyasyati kevalam-avicchinannānurāgaṁ labhate

Relinquishing even [rites enjoined by the] Vedas, a complete, unceasing, intense affection [for God] alone is attained.

Sutra 50

स तरति स तरति लोकांस्तारायति ॥

sa tarati sa tarati lokāṁs-tārāyati

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[The bhakta] crosses [the torrent], [the bhakta] crosses [the torrent]. [The bhakta] helps all in the world to cross.

Sutra 51

अनिर्वचनीयं प्रेमस्वरूपम् ॥

anirvacanīyaṁ prema-svarūpam

The essential nature of love cannot be expressed in words.

Sutra 52

मूकास्वादनावत् ॥

mūkāsvādanavat

It is like one who cannot speak [attempting to describe] flavor.

Sutra 53

प्रकाश्यते क्वापि पात्रे ॥

prakāśyate kvāpi pātre

It reveals itself wherever there is an able vessel.

Sutra 54

गुणरहितं कामनरहितं प्रतिक्षणवर्धमानम्
अविच्छिन्नं सूक्ष्मतरम् अनुभवरूपम् ॥

guṇarahitaṁ kāmanarahitaṁ pratikṣaṇavardhamānam avicchinnaṁ sūkṣmataram
anubhavarūpam

It is free of limiting qualities, free of self-centered desire, ever-expanding, uninterrupted, most subtle, of the nature of inner experience.

Sutra 55

तत् प्राप्य तदेवावलोकयति तदेव शृणोति तदेव चिन्तयति ॥

tat-prāpya tad-evāvalokayati tadeva śṛṇoti tadeva cintayati

That being attainable, one sees that only, hears that only and thinks of that only.

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Sutra 56

गौणी त्रिधा गुणभेदादर्तादिभेदाद्वा ॥

gauṇī tridhā guṇabhedād-artādi-bhedād-vā

Preparatory [bhakti] is of three kinds according to the difference in one's nature or to difference in distress and so on.

Sutra 57

ऊत्तरस्मादुत्तरस्मात् पूर्वापूर्वा श्रेयाय भवति ॥

uttarasmād-uttarasmāt pūrvapūrvā śreyāya bhavati

Each succeeding one becomes more splendid than the preceding one.

Sutra 58

अन्यस्मात् सौलभ्यं भक्तौ ॥

anyasmāt saulabhyaṁ bhaktau

The [more splendid] state of spiritual love is easier to attain than others.

Sutra 59

प्रमाणान्तरस्यानपेक्षत्वात् स्वयं प्रमाणत्वात् ॥

pramāṇāntarasyānapekṣatvāt svayaṁ pramāṇatvāt

[It is easier to realize] because its proof is self-evident and because it does not need proof in another manner.

Sutra 60

शान्तिरूपात् परमानन्दरूपाच्च ॥

śāntirūpāt paramānandarūpācca

It is of the nature of peace, and it is of the nature of supreme joy.

Sutra 61

लोकहानौ चिन्ता न कार्या निवेदितात्मलोकवेदत्वात् ॥

lokahānau cintā na kāryā niveditātmalokavedatvāt

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There should be no anxiety in relinquishing [the ways of the] world because one dedicates the world, oneself and one's sacred activities [to God].

Sutra 62

न सत्सिद्धौ लोकव्यवहारो हेयः किन्तु फलत्यागस्तत्साधनञ्च कार्यमेव ॥

na sat-siddhau loka-vyavahāro heyaḥ kintu phala-tyāgas-tat-sādhanañ-ca kāryam-eva

In the development of [spiritual love], it is not worldly activity that is to be renounced, but rather the fruit [of that activity]; and one should cultivate the spiritual disciplines for this.

Sutra 63

स्त्रीधननास्तिकचरित्रं न श्रवणियम् ॥

strīdhananāstikacaritraṁ na śravaṇīyam

One should not listen to [others' conversations about] sexual relations, wealth and the deeds of faithless people.

Sutra 64

अभिमानदम्भादिकं त्याज्यम् ॥

abhimāna-dambhādikaṁ tyājyam

Arrogance, deceit and so forth are to be renounced.

Sutra 65

तदर्पिताखिलाचारः सन् कामक्रोधाभिमानादिकं
तस्मिन्नेव करणीयम् ॥

tad-arpitākhilācāraḥ san kāma-krodhābhimānādikaṁ tasminn-eva karaṇīyam

Offering all of one's actions [to God], one should act on [self-centered] desire, anger, pride and so on only in [relation to one's offering] to God.

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Sūtra 66

त्रिरूपभङ्गपूर्वकं नित्यदास्यनित्यकान्तभजनात्मकं
प्रेम कार्यं प्रेमैव कार्यम् ॥

tri-rūpa-bhaṅga-pūrvakaṁ nitya-dāśya-nitya-kānta-bhajanātmakaṁ prema kāryaṁ
premaiva kāryam

The three forms of [conditional love] previously mentioned are surpassed when the self offers devotion [that is like that of] a constant servant or a constant lover. One should act out of love. Truly, one should act out of love.

Sūtra 67

भक्ता एकान्तिनो मुख्याः ॥

bhaktā ekāntino mukhyāḥ

The foremost bhaktas are those who are one-pointed.

Sūtra 68

कण्ठावरोधरोमाश्रुभिः परस्परं लपमानाः
पावयन्ति कुलानि पृथिवीञ्च ॥

kaṇṭhāvarodha-romāśrubhiḥ parasparaṁ lapamānāḥ pāvayanti kulāni pṛthivīñ-ca

Their voices choking when talking with each other, with physical exhilaration, and with tears flowing from their eyes, they purify their communities and the earth.

Sūtra 69

तीर्थीकुर्वन्ति तीर्थानि सुकर्मो कुर्वन्ति कर्माणि
सच्छास्त्रीकुर्वन्ति शास्त्राणि ॥

tīrthī-kurvanti tīrthāni sukarmī-kurvanti karmāṇi sac-chāstrī-kurvanti śāstrāṇi

They turn [all] places into sacred places. They make [all] activities into beneficial activities. They make teachings into true sacred guidance.

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Sutra 70

तन्मयाः ॥

tanmayāḥ

They are absorbed in that.

Sutra 71

मोदन्ते पितरो नृत्यन्ति देवताः सनाथा चेयं भूर्भवति ॥

modante pitaro nṛtyanti devatāḥ sanāthā ceyam bhūr-bhavati

Ancestors rejoice, gods dance, and the earth becomes protected [by this love], as if by a master.

Sutra 72

नास्ति तेषु जातिविद्यारूपकुलधनक्रियादिभेदः ॥

nāsti teṣu jāti-vidyā-rūpa-kula-dhana-kriyādibhedaḥ

Among them there are no distinctions based on birth, learning, beauty, family, wealth and so on.

Sutra 73

यतस्तदीयः ॥

yatas-tadīyaḥ

Since they belong to Him.

Sutra 74

वादो नावलम्ब्यः ॥

vādo nāvalambyaḥ

There should be no reliance on [contentious] doctrine.

Sutra 75

बाहुल्यावकाशात्वादनियतत्वाच्च ॥

bāhulyāvakāśātvād-aniyatatvāc-ca

Because there is room for many arguments and because they do not lead to certainty.

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Sutra 76

भक्तिशास्त्राणि मनननीयानि तद्बोधकर्माणि करणीयानि ॥

bhaktiśāstrāṇi mananānīyāni tadbodhakarmāṇi karaṇīyāni

Teachings on bhakti should be reflected on; practices that awaken it should be undertaken.

Sutra 77

सुखदुःखेच्छालाभादित्यक्ते काले प्रतीक्षमाणे
क्षणार्द्धमपि व्यर्थं न नेयम् ॥

sukha-duḥkheccā-lābhādityakte kāle pratikṣamāṇe kṣaṇārdham-api vyartham na neyam

Relinquishing happiness, dissatisfaction, self-centered willfulness, worldly gain, and so on, when there is mindfulness in every moment, not even half an instant should be passed uselessly.

Sutra 78

अहिंसासत्यशौचदयास्तिक्यादिचारित्र्याणि परिपालनीयानि ॥

ahimsā-satya-śauca-dayāstikyādi-cāritryāṇi paripālānīyāni

Unwillingness to do harm, truthfulness, purity, generous compassion, the affirmation of Divinity and other such beneficial modes of conduct are to be fully protected.

Sutra 79

सर्वदा सर्वभावेन निश्चिन्तैर्भगवानेव भजनीयः ॥

sarvadā sarvabhāvena niścintair-bhagvān-eva bhajanīyaḥ

God alone is to be worshipped by those without worry all the time with all the heart.

Sutra 80

स कीर्त्यमानः शीघ्रमेवाविर्भवत्यनुभावयति भक्तान् ॥

sa kīrttyamānaḥ śīghram-evāvirbhavaty-anubhāvayati bhaktān

When there is singing [of God's qualities], then [God] immediately reveals his presence in the devotees' experience.

Text & Translation of Nārada's Bhakti Sūtra

Sutra 81

त्रिसत्यस्य भक्तिरेव गरीयसी भक्तिरेव गरीयसी ॥

tri-satyasya bhaktir-eva garīyasī bhaktir-eva garīyasī

Within the three-fold reality, spiritual love alone is of the greatest significance. Spiritual love alone is of the greatest significance.

Sutra 82

गुणमहात्म्यासाक्ति-रूपासक्ति-पूजासक्ति-
स्मरणासक्ति-दास्यासक्ति-सख्यासक्ति-वात्सल्यासाक्ति-
कान्तासाक्ति-आत्मनिवेदनासाक्ति-तन्मयासाक्ति-
परमविरहासाक्ति-रूपैकधाप्येकादशधा भवति ॥

guṇamahātmyāsakti-rūpāsakti-pūjāsakti-smaraṇāsakti-dāsyāsakti- sakhyāsakti-
vātsalyāsakti-kāntāsakti-ātmanivedanāsakti- tanmayāsakti-paramavirahāsakti-
rūpaikadhāpyekādaśadhā bhavati

Though it is one, [spiritual love] takes eleven forms of loving attachment [to God]: loving attachment to the qualities of God's greatness, loving attachment to [God's] beauty, loving attachment through worship, loving attachment through remembrance, loving attachment through service, loving attachment through friendship [with God], loving attachment [that is like] a parent's [love for a child], loving attachment like that of a lover, loving attachment through offering the totality of oneself [to God], loving attachment by being absorbed [in God], and loving attachment in feeling separate from the Supreme.

Sutra 83

इत्येवं वदन्ति जन-जल्प-निर्भया एकमताः कुमार-व्यास-शूक-शाण्डिल्य-गर्गी-विष्णु-

कौण्डिल्य-शेश-उद्धव-आरुणी-बलि-हनुमादविभीषणादयो भक्त्याचार्याः ॥

ity-evam vadanti jana-jalpa-nirbhayā eka-matāḥ kūmāra-vyāsa-śuka-śāṇḍilya-garga-viṣṇu-
kaunḍilya-śeṣa-uddhav-āruṇī-bali-hanumān-vibhīṣaṇa-ādayo bhakty-ācāryāḥ

In this very way great teachers of spiritual love have unanimously taught without worry of people's chatter: Kumāra, Vyāsa, Śuka, Śāṇḍilya, Garga, Viṣṇu, Kaunḍilya, Śeṣa, Uddhava, Āruṇī, Bali, Hanumān, Vibhīṣana and others.

Text & Translation of Nārada's Bhakti Sūtra

Sutra 84

य इदं नारदप्रोक्तं शिवानुशासनं विश्वसिति श्रद्धते स
भक्तिमान्भवति स प्रेष्ठं लभते स प्रेष्ठं लभते एति ॥

ya idaṁ nārada-proktaṁ śivānuśāsanam viśvasiti śraddhate sa bhaktimān-bhavati sa
preṣṭhaṁ labhate sa preṣṭhaṁ labhate iti

One who faithfully and confidently embraces these auspicious teachings spoken by Nārada becomes filled with devotional love. In this way, one obtains the Dearest One — One obtains the Dearest One.