



Narada Bhakti Sutra

Introduction to the Composition

The *Bhakti Sūtras*, traditionally attributed to the sage Nārada, is a profound spiritual text that encapsulates the essence of devotion (*bhakti*) in a series of concise yet deeply meaningful aphorisms. However, it is worth noting that the true authorship of this text remains a subject of scholarly debate. The 'Nārada' mentioned here may not be the same ancient Nārada of Vedic fame. Instead, the composition is believed to have emerged much later, possibly during the early centuries of the Common Era, reflecting the evolving spiritual landscape of that period.

This text is deeply rooted in the teachings of earlier scriptures such as the *Bhagavad Gita*, the *Bhagavata Purana*, the *Upanishads*, and the *Vedas*. It synthesizes the philosophical insights of these ancient texts into a lucid and accessible format, emphasizing the path of devotion as a means to realize the highest truth. While the *Bhakti Sūtras* is considered a later composition within the vast body of Vedic literature, its clarity and simplicity have made it an enduring guide for seekers. It distills complex philosophical concepts into straightforward principles of devotion, making it a valuable resource for both seasoned practitioners and newcomers to the spiritual path.

The *Bhakti Sūtras* is divided into 84 aphorisms that systematically explore the nature, greatness, practices, and transformative power of devotion. The opening chapter delves into the essence of supreme devotion (*parabhakti*), describing it as the ultimate form of love for Ishvara, leading to liberation and the dissolution of worldly desires. Nārada, or the sage who composed this text under his name, presents devotion as a direct and heartfelt connection with the divine, one that transcends intellectual understanding and leads to an experiential realization of divine love.

Subsequent chapters further explore the greatness of this devotion, illustrating how it surpasses other spiritual paths such as *karma* (action), *jñāna* (knowledge), and *yoga* (discipline). The text elucidates the practical means of cultivating such devotion, including renunciation of attachments, continuous remembrance of Ishvara, and association with the spiritually advanced. It emphasizes the importance of grace—both from Ishvara and the great ones (*mahātmās*)—as essential in deepening one's devotion.

Despite its later origin, the *Bhakti Sūtras* embodies the core teachings found in the *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Bhagavata Purana*, where devotion is portrayed as a direct path to the divine. The text reaffirms the principles laid out in these earlier scriptures while offering a fresh and lucid perspective that resonates with the heart of the modern seeker. It simplifies complex

spiritual concepts into a pathway that is accessible and relatable, encouraging readers to cultivate a personal and intimate relationship with Ishvara.

In its final chapter, the *Bhakti Sūtras* celebrates the glory of the devotee, depicting those who are wholly absorbed in Ishvara as transcending all worldly distinctions. These devotees embody the pure essence of divine love, their very presence sanctifying the world and inspiring others to embrace the path of bhakti. The text portrays such devotion as the highest truth, an all-consuming love that unites the seeker with the divine.

This booklet serves as a companion to the timeless wisdom of the *Bhakti Sūtras*, inviting modern readers to explore and immerse themselves in this luminous path of devotion. By delving into these teachings, seekers are encouraged to awaken a direct and personal connection with Ishvara, cultivating a devotional life that leads to inner transformation, peace, and ultimate liberation.

- Chapter 1 (verses 1-14) The Value of Devotion
- Chapter 2 (verses 15-33) Defining Bhakti
- Chapter 3 (verses 34-50) The Means of Achievement
- Chapter 4 (verses 51-73) Pure and Mixed Devotion
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Chapter 1: The Nature of Supreme Devotion (Prathamodhyāyaḥ - Parabhaktisvarūpam)

1. **अथातो भक्तिं व्याख्यास्यामः** (Athāto bhaktim vyākhyāsyāmaḥ) – Now, therefore, we shall explain the nature of devotion.
2. **सा त्वस्मिन् परप्रेमरूपा** (Sā tvasmin parapremarūpā) – That devotion is in the form of supreme love for Ishvara.
3. **अमृतस्वरूपा च** (Amṛtasvarūpā ca) – It is of the nature of immortality.
4. **यल्लब्ध्वा पुमान् सिद्धो भवति अमृतो भवति तृप्तो भवति** (Yallabdhvā pumān siddho bhavati amṛto bhavati tṛpto bhavati) – By attaining which, a person becomes perfect, immortal, and content.
5. **यत्प्राप्य न किञ्चिद् वाञ्छति न शोचति न द्वेष्टि न रमते नोत्साही भवति** (Yatprāpya na kiñcid vāñchati na śocati na dveṣṭi na ramate notsāhī bhavati) – Having obtained which, one neither desires anything, nor grieves, nor hates, nor rejoices, nor becomes enthusiastic.
6. **यज्ज्ञात्वा मत्तो भवति स्तब्धो भवति आत्मरामो भवति** (Yajñātvā matto bhavati stabdho bhavati ātmārāmo bhavati) – Knowing which, one becomes intoxicated, indifferent, and self-satisfied.
7. **सा न कामयमाना निरोधरूपत्वात्** (Sā na kāmayamānā nirodharūpatvāt) – That devotion is not desire-driven; it is in the form of restraint.
8. **निरोधस्तु लोकवेदव्यापारन्यासः** (Nirodhastu lokavedavyāpāranyāsaḥ) – Restraint means giving up worldly and Vedic activities.

9. तस्मिन्ननन्यता तद्विरोधिषूदासीनता च (Tasminnananyatā tadvirodhiṣūdāsīnatā ca) – Unswerving focus on Ishvara and indifference to what opposes Ishvara.
10. अन्याश्रयाणां त्यागोनन्यता (Anyāśrayāṇāṃ tyāgonananyatā) – Renunciation of dependence on anything else is non-duality.
11. लोकवेदेषु तदनुकूलाचरणं तद्विरोधिषूदासीनता (Lokavedeṣu tadanukūlācaraṇaṃ tadvirodhiṣūdāsīnatā) – In the world and the Vedas, acting in accordance with devotion to Ishvara and being indifferent to what opposes it.
12. भवतु निश्चयदाढ्यादूर्ध्वं शास्त्ररक्षणम् (Bhavatu niścayadārdhyādūrdhvaṃ śāstrarakṣaṇam) – Let there be adherence to the scriptures after attaining firmness in determination.
13. अन्यथा पातित्यशङ्कया (Anyathā pātityaśaṅkayā) – Otherwise, there is the fear of downfall.
14. लोकोऽपि तावदेव भोजनादि व्यापारस्त्वाशरीरधारणावधि (Loko'pi tāvadeva bhojanādi vyāpārastvāśarīradhāraṇāvadhi) – Even the worldly activities like eating should be carried out only to the extent necessary to sustain the body.
15. तल्लक्षणानि वाच्यन्ते नानामतभेदात् (Tallakṣaṇāni vācyante nānāmatabhedāt) – Its characteristics are described in various ways by different opinions.
16. पूजादिष्वनुराग इति पाराशर्यः (Pūjādiṣvvanurāga iti Pārāśaryaḥ) – The sage Parāśarya states that it is an attachment to worship and similar activities.
17. कथादिष्विति गर्गः (Kathādiṣviti Gargaḥ) – Garga says it is attachment to divine stories and similar things.
18. आत्मरत्यविरोधेनेति शाण्डिल्यः (Ātmaratyavirodheneti Śāṅḍilyaḥ) – Śāṅḍilya says it is that which does not oppose self-love.
19. नारदस्तु तदर्पिताखिलाचारता तद्विस्मरणे परमव्याकुलतेति (Nāradaḥ tu tadarpitākhlilācārātā tadvismarāṇe paramavyākulateti) – Nārada declares it as the offering of all activities to Ishvara and extreme agitation when forgetting Ishvara.
20. अस्त्येवमेवम् (Astyevamevam) – Indeed, it is exactly so.
21. यथा व्रजगोपिकानाम् (Yathā vrajagopikānām) – Just as it was with the cowherd girls of Vraja.
22. तत्रापि न माहात्म्यज्ञानविस्मृत्यपवादः (Tatrāpi na mātmyajñānavismṛtyapavādaḥ) – But there should be no objection of forgetting Ishvara's greatness even there.
23. तद्विहीनं जाराणामिव (Tadvihīnaṃ jaraṇāmiva) – Otherwise, it would be like the love of illicit lovers.
24. नास्त्येव तस्मिन् तत्सुखसुखित्वम् (Nāstyeva tasmin tatsukhasukhitvam) – In it, there is no concern for one's own happiness, only for Ishvara's joy.

Chapter 2: The Greatness of Supreme Devotion (Dvītyodhyāyaḥ - Parabhaktimāhattvam)

25. सा तु कर्मज्ञानयोगेभ्योऽप्यधिकतरा (Sā tu karma-jñāna-yogebhyo'pyadhikatarā) – This devotion is superior to Karma, Jnana, and Yoga.
26. फलरूपत्वात् (Phalarūpatvāt) – Because it is in the form of the ultimate fruit.

27. ईश्वरस्याप्यभिमानद्वेषित्वात् दैन्यप्रियत्वात् च (Īśvarasyāpyabhimānadveṣitvāt dainyapriyatvāt ca) – Even Ishvara dislikes pride and loves humility.
28. तस्याः ज्ञानमेव साधनमित्येके (Tasyāḥ jñānameva sādhanamityeke) – Some say that knowledge alone is the means to this devotion.
29. अन्योन्याश्रयत्वमित्यन्ये (Anyonya-āśrayatvamityanye) – Others say they are interdependent.
30. स्वयं फलरूपतेति ब्रह्मकुमारः (Svayaṁ phalarūpateti Brahmakumārah) – Brahmakumāra says it is inherently the fruit itself.
31. राजगृहभोजनादिषु तथैव दृष्टत्वात् (Rājagr̥habhojanādiṣu tathaiva dr̥ṣṭatvāt) – Just as seen in royal feasts and other events.
32. न तेन राजा परितोषः क्षुच्छान्तिर्वा (Na tena rājā paritoṣaḥ kṣucchāntirvā) – The king is not satisfied by it, nor is the hunger appeased.
33. तस्मात् सैव ग्राह्या मुमुक्षुभिः (Tasmāt saiva grāhyā mumukṣubhiḥ) – Therefore, it alone should be accepted by those who seek liberation.

Chapter 3: Means of Attaining Devotion (Tṛtīyodhyāyaḥ - Bhaktisādhanāni)

34. तस्याः साधनानि गायन्त्याचार्याः (Tasyāḥ sādhanāni gāyantyācāryāḥ) – The teachers sing about the means of this devotion.
35. तत्तु विषयत्यागात् सङ्गत्यागात् च (Tattu viṣayatyāgāt saṅgatyāgāt ca) – It comes through the renunciation of sense objects and attachments.
36. अव्यावृत्तभजनात् (Avyāvṛttabhajanāt) – Through uninterrupted worship.
37. लोकेऽपि भगवद्गुणश्रवणकीर्तनात् (Loke'pi bhagavadguṇaśravaṇakīrtanāt) – In the world, by hearing and singing the glories of Ishvara.
38. मुख्यतस्तु महत्कृपयैव भगवत्कृपालेशाद् वा (Mukhyatastu mahatkṛpayaiva bhagavatkr̥pāleśād vā) – Mainly, it is through the grace of the great ones or a fraction of Ishvara's grace.
39. महत्सङ्गस्तु दुर्लभोऽगम्योऽमोघश्च (Mahatsaṅgastu durlabho'gamyo'moghaśca) – Association with the great ones is rare, unattainable, and infallible.
40. लभ्यतेऽपि तत्कृपयैव (Labhyate'pi tatkr̥payaiva) – It is obtained only through their grace.
41. तस्मिंस्तज्जने भेदाभावात् (Tasmimstajjane bhedābhāvāt) – There is no difference between Ishvara and His devotees.
42. तदेव साध्यतां तदेव साध्यताम् (Tadeva sādhyatām tadeva sādhyatām) – That alone should be strived for, that alone should be sought.
43. दुस्सङ्गः सर्वथैव त्याज्यः (Dussaṅgaḥ sarvathaiva tyājyaḥ) – Evil company must always be shunned.
44. कामक्रोधमोहस्मृतिभ्रंशबुद्धिनाशकारणत्वात् (Kāmakrodhamohasmṛtibhramśabuddhināśakāraṇatvāt) – Because it leads to lust, anger, delusion, loss of memory, and destruction of intelligence.

45. तरङ्गायिता अपीमे सङ्गात् समुद्रायन्ते (Taraṅgāyitā apīme saṅgāt samudrāyante) – Though these appear as mere ripples, they become an ocean through association.
46. कस्तरति कस्तरति मायाम् यः सङ्गं त्यजति यो महानुभावं सेवते निर्ममो भवति (Kastarati kastarati māyām yaḥ saṅgam tyajati yo mahānubhāvaṁ sevate nirmamo bhavati) – Who crosses, who crosses Māyā? One who gives up attachment, serves the great ones, and becomes free from egoism.
47. यो विविक्तस्थानं सेवते यो लोकबन्धमुन्मूलयति निस्त्रैगुण्यो भवति योगक्षेमं त्यजति (Yo viviktasthānaṁ sevate yo lokabandhamunmūlayati nistraiguṇyo bhavati yogakṣemaṁ tyajati) – One who resorts to solitary places, uproots worldly ties, transcends the three Gunas, and abandons the pursuit of gain and safety.
48. यः कर्मफलं त्यजति कर्माणि संन्यस्यति ततो निर्द्वन्द्वो भवति (Yaḥ karmaphalaṁ tyajati karmāṇi saṁnyasyati tato nirdvandvo bhavati) – One who renounces the fruits of actions, abandons actions, and becomes free from duality.
49. यो वेदानपि संन्यस्यति केवलमविच्छिन्नानुरागं लभते (Yo vedānapi saṁnyasyati kevalamavicchinnānurāgaṁ labhate) – One who renounces even the Vedas, attains only uninterrupted love.
50. स तरति स तरति स लोकांस्तारयति (Sa tarati sa tarati sa lokāṁstārayati) – He crosses, he crosses, he helps others to cross.

Chapter 4: Definition of Love (Caturthodhyāyaḥ - Prema Nirvacanam)

51. अनिर्वचनीयं प्रेमस्वरूपम् (Anirvacanīyaṁ premasvarūpam) – The nature of love is indescribable.
52. मूकास्वादनवत् (Mūkāsvādanavat) – It is like the taste experienced by a mute.
53. प्रकाशते क्वापि पात्रे (Prakāśate kvāpi pātre) – It reveals itself in some worthy person.
54. गुणरहितं कामनारहितं प्रतिक्षणवर्धमानं अविच्छिन्नं सूक्ष्मतरं अनुभवरूपम् (Guṇarahitaṁ kāmanārahitaṁ pratikṣaṇavardhamānaṁ avicchinnaṁ sūkṣmataraṁ anubhavarūpam) – It is devoid of qualities, free from desires, ever-increasing, uninterrupted, subtler, and experiential in nature.
55. तत्प्राप्य तदेवावलोकति तदेव शृणोति तदेव भाषयति तदेव चिन्तयति (Tatprāpya tadevāvalokati tadeva śṛṇoti tadeva bhāṣayati tadeva cintayati) – Attaining it, one sees only that, hears only that, speaks only that, and thinks only that.
56. गौणी त्रिधा गुणभेदाद् आर्तादिभेदाद् वा (Gauṇī tridhā guṇabhedād ārtādiḥhedād vā) – Secondary love is of three kinds based on qualities or differences such as suffering.
57. उत्तरस्मादुत्तरस्मात् पूर्व पूर्वा श्रेयाय भवति (Uttarasmoduttarasmat pūrva pūrvā śreyāya bhavati) – Each succeeding type is superior to the previous one.
58. अन्य मात् सौलभं भक्तौ (Anyā māṭ saulabhaṁ bhaktāu) – Among other paths, devotion is the easiest.
59. प्रमाणान्तरस्यानपेक्षत्वात् स्वयं प्रमाणत्वात् (Pramāṇāntarasyānapekṣatvāt svayaṁ pramāṇatvāt) – Because it does not depend on other proofs and is self-evident.
60. शान्तिरूपात् परमानन्दरूपाच्च (Śāntirūpāt paramānandarūpācca) – It is of the nature of peace and supreme bliss.

61. **लोकहानौ चिन्ता न कार्या निवेदितात्मलोकवेदत्वात्** (Lokahānau cintā na kāryā niveditātmalokavedatvāt) – In the loss of the world, one should not worry, as one has dedicated oneself to Ishvara and the world.
62. **न तत्सिद्धौ लोकव्यवहारो हेयः किन्तु फलत्यागः तत्साधनं च** (Na tatsiddhau lokavyavahāro heyah kintu phalatyāgaḥ tatsāadhanam ca) – On attaining that, worldly dealings are not to be abandoned, but their fruits should be renounced.
63. **स्त्रीधननास्तिकचरित्रं न श्रवणीयम्** (Strīdhananāstikacaritram na śravaṇīyam) – The behavior of women, wealth, and atheists should not be heard.
64. **अभिमानदम्भादिकं त्याज्यम्** (Abhimānadambhādikaṁ tyājyam) – Pride, hypocrisy, etc., should be renounced.
65. **तदर्पिताखिलाचारः सन् कामक्रोधाभिमानादिकं तस्मिन्नेव करणीयम्** (Tadarpitākhillācāraḥ san kāmakrodhābhimānādikaṁ tasminneva karaṇīyam) – Having dedicated all actions to Ishvara, desires, anger, pride, etc., should also be directed towards Ishvara.
66. **त्रिरूपभङ्गपूर्वकम् नित्यदास्यनित्यकान्ताभजनात्मकं प्रेम कार्यं प्रेमैव कार्यम्** (Trirūpabhaṅgapūrvakam nityadāsyānityakāntābhajanātmakam prema kāryam premaiva kāryam) – Breaking the three forms, constant servitude, and love in the form of the eternal consort should be performed; love alone should be performed.

Chapter 5: The Glory of the Devotee (Pañcamodhyāyaḥ - Mukhyabhaktimāhimā)

67. **भक्ता एकान्तिनो मुख्याः** (Bhaktā ekāntino mukhyāḥ) – The primary devotees are those who are single-minded.
68. **कण्ठावरोधरोमञ्चाश्रुभिः परस्परं लपमानाः पावयन्ति कुलानि पृथिवीं च** (Kaṅṭhāvarodharomañcāśrubhiḥ parasparam lapamānāḥ pāvayanti kulāni pṛthivīm ca) – With choked throats, horripilations, and tears, they converse with each other, sanctifying their families and the earth.
69. **तीर्थोर्कुर्वन्ति तीर्थानि सुकर्मी कुर्वन्ति कर्माणि सच्छास्त्रीकुर्वन्ति शास्त्राणि** (Tīrthōrkuर्वन्ति tīrthāni sukarṇī kurvanti karmāṇi sacchāstrīkurvanti śāstrāṇi) – They sanctify sacred places, purify actions, and ennoble scriptures.
70. **तन्मयाः** (Tanmāyāḥ) – They are absorbed in Ishvara.
71. **मोदन्ते पितरो नृत्यन्ति देवताः सनाथा चेयं भूर्भवति** (Modante pitaro nṛtyanti devatāḥ sanāthā ceyam bhūrbhavati) – Ancestors rejoice, deities dance, and this earth becomes blessed.
72. **नास्ति तेषु जातिविद्यारूपकुलधनक्रियादि भेदः** (Nāsti teṣu jātividyārūpakuladhanakriyādi bhedaḥ) – In them, there is no distinction of caste, learning, form, family, wealth, or actions.
73. **यतस्तदीयाः** (Yatastadīyāḥ) – Because they belong to Ishvara.
74. **वादो नावलम्ब्यः** (Vādo nāvalambyaḥ) – Debate should not be resorted to.
75. **बाहुल्यावकाशत्वाद् अनियतत्वाच्च** (Bāhulyāvakaśatvād aniyatatvācca) – Due to the scope for abundance and the indeterminate nature.

76. **भक्तिशास्त्राणि मननीयानि तदुद्बोधकर्माणि करणीयानि** (Bhaktiśāstrāṇi mananīyāni tadudbodhakarmāṇi karaṇīyāni) – The scriptures of devotion should be contemplated, and acts that awaken it should be performed.
77. **सुखदुःखेच्छालाभादित्यक्ते काले प्रतीक्ष्यमाणे क्षणार्धमपि व्यर्थं न नेयम्** (Sukhaduḥkhecchālābhādityakte kāle pratīkṣyamāṇe kṣaṇārdhamapi vyartham na neyam) – Having renounced joy, sorrow, desire, and gain, and while waiting for the time, not even half a moment should be spent in vain.
78. **अहिंसासत्यशौचदयास्तिक्यादिचरित्राणि परिपालनीयानि** (Ahimsāsatyasaucadayāstikyādicaritrāṇi paripālānīyāni) – Non-violence, truthfulness, purity, compassion, faith, and similar virtues should be practiced.
79. **सर्वदा सर्वभावेन निश्चिन्तैर्भगवानेव भजनीयः** (Sarvadā sarvabhāvena niścintairbhagavāneva bhajanīyaḥ) – Ishvara alone should be worshiped always, in every way, without worry.
80. **सङ्कीर्त्यमानः शीघ्रमेवाविर्भवत्यनुभावयति भक्तान्** (Saṅkīrtyamānaḥ śīghramevāvīrbhavaty anubhāvayati bhaktān) – When sung, Ishvara quickly appears and makes the devotees experience His presence.
81. **त्रिसत्यस्य भक्तिरेव गरीयसी भक्तिरेव गरीयसी** (Trisatyasya bhaktireva garīyasī bhaktireva garīyasī) – Of the three truths, devotion alone is the greatest, devotion alone is the greatest.
82. **गुणमाहात्म्यासक्ति-रूपासक्ति-पूजासक्ति-स्मरणासक्ति-दास्यासक्ति-सख्यासक्ति-वात्सल्यसक्ति-कान्तासक्ति-आत्मनिवेदनासक्ति-तन्मयतासक्ति-परमविरहासक्ति-रूपा एकधा अपि एकादशधा भवति** (Guṇamāhātmyāsakti-rūpāsakti-pūjāsakti-smaraṇāsakti-dāsyāsakti-sakhyāsakti-vātsalyāsakti-kāntāsakti-ātmanivedanāsakti-tanmayatāsakti-paramavirahāsakti-rūpā ekadhā api ekādaśadhā bhavati) – It appears as one but is of eleven types: attachment to Ishvara’s qualities, forms, worship, remembrance, servitude, friendship, affection, conjugal love, self-surrender, absorption, and supreme separation.
83. **इत्येवं वदन्ति जनजल्पनिर्भयाः एकमताः कुमार-व्यास-शुक-शाण्डिल्य-गर्ग-विष्णु-कौण्डिन्य-शेषोद्धवारुणि-बलि-हनुमद्-विभीषणादयो भक्त्याचार्याः** (Ityevaṃ vadanti janajalpanirbhayāḥ ekamatāḥ Kumāra-Vyāsa-Śuka-Śāṅḍilya-Garga-Viṣṇu-Kauṇḍinya-Śeṣoddhavāruṇi-Bali-Hanumad-Vibhīṣaṇādayo bhaktyācāryāḥ) – Thus say the fearless teachers of devotion: Kumāra, Vyāsa, Śuka, Śāṅḍilya, Garga, Viṣṇu, Kauṇḍinya, Śeṣa, Uddhava, Āruṇi, Bali, Hanumad, Vibhīṣaṇa, and others.
84. **य इदं नारदप्रोक्तं शिवानुशासनं विश्वसिति श्रद्धते स भक्तिमान् भवति सः प्रेष्टं लभते सः प्रेष्टं लभते** (Ya idaṃ nāradaḥ proktaṃ śivānuśāsanam viśvasiti śraddhate sa bhaktimān bhavati saḥ preṣṭam labhate saḥ preṣṭam labhate) – Whoever believes and has faith in this teaching of Nārada, instructed by Śiva, becomes a devotee, and he attains the dearest, he attains the dearest.

This completes the translation and transliteration of all 84 verses.