

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0H2lfUPZx7A>

NĀRADA BHAKTI SUTRAS - PART 1 (June 20th 2020)

BY SWAMI ATMANANDA PURI

My humble salutations at Amma's lotus feet. My salutations to all my sisters and brothers.

Before actually starting the talk, I just want to know how many of you have been following Amma's messages on the Amrita World YouTube channel. If you can just raise your hands, I'll be looking to the side. If you have not been doing that, I would recommend, please do that. There's a YouTube channel: Amrita World in which all of Amma's messages are being put up, especially there are about ten messages regarding the current Covid situations. It's an invaluable treasure.

There are also other videos with short Amma's messages. You could just watch one video every day, it just takes about four or five minutes and that will set your tone for the day. So because Amma has spoken a lot and is going to speak, I believe, further on the situation, I won't be speaking much about it.

So we'll start with the topic of the day.

It all begins with one manager in an office. He had taken a loan from somebody and he didn't want to pay the money back. So whenever the creditor wanted the money back, he would call the manager and say "I'm coming to your office, please keep the money ready". And whenever the manager heard that the creditor is going to come, he would just tell the secretary "I am going somewhere, if this man comes tell him I'm not here". It happened many times, and then the creditor understood and he decided "I will go to the office without informing him".

So as the creditor parked his car and came out, the manager saw from the window, "Oh the creditor has come". And he couldn't escape, because there was only one exit. So he was luckily in his cabin which had one-way glass, nobody could see in, so he told his secretary "When this creditor comes tell him that I am NOT in the office. All the previous times whenever you told him, he left, he'll leave today also and after he leaves I'll come out". So when the creditor came, the manager's secretary told him "Sorry the boss isn't inside". The creditor said "Ok, it's fine. I'll just wait for him".

And he just waits there in front of the boss's cabin. One hour passed, two hours passed, three hours passed, he didn't get up. The boss inside was in trouble, he had to go to the toilet, he had to eat food, he couldn't do anything, he was trapped. So finally he said "It's better to pay the money back to this creditor, rather than get stuck in this cabin". So he came out, met the creditor and the creditor didn't seem surprised at all. He gave him the money. Then the manager asked the creditor "How come you didn't leave when the secretary said I wasn't here, because all the previous times, I was told, you came, you were told I wasn't here and you left. Today it's as if you knew I was sitting inside the cabin". And then the creditor said "Yes, I knew you were inside that cabin". The boss was surprised he said "How did you know I was in the cabin? Could you hear me? No. Could you smell me? No. Could you taste me? No. Touch me? No. Then how come you knew I was in the cabin?" And the creditor said "It's very simple, because every time I came here and your secretary told me you're not here I looked around and I saw that none of your employees were working. Some of them busy doing Whatsapp, somebody was doing Facebook, somebody was watching the latest cricket match, nobody was working. But today when your secretary told me you're not in your cabin, I looked around I found that each and every one of your employees were working. So though I couldn't see you, couldn't perceive you, couldn't smell you, taste you or touch you, I could see the effect of your presence, so I knew you are here."

See, this is the same thing. Some of us question: Is there a *Paramatma*? Is there an *Ishwara*? Is there a divine power? Because we cannot see *Ishwara*, the *Paramatma*, we can't smell *Ishwara*, we can't taste *Ishwara*, we can't touch *Ishwara*, so how do you know there is an *Ishwara*, the *Paramatman*, the divine power? Very simple: take a look around: such a beautiful creation. Everything is working perfectly. The planets, the stars, from the microscopic level to the macroscopic, everything is working perfectly, such beauty in creation. There has to be an intelligence from which all this has come about.

Otherwise there are some people who say: no, no, there is no intelligence behind this. It all just came out of chaos. It's all totally random. Well if we could believe that, then we could believe this also. Suppose you take a monkey. Put that monkey in front of a computer and it starts typing. It doesn't know what he's doing, he's just pressing keys at random and it does something. And after some time you look at what the monkey has typed and you'll discover, to your surprise, the monkey has typed in the span of four or five hours, the complete works of Shakespeare without a single mistake. Would you believe that? No, that seems impossible. So, if that cannot happen out of random, how can the entire universe come out of random? There has to be an intelligence and this intelligence is called *Ishwara*, the *Paramatman*.

Now having experienced this *Ishwara Srishthi*, *Srishthi* means the creation, what do we do with this?

I just relate a story which I heard Amma explain a long time ago, the story of two ants. There was an ant which was staying in a salt mountain. All it could eat was salt and it became very thin, because all it was eating was salt. Then one day saw a very plump healthy looking ant, which was coming towards him and he was surprised. And he said "How come you're so healthy?" and the plump ant said "Oh, I live in a sugar mountain. I eat sugar. Why don't you come with me? Because you are eating salt, that's why this is your situation. You're so unhealthy. Come with me and you can eat sugar." Sugar is not good for us, humans, but sugar is very good for ants. That's why the other ant was healthy. The salt-ant said "I'll just bring my stuff" and it went inside its cave and came back with its backpack and both of them went to the Sugar Mountain. The sugar-ant told the salt-ant: "the whole mountain is made of sugar, eat as much as you want, I have to go somewhere. I'll come back in a couple of weeks, and when I come back I expect you to be as healthy and plump as me."

After two weeks, when the sugar ant came, it was expecting to see a very healthy looking salt-ant but, unfortunately, the ant which he saw was hardly better than the ant he had left behind; just a marginal improvement. He was very surprised, he said: "what happened? Did you eat the sugar?" The salt-ant said: "yeah I ate the sugar but, I really didn't like it... it's not as good as you say". The sugar-ant was surprised... how can an ant not like the taste of sugar?

Then it looked closely into the mouth of the salt-ant and it found something in the mouth and it put its hands or legs or whatever... in the mouth of the salt-ant and pulled out two white blocks. He asked: "what is this?" The salt ant said: "that's some salt which I had kept in my mouth". The sugar ant said: "how come??! Why did you keep salt in your mouth?" The salt-ant said: "all my life I've been eating salt, so when you told me about this wonderful thing called sugar I wasn't sure whether if it will suit me, and I know I can survive, though miserably, on salt, so just as a precaution I put two pieces of salt in my mouth and I came".

Now look at the situation: the salt-ant is eating the sugar with salt in its mouth. It will never enjoy the sweetness of sugar. So after the salt was removed, the sugar-ant said: "now eat". And the ant started eating and it couldn't stop and soon it became as healthy and cheerful and plump as the sugar-ant.

What does the story tell us? Amma says that, like the sugar mountain, *Ishwara Shrishti* or *Ishwara's* creation, is full of honey. We put salt in it, and what is the salt? Our contribution to *Ishwara Shristi*, God's creation, is our *ahankara*. By *ahankara*, Amma means the ego, and by ego what Amma means is our strong likes and dislikes. So the world that we experience it through a filter of our likes and dislikes and when we experience this *Ishwara Shristi*, God's creation, through the filter of likes and dislikes we miss out the sweetness.

If you look at the world we think we have created a lot of things: I've done this, I've done this, I like this, I don't like this... but if you really look at the world what have we created? Absolutely nothing. Even this body, which we claim it's ours, it's a gift. We didn't create this body. Look back at your life and tell, look honestly, can we say: "I created something?" Nothing. Everything that we experience right now it's God's creation. The only contribution that we have in God's creation is that we create our likes and dislikes. That is why when we leave this world what we are leaving behind is *Ishwara's* creation. We can't take anything with us, because it is not ours. But we do take some things with us when we leave this body on our onward journey and what is that? That is our likes and dislikes, that's the only thing that we can take because that is the only thing which is our creation. Now, once we understand this very fundamental fact, we will understand what Amma means when she says everything is *Ishwara Shrishti*. Amma always says "the creator and the creation are not different". The only thing that we have to remove is our likes and dislikes.

Nowadays, we are in a situation where most of us are cramped in our rooms, following the lockdown, and we have forced to sit with people or family with whom we hardly spent any time. But now as we meet with people we have to interact more and more with them, all the likes and dislikes start manifesting. Recently I got a message from one person and he said he and his wife normally they never get along, and he said: "nowadays, though we have arguments nowadays, we still have arguments, but it always ends in laughter". And I was so surprised because I couldn't imagine this person getting along well with his wife. Because that was the way they were. I thought, good. Then, I asked please explain, what happens? and he said: "it's very simple whenever we get into an argument it ends finally with her throwing something at me. And when she throws something and she misses, I laugh. And when she doesn't miss, she laughs. So it always ends with laughter."

Now why does this happen? Why do we want to throw things at the person we love? Because we don't accept them as they are. *Ishwara Shrishti*, what does it mean? God has created a person: to one person she is the wife, to another she is the mother, to

another she is the daughter, to another she is sister. This is our imposition on *Ishwara Shrishti*. So whenever we encounter a person, we are unable to accept them as they are, we want them to behave in a manner that we would like them to. And when they behave according to their nature, we can't accept it. We want them to change. What do we do in a situation like this? You come across a person and you want them to change. First of all, see, is it in your responsibility to change that person? If it is not, you don't have to. For example, and how do you change the behavior of a person, instead of telling them you are wrong, that is bad, why don't we just tell them what is the benefit of acting in another manner? If you find some of the behavior offensive you can point out the benefit of acting in a particular manner. This is to be done only if it's our responsibility to change that person. Whenever we try to do this we have to be very very careful.

Once a mother and a little daughter they're having some me time. They were sitting and having dinner together. Just the little girl and her mother. And the little girl was looking at her mom curiously and she saw five or six strands of white hair in her mother's hair. And she was so curious she said: "mom, why is your hair so white?" The mother thought this is a good chance for me to change her behavior so let me try this. She said: "Darling, every time you did something to upset me, every time you did something wrong, every time you made me cry, one of my hair became white". The little girl looked at the mother she was very sorry, she said: "Mother I'm very sorry, mom I will never do anything to make you cry or make you feel upset again". The mother was very happy. The little girl put a spoon into the bowl of cereal and as she lifted the spoon she just stopped and looked at the mother. The mother looked at the little girl...what happened? She said: "Mom, I have a question". "What is the question?" "How come grandma's hair is all white?"

So this is what happens, if we want to change people, we have to change first. Let's not try to change people according to our desires: they should behave in this manner. Don't try to change them. Still if you want to change them you can still change them, how? This is where we take a cue from Amma. Amma wants all of us to change for the better but Amma doesn't force us to do anything. And she changes us. How? Basically by walking the talk. She doesn't ask us to do anything which she has not done even more intensely. She goes out right from cleaning the toilets, public toilets, to giving darshan. Take any range of activity, Amma does each and everything. She never tells us to do something which She doesn't do. This is the way Amma changes us. She does things so perfectly and when we look at Her, we change.

I remember the experience of one doctor in AIMS, he had mentioned this in the Matruvani many years ago. He was from UK, and he came to join Amma's AIMS hospital in Cochin. He was not a devotee then, he came because it was a very technologically advanced hospital. He didn't believe in spirituality or gurus, but he came because the hospital was good and he was so excited because there were a lot of very good expensive equipments being brought and lot of people were getting the benefit of the treatment because such equipments didn't exist in many hospitals in India. He was so excited to see very expensive equipment which was being used to treat a lot of people and he was happy because of that.

Once, on Her way back to Amritapuri at night, Amma made a stopover at AIMS. This doctor was present and when he met Amma he was so excited with all the new expensive equipment that had come and he thought he could show it to Amma and that Amma will also be excited to see all this. And he told Her: "Amma come, I will show you all these very expensive equipments which have come, which are doing so much good to the world". Amma just looked at the doctor and smiled at him very compassionately and Amma said: "Son, if you are happy, I'm happy. Amma doesn't have to see it". It was as a simple statement but it made a dramatic change in the heart of the doctor. He understood that Amma is not attached to any of these things, She is doing so much good for the world but She doesn't consider anything as Her own. That single statement from Amma transformed him and he became an ardent devotee.

When a flower blooms and we pass by the flower, its fragrance will definitely influence us. Similarly, in Amma's presence, just watching Her, reading Her activities, thinking about Amma, just this act of focusing on Amma and whatever She does, these things will definitely influence us and we will change. So, when we change, people look at us and they change.

Now, the goal of life is to experience what is known as "*Ishwara shristi*". Amma says everything is *Ishwara shristi*, but we can't enjoy it, why? because of *Jiva shristi*, the individual, *shristi* is creation, we create something and superimpose. How do we do it? Are we able to enjoy *Ishwara shristi* at least once in a while? Definitely. Suppose, in the situation, it may not happen or it may have happen to you... Sometimes in your life it can happen. Suppose you've been working very hard and your boss comes and tells you: "You've been working so hard, why don't you take a company paid holiday with bonus?" and the company sponsors you business class, you go to some very lovely island, very beautiful, in the midst of nature and you're enjoying. Why are we enjoying when we go for a new holiday? You all enjoy, do you know why we enjoy so much? Because in a holiday, we have totally forgotten the past; whatever work that we do, we are not

thinking about the future, we are totally open to the present moment. We see mother nature, we see the ocean... During work time at home, when we go to the beach we still see the ocean but we don't enjoy it so much, but in a holiday the experience is magnified and we really enjoy, why? Because at that instant, when you are experiencing the ocean, hearing the birds, there is no seeking or resisting within us, we don't resist the current experience whatever it is and we don't try to seek to change it. But, we have all experienced: whenever we go for a holiday, in the beginning it is fine, it is very nice, but later on what happens is, it becomes boring or we would rather do something else the holiday is not so good, we start creating complaints about the place which we enjoyed just a few days ago. Why? Because we are hard workers and just like *Ishwara*, the Divine Principle creates, we, the *Jiva*, also create. We start our *Jiva shrusti*, our individual creation; we start imposing likes and dislikes on the current experience and this is why even if we are on a holiday, after some time, it is no longer enjoyable. The holiday mood that we are in disappears, because of the subtle likes and dislikes which start manifesting.

Is there any way where we can be permanently on what is known as a “holiday mood”? Every day, can we enjoy as if it's a holiday? Why can't we enjoy every day as it is a holiday? Because when we look at ourselves... now I will keep quiet for a few seconds, see what happens... I will keep quiet for a few seconds, the mic has not gone off and I have NOT forgotten my next point but just I will just keep quiet for a few seconds and I will be watching what you are doing. I'm looking to the side so I can see what you're doing... some of you are pretending to smile, ok... see what happens when we keep quiet for a little while... moment to moment... what happens? Moment to moment our likes and dislikes start manifesting, we can't help it. Why is it this way? Why can't we just sit quietly and enjoy *Ishwara shrusti*, God's divine creation moment to moment? Why is it that moment to moment likes and dislikes are manifesting? It's like this, I will try to explain: once there was a ruler in an island nation, not much contact with the world, and suddenly they discovered a lot of oil there and that nation became very rich and the ruler, the king of that island nation, became extremely rich so he was taken by the oil companies to a trip in... Let's say Europe, and he was being exposed to many things for the first time. They were taking him to many places and once he went to a place and he felt pity when he saw there lot of people, 20 people running after, chasing and fighting each other over a small round object and he said, told the secretary: “See, this is really bad, I feel bad for them; just go to the shop and find out what that thing is; go to the shop and buy enough for everyone. Immediately, the secretary went. He got enough 20 of those objects, went to the place where the people were fighting, running around about after that object and stopped them and said here is one for each one of you. The king was watching all this. He was expecting that they will all be happy.

Immediately all of them said no, we don't want this, you're stopping the fun! The King didn't understand, the secretary didn't understand, then somebody explained to the king: "see, what they are doing they are playing a game of football soccer, there is only one ball, that's the rule of the game, they all have to run around it" and he explained the game. The players were saying there is no fun if you give each one of us a football, we enjoy the game only when we play according to the rules of the game.

Similarly, in the game of life that we play, there are certain rules and what is this rule? This is very beautifully explained in one of the mantras in the Upanishad called the "Katha Upanishad" or "Katho Upanishad", it is a beautiful mantra. I'll just read it out aloud and explain the meaning, says:

*parāñci khāni vyatṛṇat svayambhū-
stasmātparāñpaśyati nāntarātman |
kaścidhīraḥ pratyagātmānamaikṣa-
dāvṛttacakṣuramṛtatvamicchan ||*

Katha Upanishad 4,1

What does it mean?

parāñci khāni vyatṛṇat svayambhū,

The divine power created us, individuals, with the mind and the sense organs turned outwards. That is why the mind and the sense organs are always running after objects, the likes and dislikes are manifesting.

stasmātparāñpaśyati

That is why our mind and objects are always looking at external things.

kaścidhīraḥ

That is, certain very discriminative people, they are not satisfied with the small tiny pleasures, the momentary pleasures which we get. What do they want?

amṛtatvamicchan

They want immortal peace, immortal joy, and what do they do?

dāvṛttacakṣuh

Literally, it means turn their eye inwards and what do they do when they turn their eye inwards?

pratyagātmānamaiḥṣa

What does that mean? They have vision or they see the *Paramātmā* and the divine.

So, the rules of the game are?

Our minds and sense organs are designed to look outwards but when we look outwards into the world all that we will experience is temporary happiness. If you want to experience true happiness, what you have to do? Turn the eye inwards (*dāvṛttacakṣuh*).

So that is simple, how do we do? How do we turn the eye inwards? Very good, we can go to the Amma's AIMS Hospital, go to the ophthalmology department, tell the eye surgeon: "I need a procedure done. He'll say, what procedure do you want to do? Please turn my eyes inwards" and the ophthalmologist, the surgeon, will be surprised and say "why do you want to do that? I heard in a satsang, you have to turn your eye inwards..." But that is not what is meant, what it means? *kaścidhīrah*, certain discriminating people, they understand that the source of joy and happiness lies within and not outside. Whatever we experience in the world is just a reflection of the joy which is within. This joy which is within us is *Ishwara*. Whenever we experience pure bliss, it is the presence of *Ishwara*.

What is the rule of the game? To summarize it in modern language: a person can never be peaceful. Why? Because a person is a manifestation of likes and dislikes, the ego, the *Ahaṁkāra*. A person can never become peaceful but peace can manifest as a person. All the unhappiness that we feel and experience right now, it's just a manifestation of likes and dislikes, which are temporary. What is our true nature? the *Paramātmā*, the peace.

How to be permanently in this holiday mood? How can we experience this bliss always? In my last virtual *satsang*, I had given the example of sandalwood. Sandalwood is an object which is inherently fragrant in nature. When it gets covered by moisture, a thick coating appears and starts emitting a foul odor. When you remove the thick coating, then we don't have to do anything else, the inherent nature of the fragrance of the sandalwood comes out. Similarly, whenever we stop doing *Jiva shristi*, that is creating, or whenever we stop manifesting the likes and dislikes... Likes and dislikes will appear spontaneously but we don't allow them to continue, that's the rule of the game. When you have a thought, a like or a dislike, it is called *cintā*. In the Bhagavad-gita it is said *cintā* is not a problem, *anucintānam* is the problem. What do we mean by *anucintānam*? A thought appears and we continue with that like or dislike, then it creates misery so, whenever we stop doing this *Jiva shristi*, what happens is we can sense the *Ishwara shristi* as it is.

What has to be done? In the mantra later said that the eye, physical eyes, have to be turned inwards but what it really means is the “I” has to turn inwards and discover. When we turn inwards deep within will discover that this “I” is the same as “you”.

You means the *Paramātman*, the divine supreme. The *Paramatman*, our true nature, has to be the center of our whole day.

Right now our whole day is centered around the “I” and we want the whole day to be like a holiday. But if you look at the spelling of holiday: *hol-i-day* the center of holiday is *I*. If that *I* is replaced by *You* and the first letter of *You* is *Y*, what does it become? Holiday becomes holy day.

Let us never forget that we are here. It's a free trip to you and to us, this is *Ishwara's* shristi, we have done nothing to deserve this. We have not contributed anything towards it. Everything that we experience, is *Ishwara Sristi*, creation of *Ishwara*. In order to make this trip a holiday, each day has to become a holy day. And how do we do this? When our whole day is centered around “You”, You is the divine, the *Paramātman* instead of I, this limited I.

And what is the path to do it? The path to do, to turn each day into a holy day and be permanently in the holiday mood? That is a royal path which is known as *Bhakti*. And that is the theme of the topic of today's talk and a continuing series of talks. We will be exploring what is known as *Bhakti*.

So, how to develop this *Bhakti*?

“And now, therefore, we shall expound on *Bhakti*”. What did I quote just now, it is the first *Sutra* of a very powerful text called, the “*Nārada Bhakti Sutra*”

So I will just chant it:

athāto bhaktim vyākhyāsyāmaḥ

“Now, therefore, we shall expound on the nature of *Bhakti*”

It's simple. We don't have to remember this by heart or anything, I will explain what this means. This line comes from a very powerful and very useful text called the “*Nārada Bhakti Sutras*”. “*Sutra*” means basically a very short sentence in Sanskrit in which a lot of information has been condensed, so it's very easy to memorize. But it contains a lot of information. It is like when you want to send a file to somebody on the internet or you want to copy into a file into a thumb drive and it says this is too large you have to

compress it. So we use some software to compress this large file into a small file. Take it somewhere, give it to somebody. Now that person who receives that file cannot use it as it is, because it is compressed. They have to uncompress it, unzip it. Similarly the “*sutra*” is that way, a lot of information is compressed into one short sentence. So that is what a “*sutra*” is.

So “*Nārada*” means a great saint, a great devotee of the Lord. And the *Nārada Bhakti Sutra*, and *Bhakti* means devotion, the word *Nārada* also has another meaning, not only the meaning the name of a great saint, a great devotee. In Sanskrit the word *Nārada* can also be expounded as “*Naram paramātma vishyakam gyānam dadati iti nardah*”. That means, that which gives us the knowledge how to obtain *Bhakti*.

So this *Nārada Bhakti Sutra*, the first *sutra*, is a very short sentence, which says basically: “*Now we shall discuss on the topic of Bhakti*”. The first word is “*Now*”.

In Sanskrit tradition, whenever there is a text explaining something, there are four things which are made clear in the beginning:

- The first thing is, what is known as the qualified student, or in Sanskrit it's called “*Adhikāri*”, who is fit to receive this knowledge, that is indicated by the word “*Now*” in this *Sutra*.
- The second thing is called *Sambandha*, that means the relation between you who are going to receive the knowledge and the topic which is going to be explained.
- Third, of course, is the subject which is described later in the *sutras* number two and three which we'll be seeing on the later talk.
- The fourth thing is known as *prayojanam* or the benefit or the purpose of this study we just mentioned in the *sutras* number four, five, six.

The next few talks as we go on, we'll be exploring the other *sutras*. Today we'll just focus on the first *Sutra*. What is the first word of this *sutra*? “*Now*” (*adhikāri*), means that qualified student, you who are qualified to receive this knowledge of *bhakti*. You may think, “Am I qualified”? Yes definitely we are, because we are Amma's children and through Amma's teachings all of us have been practicing one of the following three steps of *bhakti* or devotion, which I'm just going to talk about. If you have started practicing one of these steps, you will slowly but surely move into the second and the third steps. Any one of us who is practicing any one of these steps becomes qualified, will become an *adhikāri*, ready for this knowledge.

What are these three steps? These steps are so important that the moment we start practicing any one of them, we immediately get the benefit, we get immediate peace. Amma says it is like the jackfruit tree in India. All other trees, if you want the fruit you

have to climb to the top but the jackfruit tree, the jackfruit, can even emerge in the bottom of the tree. It is very easy to access so, when we follow one of these three aspects of bhakti, the first and immediate experience is that of peace but the important thing is when we do any one of these three steps, we have to do it with what is known as “*bhāvana*”. “*Bhāvana*” means a “feeling-visualization” and arousing a mental state of intense love and concentration. We make manifest that which we cannot experience but we make it manifest with this “feeling-visualization”. Amma makes lot of emphasis on this subject called *bhāvana*. What *bhāvana* means when we do a spiritual practice? It should not be mechanical; it has to come from a place of love. What does this *bhāvana* mean? When a farmer prepares the soil and he plants the seed, he is performing *bhāvana*. When we start doing these practices of *bhakti*, slowly, true love, true devotion will emerge within us. So, we have three steps to devotion. What is the first step?

The first step is what is known as *prasāda buddhi*, the attitude that everything is *prasād*. What is *prasād*? We all know, all of us who have been with Amma, know what is *prasād*. What is *prasād*? *Prasād* is a blessed food. When Amma gives us something, Tuesday She gives us *prasād*, so it is *prasād*. When we go to a temple after the puja, some consecrated food is given to us, it is *prasād*. When *prasād* comes, we never look at the quantity or the quality. Whatever we get, we take it with full gratefulness and we accept it. Always thinking of *prasād* is called *prasāda buddhi*. *Buddhi* means intellect or it means “thinking of”. We have to be careful about what *prasāda buddhi* means because, once I was giving a satsang in one of the places that ever said and after speaking there were a lot of people in front of me there were little kids and adults so, the adults were very interested in the talk and the kids... kids being kids they couldn't follow much, the jokes they would understand, they would laugh but I saw one little kid... a couple of weeks she was sitting in front of me looking at me very intensely while I was speaking. I was thinking... oh this girl is understanding! And then, after the talk, we had the *prasād* lunch and while I was eating the lunch the little girl came to me and said “Swamiji, why are your *satsangs* so long? After the *satsang* we are getting *prasād* lunch and I'm so hungry! I'm only thinking of *prasād*... when will I get *prasād*? When will I get *prasād*? I was actually feeling a bit guilty that I am thinking about *prasād* only and then I heard you mention we should always think of *prasād* so, is that what you meant?”. That, definitely, is not what was meant so, what is meant by *prasāda buddhi*, the attitude that everything is *prasād*?

The first step is the foundation, (we'll just look at the first step today, and the second and third steps we'll look at them later) because if we understand this step and we start practicing it in our life, it has the ability to transform our lives. What does this mean? For

us to understand this, we have to understand a concept of what is known as “*karma phala*” of fruit of actions. In the tradition, there are three types of *karma phala* or fruits of action which are described:

Sanchita karma phala

The first thing is known as “*sanchita karma phala*” that means a collection of the fruits of our actions in all our past lifetimes. In the tradition, we believe that this is not the only human birth we had. We had many human births, we will have in the future. As a human being, all the good deeds that we do, generates what is known as merit and all the bad deeds that we do, generates what is known as *pāpa*, demerits, sins. All the *punya* (the merits) and *pāpa* (demerits) we will not be able to experience in one life time so whatever we don't experience, gets collected and this huge mountain of *punya* and *pāpa*, merits and demerits, is known as *sanchita karma phala*.

Prarabdha karma phala

From this *sanchita karma phala*, Ishwara, the Divine Principle, selects a fistful from this mountain and says: “the next birth you will experience this”. That starts acting the moment we enter into this body. This, the fistful from the mountain which is given to us is known as *prarabdha karma phala*. Who gives us this *prarabdha karma phala*? *Ishwara*, the Divine Principle. That’s why *Ishwara* is called as *karma phala dāta* that means, he who gives us the fruits of our own actions. Two things, this *prarabdha karma phala*, their cost is our own actions, it can be good or it can be bad. Who gives it to us? *Ishwara*. Once we understand this principle, it has the ability to transform our lives why? Because then we understand, whenever we face anything in our life, it is because of our own actions in the past. It can be good, it can be bad. *Ishwara* is called *karma phala dāta*, the one who gives us the fruits of our actions. What happens is: when we encounter a situation, something bad happens, we normally end up hating the person through which that bad thing manifest. Or something good happens and we get attached to the person through whom the good thing manifests. This attachment or hatred towards the person through which the fruits of our own *prarabdha karma* is manifesting creates our problems and then we again act according to likes and dislikes.

Āgāmi karma phala

When we act according to our likes and dislikes, we create the third type of *karma phala* which is called *āgāmi*. That means, we create more *karma phala* which we have to experience in the future.

But if we understand that, whatever experience that we have from any person in front of us, we have to remember that this person who is now in front of us is just like a

spoon. What do I mean by that? Suppose there's some very tasty dish in front of you, take a spoon and you eat that and you like it so you don't get attached to the spoon because the spoon is only conveying that tasty dish. Suppose there is some horrible bad tasting let's say... there's an ayurvedic medicine called *kashayam* which is very bitter, normally people don't like it, but if you are using the same spoon, if you take that bitter thing and you have to eat it, you don't blame the spoon, the spoon is only conveying.

So, whenever we come across any situation in which somebody is doing something bad to us, we understand that what is happening is a manifestation of the result of my actions, so we don't hate the person; we do what is necessary in that moment without hating the person. This is very, very important, why? because whenever we go through life with this attitude, every each and every moment, whatever I am experiencing right now, sitting and speaking to you is my *prarabdha* and you, unfortunately, having to listen to me, it's your *prarabdha* so, whether it is good or bad is up to you to decide but what is the benefit of this? Whenever something good happens we don't get attached to a person and whenever we get any bad experience we do what is necessary without hating the person and we conserve our mental energies so much that we can efficiently tackle the present situation.

Most of our energy goes wasted with anger and negative emotions, that will stop. What Amma says is, if you need something, if you desire something, you work hard for it, get it... fine. If you don't get it... that is also fine, because that is *Ishwara's prasadam* but, the desire for the thing that you have and the thing doesn't come to you... and when a negative result comes, what should we do? Normally we blame ourselves or we blame others. Here what we do is we think *Ishwara*, Amma, doesn't want us to have at this point of time but I still have the desire so work again and next time, when the result comes, see if you get it fine, okay, sure *Ishwara* wants me to have it this time or I have to try again. Keep doing it until either you get it or the desire goes away. This is the first step, it is called *prasāda buddhi*. Each and every experience in our life is coming to us from *Ishwara*. Why? *Ishwara*? is the *Karma phala dāta* or the one who gives us the fruit of our own actions so when our *prasad* comes we take it with a sense of reverence.

I will quickly cover the second and the third steps too. -First step is *prasāda buddhi*. When we do *prasāda buddhi*, we start working with the attitude of accepting everything as *prasād* but we still have desires. As we proceed in this path, we will slowly become more and more grateful towards *Ishwara*, Amma, the Divine Principle who is taking care of us so much. Then, our attitude starts changing, we still continue to do actions, work, but we'll do it not for our sake, we do it for *Ishwara's* sake, for God's sake. Even simple things. Amma always tells the story about a person who went for a walk, he saw three

people working one was angry, one was sad and the third was smiling and dancing. They were all stonemasons, doing just chiseling, with a hammer and chisel. They were doing the same work. One was angry, so he went to the first person who was angry and asked: "What are you doing?" the first angry person said: "Can't you see? I'm hitting a hammer on a chisel". He asked the second person, "What are you doing?" he said: "Oh, I'm just earning my livelihood, if I don't earn this money I can't take care of my family", he was sad. The third person, was doing the same thing but he was laughing and dancing and doing the same... he was dancing when doing the work. He asked him: "What are you doing?" The third person said: "Oh, I am building a temple for my Krishna!". See, all three people were doing exactly the same thing, they were being exactly paid the same amount of money but their attitude made all the difference: one was angry, the second was sad and the third was in bliss, why? He was doing it for *Ishwara*, for God. Each and every action that we do, it can be done with this attitude.

In the beginning stages when we enter spiritual life, we feel there are some actions which are materialistic, some actions which are spiritual. Later on, as we come more and more into Amma's teachings, get involved with Amma, we slowly understand that Amma is trying to teach us that instead of dividing action into spiritual and material, what we have to do is to spiritualize each and every action. What about, let's say, an action like bringing up a poor child... how can that be spiritual? It can be, it is, if you do it with the attitude. Why? when do we say "it is my child", because we feel we have created the child but if it is really our child, the moment the child is born, that first time we hold the child, do you know what is the nature of the child? Do you know it could be the next Albert Einstein or could be the next Pablo Picasso? We don't know who this soul is. As the child grows, its talents start manifesting and we come to understand oh, this child has this talent... if this child were really mine... why wouldn't we know? You don't know, so it's a gift from *Ishwara*. So, we express our devotion to *Ishwara* by bringing up that child as if it is God's child. This child is your gift to me. I show you my devotion to you by looking after this child well so it is *Ishwara's* child. This attitude makes a lot of difference.

Amma always tells us the story... in fact it was an incident when there was the earthquake in Gujarat many years ago. Three entire areas were devastated. Amma's ashram went and rebuilt three whole villages and when Amma went there finally, all the villagers came for darshan and Amma was speaking to all of them. Amma was very happy when she talked to them. She was asking each and every one. Because many people had lost the husband, the wife, the children, the daughter... everything! Many people had lost everybody. Then Amma was saying, though they are not educated much, they have not learned any spiritual texts, but they have this attitude of

acceptance. When Amma asked them: “Are you sad?” They said “no” because the father that I had, the mother that I had, the husband that I had, was a gift from *Ishwara* to me. When the time came, *Ishwara* took him away. So this attitude of acceptance gave them immediate peace.

What are the steps? First is the attitude of *prasāda buddhi*. Everything that happens in life is a result of our own actions selected by *Ishwara* for our spiritual benefit. That gives us peace. Second attitude is: we keep falling in love, (not falling in), but rising up in love for the Divine and every action that we do is for the sake of the Divine. The third step is something which all of us, Amma’s children, have had glimpses of; instead of feeling that “I am doing the work”, we feel and we understand that “God is working through us”.

I will just conclude by sharing an experience which illustrates to me this last step of being an instrument in God’s hands. It happened more than 25 years ago. One of the first sevas Amma gave me, was to teach some computer related subjects in Amma’s Computer Institute. I was given a subject which I did not have a training in computer science but I had work experience. Sometimes I was assigned subjects in which I had no theoretical knowledge, so I had to prepare four or five hours to conduct a one-hour class. Once it happened that I stayed back at the computer center which is six kilometers away from the ashram and I was planning to prepare for the class the previous night so that the next day morning I could conduct that class. But it just happened that some unexpected work came and I was forced to do the other work. I was compelled to do the work. I was the only person around who could do that work. I did the other work and it was too late and I was so tired that couldn't prepare four or five hours for the next morning's class so I thought let me sleep for a few hours get up early in the morning and then, do this work. And, finally, what happened was I was so tired I woke up late about half an hour before the class was to start and... I didn't know what to do because to go to a class in front of the students and say that I am not prepared, it was not possible for me. For me it was my *puja*, my service to Amma. Amma had given me the task of teaching these students and to go unprepared to a classroom was devastating for me. I looked at the topic, read the heading and I knew this is a topic I have absolutely no idea. I was so sad and for me it was like, I'm doing it for Amma and I can't do it. Out of the bottom of my heart I cried to Amma: “I can't teach this! You have to teach this“. And I kept the book aside, I went to the classroom I didn't have time for anything else. As I went to the classroom, I thought maybe I’ll give a surprise test so that I don’t have to teach. Then, I thought “okay at least I know that text the heading of the chapter, let me write that on the whiteboard“. So I wrote that, the text matter on the whiteboard. When I finished writing the heading of the chapter, that

was all I knew, but suddenly in my mind an idea about that chapter came and it was very clear. I knew it had to be right, so I wrote that down, explained that. Before I finished, put the full stop. The second point came, then the third point came and suddenly it was a torrent of ideas and I had to write so fast, because I was afraid if I don't write fast this knowledge will pass through me. And it is not my knowledge. It was coming through me. At that moment I understood that Amma had heard my prayer and Amma was teaching through me. I was just like a flute, nothing, music was flowing through me. I still remember the name of the subject and the chapter. The subject was, for those of you know computers, it was "Systems Analysis and Design" and the very name of the topic was "Data Flow Diagrams". I had absolutely no idea what it was, but the knowledge started flowing through me. At that instant I understood Amma is teaching through me.

Later on with Amma's grace, Amma gave me opportunity to study the Bhagavad Gita and other scriptures and I heard a lot of Amma's teaching. I understood, this is what Amma meant by being an instrument in God's hands. So, if we practice the steps of *prasāda buddhi*, accepting everything as *prasāda*, it gives peace. Then we start developing a love for God, do everything for God's sake. Then more and more love starts developing. Finally when we continue like this, we enter into the third stage.

For me it was a brief glimpse. Now we understand that the entire purpose of life is to become an instrument in God's hands. Let the music of the divine flow through us and this is possible only when we become hollow like the flute and our likes and dislikes are kept aside.

So with these words, I offer everything that I have said at Amma's lotus feet. Those of you, if you have found anything useful, it is entirely due to Amma's grace. If you found anything wrong, distasteful, please forgive me, it is just my *ahamkāra*, my likes and dislikes.

ॐ

lōkāḥ samastāḥ sukhinō bhavantu
lōkāḥ samastāḥ sukhinō bhavantu
lōkāḥ samastāḥ sukhinō bhavantu

ōṃ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ

Om Sri Gurubhyo Namah
Hari Om