

# *Narada Bhakti Sutra*



Narada, the Deva Rishi of Occultism



## Prefatory notes

This is a recension of the Doctrine of Devotion or Bhakti in the light of Theosophy from Bartzokas CA (*Comp. & Ed.*). *Compassion: the Spirit of Truth* (2009), where

- the esoteric character of Narada is sketched out (*pp.* 155-59);
- the triune hypostasis of Love is unravelled as Divine, Worldly, and Devotional Love (*pp.* 160-62);
- Narada's aphorisms on Bhakti are set side by side with Krishna's precepts to Arjuna (*pp.* 163-84).

The numbers on the left correspond to Narada's first eighty-one aphorisms.<sup>1</sup> Text in square brackets and footnotes are ours. Other Editor's Notes, common to all our publications, and abridged titles of frequently quoted works can be found in the same place.

Students may also wish to read "The Story of Narada and the Supremacy of Bhakti," being our selections from the *Shrimad Bhagavatam*, in the same series.

EDITORS

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<sup>1</sup> Aphorisms 82-84 are not directly related to Bhakti.



## 1 O Lanoo, listen to the Doctrine of Love.

- 1 Now, therefore, I shall try to explain the meaning of *Bhakti*.
- 2 *Bhakti* is, indeed, the highest state of [Devotional] Love of *This*<sup>2</sup> [asmin].
- 3 It is the very essence of the Ocean of Immortality [amrita<sup>3</sup>].
- 4 Upon reaching *Bhakti*, one becomes consummate, omnipotent [siddha<sup>4</sup>], immortal, self-satisfied.
- 5 Upon attaining *Bhakti*, one disengages from [the primordial Opposing Forces of] pleasure and pain, attraction and repulsion, love and hate; and can no longer take delight in, or feel passionate about, worldly affairs.
- 6 Upon experiencing *Bhakti*, one becomes elated yet silent; and, at times, totally engrossed in the bliss of the Supreme Self [atman].<sup>5</sup>

## 2 Give it all away or you will lose it.

- 7 *Bhakti* cannot be motivated by lustful desire because [it can only be accomplished by] the elimination of [selfishness itself, which is the sum total all personal] desires.
- 8 Self-renunciation [does not imply] abandoning [daily affairs such as] secular and sacred activities [but offering them instead to *That* or, much better, to Humanity].
- 9 Single-minded Devotion to *That* [tasmin] precludes anything antagonistic to *That* [which could hamper *Bhakti* unfolding].
- 10 Single-hearted Devotion calls for [self-reliance and hence] the abandonment of all [external] support.
- 11 Indifference to situations that are incompatible with Devotion should not exclude those secular and sacred activities that can awaken Devotion.
- 12 [In the meantime] one should continue observing secular injunctions, even after Devotion has been firmly established [because of their protective effect].
- 13 Otherwise, there is every possibility that one can backslide.

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<sup>2</sup> *I.e.*, Supreme Lord.

<sup>3</sup> Or elixir of divine life. *Cf.* "THE ROOT OF LIFE WAS IN EVERY DROP OF THE OCEAN OF IMMORTALITY (*Amrita*) . . ." *Secret Doctrine*, I p. 69 & *fn.* [Stanza III.6.]

<sup>4</sup> *Cf.* "The Pali word *Iddhi*, is the synonym of the Sanskrit *Siddhis*, or psychic faculties, the abnormal powers in man. There are two kinds of *Siddhis*. One group which embraces the lower, coarse, psychic and mental energies; the other is one which exacts the highest training of Spiritual powers." *Voice of the Silence*, frag. I note 1 (to *vs.* 1 p. 1); p. 73 in *glos.* of Chinese & Centenary eds.

<sup>5</sup> *Cf.* "But love toward the eternal and infinite thing feeds the mind with a joy entirely exempt from sadness." Spinoza: *The Emendation of the Intellect*, etc., 10. In: Curley E. (*Tr. & Ed.*). *The Collected Works of Spinoza*. Vol. I, Princeton: University Press, 1985



14 Social responsibilities should be observed only to the extent [that custom and practice require]; but [activities necessary to physical health, such as] eating [and dressing, for example] should be maintained for life.

### 3 Let your life become an example to unbelievers.

- 15 [The main] features of *Bhakti*, according to various authorities [rishis], will be now stated.
- 16 Vyasa says that *Bhakti* may be indicated by the ardour of reverence and respect of *That*.
- 17 Garga says that *Bhakti* may be expressed by listening with affection to talks<sup>6</sup> about the glory, greatness, and so on, of *That*.
- 18 Shandilya says that *Bhakti* may be perceived by one's unhindered delight [when basking] in the Universal Self [atman].
- 19 Narada says that *Bhakti* requires dedication of every [thought and] deed to *That*; and [forewarned of] extreme mental distress if *That* were to be forgotten even for a moment.
- 20 Typical examples of *Bhakti* [from the *Bhagavata-Purana*] will now be given.<sup>7</sup>
- 21 The pure and impassioned love of the cowmaids [gopis] of Vraja [for Krishna, is a well-known illustration of *Bhakti*].
- 22 Even in their fervent love [of the gopis for an avataric appearance], the greatness of the object of their Devotion should always be remembered to ward off reproach.<sup>8</sup>
- 23 Had they not been aware [of Krishna's greatness], their love could have been debased to that of a paramour.
- 24 For, in the False Devotion [of profane love] lovers are preoccupied with their own happiness and not with that of their paramour.

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. "Sravaka (Sk.). *Lit.*, 'The who causes to hear'; a preacher. But in Buddhism it denotes a disciple or chela" (*Theosophical Glossary*) . . . "a listener, or student who attends to the religious instructions. From the root 'Sru.' When from theory they go into practice or performance of asceticism, they become *Sramanas*, 'exercisers,' from *Srama*, action. As Hardy shows, the two appellations answer to the words ακουστικοι and ασκηται of the Greeks" (*Voice of the Silence*, frag. III note 86 to vs. 197, p. 45; p. 73 in glos. of Chinese & Centenary eds.) Also cf. ακουσις, oral instruction in Pythagoras' School (Iamblichus, *De Vita Pythagorica* 18.82, etc.); ακουσματικός, eager to hear, re: probationers of the same School (*Ibid.*, 18.81, etc.); φιληκοος, fond of hearing discourses (Isocrates 1.18, *et alia*), but also fond of hearing for mere pastime, *opp.* οι φιλομαθουντες. (Polybius, *Fragmenta* 7.7.8)

<sup>7</sup> Cf. "Narada . . . cites the example of the Gopis, the shepherdesses of Brindavan, and their love for Krishna. One may say that this example is prehistoric. But many historical exemplars can be found among the followers of all religions, and they also exist today." *Narada's Way of Divine Love*, p. 59

<sup>8</sup> Cf. "The truth taught here is that just as by watering the root of the tree, the branches are also nourished, so by pleasing the Lord, who dwells in the hearts of all, all beings are pleased." *Narada's Way of Divine Love*, p. 63



#### 4 True life can only be found through Devotion to All.

- 25 [The Path of *Bhakti*] is far superior to
- [1] Karman [Path of Action],
  - [2] Jnana [Path of Knowledge], and
  - [3] Yoga [of Patanjali or Path of Mystical Contemplation].
- 26 [As every sincere effort nurtures the devotional impulse] the fruit of such effort heightens Devotion [in the Path of *Bhakti* and all Spiritual Paths].
- 27 [*Bhakti* is superior to other Paths] on account of the Supreme Lord's [ishvara<sup>9</sup>] distaste for selfishness<sup>10</sup> and love of humbleness.<sup>11</sup>
- 28 [Some Teachers<sup>12</sup> say that] Jnanam or inner knowledge alone is the means for arousing *Bhakti*.
- 29 [Others say that] Jnanam and *Bhakti* are inter-dependent.
- 30 But the son of Brahmā [Narada] says that *Bhakti* is its own fruit.
- 31 [The catalytic power of *Bhakti* can be illustrated by how one feels at the] sight of a royal palace, dinner, and so on.
- 32 One can neither please the king [who bestows grace and favours on his subjects<sup>13</sup> by knowing about him or merely] by admiring his palace, nor relieve the pangs of hunger by looking at dinner [unless one's innermost perceptions have been enlightened by Devotional Love].
- 33 Therefore, the Path of *Bhakti* alone should be adopted by those who yearn to be freed from the bonds and limitations of matter [and, not least, their terrestrial manas<sup>14</sup>].

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<sup>9</sup> Lord (Logos) among the mystic philosophers of India. Cf. *Isis Unveiled*, II p. 591 fn.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. "Those are the noblest persons who, giving up self-interest, bring about the good of others; those that undertake a business for the sake of others, not inconsistent with their own good, are men of the middle order; those that stand in the way of the good of others for their own benefit are demons in a human form; but we know not what to call them [lit. who they are] that oppose the good of others without any advantage to themselves." Bhartrhari: *Niti Shataka*, 74 (tr. Kale)

<sup>11</sup> Cf. "I have three precious things, which I hold fast and prize. The first is gentleness; the second is frugality; the third is humility, which keeps me from putting myself before others. Be gentle and you can be bold; be frugal, and you can be liberal; avoid putting yourself before others, and you can become a leader among men." *Sayings of Lao Tzu*, "Lowliness and Humility," p. 35 (tr. Giles)

<sup>12</sup> Acharyas or Teachers of Ethics.

<sup>13</sup> In other words, without *Bhakti* energising and consecrating the allegiance of subjects to their Inner Ruler and Sovereign, neither the King nor those who may profit from His grace and favours are truly satisfied. The King or Inner Ruler is Ennoia (Designing Thought) or Atma; his subjects, the Lost or Wandering Sheep or Helena; cf. "The Holy Dove, which has given birth to the two Twins; Ennoia; Ruler; and The Lost or Wandering Sheep, Helena." In: *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (COMMENTARY ON THE PISTIS-SOPHIA) XIII p. 41

<sup>14</sup> Or mayavic upadhi.



## 5 With subdued heart place all thy works on Me.

- 34 Teachers of Ethics [acharyas] have described<sup>15</sup> certain mental processes that can elicit *Bhakti*.
- 35 *Bhakti* can be called forth:
- [1] by letting go of sensual gratifications of any kind [including personal desires and interests];
- [2] by progressive detachment from mundane pursuits [whether material or mental].<sup>16</sup>
- 36 [3] by continuous adoration of *That* [uttered in deeds of altruistic service to all beings].
- 37 [4] by hearing<sup>17</sup> and singing the glory of the Lord [bhagavat<sup>18</sup>] while still living in the world [and for the world].
- 38 [5] by the Compassion [kripa<sup>19</sup>] of the Mahatmans [Great Souls] in the first place;
- [6] and by the Compassion of the Lord [bhagavat] to a lesser degree.
- 39 It is exceptionally difficult for one to come into contact with Mahatmans. [Their benevolent embrace of the world is subtle and inscrutable. But if contact is established] Their influence becomes unerringly effective.<sup>20</sup>
- 40 [Association with a Mahatman] can be accomplished only by the Compassion [kripa] of *That*.

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<sup>15</sup> In ancient scriptures, songs of praise, heroic poems, etc.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. "Sri Ramakrishna used to refer to [the objects of sense] as worldliness, and worldliness he would define as 'lust and greed.'" *Narada's Way of Divine Love*, p. 81

<sup>17</sup> See *fn.* to *aph.* 17 above.

<sup>18</sup> The Lord, literally. A title of Buddha and Krishna. Cf. *Theosophical Glossary*: Bhagavat. Krishna is a personification of Logos.

<sup>19</sup> Kripa means Mercy or Grace, *i.e.*, the All-embracing Love and Kindness, Logos' boundless Compassion for All. Not some kind of divine amnesty of karmic debts which will have to be settled in full sooner or later. As Master M observed in a letter to WQ Judge, even "Atma is Karma." *Echoes of the Orient*, I p. lvi. See where HP Blavatsky posits Grace:

"Grace (*xapic*) is a difficult word to translate. It corresponds to the higher aspect of Akasha. The two aspects are as follows:

Spiritual Plane: Alaya (Soul of Universe); Akasha.

Psychic Plane: Prakriti (Matter or Nature); Astral Light or Serpent."

*Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (NOTES ON THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN) XI p. 490

Also cf. "In its general sense, *Ishvara* means 'Lord'; but the *Ishvara* of the mystic philosophers of India was understood precisely as the union and communion of men with the Deity of the Greek mystics. *Ishvara-Prasada* means literally, in Sanskrit, *grace*. Both of the *Mimansas*, treating of the most abstruse questions, explain *Karma* as merit, or the *efficacy of works*; *Ishvara-Prasada*, as *grace*; and *Sraddha*, as *faith*." *Isis Unveiled*, II p. 591 *fn.*

<sup>20</sup> Cf. ". . . those who act up to Their teaching and live the life of which They are the best exemplars, will never be abandoned by Them and will always find Their beneficent help whenever needed, whether obviously or invisibly." *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (WHY I DO NOT RETURN TO INDIA) XII p. 161



- 41 Since there is no real difference between the Lord and His devotees [*Bhakti* can be aroused through either].
- 42 Try, try to live for the Supernal Lord and His living manifestations [by humanitarian service in self-denial<sup>21</sup>].

## 6 Rise above the trappings of personal life.

- 43 Evil company should be shunned.<sup>22</sup>
- 44 Because it gives rise to lust, anger, delusion, memory loss, discrimination loss and, at long last, total loss [of one's "Infinite Potency born from the concealed Potentiality"<sup>23</sup>].
- 45 Spreading like ripples [at first], evil company swells vices [to large-scale waves] in an ocean of misery.
- 46 Who crosses over the ocean of illusion [mayam]?  
Who overcomes illusion?
- [1] One who severs all ties with the material world;
- [2] One who is devoted to the Mahatmans [and Their Beloved Humanity];
- [3] One who is free from [the dire heresy of separateness,<sup>24</sup> brought about by false self-identity and] self-importance.
- 47 [4] One who lives in solitude and silence;
- [5] One who extirpates mundane attachments;
- [6] One who is no longer limited by Nature's three qualities [gunas or differentiated Spirit-Matter];
- [7] One who [having renounced I-ness and Me-ness] is no longer subservient to gain, anxiety, and fear.
- 48 [8] One who, though devoted to [principled] action, lets go the fruits of action;
- [9] One who [no longer distracted by self and selfishness] lives for others;
- [10] One who transcends the Opposing Forces [of the material world].

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<sup>21</sup> As outlined in *aph.* 35-38 above.

O love, my love! If I no more should see  
Thyself, nor on the earth the shadow of thee,  
Nor image of thine eyes in any spring, —  
How then should sound upon Life's darkening slope.  
The ground-whirl of the perished leaves of Hope,  
The wind of Death's imperishable wing?

Dante Gabriel Rossetti: *Lovesight* (Sonnet III, Towards "The House of Life")

<sup>22</sup> Cf. "Good company removes the dullness of intellect, infuses truth into speech, bestows great honour, removes sin, purifies the heart, and spreads fame in all directions; say what it does not secure for men." Bhartrhari: *Niti Shataka*, 23 (tr. Kale)

<sup>23</sup> *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (E.S. INSTRUCTION No. II) XII p. 552; [On the Universal Principle, being Simon's summit of all manifested creation, i.e., Fire or Иуп.]

<sup>24</sup> *Voice of the Silence*, frag. I vs. 37 p. 9. Or "*Attavada*, the heresy of the belief in Soul or rather in the separateness of Soul or *Self* from the One Universal, infinite SELF." *Ibid.* frag. I note 8 (to vs. 17 p. 4); p. 74 in glos. of Chinese & Centenary eds.



- 49 [11] One who brushes aside even the Vedas [when overwhelmed by the fervour of True Devotion];  
[12] One who transmutes Devotion into an unalloyed influx of love [of Humanity].
- 50 He [who having crossed over the ocean of illusion] helps the rest of the world [by example, by deeds of mercy and kindness to all living beings and, finally, by renouncing the liberation itself,<sup>25</sup> which is the ultimate sacrifice.<sup>26</sup>]

## 7 Feel the Great Heart within.

- 51 The [transcendental] nature of *Bhakti* cannot be described.
- 52 Like the taste of a mute.
- 53 At times *Bhakti* wells up [spontaneously] in the heart of those who are [intellectually and ethically] fit.
- 54 *Bhakti* is true love,  
[1] unsullied by matter, innocent of desires, an ever-expanding continuum:  
[2] a subtle form of [exalted] consciousness.
- 55 Having reached *That*, [the primary stage of *Bhakti*<sup>27</sup>], one looks only at *That*, hears only *That*, speaks only of *That*, and thinks only of *That*.
- 56 The secondary stage of *Bhakti* [gauni] is threefold, according to one's predominant inclination [*i.e.*, sattva, rajas, tamas]; and [fourfold, according to] motivation.<sup>28</sup>
- 57 Each preceding stage [of secondary *Bhakti*] is nobler than the succeeding one.<sup>29</sup>

## 8 With unfettered mind throw every deed on Me.

- 58 *Bhakti* [or Path of Renunciation] is easier and far more effective than any other Path.
- 59 Because  
[1] *Bhakti* needs no validation from external authorities. It is Authority itself; its outcome is evidence and proof;
- 60 [2] *Bhakti* is the paradigm of supreme peace [shanti] and bliss [ananda, which are beyond the understanding of mortals].

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<sup>25</sup> Cf. "Still greater he, in whom the Self Divine has slain the very knowledge of desire." *Voice of the Silence*, frag. II vs. 167 p. 38

<sup>26</sup> Cf. "Nirvanas, gained and lost from boundless pity and compassion for the world of deluded mortals." *Ibid.* vs. 187 p. 42; [on the "Secret Way" leading to Parinirvanic bliss.]

<sup>27</sup> *I.e.*, the highest stage of *Bhakti*, where devotee, devotion, and object of devotion merge into One.

<sup>28</sup> *I.e.*, "Four classes of men who work righteousness worship me, O Arjuna; those who are afflicted, the searchers for truth, those who desire possessions, and the wise . . ." *Bhagavad-Gita* 7 vs. 16

<sup>29</sup> This *aph.* is an elaboration of the previous one, ranking gunas according to their spiritual potential, *i.e.*, sattva is more ennobling than rajas, and rajas more than tamas.



- 61 Having irrevocably committed social and religious duties to the Lord [in addition to one's own self], one should no longer worry about possible losses or privations; [as self has been surrendered, it can no longer be affected by external conditions.]
- 62 Even after *Bhakti* is attained, one should not abandon [undischarged] worldly duties and obligations, the fruits of which should, in any case, be offered to the Lord. [Moreover, ennobling activities such as] public-spirited service to the community<sup>30</sup> should continue [or may begin, if one has not already exercised mind and body in this direction].
- 63 One should not listen to stories about [men,] women, wealth, and unbelievers.
- 64 Self-conceit, arrogance, and other [assertions of I-ness] should be corrected.
- 65 Having dedicated to *That* [one's self and] actions, [any unmastered vices that may persist, such as unfulfilled] desires, anger, pride, and so on, should be directed to *That* alone.<sup>31</sup>
- 66 Upon breaking through the [secondary or lower] threefold stage of *Bhakti*,<sup>32</sup> consciousness begins rising to a [primary or] higher stage, where one's mood is [similar to] that of a servant devoted to his master; or a lover to her beloved.
- 67 Those staunch and utterly committed devotees [whose consciousness dwells in primary *Bhakti*] are the Lord's dearest servants.
- 68 Conversing with each other [about the Lord's attributes] with throats choked [with emotion], hair standing on end, and tears flowing, they purify society and the Earth itself.<sup>33</sup>
- 69 They sanctify places of pilgrimage, glorify action with virtue, impart authority to scriptures.
- 70 They live [and move, and have their being] in *That* [and *That* lives through them].
- 71 Their forefathers rejoice, resplendent celestial beings [devatah] dance in joy, and even the Earth<sup>34</sup> feels the protecting love of the new Masters.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> And the wider duties of care for the wellbeing of humanity at large.

<sup>31</sup> Instead of discharging such unruly emotions outwardly. Because *we are That*, directing resentment or frustrations toward *That* is like talking to ourselves, "thinking aloud" so to speak; there is not anyone else to overhear. Thus, the mind can be unburdened without shouting at fellow travellers along the same path, holding them responsible for our own failings and accruing bad karman in the process. Those indoctrinated to fear their imaginary "god" may denounce this aphorism as impious, to say the least. But, in truth, *That* is not only our one and only friend. It is our best friend (*cf. Gita 4 vs. 3*). It will never let us down, betray us, or behave the way we do toward each other. And even if It does not appear to respond in ways that we are accustomed to, It understands better than we ever will the human condition and will help us overcome these early difficulties. Moreover, pent-up frustrations vented toward *That* will over time strengthen the bond between the two selves so that self can be raised by Self, as *The Voice of the Silence* points out. That is another advantage of *Bhakti*.

<sup>32</sup> *Cf. aph.* 56 above.

<sup>33</sup> *Cf. fn.* to *aph.* 71 below.

<sup>34</sup> Which is ensouled. *Cf.* "Kepler on the Soul of the Earth" in our Mystic Verse and Insights Series.

<sup>35</sup> *Cf.* "Know, Conqueror of Sins, once that a Sovani hath cross'd the seventh Path, all Nature thrills with joyous awe and feels subdued. The silver star now twinkles out the news to the night-blossoms, the streamlet to the pebbles ripples out the tale; dark ocean-waves will roar it to the rocks surf-bound, scent-laden breezes sing



- 72 [They have risen] above [the myriads of] distinctions [and discrimination] of appearance, birth, class, creed, culture, family, occupation, wealth, and so on.
- 73 They and the Lord are One. [Although men appear different from each other, in truth they are the same as *That*.]

### 9 Intoxicate yourself with the right attitude and ethic.

- 74 One should not be drawn into argumentative [and often cynical] discussions [about *That*.]
- 75 Because [such disputations tend to] entangle minds in a web of uncertainty and doubt, without enabling them to reach valid conclusions [about *That*.]
- 76 One should [earnestly study and] ponder upon the scriptures of *Bhakti*;<sup>36</sup> and heed their precepts.
- 77 While patiently waiting to be released from the clutches of pleasure and pain, gain and loss,<sup>37</sup> not even a fraction of a second should be wasted [without making an effort to relieve suffering everywhere<sup>38</sup>].
- 78 One should actively foster and further harmlessness [ahimsa<sup>39</sup>], truthfulness [satya], cleanliness [sauca], compassion [daya], faith [astikya], and other virtues.
- 79 Those who [bolstered by faith and self-discipline] have no more [personal] cares and worries, should remember and worship the Lord at all times [by loving thoughts and deeds toward All] with all their heart.
- 80 When thus adored and revered, the Lord [sah] reveals his inmost nature to his devotees so that they can see Him as He truly is.<sup>40</sup>
- 81 [Men bound together in one spiritual solidarity of] thought, deed, and devotion to [the infinite Spirit of] Truth is the Greatest Love [Man's most precious boon and the most dear to the Lord].

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it to the vales, and stately pines mysteriously whisper: 'A Master has arisen, a MASTER OF THE DAY.'" *Voice of the Silence*, frag. III vs. 281 p. 65

<sup>36</sup> Specially the *Bhagavata-Purana*.

<sup>37</sup> Marked by a turning point, a veritable *μετανοια* (metanoia), when pure reason begins stirring the heart. See *Compassion*, ch. 8, § "Merge your self in Self," p. 306, *fn.* 5.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. "Let not the fierce Sun dry one tear of pain before thyself hast wiped it from the sufferer's eye." *Voice of the Silence*, frag. I vs. 60 p. 14

<sup>39</sup> Dynamic compassion.

<sup>40</sup> And His devotees will then realise the awesome truth, as Hanuman did when asked by Rama who he was:  
When I think of myself as an embodied being, I am your servant.  
When I think of myself as an individual soul, I am part of you.  
But when I realise "I am Atman," I am one with you.

