

VIII Bhakti Darsana, Contemplative Devotion

Verses 9 & 10

Towards the Father of the world,
to one's spiritual teacher, father, mother,
towards the founders of truth,
towards those who walk in the same path,
towards those who put down evil,
(and) to those who do good to all,
what sympathy there is, that is bhakti,
what here belonging to the Supreme Self is the ultimate.

9/25/7

The culminating pair of verses in Bhakti Darsana call out to be paced as poetry. They constitute a profound blessing in the form of a chant, poured out from one of the great souls of the Age, the kind of super-genius that Nitya refers to in his appropriately poetic commentary.

And what a wonderful commentary it is! I recommend you close these notes, go get your copy of *The Psychology of Darsanamala*, and peruse it instead. If these class notes occasionally strike me as decent and even somewhat useful, Nitya's prophetic style and sensitively nuanced brilliance leave me bowed before him in humble admiration and amazement. He did this all day long, decade after decade, seeming without effort, offering it freely to anyone who chose to be present. And I should confess here now that my most worthy paragraphs, the ones I get a

rush from writing and nod to myself in satisfaction, turn out eventually to be restatements of things I learned directly from him. They went deeply in and disappeared, to resurface as what seem like original insights. But for most of them at least, in my extensive readings I'll sooner or later discover them already in print in one of his books or stories. It isn't raw plagiarism though. There is both a continuity and a personal uniqueness adapted to present circumstances. I am happy to be carrying on—however stumblingly and semiconsciously—a vestige of the work of the scientifically minded poetic mystic he was.

Bill reprised one of the many-faceted sentences from the last paragraph, wondering about its exact meaning: “Our habitual choice to walk a path of truth, goodness, and beauty is always a movement or transition from the previously acquired to what is to be passed on in the relay of tradition.” Nitya refers to this as a hierarchy of bhakti or devotion. The class talked about all the ways that we form a link in the continuity of the stream of life. Tradition is not some static, monumental given truth that is handed, like a musty tome, to unwilling recipients in the younger generation. It is a fluid dance, alive and unfixed, though having a consistent shape or pattern that gives meaning to the continuity. It is not arbitrary, though it is often chaotic. We tend to believe we are passing on one thing, and are actually communicating quite another. This is most obvious in parenting. We cajole and argue and instruct all day long, but our kids observe and embody what we really mean and thus who we really are before we ever open our mouths. The tradition that is the true course of evolutionary unfoldment is substantially different from what we wish and what we say and what we try to make happen. History is eternally fictionalized.

The notion of a tradition of devotion also calls to mind religious or scientific lineages. There the continuity is usually codified in a scripture or textbook. We become part of the positive flow when we imbibe the meaning of the static words and bring

them to life in our being. Nitya also mentions civil legal systems that are generally even more restrictive than the religious. All these shape us, while simultaneously we carry them forward and give them definition through the ways we express them. Despite the mismatch of our wishful thinking, what we transmit is still somewhat dependent on what we believe. Therefore we are very much active participants in the shaping of our local universe. Even in rigid and inflexible surroundings we can have a significant impact. It won't be what we expect, but it will have a mysterious parity to what we actually represent.

No one said it aloud, but the class itself is another way that the wisdom of the past is revived and instilled in the hearts of its participants. Some of us like to think that it is a precious and valuable essence that is being preserved, but probably it looks as stupid as anything else to outsiders. Maybe more stupid, or even dangerous—that's how things work. The better things are, the more they are resisted—and the more superficial, the more folks flock to them. But a warm gathering of cheerful souls, minds bent together in penetrating and releasing the conjunction with light that is bhakti, has a tangible life of its own. By revisiting our inner selves in communion with sympathetic friends, we hearten each other without ever getting syrupy sweet or maudlin. It's a beautiful feeling. We bring the fourth line of the verse to life in the experience of bhakti with those who walk in the same path. To some degree we can include the fifth and sixth lines as well.

The richness and true wealth of the sharing in the class cannot be adequately reanimated here. We covered a lot of ground. I can offer two more bits for the nonce. First, Moni gave us the best metaphor ever for how tradition can keep us bound, in reference to the penultimate paragraph, where the strictures and straitjackets of group endeavors are spelled out. Grown elephants can easily uproot a tree, and they often do. But if you start with a baby elephant, you can tie it to a very small tree and it will stay

there. The little bit of resistance the sapling affords is all that's needed. As the elephant grows bigger, if you keep tying him to the same kind of tree he will be content to stay there. Finally (as a triumph of civilization) you can tie a full-grown elephant to a small tree. Although he could easily tear it out of the ground and go away, he won't even try. That's us, in a nutshell!

Our broadest discussion of the evening was about the beneficence of the universe, and how much we are freely given by the forces that surround us. Eugene reminded us that they are *forces*, that devotion is dynamic and active, as is our interaction with life. Sometimes we imagine that in spiritual life everything stops, or at least gets very calm. Only momentarily, if ever. To be alive is to change, to interact with everything in keeping with our interests and inclinations. Nitya's reminder is that the universe is reciprocal, and our safe conduct is vouchsafed by the kindness that wells up in our hearts. The Golden Rule is not just a nice idea, it's the way things work. For good things to happen to us, we have to be in motion. Keep in mind that in a dynamic universe, sitting still may well be the most active behavior of all.

There was a call for examples. I related the tale of a poet we met last year. He was hitchhiking around Europe one summer many years ago. In Sweden he found himself in a remote spot with little traffic and a long wait between cars. Finally he saw a Volkswagon bus (hippie vehicle nonpareil) winding towards him. It stopped, and he hopped in. The driver was W.S. Merwin, the poet's poet.

Adam reprised the story of "accidentally" meeting the theorist Dabrowski on a Warsaw bus, told earlier in the comments to Darsana V, verse 2.

Melina gave us a perfect everyday example of how we are cared for by the universe as a matter of course. She was readying a show of her art, and only had one or two frames for the many works she had prepared. Frames are expensive, and Melina doesn't

have a lot of cash hidden in her mattress. She thought she might have to display her work unframed. A few days before the show she put a frame in her bike basket and went off to look for something that might match it at the thrift store. Odds and ends intervened to change her timing a couple of hours. Then, as she was pedaling along to the store, a man who saw what she was carrying stopped his van and asked her if she wanted a bunch of free frames. He delivered an armload straight over to her apartment.

Mostly we take the happenstances of life for granted, but unusual experiences like these remind us there is a colossal amount of benefit we get to even be alive. Anyone who's been very sick knows how heavy the body gets, and how impossible it can be to get it to move. Millions of complex activities are taking place in our bodies without the least input from us, to keep us healthy and hopefully happy. As we overcome our nonchalance and turn our gaze to appreciate the wonders of existence, we experience bhakti.

On a broader scale, Nitya mentions the sun and the ocean, teeming up like a universal father and mother to spread rain clouds across the globe to nourish all creatures: "It is like a free service rendered to all living organisms irrespective of their merits. A thousand and one other instances can be quoted to show that the innate law that holds together every atom of this world has a will to care and a meta-intelligence to design a program with all the caring parents in the world put together." (393)

Traditional bhakti begins with a devotee worshipping a remote deity. Adam described a relevant film he likes, by David Hockney & Philip Haas, which includes a comparison of the perspectives in European and Chinese art. It's called "A Day on The Grand Canal with The Emperor of China, or surface is illusion but so is depth." The West traditionally based its art on a vanishing point, emphasizing the dualist perspective. Like God, as you approach the vanishing point it recedes, ever maintaining its

remoteness. In Chinese art there is no vanishing point. You are right inside the scene, as if God were all around, or as if the center was everywhere.

Narayana Guru puts his own dynamic twist on the ancient scheme of devotion, and over the course of this Darsana brings the two sides ever closer together. The ultimate union of devotee and Absolute is bhakti at its best. It's a wholly natural process, like the bee sipping nectar from the flower. Reciprocity means that joy invites deeper communion, and deeper communion invites profounder joy. These final verses are the breath of the Guru itself, washing over us in the union of all in All. We merge, and yet we don't disappear. We remain to act as intermediaries to transmit that liberated joy gently and tactfully into the world we live in. Aum.

Part II

This tidbit contributed by our local dervish Baird:

SUFI BHAKTI:

"Know

The true nature of your Beloved.

In His loving eyes your every thought,

Word and movement is always-

Always Beautiful."

- Hafiz

Part III

I don't think I have made the idea of a hierarchy of devotion very clear. What I talked about earlier is mainly the ordinary conceptions about such matters. I think in class several people thought immediately of a pyramidal structure like the Buddhist religion, where there's a top dog who is claimed to be the Absolute, with layer after layer of inferiors below him. The Catholic Church boasts something similar. Such a system only works if the pinnacle of the pyramid really does represent perfection, and everyone else practices perfect obedience, otherwise whatever imperfections there are cascade down to infect the entire edifice below them. In a classic process of double negation, errors compound errors and magnify the deflection from the original intent. We can look around and see the devastation wrought by hierarchical systems all around us. Luckily, the Dalai Lama is a pretty good fellow, much closer to an ideal than certain Presidents and CEOs I can think of, and some of his underlings try very hard to be exemplary followers. So as of yet the Buddhists don't have much of a war department.

A spiritual hierarchy of devotion is more like an inverted pyramid, or better yet a cone. At the point of inception at the vertical negative apex, the process of relating oneself to abstract, generalized conceptions begins. Early on these are likely to be limited in purview, half-baked and/or self-oriented. Over time the conceptions are enlarged and refined, which structurally means as you go upward (representing the passage of time), consciousness widens out to embrace more and more factors. In the vertical positive region, the cone doesn't stop anywhere, but merges with the Totality and dissolves. At whatever stage we find ourselves, we are at our best when the total reality infuses our awareness from above, so to speak, through the base of the inverted cone.

I guess you COULD picture this as a titanic ice cream cone, with your favorite flavor scoop on top as the Self or turiya, melting

and dripping down to coat every bit. What a lot of business you'd do if you advertised turiya-sized scoops!

Seriously now folks, a hierarchy tends to be thought of as consisting of discrete stages, although in this case it really is a continuum. We might say devotion begins with the devotee as the point source. Gradually, and conceivably in stages, the devotee's vision can take in successively: lover, family, friends, coworkers, village, country and world. Simultaneously the concept of a distant God slowly melts into discovering it within everything and knowing everything is within it. This is a good example of double assertion, a positive feedback loop intrinsic to bipolar affiliation that is mutually supportive of the participants. It reinforces truth instead of error. Progressively realizing this inherent unity is figuratively "uplifting" as it draws you up the vertical axis toward the oceanic awareness of the turiya, the base of an inverted cone whose diameter is infinite. There we attain the ultimate level of bhakti, where we become fully convinced of our "identity with the supremely numinous truth that shines in and through this wonderful world."

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12/12/17

Bhakti Darsana verses 9 & 10

Towards the Father of the world,
to one's spiritual teacher, father, mother,
towards the founders of truth,
towards those who walk in the same path,

towards those who put down evil,
(and) to those who do good to all,
what sympathy there is, that is *bhakti*,

what here belonging to the supreme Self is the ultimate.

Nataraja Guru's translation:

*Towards the Father of the World, to one's
Spiritual teacher, father, mother;
Towards the founders of Truth and
Towards those who walk in the same path;
Towards those who put down evil
And those who do good to all, what sympathy
There is, is devotion here; what here
Belonging to the Self-Supreme is the ultimate.*

With the swirl of the holidays upon us, we agreed to make the last two verses of the Bhakti Darsana the terminus of our gatherings in 2017. We're going to let it sink in as we focus on sharing our time and love with our closest friends and family.

Nataraja Guru's guiding insight in his commentary on Darsanamala is that in the second half there is an incremental coming together of the Self and the non-Self. Here at the end of the eighth darsana we have progressed from simple gratitude to sympathy, a distinct closing of the gap. Gratitude is accorded by a one to an other, while sympathy shares the stage with it. Narayana Guru specifically states that in bhakti there is a sympathetic agreement between the appreciator and the appreciated. We are more than grateful to the wise and cosmic entities on his list, we are beginning to embody those qualities in ourselves.

The relief felt by everyone present that an important election [for Alabama Senator] had gone that evening in favor of a good man supporting ethical values, who edged out a palpable embodiment of evil, gave a realistic tone of gratitude to the class. The year has been especially lacking in positive political developments in the USA. It feels like the maddeningly dammed

up care and concern felt by so many of us has found a sympathetic outlet at last. Perhaps there will soon be a flood released to inundate the arid desert generated by neoliberal capitalism.

Nitya highlights an important dimension of gratitude, one which implies a universal beneficence knitting our world together:

The farmer is consciously or unconsciously grateful to the amazingly benign hidden hand that promotes his labor and concern at every step to make his farm yield plentifully. (393)

Deb noted that our vast world is profligate in giving us so much abundance, including obstacles (naturally), friendships, alone time, and so on. Even though we are often severely challenged, our difficulties are a stimulus to growth. At its core it is not a world of contracts but of beneficence.

I fastened on Deb's contractual idea as being of major significance. A contractual view of life demeans that hidden hand or flow that blesses all beings regardless of their merit, as Nitya puts it. Do we have to make deals with the sun for it to energize the world? Superstitious humans have thought so at times, but scientifically speaking all our machinations to influence and thereby manipulate the ground of being are illusory. It's quite the other way round. Gratitude and sympathy rise above contractual considerations to touch on true freedom. And as Deb added, they connect us with our core.

Honored guest Emma saw how our blockages—to community, to our Self—come from a fallacy of propositional thinking. We humans tend to ignore what isn't rational, yet isn't the non-rational (or trans-rational) where our deep insights arise? If we tune out our intuitional wisdom, we are left with something like bald contractual analysis. Deb lamented how she was thoroughly trained and became expert at ignoring her quiet voice within. She is now giving it more credence, and finding its guidance gratifying.

Bushra added how we must love people irrespective of merit: love based on merit is something less than love. In true love the object doesn't have to be evaluated—to be weighed and judged. That would destroy the love, or anyway severely dampen it.

Looking at religious history, the more the emphasis on judging and merit-rating, the more brutal and repressive they have been. Instead of letting their love flow, fearful believers obsess over how to meet the impossible demands of an implacable deity. It's yet another case of man creating God in his own image, a complete reversal of the biblical Book of Genesis, yet preached in many a pulpit.

Paul noted that humans eagerly unite behind either a terrible villain or a radiating saint. He and Nancy agreed that increasing your capacity to love and include rather than exclude is liberating to the extent it expands your boundaries. Challenging situations are our opportunities to make those kinds of choices.

The Bible famously advises “Judge not, lest ye be judged.” By the very act of judging others we reduce ourselves. While we may hurl accusations and even mount offensives, most of the intimidating action is confined within us. Paul's evangelical upbringing has made him acutely aware of this. That kind of religion is primarily a negative path, an endless list of don'ts enforced by an angry god. Generating fear in innocent children by threatening them with something like an eternally burning hellfire is psychological sadism. Despite his spiritual growth and blossoming wisdom, those ugly echoes from the past continue to cast a shadow on Paul's joy. He reports, if what makes you happy is bad, it's a guarantee you'll never be happy unless you change your mind.

Nancy has been reveling in her new granddaughter, who is an ideal antidote to despair—not that Nancy ever despairs. She recently had several hours of caring for her, in only her second week of breathing air. Nancy marveled at how this little wonder

came from a single molecule and has expanded into this miraculous form where everything is so perfect and in working order, eagerly drinking in its new world and learning as fast as possible. Nancy is now looking at everyone she sees on the street as a former baby, how they all started out as a tiny bliss-filled being, and they remain an expression of the ever-unfolding wonder they once knew. (This sounds like bhakti to me.)

Andy talked about saying grace, the action of sitting down to have your food with full appreciation. He spoke of how his atheist family of origin never said grace before meals, but now he is amazed and gratified at how his food appears on his table almost like magic. He thinks of all the nurturing that went into making the elements of his dinner available for him to assemble in his kitchen, to say nothing of the kitchen and its appurtenances itself. That leads him to be appreciative of every aspect of his life as a kind of miracle of grace, an outcome of what Nitya calls “a universal urge to care.” Andy claimed that real grace doesn’t stop being graceful when you finish your dinner. He feels it when he looks at the floor, when he walks down the street. He feels that the gurus are inviting us to appreciate conventional forms of virtue and to even go beyond them, at every moment.

I wholeheartedly agreed, adding that we humans are adept at taking the infinite miracles of our lives utterly for granted. As soon as we make the effort to stop and notice, everything looks like an amazing free gift, a beneficent blessing. Nitya’s poetic extrapolation puts it far more eloquently than I ever could:

The interaction between the sun and the ocean is very much like the shared responsibility of a universal father and mother, which replenishes the biosphere of the planet by lifting mammoth clouds out of the sea and distributing them over the surface of the Earth as rain to fill rivers and lakes and to store in subterranean pockets and veins. It is like a free service

rendered to all living organisms irrespective of their merits. A thousand and one other instances can be quoted to show that the innate law that holds together every atom of this world has a will to care and a meta-intelligence to design a program with all the caring parents in the world put together.

Nitya continues the theme of doting parents, who promote the grand expression of life's possibilities even when we have only the least inkling of our true roles. He likes to epitomize this creative expression as God, partly to test our openness and flexibility, but mainly as a word—an elision of *good*—that is a powerful mantra in its own right:

Thus God, who hides behind the scene, comes to the forefront wearing the garb of the common man in the street, giving him education and leadership to plan each day and to make this world a veritable workshop of high creative efficiency. It is like a grand sacrifice, beginningless and interminable, which is continuously fed with the oblation of fresh life generated in the assembly lines of physical fathers and mothers. However ignorant they are of the purpose for which they generate and perpetuate the species, they are like the receptors and effectors of the grand body of this world. They receive into them life's retrospective storage of instinct and prospective designs of intelligence only to modify and perfect the worth of these universal gifts and to pass them on to the next in line to continue the divine sport of phenomenality.

The spirit of Darsanamala continually calls us to become more aware, more sentient, as the way to become, in one of Nitya's favorite characterizations, a co-creator with God, with the innate flow of universal expression. While this slumbers within each of

us, it is usually elicited by the good offices of an inspiring teacher or guru:

Most of us are carrying out our roles, even at a high efficiency level, with a compulsive instinct that keeps us blindfolded. We are released from this ignorant plight, which at best is like the obligatory labors performed by a slave, and are changed into the joyful co-creators of this world by teachers of spiritual insight who rouse their fellow men from the stupor of ignorance.

When we have a sense of independent awareness and the confidence to shrug off social conditioning and come into alignment with our true dharma, we find ourselves in resonance with an overarching pattern of evolution:

This highly decentralized and distributed government of countless billions of autonomous units, functioning with crisscrossed alignments and reciprocal empathy, is periodically reexamined, revalued, and reconstructed by the phenomenal recurrence of law-knowing and law-enforcing super-geniuses that appear among the cream and scum of human society as prophets, poets and scientists.

That's right: super-geniuses arise without regard to any external constraints like color, creed or financial amplitude. The rest of us are mere geniuses.

The main dialectic challenge we face is how to release our potency while keeping it intelligently channeled, like the Lake of the I Ching that needs its banks to keep it from spreading too far across the land and drying up. This is particularly relevant at this historical moment when the human race appears to be exploding in

frustration at the endless impediments to happiness continually erected by the masters of greed:

This world of ours, which is loosely held together with the matrices of innately inherited and outwardly ordained group discipline, has evolved straitjackets of varying mechanistic determination which are comparable to human devices like dikes, locks and floodgates, so that the system will not be inundated with the wild passions that are periodically released from groups or individuals. Human freedom is actualized and realized by severely curtailing it with sanctions, blocks, and permits, which are nurtured with the consent of those who allow themselves to be ruled. Such is the complex matrix to which every one of us belongs.

It is hoped that by now we have significantly overcome fear and taken heart with confidence in our ability. Nevertheless, Nitya knows that a reminder to meet every interaction with unclouded courage is always welcome. If we force the issue it is going to be less than if we allow our natural kindness and good sense to rule the day. In other words, let the “automatic” love have full sway, as the intentional variety is easily sensed by others and therefore undercuts the genuineness of our participation:

In this winding path our safe conduct is vouched for only by a reciprocally generated sympathy that automatically wells up in our heart on meeting another of our kind, both in the public spaces and private cellars of this age-old labyrinth called world.

Jan particularly loved this spectacular sentence, and reread it to us. The sympathy here is the very basis of community, grounded in the acceptance or at least recognition of the validity of the other. She added that part of community is tradition, of having familiar

ground in common. That is likely why humanity is undergoing yet another cyclic period of disintegration and splintering: so many of its traditions have been recently found to be untrue and jettisoned, and nothing has yet appeared to replace them, at least on a large scale. This got me musing on the improbable effect of those old saints, or perhaps their promulgators who made them into religious icons, how they convinced vast swaths of humanity to adhere to ethical values. That fog of enchantment has been dispelled by a rational worldview that has not yet learned how to uphold compassionate values. Religions, for all their faults, do encourage people to be loving and to remain within the bounds of justice. They universally share the key idea expressed in the Biblical golden rule: do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

Community is an antidote to despair, and we shared our thoughts on it in detail. Bushra feels we humans are connected whether we know it or not. We are reading signals from each other beyond language all the time. This reminded Deb of something she's recently learned about trees, how they have communities too, supporting each other, communicating, and even feeding each other.

We are making our way through what appears to our inner guidance system very much like an underground labyrinth. We can't be sure of the way, but we are assured that if we carry the torch of our intelligence, *buddhi*, and maintain a devotional or at least cautiously optimistic attitude, we will not only pass through the darkness but have an enlightening time doing it. It doesn't hurt that we have good company, kindhearted and supportive, here and elsewhere. And for us there is no goal, other than the going. With Andy, we want to fully experience every moment, not deferring our life for some imaginary future perfection but taking it as it comes. In the immortal words of Atmo verse 5:

Ever wakefully witnessing all this shines an unlit lamp,

precious beyond words, that never fades;
ever seeing this, one should go forward.

Going forward is an evolutionary gesture. Evolutionary history is passing through us—we are the very agents for making it real. How cool is that! We are co-creators, the ones who give the universal urge to care its final manifest shape, until it is passed on to others, intentionally and unintentionally. Nitya likens this to a hierarchy of devotion:

Our habitual choice to walk a path of truth, goodness, and beauty is always a movement or transition from the previously acquired to what is to be passed on in the relay of tradition. This is to be known as a hierarchy of devotion, *parampara bhakti*.

Hopefully this darsana has freed us from any static concepts of devotion. The only specific reference of the Guru is this loving attitude that imbibes the wonders of grace pouring through us at every moment, and shares the ensuing glow with all those who cross our path. The less specifically focused the bhakti, the greater the ensuing effulgence. While most of us prefer to remain modestly recondite lights illuminating only our immediate area, by opening our hearts to the onrushing wave anything may happen. There is no way to predict who will make a quantum leap from that solid foundation into the totality of a truly universal urge to care:

Among those guided by this instinctive devotion there happens now then the great wonder of one gaining an insight into the entire system of the phenomenal in such an amazing manner as to become convinced of their identity with the supremely numinous truth that shines in and through this wonderful world.

The devotion of such a contemplative is the ultimate,
parabhakti.

Our excited conversation slipped into silence at just the right moment to allow for a prolonged meditation, internalizing the rich nurturing care of our little group, where everyone feels respected and honored to be true to themselves. It was a lovely way to arrive on the verge of the winter solstice, like the planting of a special spiritual seed that will begin to grow in the new year in exciting and unanticipated ways. Seeds are essences. We have been paring away the excess baggage our psyches have been made to carry, refining our be-ness, and burying the resulting minimalist germ in the fecund soil of a blissful garden plot. Let it be nurtured in kindness toward all beings, and it will grow into a tree that offers serenity and renewal to a humanity longing for those very qualities. Aum.

Part II

Swami Vidyananda's commentary:

All humans need adoration to a God for the sake of securing their happiness here as well as hereafter. Those who desire liberation also need the same for the sake of the purification of the Self. It is also important that all persons should respect their spiritual teacher with the same respect given to God, because of their help in removing ignorance and bestowing the light of wisdom. It is the duty, moreover, of every human being to have respect and regard for his mother and father because they caused his birth and suffered for his sake many inconveniences.

When truth and righteousness decline in the world there are people like Rama, Krishna, Buddha and Jesus who come for the regeneration of mankind and for once again establishing truth and

righteousness. There are also those who follow the footsteps of such men and they constitute good models. It is good that people have respect and regard for such personalities. In the same way it is but right that they should have respect and regard for people who control and prohibit bad acts like murder, robbery, drunkenness and debauchery. By doing this they give protection to everybody and nurture goodness among men.

All the above-stated items are necessary to human life, and this is why we have set them forth as examples. In spite of this, however, what is indicated in this chapter as most important is devotion referring to the Supreme Self, being of the nature of existence, subsistence and value. All the other devotions are customary or traditional only, but the one referring to the Supreme Self is the highest devotion.

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This from ISOA, Nataraja Guru's *Integrated Science of the Absolute*, addressing these last two verses of the Bhakti Darsana:

Thus everywhere the same Absolute is implied. In the verse referring to loyalties to an administrator of justice we touch on matters of practical everyday import. Here the absolute value remains still the same. The bipolarity between the items always marks the differential between two points of the vertical axis, and whatever horizontalized elements might enter into the situation are merely compensatory in character. When thought of thus in the most schematic terms, all duality and contradiction are abolished. Like water poured into water, to use a favourite example of the Upanishads, horizontal and vertical values become indistinguishable. (Vol. II. 289)

