



## The Concept of Bhakti-Yoga

NAYANKUMAR JITENDRA BHATT  
B-402, Ayodhya Appt.,  
Maheshnagar, Zanzarada Road, Junagadh  
Gujarat (India)

### Abstract:

*Bhakti-Yoga is a real, genuine search after the lord, a search beginning, continuing, and ending in love. One single moment of the madness of extreme love to God brings us eternal freedom. About Bhakti-Yoga Narada says in his explanation of the Bhakti-aphorisms, "is intense love to God." When a man gets it, he loves all, hates none; he becomes satisfied forever. This love cannot be reduced to any earthly benefit, because so long as worldly desires last, that kind of love does not come. Bhakti is greater than Karma, because these are intended for an object in view, while Bhakti is its own fruition, its own means, and its own end.*

---

**Keywords:** *Bhakti Yoga, God, Karma, Yoga*

---

The one great advantage of Bhakti is that it is the easiest, and the most natural way to reach the great divine end in view; its great disadvantage is that in its lower forms it oftentimes degenerates into hideous fanaticism. The fanatical crews in Hinduism, or Mohammedanism, or Christianity, have always been almost exclusively recruited from these worshippers on the lower planes of Bhakti. That singleness of attachment to a loved object, without which no genuine love can grow, is very often also the cause of the denunciation of everything else. When Bhakti has become ripe and has passed into that form which is caned the supreme, no more is there any fear of these hideous manifestations of fanaticism; that soul which is overpowered by this higher form of Bhakti is too near the God of Love to become an instrument for the diffusion of hatred. It is not given to all of us to be harmonious in the building up of our characters in this life, yet we know that character is of the noblest type in which all these three – Knowledge, Love and Yoga – are harmoniously fused. Three things are necessary for a bird to fly – the two wings and the tail as a rudder for steering. Jnana is the one wing, Bhakti is to the other, and Yoga is the tail that keeps up the balance. For those who cannot pursue all these three forms of worship together in harmony, and take up, therefore, Bhakti alone as their way, it is necessary always to remember that forms and ceremonials, though absolutely necessary for the progressive soul, have no other value than taking us on to that state in which we feel the most intense love to God.

According to Shandilya, "Bhakti is intense love to God." The best Definition is, however, that given by the king of Bhaktas, Prahlada: "That deathless love which the ignorant for the fleeting objects of the senses as I keep meditating on Thee may not that sort of intense love for Thee slip away from my heart!" Love! For whom? For the Supreme Lord Ishwara. Love for any other being, however great cannot be Bhakti; for, as Ramanuja says in his Shri-Bhashya, "From Brahma to a clump of grass, all things that live in the world are slaves of birth and death caused by Karma; therefore they cannot be helpful as objects of meditation, because they are all in ignorance and subject to change." Commenting on the word Anurakti used by Shandilya, the commentator Swapneshwara says that it means Anu (after) and Rakti (attachment); the attachment, which comes of, after the knowledge of the nature and glory of God; else a blind attachment to anyone.

In Bhagavad-Gita Lord Krishna said, “He who sees Me the universal self present in all beings, and all beings existing within Me, he is never lost to me, nor am I ever lost to him.” [6.30]

We plainly see, therefore, that Bhakti is a series or succession of mental efforts at religious realization beginning with ordinary worship and ending in a supreme intensity of love for Ishwara. In Bhakti-Yoga the central secret is, therefore, to know that the various passions, and feelings, and emotions in the human heart are not wrong in themselves; only they have to be carefully controlled and given a higher and higher direction, until they attain the very highest condition of excellence.

The highest direction is that which takes us to God; every other direction is lower. We find that pleasures and pains are very common and oft-recurring feelings in our lives. When a man feels pain, because he has not wealth or some such worldly thing, he is giving a wrong direction to the feeling. Still, pain has its uses. Let a man feel pain that he has not reached the highest, that he has not reached God, and that pain will be to his salvation. When you become glad that you have a handful of coins, it is a wrong direction given to the faculty of joy; it should be given a higher direction, it must be made to serve the highest ideal. Pleasure in that kind of ideal must surely be our highest joy. This same thing is true of all our feelings. The Bhakta says that not one of them is wrong; he gets hold of them all and points them unfailingly towards God.

In Bhagavad-Gita Lord Krishna said, “Of these, the best is the man of wisdom, ever established in identity with me and possessed of exclusive devotion. For, I am extremely dear to the wise man who knows me in reality, and he is extremely dear to Me.” [Bhagavad-Gita 7.17]

When a man feels intense misery because he has not attained to God, has not known that which is the only thing worthy to be known, and becomes in consequence very dissatisfied and almost mad, then there is Viraha; and this state of the mind makes him feel disturbed in the presence of anything other than the beloved. In earthly love we see how often this Viraha comes. Again, when men are really intensely in love with women, or women with men, they feel a kind of natural annoyance in the presence of all those whom they do not love. Exactly the same state of impatience, in regard to things that are not loved, comes to the mind when Para-Bhakti holds sway over it; even to talk about things other than God becomes distasteful then. “Think of Him, think of Him alone, and give up all other vain words.”

Those who talk of Him alone, the Bhakta finds to be friendly to him; while those who talk of anything else appear to him to be unfriendly. A still higher stage of love is reached when life itself is maintained for the sake of the one Ideal of Love, when life itself is considered beautiful and worth living only on account of that Love. Without it, such a life would not remain even for a moment. Life is sweet because it thinks of the Beloved.

Tadiyata (His-ness) comes when a man becomes perfect according to Bhakti – when he has become blessed, when he has attained God, when he has touched the feet of God, as it were. Then his whole nature is purified and completely changed. All his purpose in life then becomes fulfilled. Yet many such Bhaktas live on just to worship Him. That is the bliss, the only pleasure in life, which they will not give up. “Oh king, such is the blessed quality of God that even those, who have become satisfied with everything, all the knots of whose hearts have been cut asunder, even they love the Lord for love’s sake” – the Lord “Whom all the gods worship, all the lovers of liberation, and all the knower of the Brahman.”

Such is the power of love. When a man has forgotten himself altogether and does not feel that anything belongs to him, then he acquires the state of Tadiyata; everything is sacred to him, because it belongs to the beloved, even in regard to earthly love, the lover thinks that everything belonging to his beloved is sacred and so dear to him. He loves even a piece of the cloth

belonging to the darling of his heart. In the same way, when a person loves the Lord, the whole universe becomes dear to him, because it is all His.

The Jnani aims at the wholeness of things, at that one absolute and generalized Being, knowing which he knows everything. The Bhakta wishes to realize that one generalized abstract person in loving whom he loves the whole universe. God is the Samashti, and this visible universe is God differentiated and made manifest. If we love this sum total, we love everything. Loving the world and doing it good will all come easily then; we have to obtain this power only by loving God first; otherwise it is no joke to do well to the world. The Bhakta says, "Everything is His and He is my Lover; I love Him."

In Bhagavad-Gita Lord Krishna says, "He who neither rejoices nor hates, nor grieves, nor desires and who renounces both good and evil actions and is full of devotion, is dear to me." [Bhagavad-Gita 12.17]

In this way everything becomes sacred to the Bhakta, because all things are His. All are His children, His body, and His manifestation. How then may we hurt anyone? How then may we not love anyone? With the love of God will come, as a sure effect, the love of everyone in the universe. The nearer we approach God, the more do we begin to see that all things are in Him. When the soul succeeds in appropriating the bliss of this supreme love, it also begins to see Him in everything. Our heart will thus become an eternal fountain of love. And when we reach even higher states of this love, all the little differences between the things of the world are entirely lost; man is seen no more as man, but only as God; the animal is seen no more as animal, but as God; even the tiger is no more a tiger but manifestation of God. Thus in this intense state of Bhakti, worship is offered to everyone, to every life, and to every being.

Knowing that God, the Lord, is in every being, the wise have thus to manifest unswerving love towards all beings. As a result of this kind of intense, all-absorbing love, comes the feeling of perfect self-surrender, the conviction that nothing that happens is against us. Then the loving soul is able to say, if pain comes, "Welcome pain." If misery comes, it will say, "Welcome misery, you are also from the Beloved." If a serpent comes, it will say, "Welcome serpent." If death comes, such a Bhakta will welcome it with a smile. "Blessed am I that they all come to me; they are all welcome."

The Bhakta in this state of perfect resignation, arising out of intense love to God and to all that are His, ceases to distinguish between pleasure and pain in so far as they affect him. He does not know what it is to complain of pain or misery; and this kind of uncomplaining resignation to the will of God, who is all love, is indeed a worthier acquisition than all the glory of grand and heroic performances. The Devi-Bhagavata gives us the following definition of the higher love or Para-Bhakti: – "As oil poured from one vessel to another falls in an unbroken line, so, when the mind in an unbroken stream thinks of the Lord, we have what is called Para-Bhakti or Supreme Love. This grand ideal of the religion of love is worshipped and loved absolutely as such without the aid of any symbols or suggestions. This is the highest form of Para-Bhakti, the worship of such an all-comprehending ideal as the ideal; all the other forms of Bhakti are only stages on the way to reach it. All our failures and all our successes in following the religion of love are on the road to the realization of that one ideal.

Devotion, or love of God, is a renowned way of the saints and sages who speak to God as one could speak to a human being. While all saints and sages were of this special character throughout the world, India, especially, has been known since ages for the practicality of religion and the very intimate relationship that a devotee can maintain with God. Always, in most of the religions, god has remained a distant object of reverence and obedience to divine law. We have, here a religion that has come to the homes of people and become a part of the daily life of the

individual; and religion becomes a living feature in the world only when god becomes something vital in one's daily life for religion is love of God. The way in which we contact God in our life is our practical religion. That which the scriptures speak of, is one kind of religion which only keeps us in a sense of reverence and awe and creates in us a particular type of Bhakti called Aisvarya-Pradhana-Bhakti, that is, the love of God as creator, Father and Sovereign Supreme, the love of God as Isvara or the Master of all Creation.

In Bhagavad-Gita Lord Krishna says, "Whatever celestial form a devotee craving for some worldly object chooses to worship with reverence, I stabilize the faith of that particular devotee in that very form." [Bhagavad-Gita 7.21]

### References

1. Narada, (2010). Translated by Swami Bhuteshananda, Narad Bhakti Sutras, Vedanta Press - (Advaita Ashrama)
2. Swami Vivekananda (1978). Bhakti-Yoga: The Yoga of Love and Devotion, Vedanta Press & Bookshop
3. \_\_\_\_\_. (1982). Karma-Yoga and Bhakti-Yoga, Ramakrishna Vivekananda Center
4. \_\_\_\_\_. (1998). The Yoga of Spiritual Devotion, Inner Traditions