

Bhakti Yoga

1. Background, Eligibility
2. Meaning/ Definition
3. Types of bhakti
4. Types of bhakta
5. Bhakti yoga practice
6. Applications

1. Background. Eligibility

The innate nature of all beings is to love an external object. We cannot but love or cherish something in the heart. Love for external things is an unconscious internal urge to become unified with everything. None can live without love for something.

The path of Bhakti is the easiest of all and is not very much against the nature of the human inclinations. It slowly and gradually takes the individual to the Supreme without frustrating his human instincts.

That is why the followers of Bhakti yoga exceed in numbers than other ways of yoga.

Again that is why we can find Bhakti yoga mentioned in most of the traditional scriptures and spiritual masters they take Bhakti for the spiritual transformation of the followers.

Thus, who has deep emotion in God, who accepts the existence of God, and who is emotionally matured they can practice Bhakti Yoga. But devotion with wisdom or prudence is needed.

2. Meaning and definition

Bhakti is devotion or unselfish love. This comes from the root Bhaj—to sing or to worship or to chant. “Bhaj Sevayam” is the Sanskrit root which means singing his life with service.

Definition----

Narada

Dedicating all the actions in the feet of God and constantly remembering of God is Bhakti. If one commit forgetting he will become very thirsty.

Parashara (NBS 16)

Worshipping of God with several methods(rituals, items) is Bhakti.

Garga (NBS 17)

Devotion and aspiration for hearing the various virtues of Divine God is Bhakti.

Shandilya (NBS 18)

Being engaged oneself with divine love of God is Bhakti.

3. 2 types of Bhakti

1) Apra Bhakti

Apra Bhakti (Bhakti with worldly things)

a. Vaidhy Bhakti (is also known as Nava-Vidha Bhakti)

In the Srimad-Bhagavata and the Vishnu Purana it is told that the nine forms of Bhakti are

Sravaṇa (hearing of God's Lila and stories)

Kīrtana (singing of His glories)

Smarana (remembering of His Name and presence)

Padāsevana (service of His feet)

Ārchana (worship of God)

Vandana (prostration to the Lord)

Dāśya (cultivating the Bhava of a servant with God)

Sakhya (cultivation of the friend-Bhava)

Ātma-nivedana (complete surrender of the self)

A devotee can practice any method of bhakti which suits him best. Through that he will attain Divine illumination.

b. Ragatmika Bhakti

The devotee cares not a jot for public opinion. He is above public criticism. He pours forth exuberantly his love towards his Beloved. The devotee is intoxicated with divine Prem.

2) Para Bhakti

Para Bhakti is the highest form of Bhakti.

The whole world is Vrindavana for a devotee who is established in Para bhakti. He beholds Lord Hari or Lord Krishna everywhere. He beholds himself as Lord Krishna.

4. Types of Bhakta

1) BG 7/16

Arta—bhakta who is afflicted with worldly things

Arthathi---bhakta who is seeking worldly things

Jigyasu---bhakta who is seeking knowledge

Gyani---bhakta who has bhakti with wisdom

2) In Tantra Literature

Sattavic Bhakta---The quality of sattva predominates the Bhakta. He worships God to please Him

Rajasic Bhakta----The quality of Rajas predominates the devotee. He worships God to get wealth, name and fame.

Tamasic Bhakta----The quality of Tamas predominates the devotee. He is actuated by wrath, arrogance, jealousy and malice in showing devotion to God.

5. Practices

- 1) Offering all the actions and fruits of actions to the feet of God (BG9/27)
- 2) Being an instrument of God, whatever instructed by God, bhakta does this.
- 3) Our all power, talent, property, and capital are offered to the welfare of the world in the name of God. Bhakta has a universal mind.

6. Applications

- 1) Everywhere in the world, there is a consuming tendency. Bhakta yoga can eradicate this inclination.
- 2) Because of fragmentation of mind, we can see depression, stress, and psychophysical problems in the world. Bhakta Yoga can cure

this.

- 3) Bhakta yoga can purify the emotion.
- 4) Bhakta yoga can bring bliss and happiness.
- 5) Through practicing Bhakta Yoga people can have a universal mind.

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The path of Bhakti is the easiest of all and is not very much against the nature of the human inclinations.

That is why the followers of Bhakti yoga exceed in numbers than other ways of yoga. Again that is why we can find Bhakti yoga mentioned in most of the traditional scriptures of yoga and spiritual masters they take Bhakti for the spiritual transformation of the followers.

Thus, who has deep emotion in God, who accepts the existence of God, and who is emotionally matured they can practice Bhakti Yoga. Bhakti yoga is for all.

But devotion with wisdom or prudence is needed.

8. Meaning and definition

Bhakti is devotion or unselfish love. This comes from the root Bhaj—to sing or to worship or to chant. “Bhaj Sevayam” is Sanskrit which means singing his life with service.

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3) Apara Bhakti

Apara Bhakti (Bhakti with worldly things)

a. Vaidhy Bhakti (is also known as Nava-Vidha Bhakti)

Nine forms of Bhakti are mentioned in Srimad Bhagavata and Vishnu Purana. They are as follows.

Sravana (hearing of God’s Lila and stories)

Kirtana (singing of His glories)

Smarana (remembering of His Name and presence)

Padasevana (Rendering service)

Archana (worshipping an image)

Vandana (paying homage)

Dasya (cultivating the Bhava of a servant on God)
Sakhya (cultivating of the friend-Bhava on God)
Atma-nivedana (complete surrender of the self)

A devotee can practice any method of bhakti which suits him best.
Through that he will attain Divine illumination.

b. Ragatmika Bhakti

The devotee does not care a jot for public opinion. He is above public criticism. He pours forth vigorously his love towards his Beloved. The devotee is intoxicated with divine Prem.

4) Para Bhakti

Para Bhakti is the highest form of Bhakti.

It is nirguna Bhakti which is free from the three gunas. It is spontaneous, unbroken flow of pure love towards God. It is free from all sorts of motives. The devotee does not care about Divine Vibhuti even if they are offered. He only wants the lotus feet of the Lord. God is the be-all and end-all of the devotee. He perceives God everywhere, and in this type of Bhakti, God and devotee become one.”¹

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¹ Swami Sivananda, Practice of Bhakti Yoga (2000), Divine Life Society p 40

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11. Practices

- 4) Offering all the actions and fruits of actions to the feet of God (BG9/27)
- 5) Being an instrument of God, whatever instructed by God, bhakta does this.
- 6) Our all power, talent, property, and capital are offered to the welfare of the world in the name of God. Bhakta has a universal mind.

12. Applications

- 6) Everywhere in the world, there is a consuming tendency. Bhakta yoga can eradicate this inclination.
- 7) Because of fragmentation of mind, we can see depression, stress, and psychophysical problems in the world. Bhakta Yoga can cure this.
- 8) Bhakta yoga can purify the emotion.
- 9) Bhakta yoga can bring bliss and happiness.
- 10) Through practicing Bhakta Yoga people can have a universal mind.