

2 BHAKTI OR THE LOVE OF GOD

1. 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.

2. "Bhakti is intense love to God" "When a man gets it he loves all, hates none; he becomes satisfied for ever" ^This love cannot be reduced to any earthly benefit," because so long as worldly desires last that kind of love does not come.

3. "Bhakti is greater than Karma, greater than Yoga, because these are intended for an object in view, while Bhakti is its own fruition, its own means and its own end.

4. 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 crew in Hinduism, or Mohammedanism, or Christianity, have always been almost exclusively recruited from these worshippers on the lower planes of Bhakti.

5. 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. All the weak and undeveloped minds in every religion or country have only one way of loving their own ideal, i.e. by hating every other ideal. Herein is the explanation of why the same man who is so lovingly attached to his own ideal of God, so devoted to his own ideal of religion, becomes a howling fanatic as soon as he sees or hears anything of any other ideal.

6. In every mind, utility... is conditioned by its own peculiar wants. To men, therefore, who never rise higher than eating, drinking, begetting progeny, and dying, the only gain is in sense-enjoyments; and they must wait and go through many more births and reincarnations to learn to feel even the faintest necessity for anything higher. But those to whom the eternal interests of the soul are of much higher value than the fleeting interests of this mundane life, to whom the gratification of the senses is but like the thoughtless play of the baby, to them, God and the love of God form the highest and the only utility of human existence.

7. There is Bhakti within you, only a veil of lust-and-wealth covers it, and as soon as that is removed Bhakti will manifest by itself.

8. One way for attaining Bhakti is by repeating the name of God a number of times. Mantras have effect-the mere repetition of words. To obtain Bhakti, seek the company of holy men who have Bhakti, and read books like the Gita and the Imitation of Christ; always think of the attributes of God.

9. But theorising about God will not do; we must love and work. Give up the world and all worldly things, especially while the "plant" is tender. Day and night think of nothing

else as far as possible. The daily necessary thoughts can all be thought through God. Eat to Him, drink to Him, sleep to Him, see Him in all. Talk of God to others; this is most beneficial.

10. Get the mercy of God and of His greatest children; these are the two chief ways to God. The company of these children of Light is very hard to get; five minutes in their company will change a whole life, and if you really want it enough, one will come to you. The presence of those who love God makes a place holy, "such is the glory of the children of the Lord". They are He; and when they speak, their words are Scriptures. The place where they have been becomes filled with their vibrations, and those going there feel them and have a tendency to become holy also.

11. Bhakti-Yoga does not say "give up"; it only says "Love; love the Highest; and everything low naturally falls off from him, the object of whose love is this Highest

12. In Bhakti-Yoga the first essential is to want God honestly and intensely. We want everything but God, because our ordinary desires are fulfilled by the external world. So long as our needs are confined within the limits of the physical universe, we do not feel any need for God; it is only when we have had hard blows in our lives and are disappointed with everything here that we feel the need for something higher; then we seek God.

13. Bhakti is not destructive; it teaches that all our faculties may become means to reach salvation. We must turn them all towards God and give to Him that love which is usually wasted on the fleeting objects of sense.

14. Bhakti differs from your Western idea of religion in that Bhakti admits no elements of fear, no Being to be appeased or propitiated. There are even Bhaktas, who worship God as their own child, so that there may remain no feeling even of awe or reverence. There can be no fear in true love, and so long as there is the least fear, Bhakti cannot even begin. In Bhakti there is also no place for begging or bargaining with God. The idea of asking God for anything is sacrilege to a Bhakta. He will not pray for health or wealth or even to go to heaven

15. We all have to begin as dualists in the religion of love, God is to us a separate Being, and we feel ourselves to be separate beings also. Love then comes in the middle, and man begins to approach God, and God also comes nearer and nearer to man. Man takes up all the various relationships of life, as father, as mother, as son, as friend, as master, as lover, and projects them on his ideal of love, on his God. To him God exists as all these, and the last point of his progress is reached when he feels that he has become absolutely merged in the object of his worship.

16. We all begin with love for ourselves and the unfair claims of the little self make even love selfish; at last, however, comes the full blaze of light, in which this little self is seen to have become one with the Infinite. Man himself is transfigured in the presence of this

Light of Love, and he realises at last the beautiful and inspiring truth that Love, the Lover, and the Beloved are one.

17. The path of devotion is natural and pleasant. Philosophy is taking the mountain stream back to its source by force. It is a quicker method but very hard. Philosophy says, "Check everything." Devotion says, 'Give up all to the stream', have eternal self-surrender." It is a longer way, but easier and happier.

18. Leave inimical thoughts aside if you want to have permanent Bhakti. Hatred is a thing which greatly impedes the course of Bhakti, and the man who hates none reaches God.

19. If a man does not get food one day, he is troubled; if his son dies how agonising it is to him! The true Bhakta feels the same pangs in his heart when he yearns for God. The great quality of Bhakti is that it cleanses the mind, and the firmly established Bhakti for the Supreme Lord is alone sufficient to purify the mind.

20. Of all renunciations, the most natural, so to say, is that of the Bhakti-Yogi. Here, there is no violence, nothing to give up, nothing to tear off, as it were, from ourselves, nothing from which we have violently to separate ourselves; the Bhakta's renunciation is easy, smooth, flowing, and as natural as the things around us.

21. "In this evanescent world, where everything is falling to pieces, we have to make the highest use of what time we have, says the Bhakta; and really the highest use of life is to hold it at the service of all beings.

22. It is the horrible body-idea that breeds all the selfishness in the world, just this one delusion that we are wholly the body we own, and that we must by all possible means try our very best to preserve and please it. If you know that you are positively other than your body, you have then none to fight with or struggle against; you are dead to all ideals of selfishness. So the Bhakta declares that we have to hold ourselves as if we are altogether dead to all the things of the world; and that is indeed self-surrender. Let things come as they may. This is the meaning of "Thy will be done"; not going about fighting and struggling and thinking all the while that God wills all our own weaknesses and worldly ambitions.

23. "Lord, they build high temples in your name; they make gifts in your name; I am poor; I have nothing; so I take this body of mine and place it at your feet Do not give me up, Lord." Such is the prayer proceeding out of the depths of the Bhakta's heart To him who has experienced it, this eternal sacrifice of the self unto the Beloved Lord is higher by far than all wealth and power, than even all soaring thoughts of renown and enjoyment

24. The peace of the Bhakta's calm resignation is a peace that passeth all understanding, and is of incomparable value.

25. When the devotee has reached this point he is no more impelled to ask whether God can be demonstrated or not, whether He is omnipotent and omniscient, or not. To him He

is only the God of Love; He is the highest ideal of love, and that is sufficient for all his purposes; He, as love, is self-evident; it requires no proof to demonstrate the existence of the beloved to the lover. The magistrate-Gods of other forms of religion may require a good deal of proof to prove them, but the Bhakta does not and can not think of such Gods at all. To him God exists entirely as love.

26. The perfected Bhakta no more goes to see God in temples and churches; he knows no place where he will not find Him. He finds Him in the temple as well as out of the temple; he finds Him in the saint's saintliness as well as in the wicked man's wickedness, because he has Him already seated in glory in his own heart, as the one Almighty, inextinguishable Light of Love, which is ever shining and eternally present.

27. The Bhakta at last comes to this that love itself is God and nothing else. Where should man go to prove the existence of God? Love was the most visible of all visible things. It was the force that was moving the sun, the moon and the stars, manifesting itself in men, women and in animals, everywhere and in everything. It was expressed in material forces as gravitation and so on. It was everywhere, in every atom, manifesting everywhere. It was that Infinite Love, the only motive power of this universe, visible everywhere, and this was God Himself.

28. I may know that I am He, yet will I take myself away from Him and become different, so that I may enjoy the Beloved. That is what the Bhakta says.

29. I know one whom the world used to call mad, and this was his answer: "My friends, the whole world is a lunatic asylum; some are mad after worldly love, some after name, some after fame, some after money, some after salvation and going to heaven. In this big lunatic asylum I am also mad, I am mad after God. You are mad; so am I. I think my madness is after all the best." The true Bhakta's love is this burning madness, before which everything else vanishes for him. The whole universe is to him full of love and love alone; that is how it seems to the lover. So when a man has this love in him, he becomes eternally blessed, eternally happy; this blessed madness of divine love alone can cure for ever the disease of the world that is in us.

30. Men are ever running after wives, and wealth, and fame in this world; sometimes they are hit very hard on the head, and they find out what this world really is. No one in this world can really love anything but God. Man finds out that human love is all hollow. Man cannot love though they talk of it. The wife says, she loves her husband, and kisses him; but as soon as he dies the first thing she thinks about is the bank account, and what she shall do the next day. The husband loves the wife, but when she becomes sick, and loses her beauty, or becomes haggard, or makes a mistake, he ceases to care for her. All the love of the world is hypocrisy and hollowness.

31. With love there is no painful reaction; love only brings a reaction of bliss; if it does not, it is not love; it is mistaking something else for love. When you have succeeded in loving your husband, your wife, your children, the whole world, the universe, in such a manner that there is no reaction of pain or jealousy, no selfish feeling, then you are in a

fit state to be unattached.

32. Q.-Then is it impossible for householders to realise God through that path of love, worshipping God as one's own husband or lover and considering oneself as His spouse?

A.-With a few exceptions; for ordinary householders it is impossible no doubt. And why lay so much stress on this delicate path, above all others? Are there no other relationships by which to worship God, except this Madhura idea of love? Why not follow the four other paths, and take the name of the Lord with all your heart? Let the heart be opened first, and all else will follow of itself. But know this for certain, that Prema cannot come while there is lust. Why not try first to get rid of carnal desires? You will say-"How is that possible? -I am a householder." Nonsense! Because one is a householder, does it mean that one should be a personification of incontinence, or that one has to live in marital relations all one's life? And, after all, how unbecoming of a man to make of himself a woman, so that he may practise this Madhura love!

33. We accept God not because we really want Him, but because we have need of him for selfish purposes. Love is something absolutely unselfish, that which has no thought beyond the glorification and adoration of the object upon which our affections are bestowed. It is a quality which bows down and worships and asks nothing in return. Merely to love is the sole request that true love has to ask.

34. Then alone a man loves when he finds that the object of his love is not any low, little mortal thing. Then alone a man loves when he finds that the object of his love is not a clod of earth, but is the veritable God Himself. The wife will love the husband the more when she thinks that the husband is God Himself. The husband will love the wife the more when he knows that the wife is God Himself. The mother will love the children more, who thinks that the children are God Himself. That man will love his greatest enemy, who knows that that very enemy is God Himself. That man will love a holy man, who knows that the holy man is God Himself, and that very man will also love the unholyest of men because he knows the background of that unholyest of men is even He, the Lord.

35. The absence of the thought of self is the essential characteristic of the love for God. Religion nowadays has become a mere hobby and fashion. People go to church like a flock of sheep. They do not embrace God because they need Him. Most persons are unconscious atheists who self-complacently think that they are devout believers.