CHAPTER -2

Concept of Bhakti and its varied elements-

A thorough insight into Bhakti
2.1 Meaning and Nature of Bhakti

The term Bhakti is derived from the root ‘Bhaja’, meaning to move to a goal and rest there. It insinuates disengagement from which that is worthless and union with that which is worthy. Conventionally Bhakti is impulse to find asylum and complete protection through unswerving love and deeply loyal service rendered to the superior.\(^1\) Apart from this meaning, there are a number of different meanings of the term ‘Bhaja’ as mentioned in dictionary. The below mentioned are some meaning of the term ‘Bhaja’ as found in dictionary. Another meaning of Bhaja is ‘Divide’ or ‘Distinguish’, ‘Accept’, ‘Resort to’ ‘Observe’, ‘Enjoy’, ‘Experience’, ‘Service’. ‘Wait upon’, ‘Adore, and ultimately ‘Bhaja’ means ‘Love’.\(^2\)

I. Divide or Distinguish: While going through the meaning of the term ‘Bhaja’ as mentioned in the dictionary, one may come across different meanings with significance of its own each. The explanation part of these meanings will give an insight into the multi facet aspects of Bhaja. It has been said that a Bhakta should have the aptitude to divide or identify the meaningful (sārtha) and the meaningless (viyartha). In this transitional world there is the presence of both Sārtha and Viyartha. It is the capability of an ideal Bhakta to identify Sārtha from Viyartha and proceed ahead in this transitory world. Sārtha is that acquired asset of the Bhakta which everlasting contentment always keeps his heart and mind free from the insecurities of a materialistic world. This world is predisposed to all maladies emanating from Viyartha. It depends on temperament of the Bhakta to look to this malignating affair and cultivate the ability to distinguish the Viyartha so that he has a clear vision of what that will accompany him after death.
II. 'Bhaja' also means 'Accept'. A Bhakta seeks nothing but God. So, whatever God bestows upon him, he accepts it with gratitude. A Bhakta surrenders himself to God - his one and only resort. He has unconditional faith upon God. So, whatever situation he faces in life or achieves by dint of his karma, he accepts it. He doesn’t bother what has come to his hands. He is contented that it is something that has been sent to him by God.

III. 'Bhaja' means 'Resort to'. The basic nature of Bhakta is that he places himself totally at the feet of the Lord. He sees no one except for his Lord whose blessings is always sought for by him. This nature of the Bhakta reflects on the fact that he has discarded his self ego and is at complete peace within himself – spiritually, mentally and physically.

IV. 'Bhaja' means 'Observe'. When one observe something it is the mind that gets influenced. A Bhakta sees God in everything. So, his observance is centered upon God. For him each minute particle is nothing but God’s essence. As this quality of the Bhakta intensifies, his mind gets the message sound and clear. The mind reaches a tranquil stage and picks up God’s qualities.

V. 'Enjoy' is another meaning of the term 'Bhaja'. This enjoyment is the Ultimate enjoyment of the Bhaktas. Explanation of the word 'Enjoy' in terms of 'Bhaja' has a significant thing to say, when the Bhakta is with his Lord, he has nothing more to wish for neither worldly comforts nor worldly ties. He gets united with his Lord at the spiritual level. This is the ultimate aim of the Bhakta- to be with the Supreme Bliss. This Supreme Bliss realized by a Bhakta is the ultimate enjoyment of the Bhakta.
VI. ‘Bhaja’ also means ‘Experience’. Experience is to perceive something. In case of a Bhakta his experience is nothing but to perceive what he read and hears. Here ‘read’ means those words which he becomes familiar with and utilizes its practical worth in mundane life. A mundane life of a Bhakta is different from that of a person preoccupied by materialistic thoughts. Even those sounds and words heard by a Bhakta remind him of God’s voice within. He bothers not whether those sounds and words bear positive meaning or negative meaning. The Bhakta has faith in his Lord and feels that whatever word or sound that he hears is nothing but God’s voice. So, even the word with negative meaning has some positive thought to convey to the Bhakta.

VII. ‘Bhaja’ means ‘Service’. The literal meaning of ‘serve’ is to assist someone in doing something. But as far as the term Bhakta is concerned, the word ‘serve’ has a much broader meaning to convey. A Bhakta’s life is dedicated to his Lord i.e. God the Supreme Being. God is the Paramātmā and all other living beings are Jeevātmā, who ultimately merge with the Supreme – the Paramātmā. From this point of view service to mankind is service to God. When a Bhakta serves his fellowmen, he is indirectly offering his services to God. The served ones get positive utility from his services. This goes a long way in pleasing the Lord. The Bhakta’s kind and sincere gesture earns him his fellowmen’s love and gratitude. This pleases God too. In this way a Bhakta becomes intimate with the Lord.

VIII. ‘Wait upon’ is another meaning of the term ‘Bhaja’. Wait upon means patience. A Bhakta must have patience. Without this patience Bhakti cannot be fulfilled because the highest waiting is the ultimate encounter with God. Perseverance plays a major role in long term achievement in human life. By nature man is impatient.
The worldly burden and cares leave him a frustrated being. This shows up in his behaviour and social interaction. A Bhakta is different from the common man in mental aptitude. He understands that he has to be patient to be near God. His mental faculty has to master the art of perseverance with utmost dedication and sincerity until he is rewarded for it handsomely. A Bhakta is also a man of flesh and blood and very much of this mundane world. The only difference between him and the common man is this that unlike the common man, the Bhakta cares the least about worldly matters which can help in keeping the physical self happy and contented. A Bhakta strives for nothing but spiritual contentment. This contentment comes from the association with the Divine Being — God. The more he engages his mental faculty in practicing patience, the more shorter his wait be, until his encounter with God.

IX. 'Adore' is also another meaning of Bhaja. Adoration is that state of mind when one's mental faculty whole heartedly surrenders before the one whom he adores. Needless to say it is the Bhakta who surrenders before God — his most adored one. At this stage all material concern of a Bhakta becomes meaningless. He bathes in the ultimate bliss of contentment of being with his Lord. This makes him realize his close proximity with God.

X. And ultimately Bhaja means 'Love'. This love is eternal love, spiritual love or celestial love. The term 'Bhaja' also means to participate and to share. When it is used in regard to Bhakti it implies a communion of heart and mind. This communion of heart and mind is between the Bhakta and God. So, in this sense, Bhakti means a personal relationship between Bhakta and God.
Indian philosophy basically implies positive thinking. Positive thinking means Yogattamak attitude (Samyak Drsti). When the mental connection of God starts with that of human being in the mind, Bhakti is being created spontaneously. So Bhakti is a mental exercise. Through this exercise human mind gets connected with the Supreme mind (Isvara). It is an emotional attachment with God. This emotional attachment is distinct from Jñana or Karma. In our Indian tradition Bhakti should not be mechanical. It should be connected with love; love means attraction towards God. When achieving something makes one feel no urge for something else, no repentance for loosing anything, when nothing except the achieved can give pleasure, when there is no hatred, no sin in mind, it is then that Bhakti rises in the mind. In view of this, it is said that Bhakti is related to one’s mental condition. The Bhakti mārga indicates the way of right action. It is an emotional attachment which is distinct from knowledge and action (Jñana or Karma). Emotion expresses a living relationship between individuals and become instinct with the force of religious feelings when it binds God and devotee. Generally Bhakti involves three things: the lover (Bhakta), the beloved (God) and the loving relationship (the relation between Bhakta and God). All these three are eternal. The lover that means Bhakta is eternal, the beloved that means God is eternal, and the relationship between Bhakta and God that means ‘Bhakti’, is also eternal.

Bhakti is that term which is used the most but understood least, this is because it is a real genuine search for the Supreme Being, which is beyond limit. Bhakti is one kind of experiment which is related to God, the Supreme power. It is an observance which begins, continues and culminates in love of God. This love is called spiritual love or eternal love or celestial love. This love is possible only between lover (Bhakta) and beloved (God). The nature of spiritual love is very difficult to understand
for general people. The human being, who understands its nature, is called Bhakta or devotee and the relationship between the lovers and beloved that means Bhakta and God is called Bhakti. In Bhagavad Gita Sri Krishna has said—

“Manmanaa bhava madbhakto madyaajee maam namaskuru;
Maamevaishyasi yuktaiyam atmaanam matparayanah”

(Bhagavad Gita, IX-34)

That means—Fix your mind on Me, be devoted to Me, worship Me, bow down to Me.

Having thus surrendered yourself to Me, with your spirit united with Me, you will surely attain Me.⁴

The Lord wants the Bhakta to surrender completely before His Divine Self. No material want or expectation of the Bhakta is left. He is completely free of that burden in mortal life. It is this Bhakta who actually serves his God in the proper way. In this way such a Bhakta’s being is filled with the Divine Grace and he is the one who gets access into the eternal kingdom of God. So Bhakti means a pure relationship between devotee (Bhakta) and the Lord (God) and it is complete dedication to God.

So far much has been discussed about the basic nature of Bhakti. But in the real sense it is very difficult to explain the nature of Bhakti. This is because Bhakti is a mental faculty. It is a feeling of the heart which is related to mind and soul. Such feelings cannot be expressed properly for want of appropriate words. The examination of the nature of Bhakti is only possible when one examine the meanings of Bhakti. Some of the basic natures of Bhakti are—
(a) Bhakti is a mental process. So it is inexpressible by words. So its nature is psychological and indescribable.

(b) Bhakti means a spiritual love. So it is spiritual by nature.

(c) Bhakti is a real, genuine search for the Supreme Power or God. So its nature is based on reality.

(d) In the practice of Bhakti, Bhakta gets Ultimate peace and satisfaction. He (Bhakta) feels himself as a unity with God. So the nature of Bhakti is peace and perfect Bliss.\(^5\)

According to Radhakrishnan, if man does not love and worship, they become confined in the prison of their own egoism. This way, when rightly regulated, lead man to the perception of the Supreme. It is open to all - the weak and the poor, the illiterate and the ignorant. It is also the easiest way to lead man to the Supreme Being. The sacrifice of love is not as difficult as the tuning of the will to the divine purpose or ascetic discipline, or the strenuous effort of thinking. It is quite as efficacious as any other method and is sometimes said to be greater than others, since it is its own fruition, while others are means to some other end.\(^5\) For him, wisdom is the Supreme means of liberation, but this wisdom is not exclusive of devotion to God and desire less work. Even while alive, the sage rests in Brahman and is released from the unrest of the world\(^7\). Bhakti is not merely the “fight of the alone to the alone”, the soul’s detachment from the world and attachment to God, but is active love for the divine who enters into the world for redeeming it. While Bhakti requires faith and love, in ‘Prapatti’ man simply surrender themselves to God, place themselves in His hands leaving it to Him to deal with them as He elects. In Bhakti the grace of God is earned to an extent; in ‘Prapatti’ it is freely bestowed. The distinction of ‘Prapatti’ and Bhakti relates to the
issue in Christian thought which is very old and whether man as a fallen creature is to be saved only by the grace of God or whether he can make something of himself and contribute by his own effort to his salvation. St. Augustine says that none of us can abstain from sin of our own power. Only God’s grace can help man to be virtuous. So Bhakti requires faith and love. It has a strong connection with human emotions and feelings. That is why it can be said that Bhakti means a mental curriculum.

Now there may arise a question as to whether the concept of Bhakti was present in human mind before the rise of the Bhakti movement in the middle ages or not. The answer to this question ‘Yes’. The clarification of this point of view in regard to this is - literally speaking it cannot be said that some philosophers or social scientists have placed definition of Bhakti in the Vedic era or before that. But the essence of Bhakti or unconditional surrender before some power was always there within the heart of man or Bhaktas all through the beginning of human civilization. With the passage of time this feeling or impulse took a modified form and then philosophers and religious thinkers came to term this particular aspect as Bhakti bhava.

The next point of view in regard to the idolization of the Vedic God Lord Viṣṇu (according to Bhagavata Gita canto 2 chapter 10)

"na me viduh suragaṇāḥ prabhavaṁ na mahaṁśayaḥ I
ahamādirhi devānāṁ mahaṁśīnāṁ ca sarvaśaḥ" "II

(Bhagavadgita, Chapter 10, Canto 2)

It means - Lord Viṣṇu who is also known as Narayana, as Para Brahma, Supreme Lord who creates unlimited universe and enters each one of them as Lord of Universe.
Therefore it is clear that all the living being is a part of Lord Viṣṇu, because He is the creator of the whole unlimited universe and it is His power that He imprints the feeling of Bhakti in the human mind at the very beginning of birth of a human being.

Again in Bhagavad Gita, in the same chapter, canto 21 to 39, Sri Krishna said to Arjuna that He is also Viṣṇu and He is the one who is the best of all others as He is life, He is time, He is sun, He is omnipotent, He is omnipresent, and He is the source of all living beings.

“ahamātmā guḍakeśa sarvabhūtāśayasthitah I
ahamādiśca madhyatāṁ ca bhūtānāṁanta eva ca II¹⁰
ādityānāmakaṁ viṣṇurjyotisāṁ raviṁ śumān I
maricirmarutāmasmi nakṣatṛaṇāmakaṁ śaśī” II¹¹

(Bhagavadgita Chapter 10, Canto-20,21)

Meaning:- I am that spirit residing deep within the heart of every creature; They evolve from Me; It is by Me that they survive; I determine their days in this world (death); I am Vishnu among the Adityas who are the Lords of Light. I am the Marichi of the Maruts who are the Kings of storm and blight and the sun of a cloudless sky of noon letting off its golden hue.

As far as Hindu religion or Indian philosophy of religion is concerned, Viṣṇu is said to be one of the chief deities among Trimurti. The other two are Brahma and Shiva respectively. In Hindu religion Lord Brahma is considered as the Creator of the universe, Lord Shiva as the Destroyer and Lord Viṣṇu as the Preserver. From the technical point of view the Preserver plays a far more significant role than the Creator and Destroyer. Creation is a basic truth as far as any life form or any development
related to creation is concerned. To put an end to life is no tough task either. But sustaining life or any development process is no easy task. That is why Lord Viṣṇu – the preserver of the Universe is held in high esteem. Moreover seers and sages have depicted Lord Viṣṇu’s personality and qualities in such a way that it went a long way in the popularization as well as idolizing of this popular God who has several incarnations as well. His full fledged incarnation is Lord SriKrishna (eighth incarnation) who has made a niche for Himself in the Bhagavad Gita.

“bahūni me vyātītāni janmāṇi tava cārjuna I
tānyahāṃ veda sarvāṇi na tvam vetha parantapa II
ajopi sannavyayātmā bhūtānāmīśvaro’pi san I
prakṛtim svāmadhiṣṭhāya sambhavāmyātmamāyahā II
yadā yadā hi dharmasya glānirbhavati bhārata I
abhyyutthānamadharmasya tadātmānaṁ srjāmyaham II
paritrāṇāya sādhūnāṁ vināśaya ca duṣkṛtāṁ I
dharmasāṁsthāpnāṁrthāya sambhāvāmi yuge yuge” II 

(Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 4, Verses 5,6 7,8)

(Meaning:-) Manifold the renewals of my birth have been, Arjuna! and of thy births, too! But mine I know, and thine thou knowest not, O Slayer of thy Foes! Albeit I be unborn, undying, indestructible, the Lord of all things living; not the less – by Maya, by My magic which I stamp on floating Nature – forms, the primal vast – I come, and go, and come. When Righteousness Declines, O Bharata! When Wickedness is strong, I rise, from age to age, and take visible shape, and move a man with men, succouring the good, thrusting the evil back, and setting Virtue on her seat again.)
2.2 Definition of Bhakti

Different teachers have given various definitions about Bhakti at different times. Sri Narada and Sri Sandilya Bhakti Sutras are exclusively written on Bhakti. In Narada Bhakti Sutra, Bhakti is defined as Supreme devotion or intense love of God (Paramapremarupa). According to Sri Narada, Bhakti consists in offering all activities to God and inducting a feeling of extreme restlessness and misery at the slightest lapse in remembrance of God. According to Rishi Sandilya in Sandilya Bhakti Sutra, ‘Bhakti is infinite attachment to God’. For him, it is the supreme longing for God (Saparanuraktik Isvara), for its own sake (Nirhetuka). It is surrender in trusting appropriation of the grace of God. For him the characteristics of Bhakti are traceable to the emotive power of heart (rakti) which follows upon the Lord’s greatness. Bhakti is affection towards the personal God and in a rasa or a passionate emotion. Bhakti is free from desire and is of the nature of inhibition of all desires (nirodha) by which however is meant not the extinction of the desires, but the concentration of all desires and actions in God. Inhibition also means undivided or whole hearted devotion to God as contrasted to all that is antagonistic to Him and the giving up of all others aspects. Kapila the founder of the Saṅkhya system of thought define Bhakti, when all the powers of man’s mind and senses, which are ordinarily engaged in actions sacred and secular as also in the perception of sense objects, get purified and naturally focused on Isvara (Satya) exclusively, without any extraneous and self-centered motivation, and with a firmness which no obstructions can overpower, it is called Bhakti, devotion for the Lord. In other words, Bhakti is the love in which, without seeking results, such as sense enjoyment, etc., all works are dedicated to the teacher of teachers. It is profound experience which negates all desire and fills the heart with love for God. Adoration is
enjoyment, etc., all works are dedicated to the teacher of teachers. It is profound experience which negates all desire and fills the heart with love for God. Adoration is the essence of religion. It involves a duality between the worshiper and worshipped. If a philosophy of immanentism is so interpreted as to destroy man’s sense of creaturelyness or God’s transcendence, it has no place for devotion and worship. The distinction between creature and creator is the ontological basis of the religion of Bhakti\textsuperscript{17}. The eternal One is viewed in the ‘Bhagavad Gita’ not so much as the God of philosophical speculation as the God of grace such as the heart and the soul need and seek, who inspires personal trust and love, reverence and loyal self-surrender.

Acharya Rupa Goswami has summarized the Bhakti as –

(a) Bhakti brings immediate relief from all kinds of material distress.
(b) Bhakti is the beginning of all auspiciousness.
(c) Bhakti automatically puts one in transcendental pleasure.
(d) Bhakti is rarely achieved.
(e) Those who are in Bhakti deride even the conception of liberation.
(f) Bhakti is the only means to attract the Lord. He is all attractive but Bhakti attracts even Him\textsuperscript{18}. This means Bhakti is even transcendentally stronger than Himself, because it is His internal potency.

Swami Vivekananda defines Bhakti as “A real and genuine search after the Lord, a search beginning and ending in love.” Sri Aurobindo explains Bhakti as “absolute self giving and one minded surrender”\textsuperscript{19}. Bhakti or true devotion according to Gita is to believe in God to love Him, to be devoted to Him and to enter into Him. It is its own reward.\textsuperscript{20} The Gita makes it clear that activism without Bhakti is never a yoga;
Jñāna still bears if it is not preached by Bhakti; and it is not typical; if it is unaccompanied by Bhakti. Literary critics may find different aspects, tones of voices and even descenency in this half text. But the spiritual reader who takes it as his divine heritage and guide sees only a single fabric of related themes exhibiting an agreeable effect resulting from the apt arrangement of parts. Bhaktiyoga here is not passion, but the supplement form of divine love meant to integrate the aspiring soul with the most high through well attested method of discipline rigorously proved against bland sentimentalism and arid rationalism\textsuperscript{21}. The texture of Jesus' life is intense love of God and the certitude that comes from it. With him Bhakti was life and life was Bhakti. But for those who do not have that intensity he gave easier methods. He did not harp on the message "Love God". He economized the use of the word love. One cannot order others to love. He often used the word 'Father', God, the generous Father, to generate love in the human heart\textsuperscript{22}.

From the above it is clear that Bhakti includes faith, pleasure, love, worship, purification of mind, humility, prayer, self-surrender etc. It stands as the path for achievement of spiritual unity. In divine realization it plays a dominant role and finally it produce a complete experience where Jñāna, Kārma and Bhakti all become complete. Man is the only product of God who has the capacity to search for the why and wherefore of things in, around and above him. He is a unique creation of God. He has a profound desire for pleasure; this pleasure is part of the mind. Mental pleasure is possible only when everything mental and physical is surrendered to the Supreme Being or God. When one dedicates him or herself to God completely and prays to God with a true mind and worship God selflessly, then Bhakti is created in his or her mind and pleasure comes to the mind. Mental connection of oneself with Supreme Being or God...
pleasure or \textit{Ananda}. So Bhakti is a loving attachment between God and devotee; it includes a total self-surrender and gets motivated by only love and pleasure.

In the epic age, the theistic elements developed around the great Gods - Lord Viṣṇu and Lord Siva. The organization of the temple worship was one of the characteristic features of the religious development during this period. In the ‘Ramayana’, every character is the devotee of Lord Rama. Lord Rama is said to be propitiated only by Bhakti. Similarly, in the ‘Mahabharata’, Pandavas are the ideal devotees of Lord Krishna. Whenever they confronted calamity, Lord Krishna rushed to their succor. When queen Draupadi was dragged to the royal court to be stripped off, Lord Krishna incarnated as the infinite saris and saved her honour. It is the highest example of the relation between Bhakta and his adorable. This relationship is called Bhakti.

\textbf{2.3 Classification or Types of Bhakti}

The term ‘Bhakti’ can be broadly divided into two forms or kinds, according to its nature. These kinds are-(a) Saguna Bhakti and (b) Nirguna Bhakti. The Saguna Bhakti also known as Para Bhakti or Sadhya Bhakti and the Nirguna Bhakti is known as Gauni Bhakti. The Bhakti which occupies the central place is called Para Bhakti. In Para Bhakti, the devotee has no desire from God. He has only love towards God. According to Sri Rupa Goswami, Bhakti is of three types viz., Sadhana Bhakti (devotion performed by senses), Bhavā Bhakti (emotional devotion) and Prema Bhakti (loving devotion). Sadhana Bhakti is realizable by sense and is meant to awaken Bhavā (emotion). The Bhakti which occupies the central place is called Para Bhakti. In Para Bhakti, the devotee has no desire from God. He has only love of God. The Gauni or
Nirguna Bhakti is also called by the name of Sadhana Bhakti. This Bhakti is also known by the name of Gyanmoyi Bhakti. This Bhakti is essential to acquire the knowledge of the Lord Viṣṇu. The Bhakti which is not occupying the main place till then is known as Gauni Bhakti. When a devotee tries to attain the goal of pure Bhakti through utilization of all his senses it is called Sadhana Bhakti or Nirguna Bhakti. There are four characteristics in the state of Sadhana Bhakti and two qualities in the stage of perfection of Bhakti.

(a) The first characteristic of Sadhana Bhakti is the destruction of miseries constituted of ignorance together with desire for sinful action and ignorance; desire to do virtue (punya) and the action of virtue (punya).

(b) The second characteristic of Sadhana Bhakti is the bestowal of all good qualities and pure happiness on the jiva, as well as manifesting the affection from all living entities and to all living entities.

(c) The third characteristic is to consider liberation as very insignificant.

(d) The fourth characteristic is its rare attainment. Even after performing all the activities of Bhakti for a long time, if the person does not have deep attachment to the goal, he cannot attain prema or love.

(e) The fifth quality is the intense bliss.

(f) The sixth quality is the ability to attract the Lord.

According to Sri Rupa Goswami the Sadhana Bhakti is classified into two. One is Vaidhi Bhakti and the other is Raguna Bhakti. Vaidhi Bhakti is performed in accordance with the injunctions of the scriptures. Raguna Bhakti is done in the wake of Ragatmika Bhakti. Ragatmika Bhakti is spontaneous attachment with the Lord. When the soul practices devotion to Krishna according to the regulation of the
When the soul practices devotion to Krishna according to the regulation of the scriptures, lacking natural attraction to Krishna, and then Sadhana Bhakti is called Vaidhi Bhakti. The rules of Vaidhi Bhakti should be practiced by Brahmans, Khatriyas, Vaisyas and Sudras; by Brahmacaris, Grhasthas, Vanaprasthas and Sannyasis.

In the perfect stage of Bhakti, the first four characteristics are seen. The first part of the perfect stage is called Bhava Bhakti. At this stage, the first four qualities or characteristics appear in full. Bhava Bhakti is a matured form of Sadhana Bhakti. When Bhava (emotion) sprouts in a devotee’s heart, the devotee develops forbearance, ensures that not a moment is spent in vain, becomes unassuming and indifferent to worldly enjoyment, firm in his determination of receiving the grace of the God, constantly longs for the Lord, ever relishes and chant the Divine Name, grows attachment for His eulogies and love for His abode. Bhava is ‘anuraga’ in a substantive state. When it ceases to need a substratum for itself, it is known as Maha-Bhava. Maha – Bhava is of two types-(a) Rudha and (b) Adhirudha. When Sattvika bhavas are consuming as a raging fire, Maha Bhava is called Rudha. Adhirudha is that stage where passion is no longer raging like a fire.

When Bhava softens the heart and coagulates to an extent that the Bhakta cannot but think of God as his own, he is said to be possessed of Prema Bhakti. Prema is of two types- in one the Bhakta is conscious of the majesty and grandeur of the Lord, while in the other his love is free from such inhibiting knowledge and is called Kevala-Prema or pure love. The development of prema takes shape in some distinct stages one leading to the next. These stages are- (a) Śraddha (b)Sadhu-Sanga (c)Bhajana-Kriya (d)Anarthanivriti, (e)Nistha(f)Ruci (g)Āsakti (h)Prema. The first stage Śraddha means faith, this faith is association with saintly persons that means Sadhu. The third stage
Bhajana - Kriya means the Bhakta begins spiritual practice. When the Bhakta begins spiritual practice this practice enables him to overcome obstacle which is known as Anartha-Nivriti and when the devotee overcomes the obstacles it generates firmness in application. As a result the devotee develops a taste for Bhakti marga which develops attachment for it and finally Prema appears in the mind. The final stage of perfect Bhakti is Prema. In the stage of practice, there is Sadhana Bhakti and in the stage of perfection there is Bhava Bhakti and Prema Bhakti. The devotee or Bhakta who follows the Bhāva (feelings) of the God is said to be performing Rāgānuga Bhakti. It develops into Bhāva Bhakti and finally into Prema Bhakti (intense love for the God). Five forms of Bhāva Bhakti namely, Santa, Daisyā, Sakhya, Vatsalya and Madhura are traced to Rg Veda.

According to Narada Bhakti sutra, though the service of Bhakti is one, yet it is divided into eleven (11) kinds of attachment or Asakti. These eleven kinds of attachments are-(a) Guna Mahaytma (b) Rupa-Asakti (c) Puja-Asakti (d) Smarana-Asakti (e) Daisyā-Asakti (f) Sakhya-Asakti (g) Kanta-Asakti (h) Vatsalya-Asakti (i) Aatmanivedana-Asakti (j) Tanmayata Asakti and (k) Biraha- Asakti. Likewise Vaishnava Bhakti Sahitya has cited five kinds of Bhakti. These five kinds of Bhakti are: (1) Shanta Bhakti (2) Daisyā Bhakti (3) Sakhya Bhakti (4) Vatsalya Bhakti and (5) Madhura Bhakti. When a devotee worships the Lord in a friendly manner and attitude it is known as Sakhya Bhakti. In this type of Bhakti, the devotee has an ultimate and complete faith in the Lord. There is a very close and intimate relationship between the devotee and the Lord. Therefore, Sakhya Bhakti is much stronger than the other types of Bhakti. In this type of Bhakti, no distance is seen between the devotee and the Lord. An instance may be given of Damodar and Sri Krishna and also of Arjuna and Sri Krishna.
Here, the devotee becomes a part of the Lord. When the devotee thinks and imagines the Lord as his son in his heart and mind, such kind of Bhakti is called Vatsalya Bhakti. Instances may be mentioned of the relationship between Lord Krishna and Yasodha (mother). The Bhakti which was shown by the Gopis towards Lord Krishana is known as Madhurjya Bhakti. In this Bhakti, there is a spiritual relationship between the devotee and the Lord. Instances may be given of Mirabai and Radha towards Lord Krishna. The Bhakti which originates amidst a serene environment and from a peaceful mind is known as Santa Bhakti. In this Bhakti, emotion has no place. Meditation, prayer and Samadhi have greater place in such Bhakti. Eg. The Bhakti of the saints is an example of Santa Bhakti. The Bhakti which is practiced by avoiding every kind of social obligations is known as Bhairava Bhava Bhakti. In such type of Bhakti ‘Moksha’ can be acquired in a shorter time because the devotee does not have any attachment and inclination towards the society. But socially this type of Bhakti is not accepted. So this type of Bhakti is not mentioned in the religious scriptures.34

The amalgamation (union) of the Dasya Bhakti and Sakhya Bhakti is the Atmanivedana Bhakti. It is the product of the above two Bhakti. In Atmanivedana Bhakti, Bhakta surrender his mind and body to the Lord. So he dedicates himself along with complete mind and body. In this type of Bhakti, the devotee is completely free from love, jealousy and worldly relationships. If the devotee successfully completes the Atmanivedana Bhakti, there is every chance of attaining ‘Moksha’. In Sankaradeva’s concept, Niskama Bhakti, Prema Bhakti, Dasya Bhakti, etc are found. Sankaradeva divided Bhakti into nine types or kinds. His nine types of Bhakti can be kept in three steps. Three kinds of Bhakti are included in every one step or row. These three steps are collectively known as ‘Tritoyo’.35 According to these three steps the divisions of
Sravana, Kirtana and Smarana Bhakti, The second three rows or steps that are included are Padasawana, Archana and Bandana. The third three rows or steps that are included are Dasya, Sakhyā and Atmanivedana. Sravana Bhakti means to listen in pious heart and mind what is told. Example can be given of Lord Viṣṇu’s praises being told by the Guru to his devotees. Kirtana Bhakti is that Bhakti when the praises of the Lord is sung and told by a devotee himself. It can also be heard by another person who is near him. In smarana Bhakti, the devotee imagines deeply the Lord’s virtues, His image, etc in his mind and heart. The second three rows of Bhakti is collectively known as ‘Karmamayi Bhakti’. In such type of Bhakti, the body and sense of the devotee is fully involved in prayer. For such Bhakti, a figure is essential. It might be made of stone, wood, clay etc. worldly pleasure and longing for anything have no place in such type of Bhakti. Padasevana Bhakti is that Bhakti when the devotee worships the Lord in the Sakara Rupa (qualified form). Archana Bhakti is that one when the devotee worships the Lord in Niskama Bhava. And when a devotee worships the Lord according to the religious scripters and established traditions it is, known as Bandana Bhakti. The third three rows of Sri Sankaradeva’s concept of Bhakti is particularly belonged to the psychological or mental stage. It is that stage when the devotee attains complete freedom from worldly attachment. At this stage, the Bhakta has complete control over his mind and heart. His mind and heart is always ready for the service of his Lord. When the devotee serves and worships the Lord like a faithful servant, it is known as Dasya Bhakti. In this Bhakti, the devotee voluntarily sheds off his personality and everything at the feet of the Lord. Only serving the Lord is known to him. But he does not bother about the result of his service. An instance may be given of Lord Hanumana whose whole life was passed in the selfless service of Lord Rama.

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Besides the above mentioned nine types of Bhakti of Sankaradeva, four more types of bhava are being identified by the religious reformers. They treated and divided each of these four bhava on the basic subject. They have divided these four bhavas on the basis of love of wife, love of children and so on. These four bhavas are divided on the basis of reality of life. When these four bhavas are converted into spiritual sense, they are found to be five Bhaktis in number. These five Bhaktis are as follows-(a) Vatsalaya (b)Sakhya (c)Dasya (d)Madhurtya and (e)Santa. The ‘Bhairava Bhava’ can also be included in this category.

2.4 The nature of true Bhakta:-

The base scripts of Bhakti Dharma are Srimad Bhagavad Gita and Bhagavad Purana. The subject matter of Srimad Bhagavad Gita has developed with the conversation between Krishna and Arjun. Arjun is the questioner and he questions his friend Krishna about the doubts that generated in his mind. Krishna answers to those in a very attractive manner. According to Bhagavad Gita, Arjuna asked SriKrishna what type of devotee is dear to Him. In Chapter-XII of Bhagavad Gita SriKrishna told Arjuna about Bhakti yoga and also He pointed out those Bhaktas whom He likes most through the verses-14 to 20. In verse-14 Srikrishna says-

“Santushtas satatam yogee yataatmaa dridhanishchayaa;
Mayy arpitamanobuddhir yo madbhaktah sa me priyah37.”
(Meaning: He who is ever content, united with Me, controlled, possessed of firm conviction, with his mind and intellect dedicated to Me, such a devotee of Mine is dear to Me.)

Again in verse-15,

“Yasmaan no dwijate loko lokaan no dwijate cha yah;
Harshamarshabhayodwegair mukto yah sa cha me priyah\textsuperscript{38}," (Meaning: He by whom the world is not agitated, and he is not agitated by the world, who freed from joy, envy, fear, and anxiety – he is dear to Me.)

In verse-16,

“Anapekshah shuchir daksha udaaseeno gatavyathah;
Sarvaarambhaparityaagee yo madbhaktah sa me priyah\textsuperscript{39}" (Meaning: He who is freed from dependence, is pure, skillful (in spiritual movement), indifferent (to joy and sorrow), untroubled, who has given up all initiative (in action) – such a devotee is dear to Me.)

In verse-17,

“Yo na hrisyati na dwishti na sho\check{c}hati na kaankshati;
Shubhaashubharparyaagi bhaktimaan yah sa me priyah\textsuperscript{40}," (Meaning: He who neither rejoices, nor hates, nor grieves, nor desires, renouncing good and evil, full of devotion is dear to Me.)
Based on the variations of Bhakti, there are four types of devotee or bhakta referred in the Gita. These are – Ārta bhakta, Jijñāsu bhakta, Artharthi bhakta and Jñāni bhakta.

In Gita it is mentioned that

“Chaturvidha bhajante maam janaah sukritino rjuna;
Arto jijnaasur artharthi jnaanee cha bharatarshabha41.

(Bhagavad Gita, VII- 16)

(Meaning : O Best of the Bharatas ! Four types of virtous men worship Me – Ārta (distressed), Jijñāsu (the seeker for knowledge), Artharthi ( desires of wealth) and Jñāni ( the man of wisdom))

These four types of Bhakta are described as below –

Ārta Bhakta – According to Gita, a devotee who remains devoted and remembers God after being in trouble is called the Ārta type of Bhakta. When a devotee has firm faith in Vishnu, he is known as a true devotee. But a devotee, who worships Vishnu or God to get rid of all physical and mental stress, is known as the Ārta type of devotee. This mental and physical stress and fear affects the mind instantly. As far as fear is concerned it can be categorised as fear of enemies, fear of thieves, fear of losing self-respected etc. A prominent devotee of this type is Draupadi. 42

Jijñāsu Bhakta – A bhakta who is devoted to his God to specifically know Him is a Jijnasu Bhakta. Jijñāsu type of devotee is one whose sole purpose is to know the real God. Such a devotee doesn’t care for material wealth and other things of pleasure. He is unmindful of disease and danger even. ‘Uddhava’ is one of the most famous of such type of Bhaktas. 43
**Artharthi Bhakta** – A bhakta who practices worship of God with a motive of getting God as wealth is called Artharthi Bhakta. According to Mahesh B. Sharma, Artharthi type of Bhakta is one who seeks physical or mental enjoyment of this world or the next. This includes possession of wife, progeny, wealth, honour, eminence, fame, heavenly bliss, etc. For all these the Bhakta depends upon God and God alone for fulfilling his want. He seeks nothing but God who can fulfill his want. ‘Dhruva’ is a famous example of such Bhakta.\(^{44}\)

**Jnāni Bhakta** – A Jnāni Bhakta is one who is acquainted with the primitive truth of Viṣṇu, i.e who has total knowledge about spiritual truth of Viṣṇu. A bhakta or devotee is one who feels the Ever presence of God – his Lord within his being. This ever felt presence of God within him makes him detached from all worldly desires. The only thing left in his heart is the ever growing feeling of love and surrender towards God. One of those who were recognized as a devotee of this type was Prahlada.\(^{45}\)

Out of these four types of Bhakta described above, Jnāni Bhakta is considered as the best. This is because this type of Bhakta perseveres to understand the true God i.e. Lord Viṣṇu. Nothing but Viṣṇu is everything for such a Bhakta. Lord Viṣṇu is the one and only truth of this creation. This abiding truth realised by the Jnāni Bhakta positions him at the best place and Lord Viṣṇu or SriKrishna loves such a Bhakta the best.

**2.5 General Estimate**

From the above concise discussion it has been seen that most of the great books refer Bhakti as Bhakti to Lord Viṣṇu. Though the emergence of the Bhakti movement is said to be in the Vedic era, the feeling of devotion or Bhakti has been
flowing as a subterranean stream in the heart of humanity since eternity. If realized minutely each and every human being will feel the presence of this subterranean stream within him or her. As Bhakti is a feeling, the timing of creation of this feeling cannot be determined. Many scholars and researchers have put forward numerous definitions for the word Bhakti so as to express its meaning. But the question is can this feeling be expressed or bounded by definition? A practical as well as thoughtful answer to this question will be that it is very hard to express the meaning of Bhakti directly through one definition because this word is found in different direction and different perspectives. It is the Bhakta or the seeker of this Supreme realization who can name his choice of Bhakti and proceed in that direction to attain his goal.

From the general point of view the term Bhakti refers to the prayer or worship or adoration or service to God. The word love, attraction, affection, attachment, fondness, attention, sympathy, kindness, etc. are related to the word Bhakti. In the course of this discussion, minute distinguishing and explanation of the corresponding words such as love, attraction, attachment, etc. that are related to the word Bhakti have been made. It has been observed that each of these words have some kind of close proximity while in pursuit of the Supreme Being. Until and unless this noble realization is fulfilled the practical realization or action involved with these words must be practised regularly. This, when accomplished whole heartedly without any expectation or gain, helps a Bhakta to reach his ultimate destination well. The relation of Bhakti is with the spiritual perception of human mind. Its aim is to get freedom from physical bondage and get united with the Supreme Being. For this type of spiritual endeavour of the mind, existence of a form is necessary. Depending on this form a person can release his mind from physical illusions. Some devotees term or address this form as Viṣṇu,
some as SriKrisna and others term or address this form as other Gods and Goddesses. This suggests that one form or base is necessary for concentrating the mind.

When a person or Bhakta rely on this form or shape then the Saguna Bhakti is formed. The Bhakta gives shape to his life in such a way that all other material desires of life get vanished. The Bhakta is in perfect bliss and mental satisfaction then. He seeks nothing else but union with his Lord Viṣṇu or SriKrishna. Self-composure and detachment from worldly wants and cares are essential qualities of a Nirguna Bhakta. Such a Bhakta utilizes his sense organs and directs them towards such a direction that he is left with absolutely nothing but full and complete satisfaction of a blissful mind. This state of mind helps him to connect himself with the Supreme Being – the All-pervading Being. So, from this point of view Bhakti can be thought of as a psychological curriculum. This procedure creates spiritual changes in the mind which brings the mind from darkness to brightness, from static state to dynamic state and from ignorance to knowledge. Due to this, Bhakti can be regarded as a service sprouting from within the heart. This service is purely a feeling which is so strong that it generates realization out of desire by going beyond knowledge and action.

In the Vedic era Bhakti was considered as a super power and that belief exists till date. Bhakti is closely associated with this super power. This devotional power gives people mental peace. The people need to open their mind and soul to let the flow of this devotional power engulf them. According to the Upanishad one can attain complete liberation i.e., Moksha through this power of Bhakti. A few examples can be cited in this concern. The third Pandava Arjuna got SriKrishna as a friend, Nanda – Yashoda got Him as a son and Draupadi got Him as a brother by dint of Bhakti. In this way a Bhakta can reach his Lord – the Supreme Being through complete surrender of
the self. By doing so he liberates himself from the pricking thoughts related to materialistic wants and needs. It is through true devotion that a devotee can realize the existence and true aim of his life. At last it can be concluded that Bhakti is a minute and intense feeling which cannot be expressed in terms of words spoken in various languages. But it is so pleasant that it is possible to establish the relationship between a Bhakta and his Adored – God.
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