CHAPTER - VI

BHAKTI - YOGA

1. DEFINITION:

Bhakti is a derivative of the root ‘Bhaj’ (I.U) - to serve, honour, revere, love, adore.\textsuperscript{1566} Hence, bhakti conveys the meaning of service, devotion, love, adoration, worship etc. The connotative meaning of the definition of bhakti is that it is always in relation to God. The devotee has the firm conviction that God is the Soul of all beings; He is the lord of everything and His feet are the only shelter for all, where all can be well nourished.\textsuperscript{1567} Kapila characterizes Bhakti as unmotivational, spontaneous, dedicated totally to God, unshakable and full of wisdom.\textsuperscript{1568} Any love or adoration for the samsaric existence is far from being considered as bhakti. Therefore, devotion to God is defining characteristic of bhakti should it be considered as yoga.

2. THE GREATNESS OF BHAKTI-YOGA:

There are two kinds of bhakti as discussed in the Bhāgavatam: śādhana bhakti and sādhya bhakti. Śādhana bhakti as a mode of śādhana for the attainment of God is what is known as Bhakti-yoga. Sādhya bhakti, on the other hand, is the supreme love that is the culmination of all yogas; it is known as parābhakti. Bhakti-yoga, one of the three major paths of śādhanā, has the greatest contribution to the religion, over and above jñāna and karma yogas, due to its capacity to embrace most kinds of aspirants into its fold. This capacity is derived from the simplicity and easy accessibility of bhakti-mārga. It effortlessly leads a novice and an advanced devotee as well.

The Bhāgavatam emphasizes bhakti because, “Ascetics endowed with renunciation and control of the senses are not able to cut the knot of self-centredness fortified by tendencies acquired in the past, with the same ease as those devotees who love the Lord and are devoted to His service.”\textsuperscript{1569}

\textsuperscript{1566} MMW
\textsuperscript{1567} IV,29,50*
\textsuperscript{1568} III,25,32-33
\textsuperscript{1569} IV,22,39 transl. S.T.
Bhakti is emphasized above jñāna because the devotees of pure heart and abounding devotion attain simultaneously to intense renunciation and knowledge.\(^{1570}\) Moreover, the attainment of communion through samādhi-yoga is considered as encumbered with difficulties but not so Bhakti-yoga.\(^{1571}\)

### 3. Heart and Citta:

According to Bhakti-yoga, 'Heart' or the pure mind (as against asubhātman or impure mind) is centre of meditation\(^{1572}\) and devotion.\(^{1573}\) The desires and passions make the mind impure, whereas knowledge and devotion exude from the pure mind. When mind is referred to by jñāna-yoga, it is this very mind, conscious (ceta)\(^{1574}\) or the proficient intellect (vaiśāradī dhee)\(^{1575}\) as against the ordinary mind, which is the locus of the intellect (buddhi) that has the characteristics of doubt, misapprehension, correct determination, memory and sleep\(^{1576}\)- some of these are considered as the modifications of mind (vṛtti) by Patanjali. When the emotive faculty of mind is purified, it may be called hrdaya, the seat of Bhakti; the same, when referred to as the seat of dhee by another set of the wise people (jñāna-yogis, in this case), is called citta.\(^{1577}\) Both these refer to the pure mind. Both jñāna and bhakti yogas try to activate the pure mind in accordance with their respective nature. In order to make the mind pure, Bhakti-yoga takes help of various practices and ardent appeal to God for His grace.

### 4. Kinds of Bhakti:

Bhakti is of two kinds: saguṇa and nirguṇa. Saguṇa bhakti is also called aparābhakti, nirguṇa bhakti is the transcendental devotion, also called parābhakti or premābhakti. It is often considered as the fifth attainment beyond liberation.\(^{1578}\) Saguṇa bhakti, also known as sādhana bhakti as against sādhya bhakti, is of three kinds de-
pending upon the dominance of a particular *guna* in the devotee.\textsuperscript{1579} *Tāmasika* devotee worships God because of his cruel nature, with cruelty, hypocrisy and jealousy, or under influence of anger, or with an outlook full of separateness. *Rājasika* devotion is for the fulfillment of desires of worldly pleasures, or fame, or authoritative power; it manifests as worship in God’s images with the notion of difference. *Sāttvika* devotion is prompted by the desire to purge all sins, dedication of karmas to God and the worship of God for the sake of worship; of course, this is also done with the idea of difference (*prthak-bhāva*). *Saguṇa* devotion is called *bheda-bhakti* – the devotion with the outlook of difference between devotee and God, as against *Nirguna bhakti*, which is called *animittā bhakti*,\textsuperscript{1580} *abheda-bhakti*, *ahetukī-bhakti*\textsuperscript{1581} or *nirapekṣā-bhakti* – the motiveless devotion.

The *tāmasika* and the *rājasika* kinds of *bhakti* are not really the expressions of pure devotion for God; they are called *bhakti* only because they bear appearance of *bhakti*. The four (three *saguṇa*, one *nirguna*) kinds of devotees resemble the four as mentioned in the *Gītā*.\textsuperscript{1582}

The two pivotal characteristics of *bhakti* that is preached in the *Bhāgavatam* are the motiveless devotion for God and worship of God in all beings. The devotees of steady intelligence, who are totally resigned in God, do not desire even *Kaivalya* which is freedom from *saṁsāra*.\textsuperscript{1583} *Kṛṣṇa* describes the nature of devotion by categorically saying that only in the state of Supreme Blessedness (*Niḥṣreyya*), which is characterized by total desirelessness (*nairapekṣa*), dawns devotion for God.\textsuperscript{1584} Moreover, those who worship God in images but not in all beings are not considered as the true devotees.
5. CULTIVATION AND EXPRESSION OF BHAKTI:

The Bhāgavatam is Bible of Bhakti-yoga. All the major aspects of Bhakti-yoga are described in it. It charts an easy way of cultivation of bhakti and goes on to describe how bhakti finds expression in sādhaka. When unfavourable tendencies of mind are rid-dent through constant service of the holy ones and the study of God’s deeds, one develops steady devotion\textsuperscript{1585} which frees mind of passion, greed and other instincts that are the products of rajas and tamas, and subsequently makes the mind pure, poise and blissful due to sattva.\textsuperscript{1586} In such a blissful mind, which is also free from all attachments, dawns God’s essential knowledge\textsuperscript{1587} thereby removing all bonds of the heart, all confusion as well as all karmas.\textsuperscript{1588} Therefore, the wise ones eagerly cultivate highest devotion to Bhagavān Vāsudeva.\textsuperscript{1589}

The Bhāgavatam mentions several disciplines which augment devotion. They are:

Seeing, touching and worshipping God’s image and His devotees; service, praising, honouring, extolling God’s deeds and qualities; steadfastness in listening to the accounts of His deeds; meditation; being initiated by the Lord’s worship according to the Vedas and the Tantras; installing God’s images and worshipping them according to prescribed method; building temples with gardens, trees, grounds, tanks, shelters, etc.; offering humble service in temples; eradicating oneself pride and hypocrisy; giving up wealth and possessions for God’s sake; performing yajñas, charities, sacrifices, vows, repetition of mantras; austerities; service of holy men and such other practices.\textsuperscript{1590}

The Kumāras show a subtler and higher way to cultivate devotion for Śrī Hari.

“The detachment from things other than Ātman and love for Brahma can be generated by intense faith, performance of righteous duties towards the Lord, the desire to know, firm faith in the spiritual path of yoga, meditation about the Lord of yoga,
and constant listening to the holy stories of the Lord...; by dissociating with the sensuous people and also the places and objects of their pleasure; when there is no convenience to the recitals of Śrī Hari’s excellences, one should engage in contemplation and resort to seclusion; by ahimsā, by following the ways of Paramahamsas, by meditating on the Lord Mukunda, by listening to His deeds, by absence of desires, by self-control (yama), by spiritual disciplines (niyama), by refraining from other’s criticism, by eschewing work done for the selfish purposes and by endurance of opposite states...one can cultivate devotion.”

The Bhāgavatam gives special emphasis on the holy association as a means to cultivate devotion. Association with the holy men, who are keenly interested in narration and singing of the excellences of God, is the unparalleled means to develop faith (ṣraddhā), predilection (rāti) and devotion (bhakti) to God. “There is no easier way to eternal bliss than the practice of devotion generated by association with the holy men (satsaṅga). For, I am the sole support of the holy ones.”

The Bhāgavatam very nicely sings, “Where flows not the ambrosia of God’s glories, where exist not the sādhus who have the only refuge in God, and where prevails not God’s worship along with great celebration, there one should not be even if it be the heaven of Indra.”

6. MODES OF BHAKTI-YOGA:

In addition to describing the ways of cultivating bhakti as mentioned above, the Bhāgavatam enumerates the disciplines of Bhakti-yoga at various places. However, the best of the expressions is found in the sermon of Prahlāda. Prahlāda gives nine forms of devotional practice which are taught also by Nārada.

Popularity known as navadhā or navavidhā bhakti, they are unanimously accepted as the maxims of Bhakti-yoga.

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1591 IV,22,22-24
1592 IV,29,39; III,25,25; IV,22,22-24
1593 XI,11,48
1594 V,19,24*
1595 VII,11,11
"Hearing about Viṣṇu (śravaṇam), singing about Him (kīrtanam), remembering Him (smarāṇam), serving Him (pāda-sevanam), worshipping Him (arcanam), saluting Him (vandana), being His servant (dāsyam) and comrade (sakhya), and surrendering oneself and everything to Him (ātma-nivedana)."

These nine forms of devotion encompass the whole of sādhaka’s being. They can be classified into four levels of a sādhaka’s being:

Śravaṇa and kīrtana form the physical part of Bhakti-yoga; and likewise, they control the physical aspect of sādhaka. They are expressive in nature; therefore, they are to be considered as the external parts of sādhanā. Śravaṇa and kīrtana are aimed at instilling the thoughts of God and godliness in the mind.

Smarana, pāda-sevana, arcana and vandana are meant for retention of holy ideas and their cultivation into close relationship with God. They refer to the external as well as internal levels of a sādhaka. Smarana is remembrance and contemplation. Pāda-sevanam is to be considered as a mental service along with the physical service of God, guru and sādhus. Vandana is solicitation, prayer to God with humility. Arcana is worship of God. Smarana, pāda-sevana and arcana involve more a mental element than the physical expression of devotion.

Dāsyā and sakhyā are devotee’s attitudes towards God. Dāsyā is to have servant-Master relationship with God. Sakhyā is not ordinary friendliness. There always remains the consciousness that God is the Master, the grantor of the highest beatitude.

Ātma-nivedana is a spiritual aspect but engulfs all other kinds of devotional practices and levels of sādhaka’s consciousness. A sādhaka must dedicate his total self to God. All – physical and psychological – levels of sādhanā along with their fulfillments should be offered to God. Total self-surrender pleases God most.

According to Rukmani, the Vedic dictum that Ātma should be heard of, reflected upon, and meditated upon as well as the dictum of the Gītā that one should realize

1596 \[1,2,14; \text{VI,5,23}; \text{X,2,37}\]
1597 \text{Br. Up., II,4.5 & IV,5.6}
the Supreme by devotion, intelligent questioning and service are reflected in the nine modes of bhakti. Śravāyaḥ of the Upanisad to śravaṇam, mantavyah to kirtanaṁ, smaraṇaṁ, pāda-sevanaṁ, arcanam, and vandanam whereas nididhyāśītvam to dāsyam, sakhyam and ātmanivedanam.

The origin of the nine modes is often traced to the Gītā, where śravaṇa, kirtana, smarapam, pāda-sevanaṁ, arcanam, vandanam, dāsyam, sakhyam and ātma-nivedanam are implied.

i & ii. Śravaṇa and Kīrtana:
Śravaṇa and kīrtana refer to Hari Nāma. Hari Nāma includes the holy names of God and His glorious exploits. Śravaṇa is to listen to the Name and kīrtana is the repetition or recital of the Name. “The supreme purpose of man’s power of speech is to sing hymns in praise of the attributes of Śrī Hari, the most glorious ... And the purpose of man’s power of hearing is to listen to the recitals of His glories as described in compositions of holy and learned men.”

Śravaṇa and kīrtana suggest the absorption of God not only through listening and singing, but also through all senses. There is a beautiful prayer in the Bhāgavatam which conveys that the purpose of all senses is to serve God: “May our speech be devoted to the narration of Thy excellences, ears in listening to them, hands in Thy works and mind in the constant remembrance of Thy Lotus Feet; our heads remain

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1598 B.G., IV,34
1599 Rukmani, p.154
1600 B.G., XIII,25
1601 ibid., IX,14
1602 ibid., VIII,14
1603 ibid., IV,34
1604 ibid., VII,7
1605 ibid., IX,14
1606 ibid., IX,18
1607 ibid., IV,3
1608 ibid.,XVIII,65-6
1609 ibid.,IX,27
1610 ibid.,VII,14; XVIII,61-2/66
1611 III,6,36
ever bowed before the universe - Thy abode, and eyes be engaged in seeing Thy devotees who are Thy manifestations." Thus, the Lord who is called transcendental and unattainable through senses (nityam vāgmanasah param) should be worshipped and communed with through all senses too. The Transcendental becomes accessible to a bhāgavata even through and in the phenomenal. This is a splendid example of God’s unbounded love for His devotees.

Śravaṇa and kīrtana have two-fold contribution in sādhanā. One, by listening to God’s glories an aspirant gets the knowledge of God’s deeds and His ways. Śravaṇa is the first means by which sādhaka can know the spiritual truths. Second, by continuous listening and recital, one passes suggestion on to mind. “Kṛṣṇa, the friend of the devotees, purifies the hearts of those who take His name. He manifests in the hearts of those who hear the accounts of His deeds, and erases all the evil tendencies blocking their spiritual development.” As the self gets purified through śravaṇa and kīrtana, it sees more clearly the subtle essence as the eyes do with the application of collyrium. The Bhāgavatam does not profess merely nāma-japa, it asks the devotee to sing the names of God loudly by way of kīrtana so that it can purify even those who listen to those names. Kīrtana is meant for one’s own self as well as for others. Holy conversation does well to both – to the speaker as well as to the listener. Casual śravaṇa and kīrtana may not benefit sādhaka largely. As we already know, the Bhāgavatam emphasizes the role of faith in sādhanā. God’s names and glories are to listened and recited with faith and apt attention. Through śravaṇa and kīrtana, practiced with great faith and attention, one develops detachment for the world and devotion for God; consequently he becomes freed from sorrow and suffering. A person with the help of śravaṇa and kīrtana of God’s qualities and the acts of incarnations...
progresses in the path of the Paramahamsas attaining supreme devotion in this life and liberation hereafter.\textsuperscript{1619}

\textbf{a. Glory of Šravaṇa and Kirtana:}

The accounts of God's deeds are life-giving ambrosia to miserable lives and bliss of the seers; they wash off the sins, they are auspicious and confer serenity.\textsuperscript{1620} The consumption of spiritual disciplines rests in the delight and absorption in the Divine excellences. "The ultimate purpose of all scriptural study is the attainment of delight in hearing devotional recitals".\textsuperscript{1621} \textit{Sāṅkīrtana} is extolled above all means of devotion this age (kālī), man attains to his goal merely by;\textsuperscript{1622} "...for, it is by virtue of it that a person attains sublime serenity and saṁśāra in his case comes to an end."\textsuperscript{1623} Šravaṇa and kīrtana are advocated by all kinds of sādhanas—whether a beginner or an advanced. One must strive for it even if the mind is restrained or the self as Ātman is understood or the desire for the psychic powers has disappeared or even the ego of spiritual attainment has been abandoned.\textsuperscript{1624} Nāmakīrtana is not only for those who strive for liberation; it is the best means to remain in God even for the realized ones.\textsuperscript{1625}

\textit{Prthu} beautifully glorifies the śravaṇa and kīrtana,

"But I care not even for liberation, if it is a state devoid of facilities to imbibe the nectarine drink that is the narration of Thy glories and excellences, a nectar from the hearts of Thy supernal devotees flowing through their lips. So if a boon of my choice is to be bestowed, grant unto me ten thousands ears with which I may support my soul in the boundless joy that listening to the words of great men on Thy excellence alone can impart."\textsuperscript{1626}

All literary productions that are bereft of a trace of Hari's excellences are like decora-
b. Hari Nāma:
Nāma – the Name of God – is extolled in every system of sādhana – Karma-yoga, Jñāna-yoga, Bhakti-yoga – because nāma is verily the manifestation of God through which one can apprehend God and His glory. Nāma is the first manifestation of God unto sādhaka who withdrawing from the macrocosm endeavours to apprehend God in the firmament of his microcosmic space. As the element sound is the first among the subtle elements to appear, its locus being the ether which again is the first among the gross elements to appear, so does God first manifests within the space of the heart of the Yogi in the form of sphota (also called parā aspect of sound) – the inarticulate sound.

Sphota further manifests as nāda or ghoṣa (also called pasyanti aspect of sound) – the articulate sound. The articulate sound further got extended as the Prapāva 'AUM' (also called madhyamā aspect of sound which is perceptible through senses). As God further manifested Himself, in the creative process, revealing His various glories unto the beings He came to be known by innumerable names or symbols. The Bhāgavatam, for instance, adores Him as Nārāyaṇa, Vāsudeva, Śrī Viṣṇu, Hari, Śiva, Kṛṣṇa, Saṅkarṣana, Kātyāyani, Durgā, Śrī, Bhavāni, Sarasvatī, Gaṇeṣa, Kārttikeya and as many other forms. All these names become mantra – that which saves the mind.

c. Universal attitude of the Bhāgavatam:
TAPA – the word revealed to Brahmā, and other names of God appear as distinct from AUM, but all have equal importance as the manifesting word of God. The universalism of the Bhāgavatam obviously accommodates any name that signifies the Supreme Reality. The monotheism as well as universality of the Bhāgavatam in this regard is amply manifest in the fact that although being a vaisvapa scripture, it recounts the glory of Śiva and Śakti also considering those glories as indicative of the

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1627 X,38,12
1628 I,5,10
1629 X,85,9; XII,4,37
1630 X,85,9
1631 XI,21,39; XII,6,39; X,85,9

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same Supreme Reality. On the same principle, the Bhāgavata sādhanā would accommodate the names and forms of God as worshiped by the other religions as well.

It should be noted why God revealed Himself to Brahmā as TAPA instead of AUM. It may be construed that as he is the subllest of all beings, Brahmā has the highest spiritual capacity and the greatest wisdom. Therefore, He was revealed the subllest form of God. Tapas is the heart of God, whereas AUM is the symbol (vācaka) of God. In this way, the Truth may be revealed differently to different devotees in different times and places, but all the revelations are of equal value. Would anyone contend that Prahlāda was less fortunate than Dhrūva since he was revealed the Man-lion form, and Dhrūva the form of Viṣṇu?

d. Glory of counting the name of God:
The Bhāgavatam vehemently prescribes nāma-japa to all aspirants for their initial spiritual progress as well as for the ultimate revelation of God. While sravana and kīrtana are external and collective modes of sādhanā, nāma-japa, although a part of sravana and kīrtana, refers to the individual – not collective – counting of the name of God. The name of the one who is infinite as well as omnipotent, and called endless because He bestows endless grace upon the loner devotees who seek only Him as the support, has also the greatest potency. So, merely the listening of it brings all auspiciousness effacing the sin of man even if he utters it with knowledge of its greatness or without it, whether merely symbolically, or in jest, or as a pause, or in attitude of contempt, just as a powerful medicine benefits one even if taken without being aware of its potency; such is the greatness of mantra. Harināma is a terror even to the god of death who is really a terror to all. Ajāmila atoned for the sins of a thousand lives by uttering in distress the name ‘Nārāyana’ only mistakenly then, what

1632 II,9,22
1633 XII,6,41
1634 I,18,19
1635 II,7,15
1636 VI,2,18
1637 VI,2,14
1638 VI,2,19
1639 I,1,14
1640 VI,2,7

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to speak of those who utter it with faith. Other practices for cleansing the impurities and sins only remove those impurities and sins, but Harināma cleanses the devotee of the very tendencies that lead to the sins and impurities. Hari in the form of Name enters the heart-lotus of His devotees through their ears purifying, thereby, their heart of the sins of countless births just as autumn clears the turbid waters. That is how it is often said that the nāma and the nami are one. The Bhāgavatam considers even him a fortunate one whose tongue repeats Harināma — the fortune that really accrues to those only who have already performed austerities.

e. The study of the Bhāgavatam is in itself Śādhanā:

One of the most important features of the Bhāgavata śādhanā is that the study of the Bhāgavatam with faith and devotion is in itself a śādhanā. By listening to it, devotion to Kṛṣṇa is developed which ultimately dispels grief (śoka), infatuation (moha), and fear (bhaya) — the three considered by the modern psychoanalysts as the basic instinct of the human mind. This is because of its divine origination. It is the nectar of the tree of the Veda and itihāsas, which imparts the knowledge that is a veritable boat to get across the ocean of samsara, and rids the three-fold sufferings. If a faithful person hears this text with concentration even for a yāma or a fraction of a moment, or expounds it to other like-minded people then, he will be sanctifying both. Devas, rṣis, siddhas, pīters, manus and kings bestow all that the
reciters and the listeners of the Book need. The fruits of the Vedas accrue to one who studies this text.

In addition to this, many chapters conclude with a blessing upon the faithful who reads, recites or listen to the Bhāgavatam. To this extent, the Bhāgavatam has simplified the sadhanā. The devotee has only to read, recite or listen to the Bhāgavatam with deep faith, concentration and devotion – this is enough for crossing the formidable ocean of saṃsāra in a trice like the king Khatvāṅga, the Parīkṣit and many other devotees did. Those who have a strong faith in the Bhāgavatam will have their citta absorbed in God.

In the universal spirit of the Bhāgavatam, what applies to it with regard to the efficacy of the Book, also applies to all fundamental scriptures belonging to every religion of the world.

iii. Smarāṇa:

Smarāṇa is the remembrance of God, His form, His manifestations, His deeds and His essence. Smarāṇa can never be a sudden phenomenon. Only through the prolonged practice, one succeeds in keeping uninterrupted remembrance of the Lord. Smarāṇa is the meditation of Bhakti-yoga. Contemplation (anudhyāsana) on the deeds of God cuts asunder the bondages of Karma and the unfavourable tendencies.

God being the subject of thinking for a long time, the modifications (vṛttis) of citta are marginalized in addition to the fact that no new impressions are allowed to clog the mind. A devotee who thus remembers God constantly through the recital and contemplation of His excellences remains unperturbed even at the time of death remembering His Lotus Feet.

Learning, austerities, self-withdrawal, kindliness, pilgrimage, alms giving, and japa –
none of these purify mind as quickly as the constant remembrance of the Lord in the Heart does.\textsuperscript{1658} The remembrance of \textit{Har} is the radical cure of all travails.\textsuperscript{1659}

The purpose of performance of one's duties, of knowledge and of yoga is to have ceaseless remembrance of God. Even those demoniac persons like Kamsa, Śiṣupāla and others attained to the supreme state only by constant remembrance of God.\textsuperscript{1660} This is because the mind takes the form of whatever it thinks of ardently (\textit{kīta-peśa nyāya}).\textsuperscript{1661} If ordinary objects can take mind by sway, how much more capacity of metamorphosing the mind must the thought of the Infinite have! \textit{Smarana} presupposes first five of the eight steps of yoga system, \textit{vis., yama, niyama, āsana, prānāyāma and pratyāhāra}. Then, he is guided to practise \textit{dharana} on the form of God\textsuperscript{1662} — preferably the cosmic (Virāṭ) form.\textsuperscript{1663} Subsequently, by practising meditation (\textit{dhyāna}) he should make the consciousness free from any thought other than that of God.\textsuperscript{1664} \textit{Bhakti-yoga} of the \textit{Bhāgavatam} suggests several ways to meditate on God, three among which are prominent.

\textbf{a. Meditation on Mahāviṣṇu:}

\textit{Sādhaka} should meditate first on the total form of God, and finally on His face.\textsuperscript{1665} Through meditation on the august form of God, one is soon filled with the bliss that he will never lose.\textsuperscript{1666} The \textit{Bhāgavatam} beautifully describes the form of \textit{Mahāviṣṇu} that is the object of meditation for the devotee.

\textbf{b. The Form of Mahāviṣṇu:}\textsuperscript{1667}

\textit{Mahāviṣṇu} is the first discrete form of the Formless. He is the purest \textit{sattva} with lordliness around Him. He is the first \textit{avatarā}, the incarnation of God.
“His face is calm and peaceful, His eyes beautiful like lotus petals, and His wearing cloth yellow like the pistil of the Kadamba flower. He has armlets, earrings and diadem, shining with the precious gems with which they are studded.

“His feet are established in the blooming heart-lotus of great yogis. His chest is marked by the presence of Lakṣmi, His neck is adorned with the brilliant gem Kauśtubha, and His frame is surrounded by an unfading wreath of assorted flowers and leaves.

“He is bedecked with a lustrous girdle, rings, bracelets and anklets, and His face, smiling and beautiful, is framed by His curly locks, dark and shining.

“By the movements of His brows, as He casts His glances with a playful smile on His lips, He seems to be bestowing His blessings in abundance on all. One should meditate on this form until it manifests itself in the mind steadily.”

It is often believed by the worshippers of the Formless that this form of Mahāviśṇu has no meaning in itself, but is meant only for the ordinary mind which cannot grasp the formless God; that all beauty and majesty are attributed to God, just to conceive Him as the Perfect One, and that this attribution has no corresponding reality as such. Such views of the rationalists really lack the insight. The Beauty and the idea of beauty in a being have their origin in God. It is not that with his idea of beauty a human being beautifies God. The form of Mahāviśṇu, which is full of divine attributes, has the same meaning as the all-inclusive Brahmaṇ has. The Bhāgavatam has, as its aim, to glorify God; He may be glorified as Brahman or as Bhagavān, it means God and only God to the Bhāgavatam. However, the theistic rationalism of the Bhāgavatam becomes evident when it perceives a meaning in every aspect of the form of Mahāviśṇu.

c. Symbolism of His Form:

The Bhāgavatam explains the form of Mahāviśṇu comprising his physical features (aṅga), accessories (upāṅga), weapons (aṅgudha) and decorations (ākalpa) as follows:

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“What He wears under the guise of the jewel Kaustubha is the pure self-consciousness. The spreading of effulgence of the self-consciousness is what is seen on His chest as the mark of Srivatsa.

“The wreath of wild flowers worn by lord is His Māyā with diverse attributes; His yellow wearing cloth is the Veda, and the sound symbol (AUM) with its three syllables, the sacred thread He wears.

“He has Sāṅkhya-yoga as the fish-marked earrings, and the diadem on His head is the Satyaloka superior to other realms.

“His seat, the well-known Ananta or Ādiśeṣa is avyakṛta, the inchoate and undifferentiated Prakṛti. The lotus on His seat is sattva guṇa having attributes like Dharma and jñāna as petals.

“The prāṇa (the vital energy which includes the strength of the sense, mind and body) is represented by His mace, Kaumudaki; the category of water, by His conch, Pāṇca-janya; and the category of fire, by His discus Sudārśana.

“His sword, Nandaka, with its blue sheen, is the category of sky; His shield, tamas (the element of darkness); His bow, Śārṅga, is Time; and His quiver is the accumulation of Karma.

“His arrows represent the indriyas, His chariot, the mind dominated by will; His manifesting power, the tanmātṛās; and His hand poses (mudrā), the will to bless and protect.

“The place for offering Him worship is the orb of the sun. The qualification of worshipping Him is initiation with mantra from a teacher. His service is for the erasure of one’s all sins including sinful tendencies.

“The play-lotus in His hand symbolizes His majesties. The ceremonial chowries held on either side are Dharma and Yaśas (law and glory).

“The royal umbrella held over Him represents the realm of Vaikuntha, the state of bliss and freedom from fear. The lord, who is known as Yajña and who has Yajña as His form, is borne by vehicle Garuḍa, who is embodiment of the Vedas.
“Śrī, who remains inseparable from Him, is the Śakti, the manifesting power of Śrī Hari. Viśvakṣeṇa, the leader of His attendants, is the embodiment of the Tantras. His eight guards headed by Nanda are His eight yogic powers like Anima, etc.”

d. On the Thumb-sized Lord:
The form of Mahāviṣṇu is also meditated upon in the space of Heart, conceived of the size of a thumb – ‘aṅguṣṭha pramāṇa’ or ‘aṅguṣṭhamātrum’.1670 As is clear, ‘ḥṛdayāvakāse prādeśamātrum’,1671 i.e., in the space within the Heart etc. is derived from the Vedas. Parikṣit, when tortured by brahmāstra in his mother’s womb, also sees the form of Mahāviṣṇu of the size of a thumb.1672 The Lord revealed Himself unto Brahmā as the Causal Boar of the size of a thumb (aṅguṣṭha parīmāṇaḥ)1673 which enlarged as the Cosmic Being.

The probable significance of the concept of the Lord of the size of a thumb appears to be related to the subject – meditator. Heart is considered as the nucleus of human body. Human metabolism is also supposed to be grateful to the functioning of Heart. All feelings are also ascribed to heart. Hence, the Lord is enshrined in such a pious niche as Heart. The Vedic concept of flame of the size of a thumb as the form of Brahma is replaced by the form of Mahāviṣṇu by another set of seers.

e. Meditation On the Avatāra1674:
The devotee can meditate not only on the Impersonal Supreme Reality; he can meditate on any form, which inspires divinity in him. This idea as supplemented by the universal attitude of the Bhāgavatam, accommodates meditation on the prophets of other religion of the world also. For, the Bhāgavatam believes that there are as many avatāras as the sand particles on the earth. The devotee should meditate on ‘the Heart-bewitching exploits of the Lord in the various incarnations which he has as-

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1669 XII,11,10-20 transl. S.I.
1670 Svetasvetara Up., III,9 & 13; Katha Up., II,12-13
1671 II,2,8
1672 I,12,8
1673 III,13,18
1674 I,3,1-25; XI,4,3-22
sumed or will be assuming through mysterious power of \textit{maya}.\footnote{IV,8,57 transl. S.T.} For instance, the devotee thus meditates on \textit{Rāma}: "May that Lord of the Kosala protect us – the Lord who gave up his kingdom for honouring the pledge given by his father, and wondered from forest to forest on his lotus-feet that were so tender to bear the touch of the palms of his beloved \textit{Śītā}, and whose fatigue from journey was soothed by the leader of the monkeys and his younger brother \textit{Lakṣmaṇa} ..."\footnote{IX, 10,4 transl. Tagare}

The devotee may meditate on \textit{Kṛṣṇa} in this way: "Bearing the handsome appearance of a super-dancer, having on him a plume of peacock feathers and ear ornaments of \textit{Karkikāra} flowers, wearing a yellow cloth of golden radiance, having a wreath of \textit{Vai-jayanti} flowers, filling the holes of the flute with the honey of His lips and extolled by the \textit{Gopas} in various songs, \textit{Kṛṣṇa} along with the herd of cattle entered Vrindavana, which he had rendered love-inspiring by his foot-prints"\footnote{X,21,5; X,23,22; X,29,39 etc.}; or as “having \textit{Śrī Devī} at the seat of his chest, having face that is the cup offering the drink of beauty to all, having arms that are strength behind the \textit{Lokapālas} and having feet that are the refuge of the holy ones.”\footnote{1,11,26}

The \textit{Bhāgavatam} describes the form as well as the excellences of many \textit{avatāras} in detail so as to enable the devotee to meditate on God’s various manifestations.

The devotee also meditates on different moods and sports of God’s incarnation according to the time of the day. We observe this kind of meditation in the \textit{Yugal-gīta} of the \textit{Bhāgavatam}.\footnote{X, Ch. 35}

There is a branch of \textit{sādhana} among the \textit{Vaiṣṇavas}, which preaches \textit{sādhaka} to think of God’s deeds corresponding to a particular time of the day. It is called \textit{aṣṭāyāma cintana}. For instance, at dawn the devotee thinks of \textit{Kṛṣṇa} having just been awakened by Mother \textit{Yaśodā}, being bathed and dressed up and fed by her, and having started for grazing the holy cows of Vraja along with other \textit{Gopas}. As the time of the day progresses, accordingly does the devotee think of his God’s activities. In the

\begin{footnotes}
\item[1675] IV,8,57 transl. S.T.
\item[1676] IX,10,4 transl. Tagare
\item[1677] X,21,5; X,23,22; X,29,39 etc.
\item[1678] 1,11,26
\item[1679] X, ch. 35
\end{footnotes}
**b. Service to guru:**
Another meaning of *pāda-sevana* is the service of guru. Guru and God are one. A *sādhaka* should devote his time and mind in the service of guru.\(^{1681}\) Unswerving devotion to guru necessarily leads one to the realization of God. Total surrender at the Feet of guru with reference to body, mind and soul uplifts the *sādhaka* to the highest level of *sādhanā*.

**c. Service to the holy men:**
The third connotation of *pāda-sevana* is the service of *sādhus*. Every devotee does not have the fortune of being at the constant service to guru. Those who do not get the fortune of rendering service to guru may serve *sādhus* because the *sādhu* is a manifestation of God. God is most highly pleased with the one who very humbly and sincerely serves the holy men.\(^{1682}\) Service rendered unto *sādhus* verily reaches God. The Lord says to the *Sanat Kumāras* that He does not accept the ghee-soaked offerings of the masters of sacrifice with as much relish as the food consumed through the holy men who are totally dedicated to Him.\(^{1683}\) Verily God always serves *sādhus*. A devotee serves them only for his own welfare; so doing he is not offering any privilege to the *sādhu*.

*Pāda-sevana* is the expression of humility and devotion. It is a precursor to the self-surrender to God (*ātmanivedana*). It is unreserved surrender. *Nārada* in his aphorisms on the Divine Love says, ‘...God dislikes the reliance on one’s own unaided, self-effort, and likes the complete feeling of humility (*dainyam-priya*)’.\(^{1684}\) Even *Krṣṇa* washed the feet of guests on their arrival at the *Rājasūya yajña* performed by *Yudhiṣṭhīra*.\(^{1685}\)

**d. Glory of *Pāda-sevana*:**
The delight in the service of His Lotus Feet purges the devotee (*tapasvī*) of the impurities gathered during his numerous births just as the waters (of the Ganga) that stream

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\(^{1681}\) XI, 17, 29

\(^{1682}\) IV, 21, 38-39

\(^{1683}\) III, 16, 8; IV, 21, 40-41; X, 87, 55

\(^{1684}\) NBS, 27

\(^{1685}\) X, 75, 5
forth from His toe sanctify immediately.\textsuperscript{1686} The \textit{sādhaka}, who is thus purified of all impurities, who is endowed with the fortified strength born of knowledge and detachment, and who has made God’s Feet his sole abode, is never subject to the miseries of \textit{sarīśāra}.\textsuperscript{1687} Therefore, one must worship the Lotus Feet of the grantor of all wishes with words, body, mind, soul and through the discharge of one’s actions (\textit{svadharma}) in order to attain the spiritual fulfillment according to one’s capacity (\textit{adhikāra}).\textsuperscript{1688} Brahmā beseeches, “O Lord! I shall consider it my greatest good fortune, if, in this life as Brahmā or in my possible lower embodiment in future, I become one among the devotees and do service to Thy Lotus Feet”.\textsuperscript{1689}

\textit{Pāda-sevā} is so much a cherished goal of the \textit{Bhāgavatottamas}\ that they deny even liberation and \textit{Vaikuntha} in lieu of it. A \textit{sādhaka}, however, prepares for the state of the \textit{Bhāgavatottama} through the spiritual practice of \textit{pāda-sevā}.

\textbf{v. Arcana:}

\textit{Arcana} is to worship God. It is the propitiation of God. It can be classified into \textit{vaidhi} and \textit{avaidhi}. The Tantra and other scriptures have the prescribed rules for the \textit{Vaidhi arcana}. Those rules are also known as \textit{Kriyā-yoga}\textsuperscript{1689} according to which God should be worshipped with various offerings in eleven centres. These are the sun, fire, water, earth, sky, cow, devotee, holy men, the collectivity of living beings (\textit{sarvabhūtānī}) and one’s own \textit{Ātman}.\textsuperscript{1690} No means and efforts should be spared in the \textit{vaidhi arcana}. \textit{Vaidhi arcana} should always be accompanied by deep reverence to all beings, as God exists in all beings.\textsuperscript{1693} God says, “If a man disregards and persecutes fellow beings, but worships Me in images with numerous rituals and rich offerings, I am not at all pleased with him for proffering such worship”.\textsuperscript{1693}

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{1686} IV, 21, 31
\textsuperscript{1687} IV, 21, 32
\textsuperscript{1688} IV, 21, 33
\textsuperscript{1689} X, 14, 30 transl. S.T. (\textit{Bhakti-Ratnaśāla})
\textsuperscript{1690} XI, ch. -27; also infra, p. 204
\textsuperscript{1691} XI, 11, 42-45
\textsuperscript{1692} III, 29, 21-22
\textsuperscript{1693} III, 29, 24 transl. S.T.
\end{footnotes}
Arcana is only a preparatory to the loving devotion; when a devotee ascends to a certain level whereupon it becomes impossible for him to continue vaidhi arcana then, he should worship the Lord in his Heart. This is avaidhi arcana. Paraphernalia of worship are to be abandoned. Knowledge and devotion are the main offerings. God accepts a leaf, a flower, a fruit and even water if offered to Him with intense devotion. Arcana subtly means self-sacrifice, giving out the self to God. After resigning the self at the service of God (pāda-sevā), comes self-sacrifice. The Bhāgavatam in clear terms stipulates sādhaka to worship God alone, and not the numerous gods for the attainment of the supreme blessedness because, ‘Just as watering a tree at the root is to all the branches, the worship of God is to all gods and beings including oneself’. By pleasing Him all universe becomes pleased (Yad prasadāt idam viśvam prasidati).

vi. Vandana:

Vandana is to pay respect to or to prostrate before God. Prostration also signifies seeking refuge in God. Vandana is propitiation and solicitation. Vandana is devotee’s begging grace of God. It is to place one’s humblest prayer before God. A devotee should prostrate like a stick placing his head on the Feet of the Lord, hold them with both hands, and urge, “God! Be propitious unto me. Deign to grant refuge to me who is afraid of death.” The prayers of the devotee who has surrendered himself to God are definitely responded to by God. Gajendra-mokṣa is the most beautiful example of vandana. The Gajendra cries out to God pondering, “He, who gives shelter to all who seek refuge in him...He, due to fear of whom even Death operates on all – in Him I seek refuge.” Vandana is accompanied by the deep knowledge of the reality of God and intense devotion for Him. The Lord elephant further prays, “It is not from crocodile threatening my life that I pray for release, but from this obstructive screen of

\[\text{Ch- VI: Bhakti-Yoga}\]

1694 XI,29,17
1695 V,3,6*: X,81,3-4; B.G., IX,26
1696 IV,31,14; VIII,5,49
1697 III,14,46
1698 XI,27,45-46
1699 III,21,24
1700 VIII,2,33 transl. S.T.
Vandana is the result of long practice of the disciplines like śravāna and others. Śruta Deva, the brāhmaṇa of Mithila, and the Janaka, the king of Mithila, propitiate and serve Kṛṣṇa and his devotees with all those means, viz., reciting God's glory, dancing, meditating, praising, praying and offering total service. Being worshipped devoutly by body, speech and mind, God, who enhances devotion in His desireless devotees, bestows the Good (Śreya) in the form of dharma etc. Complete desireless and detached sādhaka should pray for nothing but pure devotion to God. Eschewing all attachments, the devotee prays for the unswerving devotion and love that continuously flows like the Ganga that flows towards ocean. Only such devotion ripens in to his relationship with God.

vii. & viii. Dāsyā and Sakhya:
Having attained to the steadfastness in the spirituality, an aspirant becomes fit for the total spiritual relationship with God. The disciplines so far discussed were the means to establish relationship with God. In the disciplines that preceded the aspirant is required to consciously put forth his physical, mental as well as spiritual efforts. Consequent to such efforts, he develops deep devotion for God which establishes his relationship with Him.

Among various kinds of relationships that can be conceived, an aspirant is suggested to cultivate two – Dāsyā and Sakhya. He is categorically asked to cultivate the attitude of servant and companion. What is most essential in sādhanā is 'Mahāmyajñāna' the knowledge of God's glory.

Dāsyā is the perfect attitude with the awareness of magnificence of God. An aspirant should constantly think that he is a humble servant of the Lord, who is the Master of all hearts, the omnipresent, the omniscient and omnipotent God. God is the protector of the sādhaka and his sādhanā.
Service of Mukunda is more effective than the yogic disciplines like yāma for the sādhaka who is often pestered by lust and greed.\textsuperscript{1706} He accepts even the humblest services from a true devotee without consideration of high and low.\textsuperscript{1707}

A servant never fears anything – not even māyā because he has his Master to protect him. Hanumān, the paragon of dāsya, worships his Lord Rāma with uninterrupted devotion delighting in being at the lotus feet of Rāma.\textsuperscript{1708} He refused everything including mokṣa and Vaikuntha for dāsya and the recitation of the Name and glory of Śrī Rāma. Sādhaka can emulate Hanumān's dāsya in his sādhana, although it is an example of the sādhya bhakti. The attitude of the kings imprisoned by Jarāsandha may be considered as an example of the dāsya of sādhana bhakti towards Kṛṣṇa.\textsuperscript{1709}

Sakhya is characterized by association, confidence and subservience. Sakhya manifests in several ways. The Bhāgavatam lucidly illustrates different aspects of sakhya. The whole extent of sakhya can be visualized in the Bhāgavatam. There is the sakhya of the Gopa-sakhās, Balaraṁa, Uddhava, Arjuna and Śrīdāma. Sādhaka may emulate the qualities of any of the sakhya as is found beneficial to him.

**a. The Sakhya of the Gopa-sakhās:**

The Gopa-sakhās were the childhood companions of Kṛṣṇa. So, their friendship was characterized more by the sense of belongingness rather than by the sense of subservience. They played sports and pranks, shared food and cattle, even quarrelled in fun. The sense of subservience was the result of the Lord's exhibition of His magnificence in various ways, such as annihilating the demons and lifting up of the mount Govardhana. However, such astonishing exploits of Kṛṣṇa could not marginalize the attitude of companionship, thereby replacing the latter by the attitudes of a devotee (śānta bhāva) or a servant (dāsya). In this itself lies the grandeur of the sakhya that the Gopas represent.

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\textsuperscript{1706} I,6,38
\textsuperscript{1707} IV,20,28
\textsuperscript{1708} V,19,1
\textsuperscript{1709} X,70,25-30; X,73,8-16
b. The Sakhya of Balarama:
The sakhya of Balarama is marked by the knowledge of Kṛṣṇa's glory and divinity. Fraternal feeling did not come in the way of this knowledge; contrary, the former enhanced the latter. His relationship with Kṛṣṇa is an amalgam of wisdom, fraternity and companionship. His wise camaraderie was so much overpowering that it sometimes eclipsed the sense of his being Kṛṣṇa's mature sibling. He knew who his brother was just as he knew who he was. This is evident in his knowledge of the reality of another set of Gopas and cows created by Kṛṣṇa to defy Brahma’s test. He knew the prowess of Kṛṣṇa; he gets least perturbed by the ill omens at the time of Kaliya episode keeping smiling at the consternation of the simple people of Gokula. The relationship of Balarama and Kṛṣṇa was uniquely mutual; even Kṛṣṇa extols the greatness of His elder brother adoring him as his divine companion and the Original Being. In spite of this knowledge of each other’s reality, Balarama and Kṛṣṇa occupied themselves with various child-like plays like hide and seek, making bunds, leap-frog, etc. This kind of sakhya is a prerogative of the Lord’s Eternal Companion who is none but the Adiśeṣa. It is neither a matter of practice (pertaining to sādhaka) nor of experience (pertaining to siddha).

c. The Sakhya of Uddhava and Vidura:
There is a kind of sakhya as it manifested in Uddhava and Vidura, which can be considered as a mode of sādhana as different from the sakhya of Balarama. It was as though a unilateral sakhya – Kṛṣṇa considering Uddhava “in no way lesser” than Himself and among His best of the companions but, the latter considering Him as his Master. Uddhava is also considered, besides a sakhā and suhṛd, an anucarā and bhrtya—the follower and the faithful servant; similarly, Vidura (ekāntika su-
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Uddhava's attitude toward God is that of dasa whereas God sees a sakha in Uddhava. A devotee retains duality of servant and the Master, but God Himself in His greatness and grace feels no distinction between His devotees and His own self. It is a divine compliment from God. This is the exact attitude a sadhaka should nurture. If an unripe sadhaka starts saying, 'I am God Himself' then, he has to meet with the fate of a gopi who forgets in the feat of emotion the glory of Krsna and proudly asks the Lord to convey her on His shoulders. A devotee cannot obliterate the boundary between him and God. It is for God to do so. Until then, a devotee should retain dasya even as a subordinate to sakhya, as Uddhava did.

d. The Sakhya of Arjuna:

Krsna is addressed as 'Parthasakha' and 'Krsnasakha' - the friend of Arjuna. Arjuna's attitude was more of a companion than of a servant. Like Uddhava, he is one of the most confident friends of Krsna. Sakhya between Arjuna and Krsna is bilateral. The Bhagavatam regards it as the total sakhya comprising of all facets of sakhya such as, sakhya, maitri, sauhrdam, bandhutvam and others like Krsna's being the charioteer of Arjuna. This friendship has its own rarity and uniqueness. Arjuna knew the glory of the Lord. At the beginning of the great war, with a view to being dispelled of doubts and despondency, Arjuna takes refuge in the Lord saying, 'I am thy disciple; teach me, who am seeking refuge in Thee'. He is drowned in utter astonishment at the vision of the universal form of Krsna, and with utmost humility and lowliness he begs pardon of the Lord, saying:

"For whatever I have spoken in rashness to Thee, thinking that Thou art my companion and unaware of this (fact of) Thy greatness, 'O Krsna, O Yadava, O Comrade', out of my negligence or may be through fondness.

\[\text{References: } 1718, 1719, 1720, 1721, 1722, 1723, 1724\]
“As for whatsoever disrespect was shown to Thee in jest, while at play or on the bed or seated or at meals, either alone or in the presence of others, I pray, O Unshaken One, forgiveness of from Thee, the Immeasurable.”125

Thus, in spite of the attitude of companionship at its best, a devotee maintains the attitudes of servanthood or disciplehood.

e. The Sakhya of Śrīdāma:

The last among the foremost examples of sakhya is the example of Śrīdāma, the Kuci. He was a brāhmaṇa of wisdom and austerity. In spite of being Kṛṣṇa’s companion at the Gurukula, he always had the śānta bhāva towards Him. He saw Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme divinity (Deva-deva), the teacher of the worlds (Jagatguru), the Truth-willed (Satyakāma), the Brahman whose body is constituted of the Vedas (chandomāyām Brahma deha yasya), the source of goodness (śreyasam) and all-pervading Being (Vibhu).126 The Lord embraced Him with great love of friendliness, offered him His own seat, washed his feet with great respect and honoured him with gifts and kindest words. But, Śrīdāma considered own self as lowly as ever before. The relationship of Śrīdāma and Kṛṣṇa is mutually a mixture of śānta and sakhya. Having talked to him about their childhood friendship, the Lord revealed him the knowledge about His self: “I am the resident of all beings”, “I am the greatest of all Gurus who bestow knowledge on members of all orders of life”.127 Śrīdāma retained constantly a feeling of śānta bhāva considering Kṛṣṇa as the Lord and himself as His lowliest of the devotees.

Thus, a sādhaka should keep constant the śānta or dāsya attitudes in the background. ‘Mahāmyajñāna, as the sage Nārada preaches, should remain constant in all attitudes. The Lord asks Devaki and Vasudeva to worship Him both as son and as Brahman, thereby to attain to His state.128

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125 ibid. XI, 41-42 transl. S. Radhakrishnan
126 X,80,44-45
127 X,80,32-33
128 X,3,45
ix. Ātma-nivedana:

Ātma-nivedana is the transcendence of the self-will; it corresponds to the state of egolessness to be attained through jñāna and karma yogas. Man attains to the Supreme Blessedness through intense devotion and the total surrender of his placid mind to God.\textsuperscript{1720}

Sādhaka surrenders everything including his sādhana to God.\textsuperscript{1720} He abandons the consciousness of a sādhaka too, i.e., his individuality as a sādhaka is also offered at the Lotus Feet of God. The self-surrender in dāśya is near total but there the dāsa-bhāva is retained in order to serve the Lord. When sādhaka advances along the spiritual path and achieves near-perfection then, he can no longer retain any form of attitude.

A devotee has no right either over himself or over his sādhana. It is not he who determines whether the servant-ego or the devotee-ego be retained or dissolved. The ultimate aim of a devotee is God. A sādhaka is not supposed to strive even for mokṣa. Mokṣa is only a part of God-experience. God is infinite. By aiming at mokṣa, an aspirant deprives himself of the benefit of his absolute subjection to God and His will. The desire for mokṣa amounts to the offering of worship to God in lieu of mokṣa. The devotees pray not for yogic attainment, nor for jñāna, nor for liberation. They pray only for God.

"Apart from Me, neither the position of an emperor nor lordship of the Rasātala, neither the state of Brahmā nor the attainment of all yogic powers – why, for that matter, not even liberation from the cycle of births and deaths – is desired by a devotee who has completely resigned himself to Me."\textsuperscript{1721} The devotee who abandons all Karmas as well as the sense of difference, and with all heart seeks refuge in God, is freed from the five sacrifices, viz., the obligations towards gods, sages, creatures, relatives and humanity.\textsuperscript{1722}

\textsuperscript{1720} II,25,44
\textsuperscript{1721} XI,12,24
\textsuperscript{1721} XI,14,14 transl. S.T.
\textsuperscript{1722} XI,5,41*
“O Uddhava! Devotees, who have by such disciplines reached the state of complete self-surrender, develop pure loving devotion, motiveless, deep-rooted and unwavering. For them there is nothing greater to achieve.”\textsuperscript{1733}

The purport of Kṛṣṇa’s teaching to Uddhava as well as His final words in the Gītā is such an absolute self-surrender to God,

“Abandoning all duties, come to Me alone for shelter. Be not grieved, for I shall release thee from all evils.”\textsuperscript{1734}

According to Yoga also, ‘\textit{samādhi} comes by sacrificing all to God’.\textsuperscript{1735}

These practices culminate into the spontaneous flow of devotion, which often finds expression in many physical ways like horripilation, heart pouring through tears, etc.\textsuperscript{1736}

The sage Nārada, verily from whom Prahlāda gained the knowledge of the nine modes of bhakti, enumerates in his aphorisms on Divine Love almost the same modes as the manifestation of Divine Love also. Hence, the very Bhakti-yoga takes the form of ripened bhakti, i.e., Divine Love. Nārada describes this ‘ripening’ by suffixing ‘Āsakti’ (intense binding Love).\textsuperscript{1737} When, through devotional disciplines, a sādhaka perfects his own self in bhakti and succeeds in drawing his self into the Divine Presence then, those very disciplines get perfected so as to ripen into Intense Love. Thus, elevation of sādhanā and sādhaka to perfection is simultaneous.

Through the nine modes of Bhakti-yoga, sādhaka attains nirguna bhakti. However, in the beginning of sādhanā, some kind of ritualism is also necessary for engaging the outgoing mind in to the religious practices so that it develops more interest in the godliness. Knowing well that the Vedic ritualism is meant exactly for this purpose, the Bhāgavatam also elaborates the method of worship.

\textsuperscript{1733} XI,19,24
\textsuperscript{1734} XI,12,14*-15*: B.G., XVIII,65-66 transl. S.Radhakrishnan
\textsuperscript{1735} YS, II,45
\textsuperscript{1736} XI,14,23*-24*: XI,3,31-33
\textsuperscript{1737} NBS, 82

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7. **Kriyā-yoga: An Auxiliary to Bhakti-yoga:**

*Kriyā*-yoga in the *Bhagavatam* is a part of *adhyātmika* karma or *Nivṛtti-mārga*. *Kṛṣṇa* elaborates the *Kriyā*-yoga for a particular kind of devotees. Some devotees develop strong faith in God’s deeds accompanied by the abhorrence of all karmas as well as the understanding that all desires lead ultimately to suffering, yet they often lack the practice of renunciation; such devotees may continue to worship God with joy, faith and determination, and fulfill desires with full awareness of the miserableness of such life. A devotee should worship God, with all sincerity accompanied by various offerings, in five centres of *His* manifestation. They are: an image, a symbolic diagram drawn on the floor, the sun, water, holy men or one’s own heart. An image is said to be of eight kinds. It may be made of stone, wood, metal, clay, and sandal paste, precious stone or a painting. Faith (śraddhā) is most pivotal to all kinds of worship.

**Details:**

*Kriyā*-yoga has various aspects like *āvāhana* (invocation of the divine presence in an image) and *udvāsa* (vacating the presence). The devotee should invoke God’s presence in his Heart with the help of meditation on *Prāṇava*. When one’s body has, through meditation, been irradiated by that Presence…he should transfer it to any of the centre of worship with the help of communion and worship God with appropriate rituals and offerings. A throne with divine majesties – *Jñāna*, *Vairāgya*, *Aīśvarya*, *Yaśa*, *Śrī*, *Vīrya* – and nine powers – *Vimalā* (purity), *Utkāsini* (exalted state), *Jñāna*, *Kriyā*, *Yoga*, *Prahvi* (modesty), *Satya*, *Isana* (sovereignty), *Anugraha* – should be conceived. On it should be conceived a lotus of eight petals luminous with other parts like pericarp and filaments, and the sun, moon and fire placed one above the other inside the pericarp. In that, God should be worshipped with Vedic and Tantric mantras as well as the ingredients of worship and prayers for emancipation. Worship of *Durgā*, and *Vīnāyaka* along with guru is conducive to liberation. Chanting of

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1738 XI, ch.-27: XL3,47-55  
1739 XI,20,27-28
Svarṇagāhm anuvaka, Mahāpuruṣa vidyā, Puruṣa suktā and texts of the Sāmaveda known as Rājan-sāma are beneficial to worship.

Those who wish to propitiate God in the form of fire should prepare a sacrificial pit according to scriptural injunctions and perform Homa with proper ingredients and meditation on Fire. The devotees should make ghee-soaked oblations uttering the Mula-mantra (Aum Namo Nārāyaṇāya) and Puruṣa-Sukta whose sixteen Rks should be chanted with an oblation following each Rk.

After each worship, a devotee should prostrate like a staff before God. He should offer prasādam and gifts to God and to deities around Him as well as to the holy men. A devotee should utilize all his resources unreservedly for the worship and service of God and His devotees. He should meditate on God after worship, offer Him water for washing and drinking, flowers and other ingredients like sandal-paste for decoration and prasādam with his own hands. Lastly, he should rest God, serve him fragrant betel leaf, hold His Feet, shampoo them and pray for His grace and liberation. He should then sing God’s glories for a while and engage self in the feeding of devotees. At last, he should partake of the prasādam. It is through sādhus that God receives food and gifts.

The Lord assures a devotee, “He who worships in the manner prescribed above, according to the course of active yoga as taught in the Vedas and the Tantras, receives from Me accomplishments of his desired objectives, both here and hereafter.”

“One attains to Me through devotion without any desire. And one who worships Me in the way described, would attain to that state of desirelessness in which true devotion flourishes.”

It must be noted that although the Bhāgavatam describes Kriyā-yoga in detail, it considers the ritual worship only a primary means to rise higher in Bhakti-yoga ultimately to attain the mystical heights of Pure Love for God. Swami Vivekananda, while stress-
ing the need of the external forms of devotion, very aptly says, “It is very good to be born in a church, but it is very bad to die in a church. It is very good to be born within the limits of certain forms that help the little plant of spirituality, but if a man dies within the bounds of these forms, it shows that he has not grown, that there has been no development of the soul.”

8. SUMMARY:
Presumably, a late entrant in the Indian Thought as a systematic method of sadhanā, Bhakti-yoga, not only came to stay, but to prevail over the other prevalent forms of sadhanā such as Vedānta, Tantra, Yoga and the rest because of its appeal to the human mind’s most used faculty, viz., emotion. Due to its almost infallible capacity to yoke even the meager abilities of man into the spiritual path, Bhakti-yoga has come to be regarded as an easier and surer path in relation to jñāna and karma yogas. The positive effect of bhakti on sadhanā has made it mandatory for the other yogas to incorporate some of the ideas, if not the modes, of Bhakti-yoga into their mainframe. Bhakti-yoga in its true spirit is bound not to be actuated by self-interest; devotion for the sake of material gain is not conducive to yoga hence, disparaged. The unreserved and unmotivational devotion for God characterizes Bhakti-yoga. Bhakti is, again, classified as sāttvika, rājasika and tāmasika; however, cultivation of the guṇātīta bhakti is the aim of sadhanā. Among various means of cultivation of bhakti, holy association is considered as the greatest means. For the beginner a systematic procedure for worship (kriyā-yoga) has been outlined. Nonetheless, nine progressive modes of bhakti are enunciated. These nine modes have come to be regarded as the breakthrough development in the history of any yoga; for, those take cognizance of all the levels of man’s consciousness. The efficacy and universal applicability of Bhakti-yoga qualifies it for being incorporated into every method of sadhanā irrespective of religious differences. Bhakti-yoga as a method of sadhanā is not only founded on the idea of duality of the devotee and God, but also aims to retain that duality even in the higher stages of sadhanā. Bhakti-yoga culminates in to total self-surrender to the Di-

1745 The complete works of Swami Vivekananda, vol. II, pp.39-40

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vine, which marks, in fact, the beginning of the rare mystical experience of the Divine Love (*Parābhakti*).