PART- 2

THE PRACTICLE APPLICATION
CHAPTER – III

THE BHAGAVATA SĀDHANA

1. THE SPIRITUAL WAY: DISPASSION FOR THE WORLDLY LIFE:

The way to salvation as distinct from the other three attainments (artha, kāma and dharma) is called a spiritual path (adhyātmika). By definition, it signifies the enquiry into the reality of the Spirit, Self or Ātmā. The worldly life has happiness mixed with miseries. In fact, that which removes miseries and secures happiness is the real good (dukhahāni śubhavāpti). The spiritual way begins with the idea of transcending the pleasure and pains of the world. The spiritual discipline aims to free man from the desires and conduces to the supreme bliss. The desire to be initiated in the Bhāgavata sādhana arises as a result of the disinterest (virakti) in the phenomenal world and concentrated cultivation of devotion for God. Such a state of mind appears when a person observes that the world is devoured by the serpent in the form of Time, and consequently, becomes alert and disgusted with all worldly objects; he ultimately realizes that Ātmā (God) is the protector of his self. The spiritual path is for one who, as a result of such knowledge, concludes that the most thoughtful action in life is to attain the Immortal through the mortal body and begins to consider the contemplation on God as the supreme aim of life.

According to Sridhara, adhyātmika signifies the way pertaining to unswerving devotion to Ātmā. Vira Raghava considers it as a path leading to the knowledge of the real self as distinguished from the Matter (Prakṛti). According to Vallabha, there are three yogas or ways – adhyātmika leading to the realisation of the Supreme Soul,
adhidharma useful in the realization of God, and adhibhootika leading to the attainment of siddhas.

Devahuti’s state of mind at time of putting forward the spiritual inquiry before Kapila signifies the pre-requisites of adhyatma or sadhanā: Disgust for the sensual pleasures, securing a guru, grace of God, guru and a holy man, desire for knowledge, and the self-surrender to guru. These corroborates with qualifications listed in the Vivekacudamani of Sankara.

In addition to the above-mentioned qualities, the predominance of a particular quality (guna) in a sadhaka determines largely his urge for transcending the mundane pleasures and his adoptability in the sadhanā. A particular quality is inherent in man; however, it can be changed by the conscious efforts.

2. Adhikārabheda: Varna:

Even though every man is a worthy recipient, the degree of his adoptability to the spiritual path depends on the manifestation of the Divine in him. The Bhagavatam considers the person who is righteous and has no envy (hence, kind to all beings acc. to Sridhara) as the most eligible person to follow the Bhagavat Dharma. According to Vira Raghava, non-envy is eulogised above all qualities because it rules out the place for the magical practices and fruit-yielding actions as prescribed in the Vedas and implies virtues like tranquillity, self-restraint essential for aspirants to Salvation.

In addition, every sadhaka is on a different station of evolution, and possesses a different background. The difference in the adoptability of each sadhaka is known as Adhikārabheda – the eligibility criteria of sadhaka, or potentiality to follow sadhanā. After the endowment of human body, what next determines the adhikārabheda is the caste (varna) of sadhaka. By varna, the Bhagavatam certainly does not mean the parentage. It is gunas that determine the varna. Varnaprathā is a socio-religious institution. It is based on the psycho-spiritual propensities of an individual, which cast

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1020 III,25,7-11
1021 VII,14,38
1022 I,1,2
1023 AITM, FN, I,1,2
1024 XI,5,2

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great implications on society, his role in it and his predilection for the divine life.

Varṇapratha need not be glorified apart from its spiritual value. The spiritual interpretation of varṇa, which is the actual and original interpretation, points to an individual’s spiritual potentiality based on his nature.1025 “If in members born in a certain varṇa the qualities pertaining to another varṇa are seen, they (the former) are to be classed as belonging to the latter varṇa.”1026

The brahmapiṇḍa has dominance of sattva in him. His nature is characterized by control of mind (śāma) and senses (dama), purity (śauca), austerity (tapa), contentment (santoṣa), forbearance (ksānti), straightforwardness (ārjavam), devotion to God (bhakti), kindliness (daya), and truthfulness (satya).1027 The one with brāhmaṇical propensities is the highest kind of sādhana. Progress in sādhana becomes easier for him. With rajas and tamas overpowered by sattva, a sādhaka remains less vulnerable to stagnation or deviation.

The ksatriya has rajas dominant with sattva as a supporting guṇa. Characteristics of ksatriya are majesty (teja), strength (bala), courage (dhruti), valour (śaurya) and endurance (titikṣa).1028 Rajas being dominant in him, he has to be careful in keeping his mind restrained. He needs to exert in order to contain his exuberance which is an impediment in sādhana.

The vaiśya has rajas dominant with tamas as a supporting guṇa. His nature is characterized by faith in the Vedas and God (āstikya), charity (dāna), absence of hypocrisy (adambha), service to the holy men (brahma sevanam), and urge to acquire more wealth (atuoṣṭh artho upacaryaiḥ).1029 Sādhana for salvation becomes very much difficult for a person who has tremendous desires in him under the influence of rajas and tamas.1030 Considerations of the world as ephemeral and unessential accompanied by the motiveless devotion, which are pre-requisites of sādhana, have yet to occur in

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1025 VII,11,31
1026 VII,11,35 transl. S.T.: XI,2,23
1027 VII,11,21; XI,17,16
1028 VII,11,22; XI,17,17
1029 VII,11,23; XI,17,18
1030 XI,13,10
him. Until one has the clinging for the world, one can never aspire for spiritual attain-
ment.

The *sudra* has *tamas* dominant in him with *rajas* as a supporting *guna*. *Tamas* in
*sudra* makes him indolent and unresponsive to the higher truths. Therefore, he must
cultivate the traits like the spirit of sincere service to the gods, twice-born castes and
cows (*śuṣrūsanam dvijagavām devānāṁ*), satisfaction with what he receives for
his services (*tatra labdhena santosah*), humility, purity, straightforwardness, service of
his master, the sacrifice (*yajña*) without uttering mantras, non-stealing and truth.¹⁰³¹
*Śudra* should cultivate *sattva* through *satsanga* and austerity, and transcend it with the
help of knowledge and devotion. Transcending all *gunas*, he should be established in
the Truth – God – *Brahman*. For, *gunas* are in God, but God is the Fourth (transcen-
dental).¹⁰³² Service is the virtue of *sudra* with which he can rise to the higher spiritual
plain. With the help of service and satisfaction, he can overcome the influence of
*tamas*.

In any case, there is no helplessness for any of the *varṇas*. Even a *śudra*, through sin-
cere performance of his prescribed duties (*svadharma*), can be a *sādhaka* for salva-
tion.¹⁰³³ Perfection in actions leads to spiritual elevation. The aspirants at the bottom of
spiritual evolution can certainly rise to the higher plains and attain the *brahmana*hood.
*Viśvāmitra*, the eighty-one sons of *Ṛṣabhadeva*, and many others became *brahmana*
even though born in the lines of *ksatriya*.¹⁰³⁴ Quite contrary to it, *Nabhaga*, a
*ksatriya*, degenerated to the level of a *vaishya* and *Ajāmila*, a *brahmana*, had become
a degraded person fit to be out of *varnapratha*.¹⁰³⁵ Similarly, a *brahmaṇa* of Avanti¹⁰³⁶
had taken to the livelihood of *vaishya* but further degenerated to the similar category as
that of *Ajāmila*. The one who fails to adore *Hari* with the knowledge and the one who
indulges, out of *rajas* in him, into action without knowing Karma-yoga – both fall from

¹⁰³¹ VII,11,24; XI,17,19
¹⁰³² XI,13,28; VI,5,12
¹⁰³³ II,7,46
¹⁰³⁴ V,4,13; IX,2,17; IX,16,28; IX,21,19-20 & 33
¹⁰³⁵ IX,2,23; VI,ch-1
¹⁰³⁶ XI,ch-23

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their class. If one overlooks his enlightenment and engages in the other three values (purusārthas) then, degradation is his fate.

The miserable of all is the one who is not fit to belong to any varṇa. His nature is characterized by impurity (aśauca), falsehood (anrtam), thieving (steyam), lack of belief in the Vedas, the revealed texts and God (nāstikya), wanton quarrelsomeness (śuṣkavigraha), lust (kāma), anger (krodha), and inordinate covetousness (tārṣah). He cannot hope for spiritual evolution unless and until he is purified through expiation and penance.

It is important to note that the Bhāgavatam considers man and woman sādhakas on equal ground.

3. The Philosophy of Guna:

The sādhaka should cultivate sattva. Cultivation of sattva is preceded by the knowledge of sattva and the sattvikā. The sādhaka should know the philosophy of guṇas. Guṇas are not merely the abstract categories in the process of cosmic evolution; they are the very constituents of mind and body of jīva; and as mind and body permanently accompany jīva during its life in satīsāra, the guṇas incessantly cast effects on the soul. We find an elaborate dissertation on the philosophy of guṇas in the Bhāgavatam and in the Gītā – in both places inculcated by Kṛṣṇa.

i. Characteristics of Guṇas:

The Bhāgavatam gives an enumeration of the characteristics of the qualities; it is more comprehensive than the one given by Sāṅkhya.

Control of mind and senses, forbearance, discrimination, austerity, truthfulness, compassion, memory, contentment, self-sacrifice, desirelessness, faith, revulsion from evil, charity, modesty and absorption in the self are the signs of sattva in mind.

Desire, activity, pride, craving for sense-objects, haughtiness, longing for one's selfish

1037 XI, 5, 3-6
1038 XI, 5, 16
1039 XI, 17, 20
1040 XI, 25, 10
1041 XI, 25, 2
ends, sense of difference between men and things, voluptuousness, craving for name and fame, indulgence in ridicule of other, demonstrativeness, and aggressiveness are the signs of *rajas* in mind.\(^{1042}\)

Anger, greed, despondency, delusion, wretchedness, perfidy, violence, beggarliness, hypocrisy, languor, evil, depression, lassitude, vain expectations, fear and indolence are some of the signs of *tamas* in mind.\(^{1043}\)

*Sattva* is identified with knowledge and intelligence; *rajas*, with works; and *tamas*, with inertia and ignorance.\(^{1044}\)

Those who cannot analyse the effects of *guṇas* should consider that as *sattva* which is recommended by the wise ones as spiritually beneficial, as *rajas* which is ignored by them, and as *tamas* which is condemned by them.\(^{1045}\)

However, the goal is to transcend all *guṇas* including *sattva*, because God is beyond *guṇas*—*guṇatīta*. By the gradual cultivation of *sattva*, the *guṇatīta* state can be attained.

### ii. Expression and Transcendence of the Gunas:

Some of the examples of the philosophy of *guṇas* as brought to the practical level are as follows:\(^{1046}\)

The waking state results from *sattva*, the dream, from *rajas*, the deep sleep, from *tamas*, and the *Turiya* is the Spirit which prevails in all the three and transcends the *guṇas*. Desireless actions are *sāttvikā*, motivational actions are *rājasikā*, actions that are performed at the cost of others are *tāmasikā*, but the actions that are unreservedly offered to God by a devotee are *guṇatīta*. The knowledge that *Ātman* is different from body is *sāttvikā*, the idea that *Ātman* is tenanting a body is *rājasikā*, thinking of body as *Ātman* is *tāmasikā*, but the knowledge of God, (or thinking of *Ātman* as God) is *guṇatīta*. Dwelling in the solitude of a forest is *sāttvikā*, in a town, *rājasikā*; in...
a place of impurity and *adharma, tāmasika,* but dwelling in God or in God’s place is *gunātīta.* Food that is nourishing, wholesome and easily obtained is *sāttvika;* that which is pleasing to the sense, *rājasika,* impure and unhealthy, *tāmasika;* but whatever is offered to God is *gunātīta.* Happiness born of the self is *sāttvika;* that born of sense contact is *rājasika;* that arising from delusion and fallen ways is *tāmasika;* but the spiritual bliss of God-realization is *gunātīta.*

When *sattva* becomes powerful, it manifests into devotion.*¹⁰⁴⁷* *dharma* and *knowledge.*¹⁰⁴⁸* The manifestation of *sattva* in a man effaces sinful tendencies that are rooted in *rajas* and *tamas.*¹⁰⁴⁹* Sādhaka* should not stop at *sattva* also.*¹⁰⁵⁰* The *guna*-based disciplines destroy the effects of *gunas* just as the fire generated by the friction of bamboos destroys the forest, so does.*¹⁰⁵¹* Ultimately, *sattva* should also be overcome¹⁰⁵²* by *sattva* itself¹⁰⁵³* as well as by desirelessness, thereby, shedding off the subtle body and attaining to God.*¹⁰⁵⁴*

### iii. How to Overcome Several Negative Propensities:

The *sādhaka* often encounters ‘the dark night of soul’ encumbered with ‘imps of devil’. God’s help is always forthcoming in such circumstances; nonetheless, the *Bhāgavatam* prepares *sādhaka* for such eventualities and shows how to ward off each of them as follows:

“Passion, by abandoning the will to enjoy; anger, by abandoning desires; greed, by reflecting on the evils of wealth; fear, by meditation on the Essence.”

“Grief and infatuation, by discrimination; vanity, by the association of the great ones; obstacles to yoga (concentration), by silence; violence, by controlling attachment to body and possessions.”

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¹⁰⁴⁷ XI, 13,2
¹⁰⁴⁸ XI, 13,6
¹⁰⁴⁹ XI, 13,3
¹⁰⁵⁰ VII, 15,44
¹⁰⁵¹ XI, 13,7
¹⁰⁵² XI, 12,24; XI, 25,35; VII, 15,44
¹⁰⁵³ XI, 13,1
¹⁰⁵⁴ XI, 25,35

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"Pain due to other being, by kindness unto them; that due to destiny (past actions), by samādhi; that from self, by the power gained from austerity; that from sleep, by consumption of sāttvika."

"Rajas and tamas, by sattvā, and sattva by proper discrimination; an aspirant attains all these easily with deep devotion to guru." 

A man who strives for the fearlessness should conquer anger through hearing about the Truth; for, anger is the greatest obstacle in sādhanā.

Passion (Kāma) that is difficult to overcome can be easily overcome through constant and firmly established delight in hearing and describing the excellences of God.

Agitation due to rajas and tamas is to be overcome without being dispirited through reflection on the results of guṇa-based activities and through sense-control.

Contentment and inner joy are most essential but for which even scholars lose higher qualities like impressiveness, learning, austerity, reputation and understanding.

Above all, sādhakas, although have to face many obstacles – gross, mental and spiritual, by resigning totally to God, one overcomes all obstacles with God as his protector.

We also find symbolic expression of the virtues begetting other virtues, in narration of the names of the progeny of Manu. For instance, the daughters of Dakṣa Prajāpati gave birth to the following children: Sraddha (faith) to Subha (auspicious); Maitri (friendship) to Prasada (favour); Daya (compassion) to Abhaya (fearlessness); Santi (peace) to Sukha (happiness); Tusti (contentment) to Moda (joy); Pusti (nourishment) to Smaya (smile); Kriya (action) to Yoga (fulfillment); Unnati (progress) to Darpa (self-estimation); Buddhi (intelligence) to Artha (property); Medha (intellect) to Smruti (memory); Titiksha (forbearance) to Kshema (well-being); Hri (modesty) to Pras-
raya (respect) and Murti, the culmination of all virtues, to God – the Lord Narayana.1061

Similar symbolism is observed in Pratisarga – counter-evolution – based on Adharma which leads jīvas to degradation:1062 Adharma (unrighteousness) – one of Brahmā’s progeny – married Mrsa (untruth) who gave birth to Dambha (hypocrisy) and Maya (deceit), to whom a demoniac boy was born, and to Lobha (greed) and Nikrti (obstination); to Lobha and Nikrti were born Krodha (anger) and Himsa (violence) who gave birth to Kali (evil) and Durukti (foul speech), Kali and Durukti had Bhaya (fear) and Mrtyu (death) as their children who in turn begot Yatana (suffering) and Niraya (hell).

4. PRELIMINARIES OF SĀDHANA:

i. Right Faith:

Sādhanā is also known as yoga. Yoga is defined as that which burns the seed of waves of the mind.1063 It is to be attained by the inquiry in the Essence. The foremost prerequisite for the inquiry into the Essence is right faith.1064 With the right faith as a foundation, the sādhaka is to resort to the traditional Vedic means of sādhanā, viz., śravana, manana and nididhyāsana1065 and the nature of the right faith may be surmised as the faith that God inhabits all beings.1066 The faith can be generated by the pilgrimage to the holy places, the dedicated service and devotion to guru as well as holy people.1067 The mind of a person with sāttvika nature and pure faith is purified sooner than even the one who resorts to number of other worships and rituals.1068 Besides right faith, the modes of Bhāgavat Dharma, the grace of God, the service of guru and the holy association may be considered as the other preliminaries of sādhanā.
ii. The *Bhāgavat Dharma*:

According to the *Bhāgavatam*, the basic disciplines essential for all types of sadhakas can be best described as the *Bhāgavat Dharma*. Blessed with the qualities that are required for sadhana, sadhaka should follow the Eternal Path under the guidance of a guru who guides him according to his inclination and potentiality. However, God has Himself revealed the path called the *Bhāgavat Dharma* for the easy attainment of Atman particularly by those sadhakas who are not properly instructed.\(^{1069}\) It is the Eternal Religion (*Sanatana Dharma*) for all mankind. It has its origin and end in God alone; it is always protected by God. Sadhaka should know the *Bhāgavat Dharma* by the observance of which Śrī Hari, who is the soul of the devotee, and gives His own self (to the devotee), is pleased.\(^{1070}\)

iii. Modes of the *Bhāgavat Dharma*:

The *Bhāgavatam* gives following guidelines for the practice of the *Bhāgavat Dharma*:

"First, the sadhaka should learn to give up attachment to the objects of the senses and cultivate attachment to the holy company. He should cultivate kindness, friendliness and humility towards other beings appropriately.

"He should observe purity, austerity, forbearance, silence, study of scriptures, straightforwardness, celibacy, non-violence, and sameness in the pair of opposites.

"He should see God everywhere as the soul of all; he should be a loner without home, clad by only a small cloth, and contented with what comes spontaneously.

"He should have faith in the scriptures concerning Bhagavān, but should not criticise the other ones; he should conquer speech, mind and actions through truthfulness, control of mind and that of senses.

"He should listen to, sing about and meditate upon the wonderful deeds of Hari, and offer all fruits of birth, actions and gunas to Him.

"He should offer to God wife, children, home, his own self, sacrifices, charity, austerity, Japa, good conduct and whatever is dear to self.

\(^{1069}\) XI,2,34
\(^{1070}\) XI,3,22
"The devotees should sing the sanctifying excellence of Bhagavān, and thereby generate intense love, fulfilment and renunciation.

"Remembering and making others remember Hari – the remover of ignorance, the devotee cultivates through devotion the devotion (Parābhakti) which would fill him with horripilation over body (as a result of bliss)."\textsuperscript{1071}

Ṛṣabha preaches similar practices in order to cut asunder the hrdayagranthi but for which one does not become fit for God’s grace.\textsuperscript{1072}

iv. Essence of the Bhāgavat Dharma:
Kavi, one of the Nava-yogis, preaches the essence of the Bhāgavat Dharma thus: Whatever actions there are that a person does with his body, word, mind and all other sense-organs by the prompting of tendencies generated by one’s past karma – all that should be dedicated to Lord Nārāyaṇa.\textsuperscript{1073}

Kṛṣṇa also sums up the Bhāgavat Dharma as the dedication of all karmas to God and the consciousness that all beings are God’s manifestation: “By virtue of practising the presence of the Ātman everywhere, a devotee gains that knowledge by which he perceives everything as Brāhman. He becomes free from all doubts and he can abandon all karmas.”\textsuperscript{1074}

The Bhāgavatam excellently summarizes the Bhāgavat Dharma, “The highest dharma of man is to attain devotion to Bhagavān.”\textsuperscript{1075} It is expressed as the universal compassion – the feeling of pain in the pain of others and that of joy in the joy of others\textsuperscript{1076} because, the follower of the infallible Bhāgavat Dharma becomes totally free from the sense of ‘I’, ‘Mine’ and ‘yours’.\textsuperscript{1077}

\textsuperscript{1071} XI,3,23-31 transl. S.T.
\textsuperscript{1072} V,5,10-14
\textsuperscript{1073} XI,2,36* transl. S.T.; also B.G., IX,27
\textsuperscript{1074} XI,29,18 transl. S.T.
\textsuperscript{1075} VI,3,22
\textsuperscript{1076} VI,10,9
\textsuperscript{1077} VI,16,41 & 43
v. Efficacy of the Bhāgavat Dharma:

The efficacy of the practice of the Bhāgavat dharma is wonderful. Its practice infallibly brings Good unto man.1078 The sādhaka who follows this path will not slip or fall down even if he treads it with two eyes blindfolded;1079 he goes across Māyā which is difficult to cross.1080 By this dharma, even great sinners are purified.1081 Just as eating of every morsel of rice gives pleasure, strength and freedom from hunger; similarly, this dharma bestows intense devotion (bhakti) to God, experience of Him (anubhava) and detachment from the world (virakti) and ultimately attains the supreme peace.1082 Ekanatha interprets the bhakti in this verse as loving devotion to all beings, anubhava or prāpti as direct God-realization, and virakti as non-attachment to one’s body, wife, children etc.1083

It is important to note that the Bhāgavat Dharma does not draw lines among Jñāna, Bhakti, Karma and Yoga. A true devotee, a true jñāni, a true yogi, and a true karma-yogi – each are endowed with all – devotion, wisdom, yoga and the skillfulness in actions (karmasu kauśalam). There cannot be any strict compartmentalization among any of the paths. Sādhaka needs the knowledge that God is the Truth, the unswerving devotion to God, and all the yogic disciplines to enhance both – all these with a never-failing sense of self-surrender to God. The practice of this complete dharma brings the grace of God1084 which is fundamental for any kind of sādhanā.

vi. Grace of God:

The Upaniṣads tells that the Ātman is revealed unto the one whom the Ātman chooses.1085 ‘The choosing’ indicates ‘grace of Ātman’. Grace (anugraha) of God is the antecedent as well as the consequence of sādhanā. By the grace of God, a man gets the good fortune of the holy association, service of guru and austerity, and is con-
sequently released from *sāṁśāra*.\(^{1086}\) By grace of God, one inclines towards spirituality, by it one progresses along, practises charity, austerity, sacrifices, yoga or *Sama-dhi*\(^{1087}\) surrenders to God,\(^{1088}\) adores Him\(^{1089}\) and verily by it, one arrives at the destination – the lotus feet of God, freeing self from ego-sense.\(^{1090}\) The *sādhana* that is perfect in all respects becomes fruitful only when God, out of His love for the devotees, deigns to accept the devotee’s prayer and reveals Himself unto him.\(^{1091}\) By the grace of God (*Kṛṣṇa*, in this reference) alone, and not even by investigating for a long time that one can realize God’s glory.\(^{1092}\) It is only through God’s favour (*anukampa*) that a man attains success in one’s efforts, and is protected in all perils.\(^{1093}\) The success in spirituality accrues only due to the grace; because it is only by His grace, that one is saved even in precarious conditions, and one is destined to perish if God is not favourable.\(^{1094}\) If one fails to please God, everything he does is mere toil; even his own self will not get satisfaction from such work.\(^{1095}\) Longevity, beauty, wealth, various realms, powers of Yoga, fulfilment of *Puruṣārthas* as well as the realization of *Ātman* – all these accrue to the one in whom God is pleased.\(^{1096}\) Thus, the *Bhāgavatam* considers that alone as austerity, Yoga, charity, sacrifices, and vows by which God is pleased.\(^{1097}\)

**vii. Eligibility for God’s grace:**

A man with intense dispassion is worthy of the grace of God by which he can know truth and attain *Kaivalya*.\(^{1098}\) God bestows grace on such a dispassionate per-

\(^{1086}\) X,40,28  
\(^{1087}\) III,9,41  
\(^{1088}\) VIII,24,46  
\(^{1089}\) III,9,38  
\(^{1090}\) II,7,42  
\(^{1091}\) V,3,2  
\(^{1092}\) X,14,29  
\(^{1093}\) VII,9,19; X,89,63  
\(^{1094}\) VII,2,40  
\(^{1095}\) III,13,13*  
\(^{1096}\) VII,17,10  
\(^{1097}\) VIII,16,61*  
\(^{1098}\) III,27,26*
God's grace becomes all the more fruitful with austerity and unreserved dedication to God. At times one is endowed with the grace in various forms, but if one fails to respect and hold it in a receptacle of humility and austerity then, the person may not benefit much from it as in case of Sairandhri who squandered her association with Kṛṣṇa for the gratification of carnal desires. Ajāmila, the undeserving to gain the grace of God could elevate himself from the degraded state because he had been a pious brāhmaṇa learned in scriptures, virtuous, pure-hearted, possessed of an exemplary character and conduct, given to austere living, tender-hearted, established in sense-control, devoted to truth, learned in mantras, and devoted to the service to guru, the sacred fire, guests and elders. Due to his karma, he was dragged into the pit of ignorance and depredation. By grace of God, he was redeemed; coming back to senses, he performed expiation and strictest penance. Thus, he was potential and sincere as a receptacle to hold the grace.

Even while striving for the grace of God, one should always keep in mind that no amount of sadhāna is the worth for God’s grace. The Bhāgavatam elucidates the nature of the divine grace in a beautiful example. Mother Yasodā exhausted all the strings of the house just in attempt to tie the little Divine Baby to the mortar. When the Baby saw “mother perspiring, with her hair dishevelled and flowers falling from it, He felt, pity for her exertions, and allowed Himself to be tied up out of grace on her.” Similarly, Brahmā also tries to find out his origin by scanning the sky all around and diving deep into the depths of cosmic waters through the central hollow of stalk of the Original Lotus. When he fails to know anything he returns to the Lotus and meditates a hundred years for the Grace Divine then, the vision of the Lord is granted to him. Such examples show that no amount of tapas is sufficient for God-realization. When all the attempts are exhausted, the sadhaka intensely awaits the bestowal of God’s grace.

1099 IV,29,46
1100 X,48,11
1101 VI,1,56
1102 X,9,18
1103 III,8,16-22
viii. Mysterious nature of God's grace:

Grace of God is mysterious but not without reason. God must have reasons for all that He does; but as those are not clear to us, we call His actions mysterious. It can be so much mysterious that "the baby Kṛṣṇa, the bestower of all fruits rushed with grains anxious to buy fruits with it; the fruit-maid filled with fruits His hands from which the grains had already fallen but In lieu of fruits she finds her basket full of gems."¹¹⁰⁴

Therefore, the grace of God is often considered as unreserved and unconditional (ahetuki). God is the originator of all conditions; the reason cannot gauge his actions and intentions. God’s grace is always overflowing; yet we know that to Brahmā, He gave vision after a hundred years of intense meditation, whereas to Dhruva it was only within six months.¹⁰⁵ This may be because God is not pleased by innumerable manifestations of exuberance in man, which are not dedicated to Him.¹⁰⁶ He is pleased merely by a resolution even by a demon (Bali) to make prostration to Him;¹⁰⁷ He is pleased by the least good performed by gods or demons, men or animals.¹⁰⁸

Taking utmost benefit from the grace that comes in the form of human birth, an urge for salvation, the holy association and service to guru, sādhaka should strive for more grace which would lead him to God-realization.

ix. The Guru: God is the guru:

Sādhaka gains guidance from several kinds of gurus, the five of which are essential: First, God who is the supreme guru; second, his own discriminating self (viveka); third, the teacher (ācārya); fourth, the spiritual master (guru); and lastly, from all facets of the creation as in the case of Dattātreyā. For, stable and comprehensive knowledge cannot be acquired from one preceptor; numerous sages have sung the glory of Brahmań variedly.¹⁰⁹ The wise grasps essence from everything just like a bee.¹¹⁰ The

¹¹⁰⁴ X,11,10-11
¹¹⁰⁵ IV,9,30
¹¹⁰⁶ V,19,7
¹¹⁰⁷ VIII,23,2
¹¹⁰⁸ XI,9,31
¹¹⁰⁹ IV,18,2

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Bhāgavatam also considers, although not empathically, the role of the father and king as guru.\textsuperscript{\textsc{iii}}

God, Nārāyaṇa, the supreme guru\textsuperscript{\textsc{iv}} of all (jagad guru) reveals the spiritual path to the aspirants groping in the darkness of ignorance. The supreme guru is Vāsudeva.\textsuperscript{\textsc{v}} Harim\textsuperscript{\textsc{vi}} or Atmā\textsuperscript{\textsc{vii}} is guru. He is the guru of all gurus.\textsuperscript{\textsc{viii}} If sādhaka earnestly prays to Vāsudeva who is the Supreme guru, He Himself would guide sādhaka as the Indweller (Antaryāmī). The scriptures have numerous such examples, such as Yājñvalīkya to whom Sūrya Nārāyaṇa revealed the highest knowledge,\textsuperscript{\textsc{ix}} Śuka, the Sanat Kumāra,\textsuperscript{\textsc{x}} Nārada, Rṣabhadeva, and others.

\textbf{x. The self as the guru:}

In tune with the Gītā,\textsuperscript{\textsc{xi}} the Bhāgavatam says that man is a guru of his own self; for, man can work out his own good with the help of perception and inference.\textsuperscript{\textsc{xii}} However, until a sādhaka overcomes the sense of 'I' and 'mine', he is governed by his mental weaknesses; such a mind cannot be a guide to his own self. Therefore, the Bhāgavatam adds that only a man endowed with wisdom (dhīra) can perceive the Supreme Reality.\textsuperscript{\textsc{xiii}} The rest have to resort to the company of guru in whom the characteristics of the supreme guru Vāsudeva are manifest.

\textbf{xi. The nature of guru:}

He is the guru who knows the truth that God is the self as well as the lord of all embodied beings, their independent cause, their only asylum, and the most loved one. He is equal to God.\textsuperscript{\textsc{xiv}} One should seek and serve a guru "Who is well-versed in the
Supreme Word and has known *Brahman*, who has realized God and is peaceful, and who is a *muni* fully absorbed in *Ātman*.

xii. The role of guru:

When *sādhu*’s commitment to and delight in the Supreme Reality is firmly established, he seeks a guru. One’s introduction in the divine path is *dikṣā*. Initiation in the godly path by a guru has been considered as one of the prerequisites for an aspirant. Without guru, the aspirant’s condition will be like the merchant in the mid-sea without a helmsman to direct the boat. Guru bridges the *jīva* with God. It is only through the instructions and blessings of guru that one understands that the one *Paramātman*, by virtue of His *Yogamaya*, has manifested Himself as the many in various aspects. It is only by the grace of guru that one attains to Peace and Fullness. In the *Bhāgavatam*, we see numerous examples wherein it is only due to the grace of guru that the fulfillment resulted. The first is that of *Parikṣit* himself. Śuka being the guru, he crossed the formidable ocean of *samsāra* in just seven days. There are numerous instances of guru-*śiśya* relationship culminating into the liberation of disciple, e.g., *Kapila* and *Devahūti*, *Nārada* and the sons of *Dakṣa*, *Nārada* and *Dhruva*, *Nārada* and *Prahlāda*, *Dattātreya* with the twenty-four gurus, *Rudra* and the *Pracetas*, and few others.

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1121 XI,3,21
1124 XI,10,5
1125 XI,18,38
1126 IV,22,26
1127 XII,11,17; XI,3,48
1128 X,87,33
1129 XI,12,23-24
1130 X,80,43
1131 III, ch-25-26
1132 VI, ch-5
1133 IV, 8, 40-62
1134 VII,7,15
1135 XI,7,33-35
1136 IV, ch-24

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Dattātreya glorifies the guru thus: "The spiritual preceptor is the supporting piece of wood and the pupil is the supported piece. Instruction is the process of friction, and the knowledge is the fire, that brings happiness."\textsuperscript{1137}

xiii. Service to guru:

Once the sadhaka is initiated and as he engages himself in the holy association, he should pursue the spiritual goal by service to guru. Guru is to be worshipped as God with total self-surrender to him. He is to be regarded as one's sole relative. Guru is the living presence of God.\textsuperscript{1138} He is to be loved as one's own self; the disciple should learn the Bhāgavat Dharma and the ways of God's devotees from the life of guru.\textsuperscript{1139}

If the disciple considers guru as merely a man instead of God then, all wisdom that guru imparts will be, in his case, like a bath given to elephant (who has a habit to spray dust and mud all over the body immediately after bath, and thus making bath futile).\textsuperscript{1140} Guru is the embodiment of all divinities (sarvadevamayo guruḥ).\textsuperscript{1141} Not that God is to be superimposed on guru; this would amount to be a lack of faith in guru and in God. He is to be followed and realized.

In any form of sadhanā, service to guru is a raft that fearlessly takes the sadhaka across. A disciple should serve guru like a lowly servant, following him always, sleeping near where he sleeps as to be able to be in his presence whenever he requires it, shampooing his feet when he rests, and standing with the palms joined in his presence.\textsuperscript{1142} It is only through the one-pointed devotion to God developed by ceaseless service to guru that the axe of knowledge is sharpened.\textsuperscript{1143} God is not as pleased by Yajñas, (brahmacārī s) duties, austerity or renunciation, as He is pleased by His service through guru.\textsuperscript{1144} Service to guru entails several aspects, which change one's attitude in performing actions (karma-suddhi), purifies mind (citta-suddhi) and begets

\textsuperscript{1137} XI,10,12 transl. Tagore
\textsuperscript{1138} XI,18,39
\textsuperscript{1139} XI,3,22
\textsuperscript{1140} VII,15,26
\textsuperscript{1141} XI,17,27
\textsuperscript{1142} XI,17,29
\textsuperscript{1143} XI,12,24
\textsuperscript{1144} X,80,34*
wisdom (jñāna) and devotion (bhakti). For, to a worthy disciple, guru reveals even the most esoteric knowledge.\textsuperscript{145}

xiv. Holy Association (satsaṅga or sādhusaṅga):
After initiation into the spiritual path, one should remain in the holy association. The concept of guru is not limited to one’s preceptor only; it extends to the ‘gurujaṇa’ – all Holy Personages. It is only because of the holy association that the mind of a man begins to be drawn towards God, bringing release for him from saṁsāra.\textsuperscript{146} So long as one does not bathe one’s head in the dust of the holy men’s feet, one’s mind cannot turn towards the feet of God; if one cannot turn towards God, saṁsāra can never cease for him\textsuperscript{147} and the enlightenment cannot dawn.\textsuperscript{148} It is only because of sādhusaṅga that the purest Bhāgavat Dharma is revealed unto one.\textsuperscript{149} It is not merely by listening to or reading the scriptures that the wisdom dawns. It is really by observing the wise ones that one is blessed with the wisdom. Talking of fire does not ignite the fire; fire must be ignited with help of the fire. Nārada, though an ignorant child of a maidservant, achieved the high spiritual standards only through the holy association.\textsuperscript{150} In the company of sādhus, the sādhaka develops good-sattvika-saṁskāras. Therefore, the seeker after salvation (mumuṣkṣu) should remain in the holy company alone\textsuperscript{151} because the very intensity of the attachment for the worldly objects, if directed towards the attachment for the holy ones, opens the doors of salvation.\textsuperscript{152}

One should seek the company of sādhus because their association destroys all attachments and, consequently, one develops faith, delight and devotion in God.\textsuperscript{153} Their association even for a moment is greater than heaven or mokṣa, because they
are always accompanied by God. Not all kinds of worship can efface the sinful tendencies in man because the consciousness of difference prevails in those worships; but even a brief association with the enlightened ones effaces them because it removes their root, viz., ignorance.

The examples abound not only of the human beings who attained to His being by satsaṅga, but of beings with rajas and tāmas predominant in them, such as asuras, rākṣasas, beast; birds, gandharvas, vidyādharas, siddhas, cāraṇas, guhyakas, apsarās, serpents; and among human beings women, vaisyās, śudras and out-castes.

xv. The glory of the holy men (sādhu):

God says there is none greater than or equal to the brahmana or sādhu who ever holds in him God's form because he is endowed with sattva, control of mind and senses, austerity, forbearance, truth, benevolence and realization. It is not with the help of sacrifices and vows that God is pleased; He is pleased by the service of the holy ones. Even He, along with all deities, carries on His head the dust of the feet of the holy ones. God accepts wholeheartedly the service rendered unto the holy ones, not so the best of the sacrificial offerings. Because the holy one (brāhmaṇa) is the best recipient among men, as he holds Hari through austerity, learning and contentment. Those who worship in many ways but do not see divinity in the sādhus are like an ass conveying grass for cattle. The serene knower of Brahma is the life-buoy for those drowning in samsāra. The holy men confer vision to those who take refuge in them; they are deities, relatives, the very soul and, more, the form of God Himself. Saḍhaka should constantly keep himself in the company of sādhus. With-

\[\text{1154} \text{ IV,30,34} \]
\[\text{1155} \text{ XV,5,24} \]
\[\text{1156} \text{ XI,12,3-4} \]
\[\text{1157} \text{ V,5,24} \]
\[\text{1158} \text{ III,16,9; IV,21,40-41; VII,14,42; XII,10,21} \]
\[\text{1159} \text{ V,13,23; VII,14,17; IV,21,41} \]
\[\text{1160} \text{ VII,14,41; XII,10,24} \]
\[\text{1161} \text{ X,84,13} \]
\[\text{1162} \text{ XI,26,32-33} \]
\[\text{1163} \text{ XI,26,34} \]
out sādhusaṅga, one can never learn the ways of sādhanā. Sādhusaṅga is the greatest good fortune.1164

“Spiritual practices (Yoga), knowledge (Sāṅkhyā), performance of duties (Dharma), study of scriptures, austerity, renunciation, desireless works, philanthropic activities, gifts, vows, sacrifices, chanting of mantras, pilgrimages, Yama and Niyama – none of these wins God’s favour and bind Him to the devotee as much as the holy association, which eradicates all attachments, does.”1165 It is the best means to attain God.1166

Even the worst of the places are sanctified and turn into the pilgrim-spots where such devotees stay.1167 The pilgrim places (tirthas) and images of God purify men in long course of time but sādhus purify men merely by their sight (darśana);1168 just as the darkness is removed at the very sight of the sun.1169 Even the Ganga, who purifies three realms of their sins, feels purged of those sins by the contact of the holy ones.1170 Verily, the line in which they are born is purified (as in case of Prahlāda).1171 They excel others even by birth but make themselves all the more excellent by austerity, learning, contentment and installing God in their heart.1172

definitions

xvi. Who is a sādhu:

The Bhāgavatam gives the following characteristics of sādhu: He is patient in all circumstances, friend of all, compassionate, peaceful, with virtue alone as his ornament. He has deep-rooted devotion for God alone; he works solely for God and abandons all relatives and clansmen. He always hears and speaks of God’s deeds and excellences; with the consciousness dedicated to God, no afflictions ever afflict him. Such a sādhu is bereft of all kinds of attachments.1173

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1164 XII,10,7
1165 XI,12,1-2
1166 XI,12,9 transl. S.T.
1167 VII,10,19
1168 XII,10,23; X,48,31; X,84,11
1169 X,10,41
1170 IX,9,6
1171 VII,10,18
1172 X,86,53
1173 III,25,21-24; XI,26,27-28

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He is kind, never doing bad to anyone, forbearing, grasping the truth, free from the impurities of self, balanced, and benevolent to all. He is free from passions with mastery over senses, soft, possessionless, accepting minimum, peaceful, composed, dutiful and ever resigned to God. He is ever vigilant, self-possessed, courageous, with six weaknesses conquered, respecting all but expecting no respect, with inherent strength and the wise. He worships God wholeheartedly irrespective of whether he has knowledge of God’s glory or not.  

Sādhu goes beyond duality, which is based on guṇas; he, therefore, remains unaffected by opposites. He is a loner (ekāntin), possessionless, and he clings to the Lotus Feet of Śrī Hari with undistracted devotion. Such devotee of God persecutes no being because he goes beyond duality of ‘I’ and ‘mine’; he loses all interest in everything and gets absorbed in God alone. Unlike gods who bless according to one’s Karma, he affords protection to all beings at the cost of his own life, and travels all over the world, with God in heart, sanctifying the region. Sādhu always has the consciousness that the gross and the subtle universe is God’s form.

A true sādhu has no trace of passions in his heart. A sādhu who has conquered the sense of ‘I’ and ‘mine’ can successfully approach God because those who are still pestered by the passions and desires cannot see God. For such a sādhu who has supreme devotion to Bhagavân Vāsudeva, knowledge and renunciation, there is nothing but God to gain support from. God never leaves the heart of such sādhus.
who having totally cleansed their heart invite God to take seat therein through con­
tinuous meditation.\textsuperscript{1186}

If the six enemies in the form of six passions are not subdued, they will follow the sād­
haka even if he takes to the life of a recluse.\textsuperscript{1187} The Bhāgavatam calls such a sādhu a ‘kuyogi’ to whom God does not reveal the Truth.\textsuperscript{1188} “A man who has not subdued his six enemies, the senses, whose will (buddhi) is perverted by deep-seated desires, who is devoid of knowledge and renunciation, and yet assumes and displays the triple staff of the sannyāsin as a means of livelihood – that traitor to dharma deceives the ador­able gods, his own self and Me... With all evil tendencies latent and waiting to come out, he loses this world and the next.”\textsuperscript{1189} If a sādhu does not root out the desires for enjoyment from his heart, then, God, the lord of every heart remains unknowable for him like a diamond that is worn on neck but forgotten by its wearer; he suffers miser­ies from two sources, \textit{viz.}, Death which is sure to visit him and God who does not re­veal Himself unto him.\textsuperscript{1190}

The real \textit{tridanda} consists of silence, breath-control and desirelessness, which are the restraints of speech, body and mind, respectively.\textsuperscript{1191} If one fails to control these three then, the vows, austerity, charity, etc. in his case would leak out as water kept in unbaked pot.\textsuperscript{1192}

\textbf{xvii. Some Imperatives for the Sādhaka:}

The Bhāgavatam, while singing the glory of God and describing the paths of sādhanā in detail, all through also prepares the sādhaka for the Bhāgavata sādhanā laying be­fore him certain categorical imperatives to be followed. The following tenets can be derived as the essentials of the \textit{Bhāgavata sādhanā}. 

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1186} V,31,20
\item \textsuperscript{1187} V,1,17
\item \textsuperscript{1188} VI,16,47; XI,26,28-29
\item \textsuperscript{1189} XI,18,40-41
\item \textsuperscript{1190} X,87,39
\item \textsuperscript{1191} XI,18,17; XI,16,44
\item \textsuperscript{1192} XI,16,43
\end{itemize}
1 One should be steadfast in one’s path.\textsuperscript{1193}

2 One should always remind self of the distinction between body and \textit{Atman}.\textsuperscript{1194}

3 One should be selfless and sacrificing for others.\textsuperscript{1195}

4 One should not be self-gratifying; one should feed the senses only as to maintain the life, to keep the knowledge bright, and mind and senses intact.\textsuperscript{1196}

5 One should always refrain from practising Yoga for making body strong and young as well as for acquiring psychic powers.\textsuperscript{1197}

6 One should be a conqueror of the palate, which causes intense excitement to mind of even those who have mastery over the other senses.\textsuperscript{1198}

7 One should refrain from all talks except about God, give up all sensuous indulgences – whether petty or rare, never cause injury to anyone, and above all, be totally resigned to \textit{Vāsudeva}.\textsuperscript{1199}

8 While one should strictly avoid sense-contact with the objects, even during contact with the objects, one should remain untouched by the effects of such contacts.\textsuperscript{1200}

9 One should strictly keep away from the objects such as woman, gold, decorations, attires, etc. that infatuate one for their enjoyment\textsuperscript{1201} for, mind gets agitated only when sense and their objects come into mutual contact.\textsuperscript{1202}

10 One should be free from attachment of anything and anyone\textsuperscript{1203} because the bond of affection cannot be severed even by the brave or by the \textit{Yogins}.\textsuperscript{1204}

\textsuperscript{1193} XI,7,37
\textsuperscript{1194} XI,7,48
\textsuperscript{1195} XI,7,38
\textsuperscript{1196} XI,7,39
\textsuperscript{1197} XI,28,41-43
\textsuperscript{1198} XI,8,19-21
\textsuperscript{1199} VIII,16,49\textsuperscript{*}
\textsuperscript{1200} XI,7,40
\textsuperscript{1201} XI,8,8
\textsuperscript{1202} XI,26,22
\textsuperscript{1203} XI,7,52

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11 One should always be alone, free from any association whatsoever.\textsuperscript{1205}

12 One should be pleased with whatever comes by chance considering it as God’s will without making any effort for procuring anything including food.\textsuperscript{1206}

13 One should not accumulate anything for the future.\textsuperscript{1207} One should be possessionless (\textit{niski\=\text{n}cana}) in order to attain infinite joy.\textsuperscript{1208} Wealth makes even the learned men forget the death, pervert, indulgent in enjoyment, proud, infatuated, thereby bringing the downfall.\textsuperscript{1209} One should depend completely on God without caring to possess even bed, clothes, vessels, alms, shelter or any other source of protection.\textsuperscript{1210} God loves those who abandon all possessions (\textit{Niski\=\text{n}canapriya}).\textsuperscript{1211}

14 One should never come into contact with women even if it be a wooden image of a women,\textsuperscript{1212} a mother, a sister or a daughter for, even the learned men often cannot resist the overpowering senses.\textsuperscript{1213} Woman is like fire and man like \textit{ghee}, their mutual contact always has the danger of ignition. So long as the body consciousness prevails, the duality and the threat of spiritual fall persist.\textsuperscript{1214\textsuperscript{a}} Just as a woman is to man, a man is to woman.\textsuperscript{1215}

15 One should not listen to the worldly songs and music or witness the dances.\textsuperscript{1216}

16 One should visit the pilgrim-spots that are sanctified by the stay of the great devotees, emulate the great example set by them,\textsuperscript{1217} and observe sacred days with devotional practices.\textsuperscript{1218}

\textsuperscript{1204} X,84,61
\textsuperscript{1205} X,9,10
\textsuperscript{1206} XI,8,2
\textsuperscript{1207} XI,8,12
\textsuperscript{1208} XI,9,1
\textsuperscript{1209} VIII,22,11-16-17; X,10,8; X,27,16; X,73,20
\textsuperscript{1210} II,2,4-5
\textsuperscript{1211} X,60,14
\textsuperscript{1212} XI,8,13; also XI,14,29; XI,26,3 & 22-24
\textsuperscript{1213} IX,19,17; III,31,36-42
\textsuperscript{1214} VII,12,9*-10*
\textsuperscript{1215} III,31,41
\textsuperscript{1216} X,8,17-18
5. THE PATHS OF SADHANA:

According to the Bhagavatam, salvation (mokṣa), realization of Brahman or Ātman or Isvara, Nirvāṇa, Samādhi, the attainments of Viṣṇulokam or Viṣṇupadam are the forms of salvation (Final Beatitude). Three ways to approach them have been shown in the Bhagavatam. They are the ways of Knowledge (jñāna), Devotion (Bhakti), and Action (Karma). Kṛṣṇa says that there is no other way besides these.

i. Jñāna-yoga:

Jñāna-yoga is for those who develop dispassion for works and abandon them. Jñāna-mārga is characterized by the knowledge of God, and the Self as the part of God. It consists of discrimination between the real and the unreal. It seeks to approach God through the cognitive part of one’s consciousness, sublimating the emotive part of the self.

ii. Bhakti-yoga:

Bhakti-yoga benefits those who develop faith in God’s excellences even if they are not very much endowed with dispassion, but at the same time are not deeply attached to the world also. Bhakti-mārga is mostly characterized by dualism of God and devotee. It seeks to establish personal relationship with God surrendering one’s total self to Him. It comprises of the disciplines like remembering Hari and singing His excellences. It demands total dedication to God’s service. Harināma, prayers, worship, the holy association, and pilgrimage are some of its aspects.

iii. Karma-yoga:

Karma-yoga is for one whose mind (citta) is not endowed with dispassion and still hankers after the fruits of karma, and cannot concentrate on God. True karma is the unmotivated action absolutely meant for the divine cause and totally dedicated to
God. Karma-mārga includes Vedic ritualism (karmakāṇḍa), which more often than not, aims at the facilitation in the world and in the heaven; this attitude towards karma is known as Pratyti-mārga. There are indeed rituals, which are selfless and aiming at the salvation of the performer; this attitude towards karma is known as Nivṛtti-mārga. Performance of svadharma is one of the fundamentals of Karma-yoga. God-dedicated karma is the best form of Karma-yoga. Next is the service of the mankind without the awareness of the meaning of Karma-yoga. The progress in Karma-yoga is marked by the abandonment of actions that are aimed at fulfilling desires, and, thereby, going towards the performance of desireless action for salvation.

iv. The Emphasis on the Bhakti-mārga:

As is well known, the Bhāgavat Dharma gives utmost value to the Bhakti-mārga. Bhakti is considered as the path easier to negotiate than jñāna and Karma yogas. Nārada says, “The self which is continuously afflicted by desire and greed is not calmed by the paths of yoga, with abstentions, etc. as directly as through service to Mukunda.” Knowledge is generated from the actions that are performed for God; as, such actions are accompanied by the devotional contemplation. Jiva Goswami however adds, in tune with the Bhāgavatam, that the actions should be those which please God. Vira Raghava, concurring to the Gītā, says that the actions always performed according to the instructions of God, create devotion and enable the devotee to meditate on God.

Prof. Sheridan aptly observes, “Because it comes directly from an impulse of Bhagavān, devotion surpasses and replaces every other discipline of salvation (sādhanā). Worship heals the aberrations of the flesh better than other methods...The other disciplines accomplish natural goals. Bhagavān is reached by centering one’s heart on

\[1224\] VII, 15,47
\[1225\] 1,6,36 transl. Sheridan
\[1226\] 1,5,35
\[1227\] B.G., III,30; IX,27
\[1228\] AITM.FN, 1,5,35
him. Because there is no higher goal, there is no more exalted means. Means and goal coalesce. ”

6. THE AUXILIARY PATHS:
Rāja-yoga and Tantra are the additional aids to the Bhāgavat sādhanā. Any sādhaka finding, either or both of them, useful in sādhanā can practise them. The Bhāgavatam aims to propagate the dharma that is easy to be followed even by a novice in the spiritual path. Hence, Tantra sādhanā, which is full intricacies, is not emphasized.

i. Rāja-yoga:
The aim of Rāja-yoga is Samādhi. It is also called Mano-yoga. Its disciplines are conducive to every path of sādhanā – be it Jñāna-yoga, Bhakti-yoga or Karma-yoga. Patanjali elucidates it in detail. Kapila and Kṛṣṇa also expound it in the Bhāgavatam. Yoga comprises of eight-fold disciplines, hence it is also called Āstānga-yoga.

ii. Tantra-yoga:
It is one of the most mysterious methods of sādhanā. It is looked upon with such awe that it is not recommended to general sādhakas. Owing to its mysterious nature, it is not frequently discussed in the Bhāgavatam. However, references to it and to some of its limbs ascertain its place in the Book. Tantra-mārga is closely linked to Rāja-yoga. It has a great significance in meditation on the plexuses that are conceived in the human body. The divinity is invoked through concentration on body too.

7. THE TOTAL OF JÑĀNA, BHAKTI, KARMA AND YOGA:
Jñāna, Bhakti and Karma are the inseparable composite constituents of the Bhāgavata sādhanā. Each of these mārgas is accommodative of others. Elimination of single one disturbs the structure of sādhanā. The Bhāgavatam is considered as the Bhakti-śāstra because Bhakti-mārga is described at a great length. The description of Bhakti-mārga in the Bhāgavatam makes it evident that Bhakti-mārga of the Bhāgavatam necessitates the practice of jñāna and Karma. It is often due to the dogmatic conditioning that the learned ones fail to grasp this comprehensive essence of the Bhāgavatam thereby considering the Book as a promulgator of one of the paths only.

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129 Sheridan, p.91

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The Bhāgavata sādhanā is the total of devotion, knowledge, dispassion (vairāgya) and renunciation of actions. Sādhaka should eschew all attachments and practising the universal love, he should go beyond the awesome samsāra taking up the sword of knowledge sharpened by the service of God. The Bhāgavatam guides sādhaka to establish the pure intellect (dhee) in Ātman with the help of Yoga practices, devotion, renunciation and knowledge. It preaches to navigate the Supreme Sea of Spirituality through the motiveless practice of svadharma, purity of the Self, intense devotion, knowledge of the Truth, dispassion, austerity, Yogic practices and through intense absorption in Ātman (God). The man with his mind filled with knowledge, non-attachment and devotion, realizes his self to be Ātman as distinct and free from the Matter and the material world. The sages endowed with faith, renunciation and knowledge see Ātman in Ātman (God) through devotion generated by hearing about God. Again, it is said that devotion to God gives birth to intense renunciation and austerity characterized by asceticism.

The Bhāgavatam, while describing the end of the Yogi, shows the unity of all paths of sādhanā:

"While yet he (sādhaka) continues to hold the chariot in the form of human body with all its constituent parts under his control (Rāja-yoga), he, deriving his strength from the Lord Visnu (Bhakti-yoga), and wielding the sword of the spiritual knowledge (Jñāna-yoga) sharpened through the service of the highly exalted souls (Karma-yoga), should put an end to all the enemies (born of guṇas)...."

Krṣṇa, conveying the crux of sādhanā, says that knowing self as Ātman through knowledge, and being endowed with that knowledge (jñāna) and the realization of the

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1230 III,25,18; V,5,28; VI,17,31
1231 V,13,20
1232 III,26,72
1233 III,25,27*; III,27,21*-22*
1234 III,25,17-18
1235 I,2,12
1236 IX,5,25
1237 VII,15,45 transl. Tagare, (parenthesis mine)
Supreme Self (*vijñāna*), *sādhaka* should adore God through devotion, ultimately sacrificing both – *jnāna* and *vijñāna* – in Him who is the Master of all sacrifices (*yajñas* and *karmas*).\(^{1238}\)

Karma-yoga leads to *Kriyādvaita* – the non-duality of action. *Kriyādvaita* is the resignation of all acts performed through the instrumentality of thought, words and deeds directly to the Supreme *Brahman*.\(^{1239}\)

*Jñāna-yoga* ends in *Bhavādvaita* – the non-duality of thought. *Bhavādvaita* is the comprehension of the essential oneness of cause and effect like that in the thread and cloth, their difference being unreal.\(^{1240}\)

Thus, the synthesis of *jñāna*, *bhakti*, karma and *rāja-yoga* is but natural because they all have divine origination, and the attainment of peace of mind and God as the common goal.

“From Him has originated the pure dharma, *jñāna*, renunciation based on proper understanding, the eight-fold powers, and the fame for the holy deeds which purify the minds of men.”\(^{1241}\)

If one can realize the unity of *jñāna*, *bhakti*, karma and yoga in God then, one would transcend the sense of duality, and non-duality within and “around” God. The great men say that *Hari* is the supreme goal of all varieties of sages.\(^{1242}\) All worshippers approach and attain to the same God.\(^{1243}\) Just as all rivers emanating from different mountains merge into one ocean, all paths of *sādhana* lead finally to God alone.\(^{1244}\)

The apparent distinction among various paths is due to the prevalence of different spiritual traditions.\(^{1245}\)

N.K. Brahma rightly observes in this regard, “These three are intimately connected
with one another, and the co-operation of all of them is necessary for the realization of the ideal. Modern Psychology no longer believes in the compartment division of the Faculty Psychologists... The secret which Psychology discovers is that when each aspect of the mind works in moderation, it helps the development of the others along with it, but if any one aspect is given undue emphasis it rather eclipses and paralyses the growth of the other aspects.1246

8. SUMMARY:
Dispassion for the worldly pleasures marks the beginning of the spiritual quest. The urge for the spiritual path arises from the urge for the happiness bereft of misery. Such happiness can come only from within because our experience says that the external happiness is uncertain and limited, dependent as it is on the numerous external elements most of which are out the control of man. The urge for the inner happiness depends on the qualities of man, which are inherent but can also be cultivated. These qualities determine the intensity of the spiritual urge and subsequent success in sādhanā. Sādhanā is the conscious effort of man to cultivate those qualities. The preliminaries of sādhanā fortify man’s faith in the spiritual truths and make his progress spontaneous. As he advances into the inner chamber of sādhanā, he is guided by guru to resort to a particular path from among karma, jñāna or bhakti according to his attitude. However, he is not to overlook the other paths as well. In addition to the three already mentioned, he may be advised to take help of the modes of the other paths such as Rāja-yoga and Tantra. It is the grandeur of the Bhāgavata sādhanā that it takes into consideration all the major paths of sādhanā although it has firm faith that Bhakti-yoga is the surest and most suitable yoga for the current age. It believes in the synchronization of all three faculties of the mind, viz., cognition, conation and affection that are accentuated by Jñāna-yoga, Karma-yoga and Bhakti-yoga, respectively.

1246 Brahma, pp.97-98