



# RAMĀ ŚAKTI MISSION

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Bhakti is profound love for God. It is the very culmination of seeking and striving for moral fulfillment and spiritual experience. The search for God is the search for the Unknown, the search for the mystery of Self, world and existence. But, Bhakti is ecstatic love and reverence directed to the Divine who is intimately known, as the seeker's own deepest Self. Knowledge, mutual relation and intimacy of contact, form the basis of love even in the empirical plane. So too, without knowing your relation to God, without entering into an intimate acquaintance with Him, you cannot love God.

Bhakti is the spontaneous outpouring of the heart, arising from Self-Knowledge. It is the uninterrupted communion with the Beloved on the levels of thought, emotion, ecstasy, awareness, spiritual intuition and unitive experience. Devotion, of course, begins, subsists and develops on a dualistic relation. It is a stage of the growth of bhakti, and not Bhakti as such. Dualism in devotion in the case of an aspirant is unavoidable so long as ego has a hold in his consciousness. But how can the real Bhakti which arises from the knowledge of the oneness of the Self and God, ever admit of a dualistic element in it! In the perfection of Devotion, which is called parabhakti, there is no dualism at all.

People ask, where is the place of adoration in Advaita. Well, in advaitic experience, which is otherwise called perfect God-absorption, there is no consciousness of the individual 'I' or an adorable Isvara, or an objective universe. Then, how can there be adoration in that state of samadhi! There silence alone reigns as the expression of Truth and its experience. But when the Sage returns to the phenomenal plane, he folds his palms in adoration of the Supreme. Shuka Deva who recited Srimad Bhagavata to Pareekshit and Sankara who sang praises of various deities were jnanis who had advaitic experience. Yet they exemplified the highest type of devotion to God. Even Avatars of God glorify God, assuming the attribute of devotional bhava. Devotional bhava is intrinsic in the nature of the Jivatman.

What is known as devotion in the common parlance is conventional piety, which is called Vaidhee bhakthi or Gauna bhakthi. In this stage of moral preparation, the mind is in need of disciplines and the constant aid of external influences.

Practice of the Name, the parayana of the holy texts, worship of the Deity, pilgrimages, association with the devotees, group singing of the praise of God, observances of obligatory religious rites, fast, vigils, propitiatory yajnas, all these come under Gauna bhakti. All these disciplines are meant for the purification of chittha. Without the purification of chittha, Bhakti cannot dawn. Gauna bhakti is a mental attitude, rooted in shraddha and flourishing in an atmosphere of prayer, of longing for grace or yearning for the Vision. The Gauna bhakta has not seen God, touched God, or felt the rapture of intimacy with God. But, to a real Bhakta, God is not a strange Being, or a remote Deity. He has realized his affinity with God. God can never be separated from him, nor can he be separate from God.

The supreme devotion, 'parabhakti', is not just a step towards knowledge; it is the efflorescence of Knowledge. It is not a discipline; it is the fruit of all disciplines. It is not



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the means to liberation; it is the very ornament of the liberated. It is not a virtue; it is the source of all auspicious virtues. The idealism of Bhakthi is superior even to the fourth purushartha namely, Moksha. The Bhaktha spurns the idea of liberation. Consecration, eternal self-giving, eternal service of the Beloved is the ideal he cherishes. Bhakti is rightly designated as the fifth purushartha. Knowledge is innate in every one; but ecstatic God love; which is the supreme blessedness, is hard to get. Hence, pray for Bhakti. Bhakti is the choicest blessing and boon from God. Brimming with love and burning with divine hankering, the pure mind bereft of self and worldly cravings, rushes headlong towards Satchidananda as the Ganga towards the ocean. This is Bhakti.

Bhakti is full of sweetness, full of light and full of bliss. But the career of a Bhakta has been one of tests, trials and tribulation, a saga of sacrifices and sufferings. Kings have persecuted devotees. Society has condemned them. Yet they stood such trials with heroic fortitude, blessing even their oppressors and cursing none. What is the secret of such infinite power of fortitude and patience in a devotee? It is his calm, unquestioning resignation to the Will of God. Absolute faith, trust, fidelity, love, longing and loyalty to God and utter surrender to His Will and dispensation, characterize the devotional approach. For the devotee, faith in God means faith in His Name. As a mother is for the child, as a staff is for the blind, as the water is for the fish, so is the Name for the devotee. Far above the region of doubt, questioning, and reasoning, his faith is a firm inner grasp on God. Faith does not depend upon anything and anyone in life.

Even in dire calamity and extreme adversity, Bhakta's faith remains unshaken. Prarabdha brings happiness and misery. Everything you enjoy and experience in life, either in the form of pain or in the form of pleasure, is a reward of your past actions. Justice rules creation. When you know this fact, you will become calm and peaceful and you will get the strength to bear all afflictions courageously. Hold fast to God under all circumstances. Let not your faith waver at any time. Lack of faith betrays ignorance of the benevolent nature of God and of the inexorable law of karma.

The devotee has no complaints to make. He has no grievances. He does not question the ways of God or doubt God's justice and mercy. He is free from feelings of 'I' and 'Mine'. A cloud of despair never crosses his mental horizon. Anger and excitement are unknown to him. A word of curse never escapes his lips. He has no craving for anything in the world. He does not seek any favour either from man or even from God. He does not petition for boons. He does not bargain with God. He does not look to any worldly comfort, for God is his only comfort. Bhakti is a crucible, which melts all passions. Bhakti is the purifying fire, which reduces all vasanas into ashes. Renunciation (tyaga) and dispassion (vairagya) ever attend on the queen of Bhakthi.

Self-Control, dispassion, meditation and discrimination, which have to be cultivated in other paths like jnana most rigorously, all become natural when Bhakti dawns. The Yogi's mind is on the astral charkas; the jnani (the aspirant on the path of jnana) dreams of the position of Brahman but the Bhakta has forgotten himself and the world in his overwhelming love for God. There is no fall for a Bhakta. Where to will he fall? In humility, he considers himself smaller than a blade of grass. Not I, but Thou Oh Lord' is his attitude from the very beginning. Where passions raise their heads, where the fever of craving has not abated, where egoism still lingers, where the faults still holds fascination, where the mental vision is on the faults and failings and the short comings of others, there bhakti has not entered at all.



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Devotion is nurtured by prayers, penitence, silent penance, sacrifice, deepest anguish, long vigils, uncompromising war with one's own lower nature and strenuous moral training; but once the real bhakti begins to take root, tapasya becomes blissful. Without knowing the background of Bhakti, people consider bhakti as a lower order of sadhana. Bhakti is not so easy as it appears to be.

It grows only in a strong, pure and broad mind, which has rejected self, desire, attachment and falsehood for the sake of God. The only misery, which the Bhakta dreads, is the forgetfulness of God even for a fraction of a second. This, he cannot bear. Indeed, for one who has felt the comfort of God, there is no hell more horrible than the forgetfulness of God. Bhakti endows you with penetrating perception. It sees through the veil of Maya and beholds the divine radiance. It gives you the eye to perceive your own littleness and limitations and also the supreme immensity of God.

He who praises himself, or rejoices when others praise him, is far away from the domain of bhakti. Though education and book knowledge may not be there, think not that a bhakta is intellectually backward. Bhakta's intellect is a superior intellect free of ego and tamasic obscurity. He is guided by divine intuition. He never swerves from the path of dharma. There is no depression in a bhakta since he has no desire either.

Even after the dawn of Jnana, the powerful dehasana lingers and the sadhaka has to practise Brahmanishta always in solitude. In this background, imagine, what could be the magnitude of Bhakti, which the Gopis of Vraja had towards Lord Krishna! As soon as the melodious notes of Murali (flute) reached their ears, the Gopis forgot their body, children, duties, husband, home etc and ran towards the Lord. From this it is clear that there is no power superior to Bhakti to detach the mind from all objects and to take it to a state of union with God. In Bhakta's inner renunciation, there exist no conflict, no mental ordeal, no painful suppression of desire, and no violent imposition of disciplines. Everything is smooth, natural and easy.

Gopis were the very symbol of Bhakti. The Bhakti, which Mother wants you to develop, is reinforced by knowledge. It is jnanothara bhakthi. Whether you are engrossed in your duties or engaged in your adhyatmic observances, your inner bond with God should remain intact and your heart should be with God. God is your Aptabandhu, the trustworthy Friend and Apatbandhava, the Saviour in distress. There is no one except God who is your own Deity and Dharma demand maintenance of inter-personal affinity. But understand, God alone is worthy of worship, love and service. Love all in and through God. But cling not to mortals and shadows. None can love you; none can save you, except God. Knowing this truth, live unattached and gradually, the sense of belonging to God will deepen and your bhava will become intense.

Shraddha, bhakti, bhava and reverence should be combined in you. Then only you can enter the chamber of God. Bhava is the forerunner of bhakti. Your bhava towards God and Guru is your most precious wealth. Preserve it at all cost. Bhava infuses emotional intensity into your worship, devotion, service and meditation and brings the mind into a state of closeness to God. Mind melts away only in the exuberance of bhava.

Without bhava, religious pursuit is dry, and worship, service and meditation all become mere external activity, 'bahia cheshta'. God cannot be caught in your intellect. Heart is



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the worshipper. It is also the sanctum of God. Bhava arising from heart gives life even to the inert image of God. Through bhava you can converse and commune with God. Anything concerning His Name, Form, Leelas, Words, Presence, His Abode, the ground trodden by Him, all these should be holy, elevating, sweet, inspiring, purifying and love inspiring for you. That is the indication that you have bhava.

The touch of the dust of the Dwaraka sent Sudama into ecstasy. That is the profundity of bhava which arises from devotion to God. If there is no bhava, you cannot feel the glory of Divine Presence and the bliss of inner spiritual elevation even if you sit in the presence of your Guru. Whatever bhava, devotion and faith you have got now, preserve them and go on increasing and intensifying them. The enemy of devotion is evil association. Evil association is of two types: internal and external.

Identification with rajas modes is the evil association, which is internal. The company of the irreligious and the faithless, who criticize saints and the spiritual tradition and scoff at dharma and devotional practices, is the evil association, which is outer. Both these should be shunned like poison. The company, which produces misery to you, is evil company, 'dussanga'. Giving up pride, anger and egoism and attachment, cultivate noble qualities like truthfulness, non-violence, compassion, humility, love for justice and steady devotion to svadharma. Win the Grace of the Guru through righteous conduct and anushtana. Withdraw the mind from objects and personalities and filling the mind with the thought of God only.

This is the pathway to Bhakti. When God becomes the Avatar on earth, the religion of Devotion gets established. The doors to Mukti are kept wide open. A tide of spirituality reaches everywhere. The gospel of bhakthi becomes the guiding scripture. And, once again, the world heaves a sigh of relief.