

Bhaja Govindam

12/03/19 Adi Shankaracharya's Bhaja Govindam

Adi Shankaracharya wrote a number of Vedantic works for imparting knowledge of the Self and the Universal Spirit. He also composed a number of hymns to foster Bhakti in the hearts of men. One of these hymns is the famous Bhaja Govindam. The way of devotion, is not different from the way of knowledge or Jnana. When intelligence matures and lodges securely in the mind, it becomes wisdom. When wisdom is integrated with life and issues out in action, it becomes Bhakti. Knowledge, when it becomes fully mature is Bhakti. If it does not get transformed into Bhakti, such knowledge is useless tinsel. To believe that Jnana and Bhakti, knowledge and devotion are different from each other, is ignorance. If Sri Adi Shankara himself who drank the ocean of Jnana as easily as one sip's water from the palm of one's hand, sang in his later years, hymns to develop devotion, it is enough to show that Jnana and Bhakti are one and the same. Sri Shankara has packed into the Bhaja GovindaM song: the substance of all vedanta, and set the oneness of Jnana and Bhakti to melodious music. - C. Rajagopalachari

Abhilash Rajendran Wednesday, May 18, 2016

Composed by Adi Shankaracharya, Bhaja Govindam, or Bhajagovindam, is a popular devotional song in Hinduism. The 31 stanza composition in Sanskrit is not just a devotional song. Each word in Bhaja Govindam is pregnant with meaning and the composition is a sort of short synopsis of the teachings of Santana Dharma.

This English translation of Bhaja Govindam was found in a magazine published in Autumn 2003 by the Sivananda Ashram. The magazine also contained an article on the song by Dr M.N. Nandakumara. Sadly, I was not able to locate the name of the translator.

रचनः शङ्कराचार्य

भज गोविन्दं भज गोविन्दं
गोविन्दं भज मूढमते ।
सम्प्राप्ते सन्निहिते काले
नहि नहि रक्षति दुःक्रिङ्करणे ॥ 1 ॥

1 Seek Govinda, Seek Govinda,
Seek Govinda, O Fool!
When the appointed times comes (death),
grammar rules surely will not save you.

मूढ जहीहि धनागमतृष्णां
कुरु सद्बुद्धिम् मनसि वितृष्णाम् ।
यल्लभसे निज कर्मोपातं
वित्तं तेन विनोदय चित्तम् ॥ 2 ॥

2 O Fool! Give up the thirst to possess
wealth.
Create in your mind, devoid of passions,
thoughts of the Reality.
With whatever you get, entertain your mind,
be content.

नारी स्तनभर नाभीदेशं
दृष्ट्वा मा गा मोहावेशम् ।
ऐतन्मांस वसादि विकारं
मनसि विचिन्तया वारं वारम् ॥ 3 ॥

नलिनी दलगत जलमति तरलं
तद्वज्जीवित मतिशय चपलम् ।
विद्धि व्याध्यभिमान ग्रस्तं
लोकं शोकहतं च समस्तम् ॥ 4 ॥

यावद्-वित्तोपार्जन सक्तः
तावन्-निजपरिवारो रक्तः ।
पश्चाज्जीवति जर्जर देहे
वार्ता कोऽपि न पृच्छति गेहे ॥ 5 ॥

यावत्-पवनो निवसति देहे
तावत्-पृच्छति कुशलं गेहे ।
गतवति वायौ देहापाये
भार्या बिभ्यति तस्मिन् काये ॥ 6 ॥

बाल स्तावत् क्रीडासक्तः
तरुण स्तावत् तरुणीसक्तः ।
वृद्ध स्तावत्-चिन्तामग्नः
परमे ब्रह्मणि कोऽपि न लग्नः ॥ 7 ॥

का ते कान्ता कस्ते पुत्रः
संसारोऽयमतीव विचित्रः ।
कस्य त्वं वा कुत आयातः
तत्त्वं चिन्तय तदिह भ्रातः ॥ 8 ॥

3 Seeing the full bosom of young maidens
and their navel,
do not fall a prey to maddening delusion.
This is but a modification of flesh and fat.
Think well thus in your mind again and again.

4 The water drop playing on a lotus petal has
an extremely uncertain existence;
so also is life ever unstable.
Understand, the very world is consumed by
disease and conceit,
and is riddled with pangs.

5 As long as there is the ability to earn and
save,
so long are all your dependants attached to
you.
Later on, when you come to live with an old,
infirm body,
no one at home cares to speak even a word
with you!!

6 As long as there dwells breath in the body,
so long they enquire of your welfare at home.
Once the breath leaves, the body decays,
even the wife fears that very same body.

7 So long as one is in one's boyhood, one is
attached to play,
so long as one is in youth, one is attached to
one's own young woman;
so long as one is in old age, one is attached to
anxiety,
yet no one, alas to the Supreme Brahman, is
ever seen attached.

8 Who is your wife? Who is your son?
Supremely wonderful indeed is this samsara.
Of whom are you? From where have you
come?
O brother, think of that Truth here.

सत्सङ्गत्वे निस्सङ्गत्वं
निस्सङ्गत्वे निर्मोहत्वम् ।
निर्मोहत्वे निश्चलतत्त्वं
निश्चलतत्त्वे जीवन्मुक्तिः ॥ 9 ॥

9 Through the company of the good, there
arises non-attachment;
through non-attachment there arises freedom
from delusion;
when there is freedom from delusion, there is
the Immutable Reality;
on experiencing the Immutable Reality, there
comes the state of 'liberated-in-life'.

वयसि गते कः कामविकारः
शुष्के नीरे कः कासारः ।
क्षीणे वित्ते कः परिवारः
ज्ञाते तत्त्वे कः संसारः ॥ 10 ॥

10 When youthfulness has passed, where is
lust and its play?
When water is evaporated, where is the lake?
When the wealth is reduced, where is the
retinue?
When the Truth is realised, where is samsara?

मा कुरु धनजन यौवन गर्व
हरति निमेषात्-कालः सर्वम् ।
मायामयमिदम्-अखिलं हित्वा
ब्रह्मपदं त्वं प्रविश विदित्वा ॥ 11 ॥

11 Take no pride in your possession, in the
people at your command, in the youthfulness
that you have.
Time loots away all these in a moment.
Leaving aside all these, after knowing their
illusory nature,
realize the state of Brahman and enter into it.

दिन यामिन्यौ सायं प्रातः
शिशिर वसन्तौ पुनरायातः ।
कालः क्रीडति गच्छत्यायुः
तदपि न मुञ्चत्याशावायुः ॥ 12 ॥

12 Day and night, dawn and dusk, winter and
spring,
again and again come and depart.
Time sports and life ebbs away.
And yet, one leaves not the gusts of desires.

द्वादश मञ्जरिकाभिर शेषः
कथितो वैया करणस्यैषः ।
उपदेशो भूद्-विद्या निपुणैः
श्रीमच्छङ्कर भगवच्छरणैः ॥ 13 ॥

13 This bouquet of twelve verses was
imparted to a grammarian by the all-knowing,
god-like Sri Shankara.

का ते कान्ता धन गत चिन्ता
वातुल किं तव नास्ति नियन्ता ।
त्रिजगति सज्जन सङ्गतिरेका
भवति भवार्णव तरणे नौका ॥ 14 ॥

14 O Distracted One! Why worry about wife,
wealth?
Is there not for you the One who ordains?
In the three worlds it is the association-with-
good-people alone
that can serve as a boat to cross the sea of
change, birth and death.

जटिलो मुण्डी लुञ्जित केशः
काषायान्बर बहुकृत वेषः ।
पश्यन्नपि च न पश्यति मूढः
उदर निमित्तं बहुकृत वेषः ॥ 15 ॥

15 One ascetic with matted locks, one with
shaven head,
one with hairs pulled out one by one, another
parading in his ochre robes
– these are fools who, though seeing, do not
see.
Indeed, these different disguises or apparels
are only for their belly's sake.

अङ्गं गलितं पलितं मुण्डं
दशन विहीनं जातं तुण्डम् ।
वृद्धो याति गृहीत्वा दण्डं
तदपि न मुञ्चत्याशा पिण्डम् ॥ 16 ॥

16 The body has become worn out. The head
has turned grey.
The mouth has become toothless.
The old man moves about leaning on his staff.
Even then he leaves not the bundle of his
desires.

अग्रे वह्निः पृष्ठे भानुः
रात्रौ चुबुक समर्पित जानुः ।
करतल भिक्षस्-तरुतल वासः
तदपि न मुञ्चत्याशा पाशः ॥ 17 ॥

17 In front the fire, at the back the sun, late at
night he sits with his knees held to his chin;
he receives alms in his own scooped palm and
lives under the shelter of some tree,
and yet the noose of desires spares him not!

कुरुते गङ्गा सागर गमनं
व्रत परिपालनम्-अथवा दानम् ।
ज्ञान विहीनः सर्वमतेन
भजति न मुक्तिं जन्म शतेन ॥ 18 ॥

18 One may, in pilgrimage, go to where the
Ganges meets the ocean, called the
Gangasagar,
or observe vows, or distribute gifts away in
charity.
If he is devoid of first-hand-experience-of-
the-Truth,
according to all schools of thought, he gains
no release, even in a hundred lives

सुरमन्दिर तरु मूल निवासः
शय्या भूतलम्-अजिनं वासः ।
सर्व परिग्रह भोगत्यागः
कस्य सुखं न करोति विरागः ॥ 19 ॥

19 Sheltering in temples, under some trees,
sleeping on the naked ground, wearing a
deerskin,
and thus renouncing all idea-of-possession
and thirst-to-enjoy,
to whom will not dispassion bring happiness?

योगरतो वा भोगरतो वा
सङ्गरतो वा सङ्गविहीनः ।
यस्य ब्रह्मणि रमते चित्तं
नन्दति नन्दति नन्दत्येव ॥ 20 ॥

20 Let one revel in Yoga or let him revel in
Bhoga.
Let one seek enjoyment in company or
let him revel in solitude away from the crowd.
He whose mind revels in Brahman,
he enjoys, verily, he alone enjoys.

भगवद्गीता किञ्चिदधीता
गङ्गा जललव कणिका पीता ।
सकृदपि येन मुरारी समर्चा
क्रियते तस्य यमेन न चर्चा ॥ 21 ॥

21 To one who has studied the Bhagavad Gita
even a little,
who has sipped at least a drop of Ganges-
water,
who has worshipped at least one Lord
Muraari,
to him there is no quarrel with Yama, the Lord
of Death.

पुनरपि जननं पुनरपि मरणं
पुनरपि जननी जठरे शयनम् ।
इह संसारे बहु दुस्तारे
कृपया७ पारे पाहि मुरारे ॥ 22 ॥

22 Again birth, again death, and again lying
in mother's womb –
this samsara process is very hard to cross
over.
Save me O destroyer of Mura (Lord Krishna),
through Thy infinite kindness.

रथ्या चर्पट विरचित कन्थः
पुण्यापुण्य विवर्जित पन्थः ।
योगी योग नियोजित चित्तः
रमते बालोन्मत्तवदेव ॥ 23 ॥

23 The Yogin who wears but a godadi (shawl
made of rags),
who walks the path that is beyond merit and
demerit,
whose mind is joined in perfect Yoga with its
goal,
he revels (in God-consciousness) – and lives
thereafter – as a child or as a madman.

कस्त्वं कोऽहं कुत आयातः
का मे जननी को मे तातः ।
इति परिभावय निज संसारं
सर्वं त्यक्त्वा स्वप्न विचारम् ॥ 24 ॥

24 Who are you? Who am I? From where did I come?
Who is my mother? Who is my father?
Thus enquire, leaving aside the entire world-of-experience,
essenceless and a mere dreamland, born of imagination.

त्वयि मयि सर्वत्रैको विष्णुः
व्यर्थं कुप्यसि मय्यसहिष्णुः ।
भव समचित्तः सर्वत्र त्वं
वाञ्छस्यचिराद्-यदि विष्णुत्वम् ॥ 25 ॥

25 In you, in me and in all other places too there is but one All-Pervading Reality.
Being impatient, you are unnecessarily getting angry with me.
If you want to attain soon the Vishnu-status, be equal-minded in all circumstances.

शत्रौ मित्रे पुत्रे बन्धौ
मा कुरु यत्नं विग्रह सन्धौ ।
सर्वस्मिन्नपि पश्यात्मानं
सर्वत्रोत्-सृज भेदाज्ञानम् ॥ 26 ॥

26 Strive not, waste not your energy to fight against or to make friends with your enemy, friend, son or relative.
Seeking the Self everywhere, lift the sense-of-difference born out of 'ignorance'.

कामं क्रोधं लोभं मोहं
त्यक्त्वाऽऽत्मानं पश्यति सोऽहम् ।
आत्मज्ञान विहीना मूढाः
ते पच्यन्ते नरक निगूढाः ॥ 27 ॥

27 Leaving desire, anger, greed and delusion, the seeker sees in the Self 'He Am I'.
They are fools those who have not Self-knowledge,
and they consequently, as a captive in hell, are tortured.

गेयं गीता नाम सहस्रं
ध्येयं श्रीपति रूपम्-अजस्रम् ।
नेयं सज्जन सङ्गो चित्तं
देयं दीनजनाय च वित्तम् ॥ 28 ॥

28 The Bhagavad Gita and Sahasranama are to be chanted;
always the form of the Lord of Lakshmi is to be meditated upon;
the mind is to be led towards the company of the good;
wealth is to be shared with the needy.

सुखतः क्रियते रामाभोगः
पश्चाद्भन्त शरीरे रोगः ।
यद्यपि लोके मरणं शरणं
तदपि न मुञ्चति पापाचरणम् ॥ 29 ॥

29 Very readily one indulges in carnal pleasures;
later on, alas, come diseases of the body.
Even though in the world the ultimate end is death,
even then man leaves not his sinful behaviour.

अर्थमनर्थं भावय नित्यं
नास्ति ततः सुख लेशः सत्यम् ।
पुत्रादपि धनभाजां भीतिः
सर्वत्रैषा विहिता रीतिः ॥ 30 ॥

30 'Wealth is calamitous', thus reflect constantly:
the truth is that there is no happiness at all to be got from it.
To the rich, there is fear even from his own son.
This is the way with wealth everywhere.

प्राणायामं प्रत्याहारं
नित्यानित्य विवेक विचारम् ।
जाप्यसमेत समाधि विधानं
कुर्व वधानं महद्-अवधानम् ॥ 31 ॥

31 The control of all activities,
the sense-withdrawal, the reflection, along with japa
and the practice of reaching the total-inner-silence
– these, perform with care, with great care.

गुरु चरणाम्बुज निर्भरभक्तः
संसाराद्-अचिराद्-भव मुक्तः ।
सेन्दिय मानस नियमादेवं
द्रक्ष्यसि निज हृदयस्थं देवम् ॥ 32 ॥

32 O Devotee of the lotus-feet of the teacher!
May you become liberated soon from the samsara through the discipline of the sense-organs and the mind. You will come to experience the Lord that dwells in your own heart.

मूढः कश्चिन वैयाकरणो
डुकृष्णकरणाध्ययन धुरीणः ।
श्रीमच्छङ्कर भगवच्चिष्यैः
बोधित आसीच्छोदित करणैः ॥ 33 ॥

33 Thus through a deluded grammarian lost in memorizing rules of the grammar, the all knowing Sri Shankara motivated his disciples for enlightenment.