

## **Love Vs. Devotion**

The sincerest experiences always display with all vividness how the path of love gradually merges into the most potent and celebrated of the Yoga paths, called the 'Devotion' Yoga. Love can neither be hidden nor fully expressed. This is the beauty, power, and depth of how true love continues and becomes eternal. It is the journey of turning the mundane sparks of love into pure devotion that makes life fulfilling. This is the highest blessing with which a seeker or traveler can be blessed. True love makes the seeker emotionally intoxicated and intellectually wonderstruck. It helps us repose the 'Self' and quietens us. It takes us towards the ultimate reality—the truth of self-realization. Devotion is the ultimate love, which is immortal, unconditional, and undying. Devotion is consistent love. In the true spirit and richness of the concept of love, everything takes shape accordingly. There are no deadly weapons, other than true love. True love gives birth to a complete, absolute, and unadulterated surrender. God must be an immediate emergency priority, and the sole priority, and all other priorities lead us to nowhere. There is and there can't be anything so wonderful, so awesome, so deep as the devotional form of love, the 'Devotion' that brings all glories. It is the ancient-most love that has the patience to wait forever, which is unconditional. An ideal Yogi or Yogini is in complete union with the Divine. Waking up to the realization of a complete union is the ultimate essence of devotional yoga, an understanding that supreme consciousness is the only thing that exists in reality. With this awareness, the devotee drops any sense of separateness from that all-pervading power, loses all identities defined by the world, and merges as though diving into a vast, infinite ocean of an all-encompassing, supreme, love. It is the path of self-realization rooted in intense love, a state of complete surrender to God. To be more precise, devotion is an intense realization. When all our feelings flow in one direction beyond egotism, it is called devotion. With every breath, we sow the seeds of 'Devotion.' It helps us soar above the world and changes us forever, touching the deepest core of our existence, our soul. 'Devotion' is the love that shines in our eyes as the light of our soul. It opens the door to Eternity, as we begin to realize that everything reflects the Divine. A true devotee, as we may call him or her, is steeped in divinity and yet continues to have an intense longing for the Divine. Devotion is the culmination of wisdom. This differs from the prevalent ideas of diverse spiritual paths. Devotion is the final fruit that one gets hold of at the end of one's spiritual journey. Taking cues from this idea, there is a huge difference between someone who loves God and someone who is a god devotee. A devotee is someone who

is simultaneously a lover and a wise person. In short, when true wisdom is mixed with love, the result is devotion. According to this definition, someone who is not a devotee but just loves God often finds his or her love for God oscillating between the extremes of high and low, according to the conditions of fulfillment of his or her material desires.

A true devotee, out of his or her wisdom, is fully aware of the god he or she loves and his or her devotion and remains undiminished whatever happens in his or her short stay on this planet, known as life. Being completely aware of the impermanence of everything in the material world, whatever happens to him or her, a true devotee can never be disassociated from divinity. This concept of devotion is quite different from the ideas of 'Bhakti Yoga' as we may find in philosophy books, where the paths of Gyan Yoga and Bhakti Yoga are regarded as two distinctively different paths. In the Vedic era, great sages received a glimpse of absolute truth and found that the division between the human and divine was more apparent than real. Reality is an undivided, integral existence, and man in his innermost existence is fundamentally the same as the Absolute. The realization of his being identical to the Absolute gives him freedom from the compelling forces of desire, causing his pangs through cycles of birth and death. Life, in every form, as one can perceive, is full of activism, which contrasts with the quietism of the transcendental nature enunciated in the Vedic scriptures. Here, the concept of devotion has been gradually shaped. Ancient great devotion proponents soon discovered a new tendency of the soul, which frees it from the pressure of desires and allows it to enjoy the movement and expression of life along with illuminated silence.

The genius of these great proponents of devotion lies in discovering the dynamism of spirit, which differs from the dynamism of desires, spiritual felicities, and spiritually harmonic expressions. Life was stifled between the activist urge on one hand and the barren silence on the other. Devotion proponents, who discovered the true movement of the spirit, endowed the spiritual journey with dynamic fullness and variety. With this change in basic principles, new metaphysical concepts, epistemological ideas, and spiritual values have been introduced in philosophy. Thereafter, the concept of the 'Bhakti school of thought', known as Vaishnavism, took its shape in phases. Vaishnavism has the chief merit of recognizing all the tendencies of the soul, deriving satisfaction, and discovering their permanent place in the Absolute, which was possible by emphasizing the concreteness and personal character of the Absolute.

Though the canons of faith in the basic conception, the Vaishnavisms, have no great divergence among themselves, they have not been uniform in their views on the nature of ultimate realization. Some have stressed the integral discipline of knowledge and intellectual intuition of reality in its complete integrity, while others have emphasized the devotional intensity and attachments with its peculiar taste and modulations of feelings or the aesthetic sweetness and intensive attractiveness of the divine while making intense yearning and devotion the most prominent path.

The union with God is a universally accepted idea in the 'Bhakti' movement. Even in the highest point of love, union, and ecstasy, it emphasizes the sense of separation, as exhibiting many shades of love consciousness, otherwise inaccessible. The separation that comes after a union intensifies the yearning through which love makes subtle and deeper expressions, revealing the idealizing spirit of love in which love fancies union and identification and impersonates God in its being. Such burning devotion can only be kindled by the grace of a true spiritual guide. We have been gifted and given an opportunity from above to salvage ourselves, to multiply the joy and celebration of our existence by devoting and dedicating ourselves to absolute divinity, transcending all worldly sorrows, and experiencing total freedom in the simplest way ever possible.