

BHAKTI YOGA BY SRI SWAMI SATCHIDĀNANDA

Bhakti Yoga is really an easy way to practice devotion in these modern times. In past ages it was probably easier to sit and meditate. There was nothing to distract people. But the moment you close your eyes today, a supersonic plane will thunder over your head. Early morning when you sit, here come ten garbage trucks rumbling nearby. You can't do anything. You walk through the streets and there are so many distractions, beautiful things to feed your senses - reading materials and movies just calling to you. Not only is the air polluted nowadays, even the thought forms are polluted. People think in terms of amassing wealth, black marketing, cheating, mugging. In the midst of all this it is very difficult not to be distracted.

If you have an emotional temperament, you like to use your heart. By chanting or repeating God's name, your emotion becomes devotion, and as your love for God develops you come to see and love your Self, which is God and is also your neighbor's Self. So your love for God also becomes love for your neighbor. By this method you develop your ability to love and become more interested in the attributes of God whom you love. You will be interested in reading and studying about the glories of God. That creates awe. And the more you love, the more lovable you become.

The only trouble occurs if we try to limit God, thinking, "This is my God; that is his God." If we think there is only one form or name for God, then we are in trouble. We have to grow universally, without limitations. Of course we love our homes, our countries, our mothers, our religions, but that doesn't mean we should ignore others, or hate them or push them aside. That's limited love. True love of God means universal love.

God created the entire world. All religions say God is the Creator. Each professes that there is only one God. If there is only one God who created the whole world, we are all His children. Suppose a Hindu says, "There is only one God who created all. Then how should I treat a Buddhist, a Catholic, or a Muslim? He is my brother, because my own God, whom I call Father, created him also. So he is the child of my Father."

In a family there may be a child who abuses or scolds the father and even spits in his face. Can one brother say, "That one is not my brother?" Can the father deny him? Even atheists who don't believe in God are still God's children. We are brothers and sisters to them. If we acknowledge one Father for all of us, can we say, "That one is an unbeliever and I hate him. He is not in my family?" Our own Father will not be pleased with that response. As we understand our own religions better, we will have to open our hearts and minds equally to everybody.

The path of devotion is so beautiful. There is charm in life. You can still be separate and enjoy it. With that devotion you can come so close to God you may be frightened. That's good. You shouldn't be afraid of God as some extraneous being, but when the finite faces the unthinkable magnitude of the infinite and is petrified, true humility is born, and the devotee knows the whole world is the Lord's temple.

Bhakti, or devotional Yoga, might seem even better than Jñāna Yoga, the path of wisdom through self-analysis. But devotion without wisdom is not devotion at all. While you are loving God, you should have wisdom, too. Standing apart and loving Him is really beautiful. A devotee always wants that. But the fact remains; the devotee and the Devoted are one and the same. Know who you ultimately are, even while you stay separate, to enjoy more happiness in life.