

## CHAPTER: I

# Bhakti, its origin and development

CHAPTER I.

P R O L O G U E.

BHAKTI, ITS ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT.

India, the celestial land of Āryans, has been a Home of spiritual life, as revealed in the Śrutis, Smrtis, Itihāsa, Purānas and Tantras of the Āryans. Spiritual life - whether in the form of disinterested action ( निष्काम कर्म or यज्ञ ) or devotion ( उपासना or भक्ति ) or spiritual contemplation and concentration ( योग ) or divine wisdom ( ज्ञात्प्रज्ञान or ब्रह्मज्ञान ) - is the true genius of India from times immemorial; and the Vedas and the Upaniṣads are a Mystic lore of the seers of Yore. Unitive life with God or the Saguna Brahman or oneness of the Ātman with the Parmātman or Nirguna Brahman or the Godhead in one form or another (i.e. by means of भक्ति , योग or ज्ञान ) has been the eternal theme of Indian Philosophy and Religion right upto the modern times.

As regards the relation of the Self with the Supreme, of the Jivātman with the Parmātman,

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa says " I am seated in the heart of all and on me as string is strung all " <sup>1</sup>. God is thus the self in self and the substance of the Middle Apparent Universe; and as such HE is the one and only Ultimate Reality behind the Universe. His true nature is best revealed in the Gītā and the Bhāgavata Purāna. It is hence that Śrī Saṅkarācārya, the prominent advocate of the Jñāna mārga, holds that the Gītā is the quintessence of all the Śāstras. <sup>2</sup> While Śrī Vallabhācārya, the prominent advocate of Bhakti-mārga, holds that the Bhāgavata Purāna is also the quintessence of all the Śāstras, including the Vedas, the Upaniṣads, the Brahma Sūtras and

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सर्वस्य चाहं हृदि संनिविष्टो ।

Gita 15:15

1. यदि सर्वमिदं प्रोक्तं सूत्रे मणिगणा इव ।  
Gita 7:7

2. गीता सुगीता कर्तव्या किमन्यैः शास्त्रप्रसूतये । १  
श्रीशंकराचार्यः वराहपुराणे - गीता माहात्म्ये  
अनुसन्धाने शौनके प्रति श्लोक्तिः ।

the Gītā.<sup>3</sup>

De facto, there is a continuous flow of spiritual experience from the Vedas to the Upaniṣads, from the Upaniṣads to the Brahma Sūtras and the Gītā and from the Gītā to the Bhāgavata, as revealed in the glorification of the Bhāgavata.<sup>4</sup>

According to the three-fold stay of fountain source of Divine Love and Divine wisdom (i.e. प्रस्थान त्रय उपनिषद्, ब्रह्मसूत्र and जीता ) God is the subtle and mysterious Power (i.e. पुरुषोत्तम ) that pervades and sustains the Universe in the form of पुरुष and प्रकृति or cit and a-cit and the Unification of the Self

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3. निगमकल्पलशो गलिलं फलं शुक्लमुशवायमृतप्रवसंयुतम् ।  
पिबत भागवतं इसमात्स्यं मुहुर्हो रसिका मुदि भावुका ॥  
Bh 11.3.

4. इदं भागवतं तत्र साक्षाद्देवानां दशनम् ।  
सर्वोपनिषदां सारं ब्रह्मसूत्रस्य दोहनम् ॥  
लागललालोचन - रथानी दिगंजलय ला. १ ला.  
पृ १८८.

with God ( આત્મ-પરમાત્મયોગ ) is the Summum bonum of human life. Bhakti and Jñāna apparently differ in form; but in essence they are one at bottom in God-realisation or Anubhava. As heat and light merge in the Sun, so Divine wisdom and Divine Love merge in Anubhava, as revealed by the medieval Saint of Gujarāt Sri Akhāji<sup>5</sup> and the modern Saint Sri Sāgar. 6

Before proceeding to the Bhakti cult of the Bhāgavata, the theme of this Thesis, I would trace here in brief the origin and development of Bhakti in India from the ancient times to the modern times.

De facto, the origin of Bhakti may be traced to the Vedas; for the element of Bhakti is vividly seen in the utterances of the Sacred Seers of the

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5. ્રોહ પ્રીતિ ગરુડુ ભલી, અખા એ બને કોયે ;  
5. ્રોહ મિલિવે વિચુકુ, પ્રીતિ સમરસ દોયે  
ડૉ. કે એ ઇડીર : " શ્રી અખાજી અપરિચ્છિ સાખીઓ "

6. વિલસતી સુષી સુર ભાવભાની,  
6. ્રોહ ને જ્ઞાનની સંકેતી અગુભલી -  
જ્ઞાનની ભલી સિદ્ધાભલી.  
સમ્બન - " વિલસે સમ્બર, ઇકાંત પદ્મ - ૫ ૪૦૮

East, as revealed by Prof. Valenkar<sup>7</sup>.

Dr. Thoothi remarks that the natural and simple life of action and devotion round the Yajñas is portrayed in the Rgveda. In course of time; in the process of deifying the powers of Nature and wisely adjusting the tenor of life, Secrets of Nature were revealed to man in terms of Rta, Vrata and Dharma, the very essence and embodiment whereof was declared as manifest in the Brahman - the one and only Truth behind the structure of this Universe.<sup>8</sup>

It is described in various ways by the wise.<sup>9</sup> This tendency to philosophise and to seek the meaning of life completes its purpose in the Upanisads.

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7. Prof. Valenkar: " Bhakti Marga in the Rg-Veda".

8. Dr. Thoothi : " The Vaisnavas of Gujarat "-  
P. 33.

9. उक्तं सत् विद्मः सद्गुणं वदन्ति ।  
R.V 1:164 46

Besides the Samhitās, the Brāhmanas, the Āraṇyakas and the Upaniṣads, there were ten - sub-sciences, grouped under the six Vedāṅgas (viz. Phonetics, metre, grammar, etymology, Kalpa and Jyotiṣa) and the four Upvedas (viz. the science of medicine, military science, science of music and mechanics). All the ten sciences have their own importance in the proper organisation and management of life itself, which is conceived as a Yajña ( a sacrifice). of these the Kalpa Sūtras developed into three inter-dependent branches viz. the Śrauta Sūtras, the Grhya Sūtras and the Dharma Sūtras, wherefrom several schools of thought have arisen from time to time, known as Smṛtis and the Darśanas, which deal with the active as well as the contemplative side of human life. <sup>10</sup>

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10. Dr. Thoothi: "The Vaisnavas of Gujarat" -  
P. 35 and 36.

BHAKTI IN THE VEDAS.

Karma, Upāsana and Jñāna are the three main aspects of the Vedic religion; and the Bhakti aspect of the Vedic religion is revealed in terms of hymns, prayers and parables. A systematic discussion of the theory and practice of Bhakti was left out in the Vedic traditions referred to above, because Bhakti is concerned with the very nature of man's being as a whole. The devotional element in the Vedas and the Vedic scriptures has been all the time known, understood, experienced and lived by all, men and women alike. Therefore, Bhakti was only illustrated and mentioned without any doctrinal paraphernalia in the early scriptures<sup>11</sup>. According to the Rgveda, God is realised by the triple means of Karma, Jñāna and Bhakti (i.e. disinterested action, divine love and divine wisdom.)<sup>12</sup>

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11. Dr. Thoothi: "The Vaisnavas of Gujarat" - P. 37.

12. त्वं ह्यग्ने इग्निना विप्रो विप्रेण सन् सता ।  
सखा सख्या सन्निध्यसे ॥ R.V 8 : 43 : 44  
तव क्रतुभिः अभृतत्वभायनम् । R.V 6 : 7 : 4

Dr. Thoothi truly remarks that essentially Bhakti is not the theory or a doctrine; nor is it the statement of a theory of life which must necessarily be stated in terms of a philosophy. Bhakti refers essentially to an attitude - a spiritual attitude. The formation of a theory of the attitude would prove an absurd undertaking, at least in the early history of man. The Vedic Seers declared the glory of prayer and the peace which it yields. Like the flavour of the flower, it reveals the very inmost heart of man's self-surrender in the Yajñas of the Vedic ancestors.<sup>13</sup>

#### THE VEDIC IDEAS ABOUT GOD.

The philosophy behind the Yajñas and the rituals of Yajñas were the heritage of but a few.

In fact, Indian thought - record begins with the Vedas. At first the ideas about God and His nature were poly-theistic. But this poly-theism ( अनेक ईश्वराय ) soon developed into Heno-theism

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13. Dr. Thoothi: " The Vaisnavas of Gujarat " -

( एक महेश्वरवाद )। Heno-theism, in due course, evolved into mono-theism ( एक ईश्वरवाद ) which culminated in Monism ( केवलाद्वैत ) or - Brahmanism ( ब्रह्मवाद - ॐ एक अनन्ताद्वैत ) i.e. the Eternal Infinitude or the Eternal Equator of Infinite Macrocosm. However, the Upaniṣadic ideas could at best make their appeal only to the - intelligent, but fell flat on the average man.

BHAKTI IN THE UPANISADS.

The nature of Bhakti, in the true sense of the term (love and faith) is first seen in the Śvetāśvataropaniṣad which identifies Brahman with God Rudra-Śiva. Śiva is knowable by love and faith; and having known Śiva, one attains eternal peace. <sup>14</sup> It is only, however, by the initiation of a Guru that one realises God. <sup>15</sup> In the - Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, Yājñavalkya says that God is all in all and that God realisation is

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14. विश्वस्यैकं परिवेष्टितारं ज्ञात्वा  
शिवम् शान्तिमत्यन्तमेति । sv u - . 4 : 14

15. यस्य देवे पराभक्तिः यथा देवे लथा गुरोः ।  
तस्यैते कथिता लक्षि प्रकाशन्ते महात्मनः ॥  
sv. u. 6 : 23

the summum bonum of human life. He is सच्चिदानन्द. 16  
The Katha-Upanisad says that man is freed from  
the round of birth and death by resorting to God  
alone. 17 The Taittiriya Upanisad says that God  
is the quintessence of Bliss and by drinking deep  
the flavor of Divine Bliss, Man is maddened with  
joy. 18 Īśa-Upanisad and the Mandaka-upanisad  
advise the aspirant to resort to AUM, the true  
and perfect Name of God; for by constant repetition  
of AUM one attains to beatitude. 19

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16. एषाऽस्य परमा गतिः, एषाऽस्य परमा संपत्, 16  
एषाऽस्य परमो लोकः, एषाऽस्य परम आनन्दः, 16  
एतस्यैव आनन्दस्य अन्यानि भूतानि मात्रामुपजीवन्ति ।  
Br. 4 3. 22

17. अनाद्यन्तं महतः परं ध्रुवं निचाप्य  
तन्मृत्सुमुखात् प्रमुच्यते । K. 4. I : 3 : 15

18. रसो वै सः । रसं ह्येवायं लब्धवानन्दी भवति ।

रसपजं रसोऽप्यस्य परं दृष्ट्वा निवर्तते ।  
Tait. U. 2 : 7.  
पति. 2 : 59.

19. ॐ क्लृप्तो रश्मिः । I. 4. 17.

प्रणवो धनुः शरो ह्यत्मा ब्रह्म लल्लुक्यमुच्यते ।  
अप्रमत्तेन वेधुष्यं शरवत् लन्मयो भवेत् ॥  
M. 4. 2 : 2 : 4

BHAKTI IN THE GĪTĀ AND THE PURĀNAS.

It will be seen from the above that Bhakti is in fact, a genuine growth of the Indian Soil and not a foreign graft from without, as believed and maintained by the Christian missionaries. Dr. Thoothi says - " In the Mahābhārata, the Gītā declares for the first time in the history of Hinduism, that Bhakti is the highest form of the religious attitude. And the Bhakti tradition, supposed to be handed down orally through - generations of saintly men and women, is said to be ultimately recorded in the Purānas as a - popular philosophy of the highest and the best that men and women should live for and strive to serve.<sup>20</sup> The view and way of life of a true aspirant are best recorded in the Gītā. The Gītā has presented to us non-sectarian theism of a most comprehensive type, based on the below-mentioned

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20 Dr. Thoothi: "The Vaisnavas of Gujarat" -  
P. 37.

Upaniṣadic doctrine of Idealism with which it is throughout consistent. Gītā's Bhakti is broad-based on faith in God. Faith develops into love and the sincere and single-minded lover of God is ultimately united to God by virtue of Bhakti Yoga i.e. continuous concentration on God, as revealed in the Gītā.<sup>21</sup> Bhakti in the Gītā is thus the chief means to the end of God-realisation. It is not an end in itself, as believed by Sage Nārada and the Bhāgavata Purāna.

#### THE UPANISADIC IDEALISM.

According to the Upaniṣadic philosophy, existence can be comprehensively and completely divided under two heads viz. the Perceiver ( दृग् or दृष्टा ) and the Perceived ( दृश्य ). The two are not absolutely distinct but are inter-related to each other. The unravelling of the mystery of the relationship between these two ( दृग् दृश्य विवेक ) is in truth the goal of all philosophies. When the Perceiver shakes off his egoism ( अहंभाव - small or great) and

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21. अनन्याश्चिन्तयन्तो मां ये जनाः पर्युपासते ।  
तेषां नित्यामिमुक्षुषानां योगक्षेमं वहाम्यहम् ॥  
Gita : 1 : 22

the Perceived is deprived of its name and form ( इदं भाव ), both of them merge into the Absolute ONE ( अद्विष्टान ) which is neither the subject nor the object of perception. The Absolute is the supreme and only Reality and that is the God of the Upanisads represented by AUM. The capacity to appear as the Many is inherent in the Reality Itself. <sup>22</sup> The only stand-point from which we can really solve and realise the relationship between the subject or Perceiver and the object or the Perceived is when we transcend both. No amount of reasoning can enable us to arrive at such a stage. <sup>23</sup>

BHAKTI IN THE BHĀGAVATA SCHOOL.

From the Sruti Yuga, we shall pass on to the Smṛti Yuga to consider the view and way of life, as preached by the system of Bhāgavatism. There was an age of revolt (600 B.C. to 300 A.D.)

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22. लक्ष्मण बहुश्याम प्रजापतेय ।  
CH. 4. 6 : 2. 3

23. R. Kṛṣṇa Swami Aiyer : " Outlines of Vedānta "  
P. 31.

against the Vedic cult of sacrifice and the -  
Upaniṣadic doctrine of Impersonal Godhead (Nirguṇa  
Brāhman), led by Gautama, Mahāvīra and Kṛṣṇa -  
Vāsudeva in their systems of philosophy known  
as Buddhism, Jainism and Bhāgavatism respectively.  
In the Bhāgavata School, the Upaniṣadic doctrine  
of the Impersonal Godhead was fused with devotional  
worship of a Personal God (Saguṇa Brahman); and  
in course of time a theistic school of Vaiṣṇavism  
was evolved. There was an aversion to interested  
action (Sakāma Karma or Yajña) and stress was  
laid on morality, discounting the metaphysical  
discussions about God.<sup>24</sup> The Chief sources of  
Bhakti or devotion to a Personal God according to  
the Bhāgavata system of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva are  
the Nārāyaṇīya Section of the Mahā-Bhārata, the  
Gītā, Nārada Bhakti Sūtra, Śāṇḍilya Bhakti Sūtra  
and the Bhāgavata Purāṇa. The Bhāgavata creed of  
Bhakti begins with self-surrender, culminates in  
Self Knowledge and ends in Union with God. During  
the critical period of about a thousand years,

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24. Dr. Thoothi: "The Vaisnavas of Gujarat" -  
P. 31.

Brāhmanism came out at least triumphant with the decay of Buddhism, with a new statement of the religion of the Vedas; and Neo-Brāhmanism had to re-interpret Yajña, Jñāna, Karma and Bhakti as seen in the Gītā,<sup>25</sup> and Bhakti was given its due place in the Brāhmanical ideal of life. The best of Buddhist and Jain doctrines was absorbed in the Neo-Brahmanism. By the advocacy of the Bhāgavata School, the masses were emancipated in many ways from the inferiority complex inherited from Brāhmanism; and the Brāhman's claim to superiority over the rest of humanity had to yield to the power of the new consciousness, awakened by Bhāgavatism.

The Bhāgavata School believes that whoever adores

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- याप्रियां पुष्पितां वाचं प्रवदन्त्यदिपश्चितः ।  
25. वेदवादस्ताः पार्थ नान्यदस्तीति वादिनः ॥  
कामात्मानः स्वर्गपरां जन्मकर्मफलप्रदाम् ।  
क्रियाविशेषबहुलां भोगैश्वर्यगतिं प्रति ॥  
भोगैश्वर्यप्रसक्तानां तया उपहृष्टचेतसाम् ।  
व्यवसायात्मिका बुद्धिः समाधौ न विधीयते ॥  
त्रैगुण्यविभक्त्या वेदा निश्चैगुण्यो मवाङ्गि ।  
निर्वन्दो नित्यसत्त्वस्थो निर्योगक्षेमो जात्स्ववान् ॥  
गीता: II . 42-45

God is God's own, irrespective of all considerations of birth, parentage and social status. Only he - realizes God who lives in God i.e. who is a God-man in the true sense of the term. <sup>26</sup>

It is in the Gītā that we find for the first time the full description of the Bhakti-Yoga where Bhakti is said to be the best means to attain to the Karma Yoga i.e. the active life of selfless work without an eye to the fruit thereof, <sup>27</sup> as distinguished from the contemplative life of the Sanyāsin of the Upaniṣads. <sup>28</sup> It should, however, be noted that Bhakti in the Gītā is only a means to the end of Ātma Parmātma Yoga, and not an end in itself, as held by Sage Nārada. <sup>29</sup> Moreover, it does not mention the worship of Vāsudeva in his fourfold form ( चतुर्विह ), as advocated

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26. प्रां हि पार्थ व्यपाञ्चित्य येऽपि स्थुः पापयोनयः ।  
स्त्रियो वैश्यास्तथा शूद्रास्तोऽपि यान्ति परां गतिम् ॥  
Gītā: 9: 32

27. कर्मज्येलाधिकारस्तो मा फलेषु कदाचन ।  
Gītā: 2: 47

28. लोकेऽस्मिन्द्विविधा निष्ठा पुरा प्रोक्ता प्रयाङ्मय ।  
ज्ञानयोगेन सार्व्यानां कर्मयोगेन योगिनाम् ॥ Gītā: 3: 3

29. सा तु कर्मज्ञानयोगोभ्योऽप्यधिकतरा । फलरूपत्वात् ।  
N. B. S. 25 & 26

by the Pañcarātra system which consists of the worship of Vāsudeva in his four-fold form ( चतुर्व्यूह )<sup>30</sup>. It is a characteristic element of the Bhāgavata School and appears to have been evolved shortly after the Gītā was composed, and not later than the Second Century B.C.. Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the Gītā is identified with Brahman ( ब्रह्मन् ) which is both Personal as well as Impersonal,<sup>31</sup> and the Bhāgavata Purāna too believes that Śrī Kṛṣṇa is God Himself.<sup>32</sup> De facto the Bhakti cult of the Gita is a purifying and ennobling factor par excellence in the life of a single-minded, true devotee of God. It is indeed unique and non-sectarian; and hence the Gītā is accepted as one of the three stays of Hinduism ( प्रस्थान त्रयी ). S.C. Roy holds that

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30. डॉ. मुन्दीशम शर्मा. " भक्ति का विकास " पृ. 200

इत्तमः पुरुषस्त्वन्व्यः परमात्थुदाहलः ।  
यो लोकत्रयमाविश्य विभर्त्यत्यय इप्सु ॥

31. यस्मात्क्षरमलीलोऽहमक्षरादपि चोत्तमः ।  
अतोऽस्मि लोके वेदे च प्रथितः पुरुषोत्तमः ॥  
जातिः 15 17 & 18

32. कृष्णास्तु भगवान् स्वयम् ।  
Bh. 1: 3 : 28

the Gītā belongs to the pre-sectarian period of the religious history of India, as it certainly was a product of the pre-systematic period of philosophical thought in ancient India. The stream of Bhakti which took its rise in India from the height of the Vedic hymns flows continuously and uninterruptedly through the stony rocks of the intellectualistic Upaniṣads and reaches its sublimest purity of devotion and profoundest depth of - speculations in the fertile soils of the - "Happy Valley" of the Gītā, standing, as it does at the foot of the lofty ranges of Himalayan speculations of the Upaniṣads with their peaks radiant with milk-white snows of the vedic songs melting at the touch of the sunshine of Divine grace and inspiration. 33

Besides, Dr. R. D. Rānade too holds that inscriptional/records of the second century B.C. historical documents of 4th century B.C. and

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33. S.C. Roy: "Bhagavad-Gītā and Modern Scholarship" - P. 245.

and philological evidence of the 6th century B.C. prove that the Bhāgavatā-Gītā was a pre-Pāṇiniyan composition. 34

All the colophons in the different Adhyāyas of the Bhagavad-Gītā include the expression गीतासु उपनिषत्सु . So according to the colophons, we must understand that the Gītā is the cumulation of the Upanisads, which has been sung.

Finally, in the Gītā-Dhyāna, we have a celebrated verse. 35 Are we then not justified by reading this verse as giving the highest compliment to the Bhagavad-Gītā by calling it उपनिषदाभूत् ?

Gītā's Bhakti reaches its climax in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa wherein Bhakti is believed to be an end in itself, for it is Love for love's sake without any ulterior motive whatsoever, like that

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34.(i) Pāṇini is supposed to have lived in the 6th Century B.C.

(ii) Dr. R.D. Rānade: "The Bhagavad-Gītā as a Philosophy of God-realisation" (page 38-39, 104-105).

35. सर्वेपनिषदो गावो दोक्था गोपालनन्दनः।  
पार्थो वत्सः शुधीर्मोक्षा कुञ्चं गीतामृतं महत् ॥  
गीताध्यानम् - Verse 4

of Gopīs' for Lord Kṛṣṇa, as revealed in the Sequel. It is open to one and all, whether he be a Saint or a Sinner, irrespective of caste or sex.

BHAKTI AS UPĀSANĀ IN THE SMṚTI-YUGA.

As regards the development of Bhakti, it may be said that Bhakti as Upāsana ( उपासना ) i.e. an emotional approach to God existed in the Vedic times. The Muṇḍakopaniṣad exhorts the aspirant to concentrate continuously on AUM so as to be oned with It. In the Gopatha AUM is said to be the true and perfect Name of God, and accordingly, it is laid down therein that constant meditation on AUM or constant Japa ( recitation ) of AUM leads one to beatitude. <sup>36</sup> In view of the triple cosmic function, God as Saguna Brahman is called Brahmā, the creator, Viṣṇu the protector and Śiva, the destroyer of the universe. Godhead, the Nirguna Brahman is beyond the reach of the three

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36. अमृतं वै प्रणवः ।

अमृतनेव तन् मृत्युं लशति ॥

क. ३ ३ : ॥ ( उत्तरभाग प्रपाठ. ३ वंशिका-११ )

Guṇas. In the Brahma Sūtras or Vyās, God is said to be the origin, sustenance and ultimate resort wherein the universe is finally resolved.<sup>37</sup> In the Nyāya Darśana of Gautama and the Vaiśeṣika-Darśana of Kaṇāda, He is called Īśvara and - believed to be the efficient cause of this universe. The Sāṃkhya Darśana of Kapil is - atheistic but the Yoga Darśana of Patañjali believes in Īśvara as the Puruṣa Viśeṣa i.e. Puruṣa par excellence, as He is untouched by the Act-force and its consequences and untainted by egoism or ne-science.<sup>38</sup> In the Pūrva Mīmāṃsā of Jaimini, Karman is believed to be the omnipotent force of this universe. The Uttara Mīmāṃsā or Vedānta regards Īśvara as Saguna Brahman. The Gītā speaks of God as Puruṣottama or Parmātmā or Vāsudeva who is both Personal and Impersonal,

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सन्माद्यस्य यतः । B.S. 1:1:2

37. शास्त्रयोनित्वात् । B.S. 1:1:3

38. क्लेशकर्मनिपाकाशयैरपराभृष्टः पुरुषविशेष . ईश्वरः ।  
पुरुषविशेष - (सन्माधिपाद) - पतञ्जलि योगसूत्र 1:24

while the Bhāgavata Purāṇa calls Him Bhagavān or Śrī Kṛṣṇa, above the trinity of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheśa. It will thus be seen that God was originally named as AUM in the Vedic scriptures but with the development of Bhakti, in course of time, He is spoken of in various ways in the Hindu scriptures, such as Rāma, Kṛṣṇa or Śiva.

#### BHAKTI IN THE ĀCĀRYA-YUGA.

From the Smṛti Yuga, we shall now pass on to the Ācārya-Yuga of Śrī Śaṅkara, Śrī Rāmānuja, Śrī Nimbārka, Śrī Madhva, Śrī Vallabha and Śrī Caitanya to review, in brief, the Bhakti in those times. In about 800 A.D. the great -- philosopher Śaṅkara (788-820 A.D.) initiated a movement which may be called New Hinduism. In the light of the Upaniṣads, the Gītā and the Vedānta Sūtras (i.e. प्रस्थान ब्रह्मसूत्र ), he tried to re-state, reform and reorganise the old Brahmanical traditions. He was, however, indifferent regarding the question of the highest Deity that man should worship, whether it be Śiva, Viṣṇu,

Sūrya, Ganapati or Śakti ( पञ्चदेवोपासना );  
for worship of this sort was only a means to the  
end of self-realisation, and not an end in itself.

South India was in fact, the original home of  
the cult of Bhakti, whether of Śiva or of Viṣṇu,  
as a mass religion, as is seen from the lives of  
the Southern Śaiva Saints and the Vaiṣṇava Alwārs.<sup>39</sup>  
In South India Śaivism or Vaiṣṇavism is traceable  
from very early times and its influence grew by  
its conflict with Buddhism and Jainism. The cult  
of Love was quite popular in South India even  
during the 6th and the 7th centuries. The Śaiva  
Saints sing of the impermanence of things worldly,  
condemn the ways of the wordly-minded and exhort  
all to wake up to a spiritual life. The Alwārs  
ignore the distinction of caste and sex, of --  
knowledge and ignorance and attach importance  
only to love of God as the means of salvation.  
They advocate the path of self-surrender or  
Prapatti, either like that of the baby-cat  
( माज्जरि शिशुन्याय ) or that of the baby-monkey

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39. उत्पन्ना शिविते । Bh M. 1 : 48

( मूर्खरक्षित्युन्थाय ) which is open to all and which is characterised by no restriction whatsoever. Besides, instead of the worship of the five-fold God ( पंच देवोपासना ) advocated by Śrī Śaṅkara, the Alwārs prescribed the worship of only one God i.e. monotheism. The age of Alwārs was followed by the age of Ācāryas the chief of whom was Śrī Rāmānuja ( 2027-1137 A.D.). He upheld the Alwār doctrines, emphasised the Personal aspect of God and founded Śrī Vaiṣṇavism, wherein he advocated Bhakti with Prapatti i.e. love and devotion to God Viṣṇu. He put the Bhakti cult on a secure philosophical basis in his doctrine of Viśiṣṭādvaita (i.e. Qualified Monism) of the triune form of Cit, acit and Hari. In his view the end of life is not merger in the Absolute but continued blissful existence in union with God. Śrī Nimbārka advocated the doctrine of Mono-dualism ( द्वैताद्वैत ) and emphasised the worship of Rādhākṛṣṇa. Śrī Madhva (1199-1277 A.D.) was a Dualist out and out ( द्वैतादी ); for what he insists on is the existence of five fundamental dualisms. He advocated the worship of the one God Viṣṇu with the attitude of servitude ( दासोऽहम् ).

Sri Vallabha (1473-1533 A.D.) explains the phenomena of the Universe by involutions and evolutions of Brahman i.e. Sat, Cit and Ānanda in his doctrine of Pure Monism ( शुद्धाद्वैत ). According to him Mokṣa is possible only by devotion and grace, and not by Jñāna and Karma as expressed by M.N. Dwivedī. 40

Sri Caitanya (1486-1533 A.D.) insists upon the right attitude of mind - whether of a lover of peace ( शान्त ) or a servant ( दास्य ) or a friend ( सख्य ) or a beloved ( वान्ता or मधुर ) for union with God. Besides the above mental attitude, he attaches the greatest importance to the continual chanting of the Lord's Name and holds that only Madhura Rati develops into Mahā Bhāva, the climax of Divine Love. In fact salvation lies in turning away from the world of sense and the false self to the inner true self and thence to God. In his doctrine of Acintya Bhed-  
bhāva he warns that wealth and sex are the two rocks whereon many souls are ship-wrecked and

hence Vaisnavas must scrupulously guard themselves against these two pit-falls.

From the age of Ācāryas, we shall now pass on to the age of Saints - South, North, West and East.

BHAKTI IN THE NĀTH YUGA AND SANTA YUGA.

Gorakha, the best exponent of Nāth-ism flourished in the 9th and the 10th centuries, when Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism were competing for supremacy. The doctrine of Gorakha or Nāthism is, in brief, as follows :-

The goal of human life is to eternalise real self or Reality at the root of the Universe, by transcending the lower self, which consists of the vital essence - the sexual power, the vital power and the mind. The first two can be controlled by mind-control and the mind can be controlled through intellectual analytical perception (i.e. Jñāna) or through the constant recitation (ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ) of a Guru Mantra (i.e. saving word of God given by a Guru ). When we rise above the pairs of opposites and the Tripūtīs of experience, we enjoy --

Sahaja Samādhi, the goal of human life. Nathism is thus a kind of Rāja Yoga of the Upanisads open to all classes, requiring a mental and moral detachment from the "Middle Apparent." <sup>41</sup> The influence of Gorakha's Ātma Yoga on later Santism has been tremendous; for his vocabulary, ideology, and delineation are fully reflected in the writings of Saints like Jñānadeva, Rāmānand, Kabīr, Nānaka and Dādu. Both the Nāthas and the Saints were reformers; but as the Saints had more to do with the laymen, they added theism and devotionism in their precepts. Besides, Hinduism was influenced by Islam from 1200 A.D. to 1757 A.D. and so - Santism came to the front to stem the tide of Islam, as will be seen from the cult of Bhakti of the Saints - South, North, West (i.e. Mahārāshṭra and Gujarāt) and East. It is true that the Saints of the South, the North, the West and the East speak different languages, but the thoughts expressed by them are essentially the same; for

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41. Dr. Mohan Singh: "Gorakha and Medieval -  
Mysticism".

God is their religion in one form or another and the attainment of the egoless state (सगुण समाधि ) is the burden of their songs.

SAINTS OF NORTH INDIA -

RĀMĀNANDA, KABĪR, NĀNAKA AND OTHERS.

De facto, it was Saint Rāmānanda who broke down the conservatism of Rāmanuja and founded a new cult of his own for spiritual perfection. Thus from the South the cult of Bhakti flowed to the North through Rāmānanda. He did away with caste-distinction and ceremonials and preached in vernacular. His Nirguna Bhakti cult was popularised and spread in all directions by his twelve disciples, the chief of whom was Kabīr. 42

K A B Ī R.

After Rāmānanda, Saint Kabīr was the central personality in the religious history of medieval

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42. भक्ति शक्ति उपजी, ल्याये शमानंद ।  
प्रगट करी कबीरने, शाल दीप नवरवंड ।

The Cultural Heritage of  
India - Vol: II . P. 250.

India. He spoke the language of the people - plain, simple and direct and expressed the simple thoughts of a simple heart in the common language of the people. He was, therefore, revered alike by the Hindus and Muslims. He was the Guru of the middle ages, who revived the dying spirit of True Religion.<sup>43</sup> He preached that God is all in all and that man in his perfect form is God. Being an introvert, he firmly struck at the external paraphernalia of religious life whether in Hinduism or Islam and exhorted all to realise their Godhood by the mystic way of Sūrata Śabda Yoga leading to Sahaja Samādhi or Sahajāvasthā as preached in Nāthism.

NĀNAKA, DĀDU, DAYĀL, TULSĪDĀS

AND SŪRDĀSA.

Nānaka (1469-1538 A.D.) the founder of Sikhism and Dādu Dayāl (1544-1603 A.D.), the founder of Dādu Pantha or Brahma Sampradāya were the great followers of Kabīr's ideals. They were the staunch supporters of True Religion and Hindu-Muslim Unity

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43. कबीर ज्ञानी शरयी गृहीं वृत्तान्तपुरे धर्मनी  
नाभाजी "भक्तमाल".

and held that man must purify him of all sense of ego and surrender his life entirely to God for self-perfection. <sup>44</sup> They believe in the oneness of all life and the Mystic way of Sūrata Śabda Yoga for Sahaja Samādhi. Tulsīdāsa and Sūrādāsa were the advocates of Saguna Bhakti Cult, Tulsīdāsa emphasised the devotion of Rāma; while Sūrādāsa of Kṛṣṇa.

SAINTS OF WEST INDIA -  
MAHĀRĀSHTRA AND GUJARĀT.

The note worthy Saints of Mahārāshtra are Jñānādeva (1276-1297), Nānādeva (1271-1351), Ekanātha (1534-1598), Tukārāma (1610-1651) and Rāmdāsa (17th Century). They were the followers of the Vārakārī Sampradāya and are saints par excellence. <sup>45</sup> While North Indian Mysticism was strongly protestant and democratic, West India was conservative and

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44. Dr. R. D. Rāṇaḍe: "Mysticism in Mahārāshtra"  
Page 42.

44. આપણે જે દેવોને ભજવે,  
તેઓને ભજવે તેઓને ભજવે,  
જેઓને ભજવે તેઓને ભજવે  
દેવો તેઓને ભજવે  
— દેવો

sought to abolish caste exclusiveness, arrogance and superiority rather than abolishing caste altogether. The burden of their teaching is that we have not only to know God but also to be, to feel and to expand pari passu. Bhakti is a life-process, and not a mere intellectual creed. They preached Parā Bhakti based on Divine Wisdom. Tukārām's Abhaᅅgas are most popular even today all over Mahārāᅅtra.

The noteworthy saints of Gujarāt are Narasinh Mehtā, Mīrābāī, Akhājī, Pritama, Chotama, Dhīro, Śrī Nṛsinhācārya and Śrī Sāgar. All of them preach love-devotion to God based on Divine Wisdom and constant recitation of God's Name - whether in the form of Rāma, Kṛṣṇa or Guru Govinda.

THE TWO CURRENTS OF BHAKTI -

SAGUNA AND NIRGUNA.

It will be evident from the above that the schools of Saints popularised the Bhakti cult among the classes and the masses and raised the prestige of the Upaniᅅadic Mysticism. The Nirguna Bhakti cult popularised by Swāmī Rāmānanda and his twelve disciples, was advocated and supported by

the noteworthy saints of North India (except Tulsīdās and Sūrdās), Mahārāṣṭra and Gujarāt; while the Saguna Bhakti cult, inaugurated by the Ācāryas like Rāmānuja, Nimbārka, Madhva, Vallabha and Sri Caitanya, was advocated and supported by the Northern saints like Tulsīdāsa and Sūrdāsa and to a certain extent by Tukārāma, Nāmdēva, Eknātha and Rāmdāsa of Mahārāṣṭra and by Narsinh Mehtā, Mirānbāi and Pritāma of Gujarāt. The aspirants of the Nirguna Bhakti cult seek to be oned with the Godhead ( निर्गुण ब्रह्मण ) by means of Parā-Bhakti while the aspirants of the Saguna Bhakti cult seek unitive life with God ( सगुण ब्रह्मण ) by means of love-devotion ( नवधा भक्ति and प्रेमलक्षणा भक्ति ).

Genuine Bhakti is adoration of the Divine through self-surrender. Life of a Bhakta is truly a God-centred life. The spirit within him craves for abiding satisfaction which only the Eternal Infinite or the Brahman can give. God is the only refuge for a true devotee, who looks to no one else for relief in distress and in times of troubles and tribulations. The Bhakta loves all, irrespective of colour, creed, caste or country, for the sake of the Divine Beloved, whom he sees animating all. He sees ONE in all and all in ONE. De facto the -

distinction between God and Godhead ( शुद्ध and निर्गुण ब्रह्म ) is a distinction without a difference like the distinction between water and ice. God is all and God-realisation, in one form or another, is the Summum bonum of human life.

A complete picture of the Bhakti cult is thus unfolded before our mind's eye from the vedic times to the medieval period. Like the advent of Muslims, who ruled India from the 13th to the 18th centuries, the advent of Christianity too, with its missionary zeal in the period of British Rule, has greatly stimulated modern religion and life in the 19th and the 20th centuries. Broadly speaking, the saivas believe in Siva and the Vaisanavas believe in one of the Avatārs of Viṣṇu ( as Rāma or Kṛṣṇa ) as God in the same sense as the Christians believe in Christ as the object of devotion and reverence and praise, as the Personal God. Through Him and His service alone salvation can be secured.

Before summing up the main theme of the origin and development of Bhakti, it would be

relevant to our purpose to make a passing reference here to other phases of Bhakti (besides Saivism and Vaiṣṇavism) evolved in 'Sūfism', 'Tāntrism', 'Lingāyatism' and 'the Santa-Mata' or 'Rādhā Swāmī Pantha' which inculcate the God-like worship of the Guru.

Sūfism is a Mystic cult of Islam and the goal of the Sūfi is the realisation of the unity of Jīva with Brahman through self-annihilation (  $\text{فناء}$  ). Dr. Tripāthī remarks that Sūfis recognise four stages for self-realisation -

- (1) Sārīat,
- (2) Tarīkat,
- (3) Hakikat, and
- (4) Marīfat.

According to Sūfism, Love is the fundamental basis as well as the sustaining power of the world. Not only that, Brahman is all love and as such, it can be realised only through self-annihilation (  $\text{فناء}$  ) which is possible only through concentrated love, wherein love itself undergoes expansion and sublimation and is thus realised in every atom of the world - in every object of existence. This

is the "Ahaṁ Brahmāsmi" of Vedānta.<sup>46</sup> As in Vedānta, Sūfism also accepts the unity of Jīva and Brahman as between the spark and the fire or the waves and the sea. The lover loses the very idea of the personal self in Love (Brahman) and is ultimately merged in love (Brahman) itself. Sūfism looks upon God as the Beloved and the aspirant thinks himself to be the ardent lover of the Beloved. "Sanam" is the term used for the Beloved in Persian literature and this term is freely used by Sūfī Poets in connection with Brahman - the ideal of Realisation. As the language of Sūfism is much akin to that used by mundane lovers and beloveds - the term 'Iske Mizājī' is used for ordinary or earthly love and "Iske Hakikī" for celestial love.

Sufism is thus akin to Saguna Bhakti in its early stage and to Nirguna Bhakti or Jñāna Mārga in the last stage of unification with God.

Like Sūfism, Tāntrism too had made a great influence on Indian philosophy and religion.

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46. Dr. Y.J. Tripathi : Thesis on "Kevalādvaita in Gujarati Poetry" - P. 193-194.

During the Tāntric age i.e. from 700-1200 A.D. thousands of Tantras were written by the Buddhists and the Hindus. The Tantra prescribes a Sādhanā of its own for a happy life on earth, Heaven hereafter and at length Mokṣa or liberation. According to Mahāyāna Buddhism, the real Noumenon is only "Śūnya", corresponding to the Upaniṣadic Brahman; and the triune form of " God, World and Souls " is only the Revelation or condensation of the "Śūnya". The Śūnya can be conceived and realised by the aspirant, if the mind is properly attuned to the highest wave-length of the "Śūnya", (i.e. 2,50,000 according to Dr. B. Bhaṭṭācārya), by constant meditation. It advocates a life of selfless work for others and meditation of Śūnya with full trust and faith in the Supreme Energy or Divinity or Śūnya behind the world structure.

The Hindu Tāntric view believes in the dual aspects of the one Brahman. It holds that Śiva is the unchanging consciousness and Sakti, its changing power appearing as mind and matter. The two aspects of Śiva-Śakti are intimately connected with each other.

How the one can be both is a Mystery. In fact, the world is the self whether as 'I' ( अहम् ) or as 'This' ( इदम् ) and the aim of the Sādhanā should, therefore, be to attain pure and perfect Cit or consciousness ( सच्चिदानन्द ). Perfect experience is Experience of the whole - that is of consciousness as "Being" ( स्व-स्वरूप ) and consciousness as Power to become ( विश्व-स्वरूप ).

Tantri-ism is thus akin to Jñāna Mārga or Nirguṇa Bhakti cult wherein the Self is identified with the Self-in-self or the Self of the Universe ( स्व-स्वरूप and विश्व-स्वरूप ).

Besides Saivism and Vaiṣṇavism, there was evolved in the Karnāṭak the Lingāyata cult or Vīra Saivism by Basava. It is called Lingāyata, because it is a religion with a Siva-līṅga as its guiding and central theme. It has a path, practice and philosophy all its own. In it Guru, Līṅga, and Jangama (i.e. a moving ascetic) command the same reverence as "Hari, Guru and Santa" in other religions. The ascotic travels from place to place preaching religion and morality to all. The Lingayat religion recommends the five-fold mode

of living (i.e. लिंगाचार , शयनाचार , शिवान्धार ,  
श्रुत्याचार and गुणाचार ) and the eight-fold  
path of God-realisation (i.e. गुरु , लिंग ,  
जंगम , पादोदक , प्रसाद , भस्म , रुद्राक्ष and  
मंत्र ):

The tradition is that the Sect was founded  
by five ascetics who are held to have sprung from  
the five heads of Siva incarnation age after age  
and is said to have been the reviver of the faith.  
In every Lingāyata village, there is a monastery,  
and each is affiliated to one of the five original  
monasteries.

Every Lingāyata must belong to a monastery  
and must have a Guru; he need not visit a temple  
at all. Both morality and Bhakti are very prominent  
in Lingāyata literature. Each Lingāyata worships  
his own Jangama Guru and the Linga is to the  
devotee what the sacred thread is to the twice-born  
Hindu.<sup>47</sup>

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47. Edited by J.N. Farquhar and H.D. Griswold;  
"The Religious Quest of India" - P. 260-261.

In addition to Saivism, Vaisnavism, Lingāyatism, there has been evolved in modern times the Santa-Mata or the Rādhās-wānī Pantha, wherein there is an unparalleled, wonderful and sincere devotion to Guru, who is looked upon as God incarnate for the disciple, as was seen in the Medieval Nirguna Bhakti cult of Kabīr, Akhājī and others. The teachings of the Santa-Mata are based on three essential beliefs viz. (a) Belief in the existence of God; (b) Belief in the oneness of the essence of God and the spirit entity in man; and (c) Belief in the continuity of life after death. It lays great stress on God-like Guru-Bhakti and on self-discipline. The triple Mystic way of the Santa-Mata for God-realisation consists of (1) Smarana, (ii) Dhyāna and (iii) Bhajana, the Persian names whereof are "Zikr, Fikr and Sūrata Sabda Yoga." 48

To conclude, no particular part of India can claim monopoly in spiritual speculation and revelation. Owing to the infinite diversity of

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48. Dr. K.A. Thakkar: "Mysticism in Gujarat" -

individuals, there is no one fixed method of approach to God for all. Each has his path which, if sincerely followed, will procure for him the fruit of his Sādhanā. In order that one may have a complete and comprehensive view of the Bhakti cult of the Bhāgavata, I have also given in the Appendix a brief outline of the various trends of Bhakti abroad, especially as seen in the prevailing great religions of the world.

The distinctive and novel features of each type of Bhakti will be discussed in detail in the sequel.

To sum up, I have given here a bird's eye-view of the origin and development of Bhakti in India right from the Vedic times to modern times, comparing and contrasting it with Sūfism and Tāntrism which have come to stay here in order that we may comprehend the Bhakti cult of the Bhāgavata in all its varied aspects.