

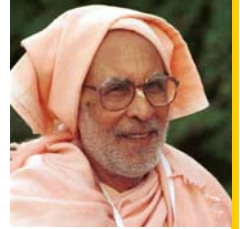


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Guided and Inspired by
Srila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Gosvami Maharaja

The Characteristics of Kevala Bhakti

Excerpts from commentary on Srimad Bhagavad Gita Verse 9.02
by Srila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Gosvami Maharaja

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Chant

Hare Krishna
Hare Krishna
Krishna Krishna
Hare Hare
Hare Rama Hare Rama
Rama, Rama Hare Hare

And Be Happy.

*raja-vidya raja-guhyam
pavitram idam uttamam
pratyaksavagamam dharmyam
susukham kartum avyayam*

This *jnana* is the king of all knowledge and the monarch of all confidential subjects. It is extremely pure and, since it directly reveals the nature of the self, it is the perfection of dharma. It is joyfully performed, bestowing transcendental and imperishable results. (*Bhagavat Gita* 9.02)

This Ninth Chapter describes *kevala-bhakti* (exclusive devotion), which is *nirguna* (transcendental). This *jnana* in the form of *kevala-bhakti* is the crest-jewel of all *vidya* (knowledge). It is supremely confidential, most purifying and experienced by direct perception. It bestows the fruits of all other *dharmika* (pious or religious) processes, is joyfully performed and bestows imperishable results.

Here, the word *vidya* means worship (*upasana*), hence *kevala-bhakti* is the best of all *vidyas*. For this reason, it is called *raja-vidya* and, because it is the most confidential among all confidential subjects, it is called *raja-guhya*.

Pavitram idam uttamam: Sins are not completely destroyed by performing atonements such as *dana* (charity), *yajna* (offering oblations) and *tapas* (candrayana-vrata etc.). Furthermore, even by once removing the results of sins through such processes as *tapasya* and *brahmacarya*, there is the possibility that the tendency to sin will again sprout. However, according to scriptures such as *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, sins are completely destroyed by the performance of exclusive devotion. This is true to such an extent that all sins are destroyed at the root simply by the con-

comitant results of exclusive devotion. In other words, even the very desire to perform sin is destroyed. This is not possible by processes other than *bhakti*, such as *prayascitta* (atonement), *brahmacarya* (celibate) and *tapasya* (austerities).

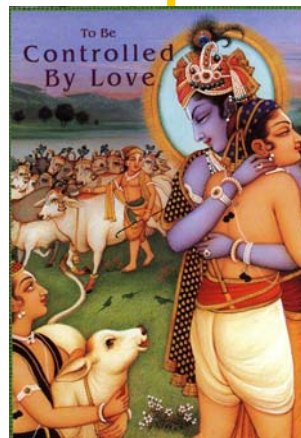
In *Srimad-Bhagavatam* (6.1.15) this is confirmed: *kecit kevalaya bhaktya vasudeva-parayanah*. "Only by *kevala-bhakti* (exclusive devotion) can all one's sins be eradicated at the root." And also in 6.1.16, *na tatha hy aghavan rajan puyeta tapa-adibhih*. "All one's sins can be removed only by service to Sri

Krishna's pure representative and not by any other process."

In *Sri Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu*, the first characteristic of *kevala-bhakti* is described as *klesaghni*. *Klesaghni* means that this *bhakti* completely destroys all sin (*papa*), the seed of sin (*papa-bija*), ignorance (*avidya*), fructified reaction (*prarabdha-karma*) and unfructified reaction (*aparabdha-karma*).

Kevala-bhakti not only purifies the gross and subtle designations of the *jiva* (living entity), but it also purifies and satisfies the *atma* (soul): *yayatma suprasidati* (*Srimad-Bhagavatam* 1.2.6). According to the verse: *atmaramas ca munayah* (*Srimad-Bhagavatam* 1.7.10), *bhakti's* attraction is the bliss one derives from serving Krishna, by which even those who are *atmarama* (satisfied within the self) and *apta-kama* (who have no desires left to fulfil) are attracted and give up such natures.

Pratyaksa anubhava-svarupa: means that which can be perceived or realised directly.



The Characteristics of Kevala Bhakti

Srimad-Bhagavatam (11.2.42) states:

*bhaktih paresanubhavo viraktir
anyatra caisa trika eka-kalah
prapadyamanasya yathaSnatah syus
tustih pustih ksud-apayo 'nu-ghasam*

A person who is absorbed in eating achieves happiness from tasting every mouthful of food, nourishment as his stomach is filled and relief as his hunger is removed. These three results come to him simultaneously. In the same way, a person who is engaged in the worship of Sri Hari simultaneously attains *prema*, realisation of *Bhagavan* and detachment from sense objects or sense enjoyment.

A person attains realisation of *Bhagavan* in proportion to the intensity of his *bhajana* (spiritual practices).

Brahma-sutra also states: *prakasas ca karmany abhyasat*. "Bhakti is so powerful that she bestows an experience of herself even in the initial stages."

Sarva-dharma-phala-prada: By performing *bhakti* one receives the complete result of all types of *dharma* (religious practices) and also attains *bhagavat-prema*, which is the objective established in the Vedas, Upanisads and other *Srutis*. According to the verse: *sarva-dharman parityajya mam ekam saranam vraja* (*Sri Bhagavad Gita* 18.66), having given up all types of *dharma*, such as *varnasrama-dharma*, *karma*, *jnana*, *yoga* and all other paths that are followed for the purpose of satisfying the body and mind, and taking shelter of exclusive devotion by performing *bhajana* to Sri Krishna, one can easily and naturally attain the result of all the previously mentioned processes. As it is said in *Srimad-Bhagavatam* (1.2.13): *samsiddhir hari-tosanam*

The highest perfection in life is to please Sri Hari." And (11.20.33):

*sarvam mad-bhakti-yogena
mad-bhakto labhate 'njasa*

"By pure devotional service My devotee can very easily achieve such benedictions as *svarga* (heavenly planets), liberation or My supreme abode."

Although the performance of different *dharmika* processes does not exist in the practice of *kevala-bhakti*, the real *dharma* of the *jiva*, which is to serve guru and so forth, remains present within him. The *Sruti* also confirms this opinion in mantras such as: *acaryavan puruso veda*. *Devarsi Narada* also establishes this in *Srimad-Bhagavatam* (4.31.14):

*yatha taror mula-niseceanena
trpyanti tat-skandha-bhujopaSakhah
pranopaharac ca yathendriyanam
tathaiva sarvarhanam acyutejya*

Just as by properly watering the root of a tree, its trunk, branches, twigs, leaves and flowers are nourished, and just as by eating food the prana (life air) is satisfied and all the senses nourished, in the same way only by worshipping Sri Bhagavan is everyone worshipped.

Sukha-sadhya (*su-sukham*): The *sadhana* (practice) of exclusive devotion involves no difficulty as the paths of *jnana*, *yoga* and so on do; instead one experiences happiness. It is therefore called *sukha-sadhya*, meaning that the final result, *sadhya*, is joyfully performed.

Bhakti can be performed simply by engaging the senses such as the tongue and ear in chanting the sweet holy names of Krishna and by hearing about His *lila* (pastimes), or merely by using *tulasi* leaves and a little water. *Prahlada Maharaja* also gave this instruction to the sons of the demons: *na hy acyutam prinayato bahv-ayasah*. "To please *Bhagavan* Sri Krishna, who is *Acyuta* (infallible), one does not have to work laboriously," (*Srimad-Bhagavatam* 7.6.19).

Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura says, "Although one has to endure great troubles to maintain the family and make them happy, one need not undergo such trouble to please Sri Hari. Because He is ever situated within the heart of everyone as *Antaryami*, one need not undergo any trouble searching for Him. One can please Him at all times, in all circumstances and in all respects, even by performing *manasa-seva* (service by the mind) or by following any one of the processes of *bhakti* such as *sravana* (listening) and *kirtana* (singing), or just by desiring to perform service. Thus, there is no pain involved in performing *bhakti*." One experiences joy even while performing *bhakti* in the stage of practice.

*tam sukharadhyam rjubhir
ananya-saranair nrbhih
Srimad-Bhagavatam* 3.19.36

Sri Krishna is easily pleased by a person who has completely surrendered and who is simple-hearted.

It is also said in *Gautamiya-tantra*:

*tulasi-dala-matrena
jalasya culukena va
vikrinite svam atmana
bhaktebhyo bhakta-vatsalah*

Sri Bhagavan (the Supreme Lord), who is *bhakta-vatsala* (affectionate to His devotees), completely sells Himself to those devotees who, with love and devotion, offer Him a *tulasi* leaf and a palmful of water.

Aksaya-phala-prada (*avyayam*): The processes of *karma*, *jnana* and *yoga* are impermanent. After yielding the goal, such processes become futile and are then abandoned. However, *bhakti* exists in the stages of both *sadhana* (practice) and *siddha* (perfection), because *bhakti* herself is not only the *sadhana* but is also the *sadhya* (goal). Even in the liberated stage *bhakti* is not lost, but rather it is performed purely and perfectly. Therefore, it is permanent and unchanging.

Who is Actually Renounced?

Long ago a great *vaisnava* sage famous by the name of Ramanujacarya lived at Sri Rangam (South India). He was very expert in giving practical instructions to his disciples. One of his disciples was Dhanurdasa, who was living as a house holder, but was a marvelous example of detachment (from worldly things), as per the teachings of Srimad Bhagavad Gita.

Once Sri Ramanujacarya asked one of his disciples go to the place where the *sannyasis* (renunciants) bathed, and interchange their clothes. Thus the clothes of *sannyasis*, who were all renowned scholars and renunciants were interchanged. One swami was wearing the cloth of another, and so an argument ensued. As one after another finished his bath and went to find his clothes, the argument grew more heated. **In this way, these great scholars of renunciation were seen to be attached to some simple pieces of cloth!**

Then Sri Ramanuja sent his disciple to the home of Dhanurdasa, after first arranging for Dhanurdasa to serve in the temple, thus making sure that he would not be at home. The disciple went to the home of Dhanurdasa in the evening, and, following Ramanuja's orders began stealing the jewelry from the body of Dhanurdasa's wife, who was in deep sleep. After stripping the ornaments from one side of her body, the disciple was about to go, when suddenly she turned over in her sleep. The disciple was shocked and left through the window immediately. Sri Ramanuja had instructed him to wait outside the window for the return of Dhanurdasa, to record his reaction.

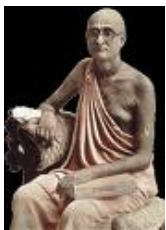
After some time, Dhanurdasa returned home. At that time, Dhanurdasa wife told that poor saints at temple must be desperately in need of our help. One of the devotees from the temple snuck in through

the window and began taking the jewelry from my body. I allowed him to take my jewelry . **But when I turned over, so that he could take the ornaments from the other side of my body as well, he fled in fear!" Dhanurdasa replied,"Oh! We have missed a good chance of service."**

From his hiding place Ramanuja's disciple was astonished at the humility and surrender of Dhanurdasa and his chaste wife. When the disciple returned to his guru, he reported everything that had taken place. Ramanuja then explained him the meaning of both these events . **The sannyasis were so attached to some ragged bits of cloth that they were fighting over them, whereas Dhanurdasa and his wife, although house holders, were so free from attachment to material things that they were ready to have their jewels stolen by the devotees, if they were needed for the service of the Lord!**

The genuine detachment and renunciation is advocated at many places by Lord Krishna in *Bhagavad Gita* (*sangoasatva karmani - 2.47, sangam tyakatvatma shudyae-5.11, anashrita karmaphala karya karma karoti yah -6.1*). It is not necessary that one who accepts the renounced order is really renounced and one who is living as a house holder is always attached. External appearance can be changed very easily but it is not worthy, until one changes ones heart as well. The long matted hair, shaved heads, plucked hair, or orange cloths will just become the way of livelihood (*Jatilo mundi kunchit kesha, kashambar Bahukrita Vesha - Bhaja Govindam*), if one is not detached from within. The sure shot way of getting detached is by developing attachment for service unto the lotus feet of Lord Krishna (*yoginam api sarvaesham mad gatena antaratma - 6.47*).

Submitted by Visvambhara Das



Question: With what attitude should we chant the name of Sri Bhagavan?

Answer: *Suddha bhaktas* (pure devotees) never call out to Bhagavan to destroy their own sin, to accumulate piety or attain the heavenly planets, or to dispel a famine, epidemic, disturbance of the peace, revolution or disease. Nor do they call out to Him to attain objects for their enjoyment, such as wealth and a kingdom. The very names of Sri Bhagavan directly indicate the Supreme Controller (Paramesvara) Himself. If we attempt to engage that Supreme Lord in accomplishing any act for our personal sense enjoyment, it means that we are trying to appoint Him, our most worshipful object, as our servant. This is a great offence.

Therefore, unless we call out to Bhagavan for the sake of serving Him, our calling Him will go in vain. Jesus Christ has said, "Do not take God's Name in vain."

But this does not imply that we are not to call out to Him continuously – while sleeping, dreaming, eating, during times of recreation – and at any time and in any place. If we call out to Bhagavan with a desire to serve Him, then our call will not go in vain; indeed it is our sole obligation. However, if we merely imitate the process of genuinely calling to Him by soliciting Him to fulfil our personal desires then our effort will be in vain. That the name of Bhagavan should not be taken in vain means that one should not call His name with a desire to attain *dharma* (religiosity), *artha* (material prosperity), *kama* (selfish gratification) or *moksa* (liberation); rather, the sole reason one should continuously call to Him is to serve Him.

Srila Bhaktisiddanta Saraswati Thakura Prabhupada

Strongest Spiritual Force on Earth



According to Lord Sree Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Transcendental Divine Love is the strongest spiritual force on earth, which can establish close relation of love and unity of hearts amongst all human beings and thereby establish real peace in the world.

There is an outbreak of conflagration of group clashes throughout the world. Nowhere you will find peace. I am worried to read in newspapers the news of bomb explosions and disturbances. A section of people have become so violent and barbarous that they do not hesitate in committing heinous crimes in assassinating innocent persons to fulfil their political ends. All humanitarian considerations have been relinquished. They are now seeking justifications in committing such great sins.

When there are different centres of interests, nobody can avoid clashing of individuals, groups, nations etc. As for example, if circles are drawn with different centres, circumferences will cross, but if there is one centre of interest there may be smaller or bigger circles but there will be no crossing. According to Lord Sree Chaitanya Mahaprabhu there should be knowledge of the real self, real interest and one centre of interest.

The Supreme Lord Sree Krishna who is 'Achyuta' (infallible) can only be the common centre of interest from whom all the spirit souls have emanated. If we pour water at the root of the tree, whole tree is nourished with all its parts, in like manner, by serving Krishna we serve all.

Non-Violence is to refrain from doing injury to others - it is negative, but love is to do positive good to others. If anybody has got pure love to any person, he cannot have the impetus to inflict injuries to any part of the object of his love. If we get love for Krishna, we cannot have the impetus to inflict injuries to any of His parts emanating from His marginal potency. All *jivas* (living entities) are interrelated through their relation to Lord Krishna. Lord Krishna has said in the *Bhagavat Gita* (18.62) "O Scion of Bharata, surrender unto Him utterly. By His Grace you will attain Transcendental peace and His supreme eternal abode."

Complete unconditional surrender to the Lotus Feet of Supreme Lord Sree Krishna can only bestow on us eternal peace. The moment we shall submit to Sree Krishna unconditionally, our all ills and sufferings will go.

'*Sharanagati*' is the best medicine for cure of all afflictions and the solution of all problems. False egos create false interests and by that clashing of interests we see the forest fire in this world.

Supreme Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu has said, if individual spirit souls can have the knowledge that they are interrelated with love relation, this forest fire of clashing of interests will stop. So Sree Chaitanya Mahaprabhu has said, Divine Love is the best and only solution of the disturbed situation of the world. That Divine Love (*prema-bhakti*) for the Supreme Lord can be cultivated by 'Nama-Sankirtan' -chanting of the Holy Name of Supreme Lord, viz. Krishna, Rama, Govinda, Madhava, etc.

In the present age, 'Nama-Sankirtan' is the best medicine and effective way to achieve the summum bonum of human life as it can be performed under any sort of circumstances. Nama-Sankirtan is a universal religion under whose banner people of all sects and rank can unite.

Essence of Knowledge

Sri Bhaktivinoda Thakur says "Essence of knowledge is - 'Life is impermanent and there are many adversities. Take absolute shelter of Sri Harinama (Holy Names of the Lord) and do your relative duties. Cool hotness of the burning sensation of the threefold afflictions by drinking ambrosia of Harinama, there is nothing valuable except Sri Harinama in these fourteen worlds. Chanting the Holy Name, avoiding the tenfold offences in the company of pure devotees is the only way to get free from the miseries of this world and to get Absolute Bliss. Uncongenial company of worldly people who are averse to Sri Krishna is to be avoided for getting devotional progress and eternal welfare."

Sri Srimad Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha Gosvami Maharaja

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BHAKTI - International Society for Bhakti-yoga

The International Society for Bhakti-yoga - aka BHAKTI - was formed by His Divine Grace Srila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja as a foundation to facilitate the practice and delivery of Bhakti-yoga and Gaudiya Vaisnavism, for all people of the world. Bhakti-yoga means union with God through loving devotional service. The words 'Gaudiya Vaisnava' refer to anyone who practices *bhakti-yoga* as a devotee of Sri Krishna in the line of the great preceptor Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. Being based on the Vedic Literatures, this path is guided by a universal philosophy and a practical way of life. It can be adopted by everyone, regardless of one's stated religion, age, gender, race, creed or nationality. The ideals of *bhakti-yoga* are non-sectarian as they relate to the eternal function of every living being in relationship with the Supreme Conscious Being, known in the Vedas as Lord Sri Krishna.

Mission Statement

Our aim and object is to present the ancient wisdom of the Vedas (the world's oldest philosophical texts) in its pure and original form for the benefit of all mankind without regard to gender, race, creed, nationality or any other temporary material distinction. Pure Bhakti-yoga is the eternal science of the soul, and the process of realizing our true nature and our eternal position, as part and parcel of the Original Creator known as Sri Krishna. By the process of *bhakti-yoga* we can attain true and eternal happiness in our true home, Sri Goloka Vrindavan.