Bhaja Govindam

Introduction

Bhaja Govindam was written by Jagadguru Adi Shankaracharya. A biography of Shankara and his other compositions of Vedic literature can be found in the shankara.itx document. Bhaja govindaM is one of the minor compositions of the spiritual giant, Adi Shankaracharya. It is classified as a prakaraNa grantha, a primer to the major works. Though sung as a bhajan, it contains the essence of Vedanta and implores the man to think, Why am I here in this life? Why am I amassing wealth, family, but have no peace? What is the Truth? What is the purpose of life? The person thus awakened gets set on a path to the inner road back to the God principle.

The background of Bhaja GovindaM is worth examining. During his stay in Kashi, Adi Shankaracharya noticed a very old man studying the rules of Sanskrit by Panini. Shankara was touched with pity at seeing the plight of the old man spending his years at a mere intellectual accomplishment while he would be better off praying and spending time to control his mind.

Shankara understood that the majority of the world was also engaged in mere intellectual, sense pleasures and not in the divine contemplation. Seeing this, he burst forth with the verses of Bhaja govindaM. In 31 verses, he, like no other, explains our fallacies, our wrong outlook for life, and dispels our ignorance and delusions. Thus bhaja govindaM was originally known as moha
mudgAra, the remover of delusions.

Shankara explains, nay chides, us for spending our time in useless trivia like amassing wealth, lusting after (wo)men and requests us to discriminate and cultivate the knowledge to learn the difference between the real and the unreal. To emphasise that, he concludes that all knowledge other than the Self-Knowledge is useless, Shankara makes the person realize how foolish he/she is in the conduct and behaviour by these verses, and shows the purpose of our worldly existence, which is to seek Govinda and attain Him.

Bhaja govindaM is divided into dvAdashamanjarikA stotram and chaturdashamanjarika stotram. At the end of composing the first stanza, it is said that Shankara burst forth with the next 12 stanzas of bhaja govindam. Thus stanzas 2-13 with 1st as refrain are called dvAdashamanjarika stotram. Inspired by the extempore recital by Shankara, each of his 14 disciples composed a verse and the 14 verse compendium is called chaturdashamanjarika stotram. (There are no evidences to prove the exact individual authorship of these 14 verses, we have some traditional hearsay eviences as attribution.) Shankara added the finishing touches by adding five of his own stanzas at the last bringing the total to 31. The combined 31 are also termed as mohamudgaraH by some. The last two verses in this version is not found in all editions.

Bhaja govindaM has been set to musical tones and sung as prayer songs by children. It is divided into dvAdashamanjarikA and charpaTapanjarikA for this purpose. The former is a set of verses (verses 2-13) while the rest of the verses form charpaTamanjarikA. Anyone who listens to the music of Bhaja govindaM is attracted to it. However, the significance of the text goes much deeper and contains a well defined philosophy of attaining salvation.

Shankara’s words seem to be quite piercing and seem to lack the
softness and tenderness often found in his other texts, thus addressing directly. The reason is that this was an extempore recital to an old man. His words can be compared to a knife of a surgeon. The surgeon’s knife cruelly removes the tumour with much pain, but removing the tumour ultimately restores good health in the patient. So are Shankara’s words, which pierce and point out our ignorance. It is a knife into the heart of worldliness, and by removing this tumour of ignorance, we can attain everlasting bliss with the grace of Govinda.

May the AchAryA guide us from ignorance to truth.

OM tat sat.
Do not get drowned in delusion by going wild with passions and lust by seeing a woman’s navel and chest. These are nothing but a modification of flesh. Fail not to remember this again and again in your mind.

The life of a person is as uncertain as rain drops trembling on a lotus leaf. Know that the whole world remains a prey to disease, ego and grief.

So long as a man is fit and able to support his family, see what affection all those around him show. But no one at home cares to even have a word with him when his body totters due to old age.

When one is alive, his family members enquire kindly about his welfare. But when the soul departs from the body, even his wife runs away in fear of the corpse.
The childhood is lost by attachment to playfulness. Youth is lost by attachment to woman. Old age passes away by thinking over many things. But there is hardly anyone who wants to be lost in parabrahman.

Who is your wife? Who is your son? Strange is this samsAra, the world. Of whom are you? From where have you come?

Brother, ponder over these truths.

From satsanga, company of good people, comes non-attachment, from non-attachment comes freedom from delusion, which leads to self-settledness. From self-settledness comes Jivan muktI.

What good is lust when youth has fled?
What use is a lake which has no water?
Where are the relatives when wealth is gone?
Where is samsAra, the world, when the Truth is known?
Do not boast of wealth, friends, and youth. Each one of these are destroyed within a minute by time. Free yourself from the illusion of the world of Maya and attain the timeless Truth.

Daylight and darkness, dusk and dawn, winter and springtime come and go. Time plays and life ebbs away. But the storm of desire never leaves.

Oh mad man! Why this engrossment in thoughts of wealth? Is there no one to guide you? There is only one thing in three worlds that can save you from the ocean of samsAra, get into the boat of satsanga, company of good people, quickly.

This bouquet of twelve verses (2-13) was imparted to a grammarian by the all-knowing Shankara, adored as the bhagavadpada.

The following 14 form chaturdashama njarikA.
Stanza below is attributed to padmaAda.

There are many who go with matted locks, many who have clean shaven heads, many whose hairs have been plucked out; some are clothed in orange, yet others in various colours — all just for a livelihood. Seeing truth revealed before them, still the foolish ones see it not.

Stanza attributed to toTakAchArya.

Strength has left the old man’s body; his head has become bald, his gums toothless and leaning on crutches. Even then the attachment is strong and he clings firmly to fruitless desires.

Stanza attributed to hastAmalaka.

Behold there lies the man who sits warming up his body with the fire in front and the sun at the back; at night he curls up the body to keep out of the cold; he eats his beggar’s food from the bowl of his hand and sleeps beneath the tree. Still in his heart, he is a wretched puppet at the hands of passions.

Stanza attributed to Subodha.
One may go to Gangasagar, observe fasts, and give away riches in charity! Yet, devoid of jnana, nothing can give mukti even at the end of a hundred births.

Stanza attributed to vArttikakAra (sureshvara).

One may take delight in yoga or bhoga, may have attachment or detachment. But only he whose mind steadily delights in Brahman enjoys bliss, no one else.

Stanza attributed to Anandagiri.
Let a man read but a little from bhagavadGita, drink just a drop of water from the Ganges, worship but once murari. He then will have no altercation with Yama.

Stanza attributed to dRiDhabhakti.

Born again, death again, again to stay in the mother’s womb!
It is indeed hard to cross this boundless ocean of samsAra. Oh Murari! Redeem me through Thy mercy.

Stanza attributed to nityanAtha.

There is no shortage of clothing for a monk so long as there are rags cast off the road. Freed from vices and virtues, onward he wanders. One who lives in communion with god enjoys bliss, pure and uncontaminated, like a child and as an intoxicated.

Stanza attributed to yogAnanda.

Who are you? Who am I? From where do I come? Who is my mother, who is my father? Ponder thus, look at everything as essence-less and give up the world as an idle dream.

Stanza attributed to surendra.
In me, in you and in everything, none but the same Vishnu dwells. Your anger and impatience is meaningless. If you wish to attain the status of Vishnu, have samabhAva, equanimity, always.

Stanza attributed to medhAtithira.

Waste not your efforts to win the love of or to fight against friend and foe, children and relatives. See yourself in everyone and give up all feelings of duality completely.

Stanza attributed to bhArativamsha.

Give up lust, anger, infatuation, and greed. Ponder over your real nature. Fools are they who are blind to the Self. Cast into hell, they suffer there endlessly.

Stanza attributed to sumati.
Regularly recite from the Gita, meditate on Vishnu in your heart, and chant His thousand glories. Take delight to be with the noble and the holy. Distribute your wealth in charity to the poor and the needy.

Stanza attributed to sumati.

He who yields to lust for pleasure leaves his body a prey to disease. Though death brings an end to everything, man does not give-up the sinful path.

Wealth is not welfare, truly there is no joy in it. Reflect thus at all times. A rich man fears even his own son. This is the way of wealth everywhere.

Regulate the prANa-s, life forces, remain unaffected by external influences and discriminate between the real and the fleeting. Chant the holy name of God and silence the turbulent mind. Perform these with care, with extreme care.

bhajagovindam.pdf
Oh devotee of the lotus feet of the Guru! May thou be soon free from Samsara. Through disciplined senses and controlled mind, thou shalt come to experience the indwelling Lord of your heart!

The following two are not found in standard text of Bhajagovindam.

Thus a silly grammarian lost in rules cleansed of his narrow vision and shown the Light by Shankara’s apostles.

Worship Govinda, worship Govinda, worship Govinda, Oh fool! Other than chanting the Lord’s names, there is no other way to cross the life’s ocean.

Appendix: Word meanings

The following words and meanings are added as an appendix to allow the reader to learn Sanskrit words. They may not follow exact word construction in the above verses. Reader is requested to consult a dictionary and commentaries for additional details.

ભજ = worship;
 Govinda;  
O, foolish mind!;
(when you have) reached/obtained;
(in the) presence/nearness of;
Time (here: Lord of Death, Yama);
No; never;
protects;
the grammatical formula DukRi.nkarane;
Oh fool!;
leave/give up+here(in this world);
wealth;
coming/arrival;
thirst/desire;
Do:act;
sat+buddhiM, good+awareness(loosely speaking: mind);
in the mind;
desirelessness;
yat+labhase, whatever+(you)obtain;
one’s+duty(normal work);
anything; obtained;
wealth;
by that; with that;
divert/recreate(be happy);
mind;
woman;
breasts that are(full-with milk);
navel+region/country;
having seen;
Don’t+go;
infatuated state(moha+AveshaM-seizure);
अतः = this;
मांसवसादि = flesh, fat, +etc;
विकारं = appearance (generally, grotesque/ugly);
मनसि = in the mind;
विजितनं = think well;
प्रारं = again;
प्रारं = and again;
॥ 3 ॥
नलिनीदलागत = nalinI+dala+gata, lotus+petal+reached/gone;
जलं = water(drop);
अतितिरं = ati+tarala, very+unstable;
तदृशं = like that;
जिवं = life;
अतिशयं = wonderful;
चप्लं = fickle-minded;
विज्ञं = know for sure;
व्याधं = disease;
अभमानं = self-importance;
असतं = having been caught/seized;
लोकं = world;people;
शोकसहं = attacked(hata) by grief(shoka);
यं = and;
समस्तं = entire;
॥ 4 ॥
याकर्तं = so long as;
विरं = wealth;
उपाजर्णं = earning/acquiring;
सक्षं = capable of;
तापरिजं = tAvat+nija, till then+one’s;
पुर्विलं = family;
रक्षं = attached;
पश्चात् = later;
bhajagovindam.pdf
ભજ = old man;
તાવત = till then;
ચિનત = worry;
સંકટ = attached/engrossed/absorbed;
પરમે = in the lofty; high; supreme; also pare
બ્રહ્મ = Brahma; God;
કારણ = whosoever;
ન = not;
સંકટ = attached/absorbed/engrossed;

c. c.
k. te = kA+te, who+your;
k.તત = wife;
k.તે = kaH+te, who+your;
પુણ = son;
સંસાર = world/family;
અય = this;
અતીવ = great/big/very much;
િવિચિન = wonderful/mysterious;
સથ = whose;
ત્મ = you;
ક = who;
કઃ = from where;
ાયાં = have come;
તાવ = truth/nature;
ચિનત = think well/consider;
tિહ = tat+iha, that+here;
ભ્રાત = brother;

c. c.
સંબંધવે = in good company;
િનસંબંધ = aloneness/non-attachment/detachment;
િનમાં = non-infatuated state/clear-headedness;
િનશ્ચલત = tranquillity/imperturbability;
Salvation+freedom from bondage of birth;

Age has advanced/gone;

Who/what use in the sense of kva? (where);

Sensual/sexual attraction;

Water;

What (use) is the;

Lake;

Spent-up/weakened state of;

Wealth;

What (use) for;

Family (is there?);

In the realised state;

Truth;

What (use) is;

World/family bond;

Do not;

Do/act;

Wealth;

People;

Youth;

Arrogance/haughtiness;

Takes away/steals away;

In the twinkling of the eye;

Master Time;

All;

Delusion;

Full of/completely filled;

This;

Whole/entire;
ભજ = having given up/abandoned;
વ્રદં = the state/position of Brahma/god-realised state;
ત્વ = you;
વન = enter;
વદં = having known/realised;
॥ ૧૧ ॥
વદં બ્રહ્મપદં = you; the state/position of Brahma/god-realised state;
પ્રિવશ = enter;
પ્રિવશ હવા = having known/realised;
॥ ૧૨ ॥
પ્રિવશ હવા = having known/realised;
વસવં = you; the state/position of Brahma/god-realised state;
પ્રિવશ = enter;
પ્રિવશ હવા = having known/realised;
॥ ૧૨ ॥
પ્રિવશ હવા = having known/realised;
પ્રિવશ = enter;
પ્રિવશ હવા = having known/realised;
॥ ૧૨ ॥
પ્રિવશ હવા = having known/realised;
પ્રિવશ = enter;
પ્રિવશ હવા = having known/realised;
॥ ૧૨ ॥
પ્રિવશ હવા = having known/realised;
પ્રિવશ = enter;
પ્રિવશ હવા = having known/realised;
॥ ૧૨ ॥
પ્રિવશ હવા = having known/realised;
પ્રિવશ = enter;
પ્રિવશ હવા = having known/realised;
॥ ૧૨ ॥
પ્રિવશ હવા = having known/realised;
૦૨}
as shankarabhagavat +charaN AH or pAd AH (plural for reverence)

॥ १२॥

का ते = kA+te, who+your;
कारि = wife;
धन = wealth;
गतित = thinking of;
पातुल = O mad one!;
किं = what?;
तव = your;
नसिं = na+asti, is not there;
निवित = controller;
नित्र = in the three worlds;
अक्ष = good people;
संगितिरिक्त = sa.ngatiH+ekA, company+(only) one (way);
भवित = becomes;
भवापूर्व = bhava+arNava, birth and death+ocean;
तरण = in crossing;
नाक = boat/ship;
॥ १३॥

जितिक = with knotted hair;
मुखिः = shaven head;
लुकितकेश = hair cut here and there;
काप्त = saffron cloth;
अमर = cloth/sky;
बहुकृत = variously done/made-up;
वेष = make-ups/garbs/roles;
पश्च = even after seeing;
च न = cha+na, and +not;
पश्चित = sees;
मूढ = the fool;
उदरिणम्तं = for the sake of the belly/living;
बहुकृतवेष = various make-ups/roles;
 limb(s); weakened; ripened(grey); head; dashana+vihInaM, teeth+bereft; having become; jaws/mouth?; the old man; goes; holding the; stick(walking); then even; not; lets go/releases/gives up; AshA+pindaM, desire+lump(piNDaM also means rice-ball given; as oblation for the dead) in front of/ahead/beforehand; fire ( for worship); pRiShThe+bhAnuH, behind+sun; in the night; face dedicated to(huddled up between) the knees; taking alms in the palms; living under the trees; then even; not; releases/lets go; desire; rope/ties; one takes resort to;


\[ \text{\textit{ગુરૂગાંધ્ર}} = \text{the sea of Ganga (banks of the Ganges);} \]

\[ \text{\textit{ગમન}} = \text{going;} \]

\[ \text{\textit{પ્રત}} = \text{austerities;} \]

\[ \text{\textit{પર્યાપન}} = \text{observance/governance;} \]

\[ \text{\textit{અથવा}} = \text{or/else;} \]

\[ \text{\textit{ધાન}} = \text{charity;} \]

\[ \text{\textit{ઝાનડીનત્ર}} = \text{(but) bereft of knowledge of the Self;} \]

\[ \text{\textit{સર્વમિત્ર}} = \text{according to all schools of thought/unanimously;} \]

\[ \text{\textit{મુખ્તિ}} = \text{salvation/freedom;} \]

\[ \text{\textit{n}} = \text{not;} \]

\[ \text{\textit{ભજત}} = \text{attains;} \]

\[ \text{\textit{જન્મ}} = \text{birth(s);} \]

\[ \text{\textit{શતેન}} = \text{hundred;} \]

\[ \text{\textit{સુરમ્પ્રદર}} = \text{temple of god;} \]

\[ \text{\textit{ત્ર}} = \text{tree;} \]

\[ \text{\textit{મૂલ}} = \text{root;} \]

\[ \text{\textit{નિવાસ}} = \text{living;} \]

\[ \text{\textit{શાયા}} = \text{bed;} \]

\[ \text{\textit{ભૂતલ}} = \text{on the surface of the earth;} \]

\[ \text{\textit{આજી}} = \text{skin (of Antelope);} \]

\[ \text{\textit{વાસ}} = \text{living;} \]

\[ \text{\textit{સ્વયંપરગ્રહ}} = \text{all attachments;} \]

\[ \text{\textit{ભાગત્યાગ}} = \text{sacrificing/abandonment of enjoyable things/worldly pleasures;} \]

\[ \text{\textit{કસ્} = \text{whose;}} \]

\[ \text{\textit{સુખ}} = \text{happiness;} \]

\[ \text{\textit{n}} = \text{not;} \]

\[ \text{\textit{કરાે}} = \text{does;} \]

\[ \text{\textit{િવરાગ}} = \text{Non-attachment/desirelessness;} \]

\[ \text{\textit{યાગરત}} = \text{indulging in yoga;} \]

\[ \text{\textit{વા}} = \text{or;} \]
भज = indulging in worldly pleasures;

वा = or;

सुरु = indulging in good company;

वा = or;

सुरुविष = bereft of company;

चुव = whose;

अभम = in Brahman (God);

अभ = or;

चित = mind (here soul);

नदित = revels;

नदत्य = nandati+eva, revels alone/revels indeed;

॥ १८ ॥

भगव = god's;

गीत = song (here the scripture ‘bhagavatgItA’);

कित = a little;

अधीत = studied;

गुंड = river Ganga;

जलव = water drop;

कलिश = a little droplet, drunk;

गुंजलिं = Even a little drop of Ganga water;

अद्वि = once even;

चेन = by whom;

मुर = the enemy of ‘MurA’ (Lord Krishna);

समथ = well worshipped;

हित = is done;

तस्य = his;

थम = by Yama, the lord of Death;

न = not;

चिच = discussion;

॥ २० ॥

पुनर = punaH+api, again again;

जन = birth;
punar = again again;
mar = death;
punar = again again;
jan = mother;
jahe = in the stomach;
sh = sleep;
che = in this world/here;
sanskar = family/world;
abdu = fordable with great difficulty;
dwarp = out of boundless compassion;
pali = protect;
mar = Oh Mur’s enemy!(KriShNa);
॥ २१ ॥
rupart = torn/tattered cloth lying in the street;
aprit = created;
ku = rag;
purupa = virtues sins;
vinij = without/ having abandoned;
p = way;
yogi = the man seeking union with god;
yoginij = controlled by yoga;
mit = mind;
abh = delights;
ablon = like a child who has gone mad;
॥ २२ ॥
kr = who (are);
tv = you;
kr = who(am);
au = I;
kut = whence;
achar = has come;
kr = who;
मे = my;
ञन्मी = mother;
कः = who;
मे = my;
त्तरः = father;
धति = thus;
परिभाष्य = deem well/visualise;
सर्व = the entire;
असारं = worthless/without essence;
विश्वं = world;
त्यञचय = having abandoned/sacrificed;
स्वप्नः = dream;
विचारं = consideration/thinking;
॥ २३ ॥
तपारी = in yourself;
भवि = in myself;
आ-ञचय = cha+anyatra+ekaH, and+ in any other place+only one;
विश्वः = the Lord MahAviShNu;
व्यञचय = in vain ; for nothing; purposeless;
कुञचसि = you get angry;
मयञशचसि = mayi+asahiShNuH, in me+intolerant;
भव = become;
समञचितः = equal-minded/equanimity;
सर्वत्र = everywhere;
त्वं = you;
वाचष्मि = you desire;
अञचिरं = without delay/in no time;
यदि = if;
विचारुत्रं = the quality/state of Brahman/god-realisation;
॥ २४ ॥
शत्रूं = in (towards) the enemy;
मिनेः = in (towards) the friend;
bhajagovindam.pdf
श्रीपि = LakShmi’s consort MahAviShNu’s;
ढः = form/image;
अद्ग = the unborn one;
नेत्र = is to be lead/taken;
अजन = good people;
अजन = in the company;
अमर = mind;
देव = is to be given;
दी-जन = to the poor (humble state) people;
यु = and;
धिं = wealth;
॥ २७ ॥
सुखतः = for happiness;
किये = is done;
रामाभाग = sexual pleasures?;
पशुकु = later on in the end;
शरीर = in the body;
शोक = disease;
यथव = even though;
लोक = in the world;
मरण = death;
शरण = resort/surrender;
तदव = even then;
न = not;
मुक्तिं = releases/gives up;
पापाचरणं = pApa+AcharaNa, sin-practising;
॥ २८ ॥
अर्थ = wealth;
अन्तर्ह = purposeless/in vain/danger-productive;
भाव = deem/consider/visualise;
निं = daily/always;
न = not;
bhajagovindam.pdf
you will see;  
one's own;  
heart-stationed;  
God;  

fool;  
certain;  
Grammar;  
grammatical formula DukRi.nkaraNa;  
study;  
awakened/aroused?;  
honourable prefix;  
Shankara;  
God;  
disciples;  
having been taught/enlightened;  
was/existed;  
tested or awakened senses;  

worship;  
lord Govinda;  
Oh foolish mind!;  
(except) through/from remembrance of the Lord's name;  
other;  
plan/method/means;  
not;  
we see;  
for crossing the ocean of births deaths;  

encoded and translated by M. Giridhar.  
Proofread M. Giridhar, NA, PSA Easwaran  

sanskritdocuments.org
The audio renderings have different sequence for verses.

---

*Bhaja Govindam*

pdf was typeset on March 15, 2022

---

Please send corrections to [sanskrit@cheerful.com](mailto:sanskrit@cheerful.com)