Bhaja Govindam

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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 chaturdushamanjarika 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 dvAdashmanjarika stotram. Inspired by the extempore recital by Shankara, each of his 14 disciples composed a verse and the 14 verse compendium is called chaturdushamanjarika stotram. (There are no evidences to prove the exact individual authorship of these 14 verses, we have some traditional hearsay evidences 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 mohamudagaraH 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.

Worship Govinda, worship Govinda, worship Govinda, Oh fool!
Rules of grammar will not save you at the time of your death.

Oh fool! Give up your thirst to amass wealth, devote your mind to thoughts to the Real. Be content with what comes through actions already performed in the past.
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 bhagavadvpada.

The following 14 form chaturdasha njariKA.

Stanza below is attributed to padmapAdA.
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).

Take your residence in a temple or below a tree, wear the deerskin for the dress, and sleep with mother earth as your bed. Give up all attachments and renounce all comforts. Blessed with such vairgya, could any fail to be content?

Stanza attributed to nityAnanda.

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.

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.

ॐ = worship;
ॐ = Govinda;
ॐ = O, foolish mind!;
ॐ = (when you have) reached/obtained;
ॐ = (in the) presence/nearness of;
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think well;
again;
and again;

= nalinI+dala+gata, lotus+petal+reached/gone;
water(drop);
ati+tarala, very+unstable;
like that;
life;
= wonderful;
fickle-minded;
know for sure;
disease;
self-importance;
having been caught/seized;
world;people;
attacked(hata) by grief(shoka);
and;
en entire;

so long as;
wealth;
earning/acquiring;
capable of;
tAvat+nija, till then+one’s;
family;
attached;
later;
while living(without earning);
old/digested (by disease etc);
in the body;
word (here enquiry/inquiry);
ಭಜಗೋವಿಂದಮ್ = kaH+api, whosoever; even one;
ಅಿ = not;
ಫುಂಗ್ = inquires/asks/minds;
ಆೕಾದ = in the house;
ಿ ཨ ཨ = so long as;
ಪವಿ = air/breath;
ಘುಂ = lives/dwells;
ಜುಂ = in the body;
ಜುಂ = till then;
ಜುಂ = asks/inquires;
ಭುಂ = welfare;
ಆೕಾದ = in the house;
ಜುಂ = while gone;
ಜುಂ = air(life-breath);
ಗುಂ = when life departs the body;
ಬುಂ = wife;
ಬುಂ = is afraid;fears;
ತುಂ = tasmin+kaye, in that body;
ಿ ཨ ཨ = young boy;
ಂಗ್ = till then (till he is young);
ಂಂ = play;
ಆೕಾದ = attached/engrossed/absorbed;
ಜುಂ = young man;
ಜುಂ = till then;
ಜುಂ = young woman;
ಆೕಾದ = attached/engrossed;
ಬುಂ = old man;
ಜುಂ = till then;
ಜುಂ = worry;
ಆೕಾದ = attached/engrossed/absorbed;
भजः = in the lofty; high; supreme; also pare
वृषभे = Brahma; God;
ञटः = whosoever;
ण = not;
ञणः = attached/absorbed/engrossed;
॥ ॥ ॥
ञोः = kA+te, who+your;
ञोः = wife;
ञुः = kaH+te, who+your;
ञः = son;
ञः = world/family;
ञः = this;
ञः = great/big/very much;
ञः = wonderful/mysterious;
ञः = whose;
ञः = you;
ञः = who;
ञः = from where;
ञः = have come;
ञः = truth/nature;
ञः = think well/consider;
ञः = tat+iha, that+here;
ञः = brother;
॥ ॥ ॥
ञः = in good company;
ञः = aloneness/non-attachment/detachment;
ञः = non-infatuated state/clear-headedness;
ञः = tranquillity/imperturbability;
ञः = salvation+freedom from bondage of birth;
ञः = vayasi+gate, when age has advanced/gone;
॥ ॥ ॥
ञः = who/what use( in the sense of kva?(where));
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having known/realised; ॥ ॥

dina+yAminI, day + night; ॥
evening; ॥
morning; ॥
frosty season; ॥
Spring season; ॥
again; ॥
have arrived; ॥
Master Time; ॥
plays; ॥
goes (away); ॥
life/age; ॥
tat+api, then even; ॥
not; ॥
releases; ॥
desire; ॥
air (the wind of desire does not let off its hold); ॥ ॥
by the bouquet consisting of 12 flowers (12; shlokas above) ॥
without remainder/totally; ॥
was told; ॥
to the grammarian+this; ॥
advice; ॥
was; ॥
by the ace scholar Shankara (Plural is used for reverence); ॥
by the Shankaracharya who is known; ॥
as shankarabhagavat +charaNAH or pAdAH (plural for reverence) ॥ ॥
who+your; ॥
wife; ॥

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भज = wealth; 
��ರೆ೦೦೦೦ = thinking of; 
ಕಂಜು = O mad one!; 
ತೋ = what?; 
ತೆ = your; 
ಜ್ಜೂ = na+asti, is not there; 
ಸೌಮ್ಯುಂ = controller; 
ತುರುಂ = in the three worlds; 
ಗಂ = good people; 
ಸುರಂಜಿಸು = sa.ngatiH+ekA, company+(only) one (way); 
ಜೂಂ = becomes; 
ಬಂತಂಜಿ = bhava+arNava, birth and death+ocean; 
ರಂಜೀರು = in crossing; 
ರಂಜೀರು = boat/ship; 
॥ ॥
ಜಿಗಿವ = with knotted hair; 
ಜಿಗಿವ = shaven head; 
ಜಿಗಿವ = hair cut here and there; 
ಜಿಗಿವ = saffron cloth; 
ಜಿಗಿವ = cloth/sky; 
ಜಿಗಿವ = variously done/made-up; 
ಜಿಗಿವ = make-ups/garbs/roles; 
ಜಗಿಲೆ = even after seeing; 
ಜಿಗಿವ = cha+na, and +not; 
ಜಗಿಲೆ = sees; 
ಜಿಗಿವ = the fool; 
ಜಿಗಿವ = for the sake of the belly/living; 
ಜಿಗಿವ = various make-ups/roles; 
॥ ॥
ಜಿಗಿವ = limb(s); 
ಜಿಗಿವ = weakened; 
ಜಿಗಿವ = ripened(grey);


**Bhaja**

- **तोः** = head;
- **दशनेविहिनः** = dashana+vihInaM, teeth+bered;
- **होः** = having become;
- **होः** = jaws/mouth?;
- **दक्षिणेऽः** = the old man;
- **मथस्य** = goes;
- **नारीलः** = holding the;
- **होः** = stick(walking);
- **दक्षिणेऽः** = then even;
- **न** = not;
- **होः** = lets go/releases/gives up;
- **आषांपिन्दः** = AshA+pindaM, desire+lump(piNDaM also means rice-ball given; as oblation for the dead)

Ⅱ ॥ ॥

- **अः** = in front of/ahead/beforehand;
- **लिङ्गः** = fire (for worship);
- **लोमः प्रिश्थ+भानुः** = pRiShThe+bhAnuH, behind+sun;
- **दक्षिणेऽः** = in the night;
- **कक्षाजयविश्वेष्वेष्वः** = face dedicated to(huddled up between) the knees;
- **करतलिष्ठः** = taking alms in the palms;
- **करतलस्यधेः** = living under the trees;
- **दक्षिणेऽः** = then even;
- **न** = not;
- **होः** = releases/lets go;
- **होः** = desire;
- **होः** = rope/ties;

Ⅱ ॥ ॥

- **ससीतः** = one takes resort to;
- **धधच्छगरः** = the sea of Ganga (banks of the Ganges);
- **गमः** = going;
- **परः** = austerities;
- **धर्मसविश्वः** = observance/governance;
or/else;  
charity;  
(but) bereft of knowledge of the Self;  
according to all schools of thought/unanimously;  
salvation/freedom;  
not;  
attains;  
birth(s);  
hundred;  

= temple of god;  
tree;  
root;  
living;  
bed;  
on the surface of the earth;  
skin (of Antelope);  
living;  
all attachments;  
sacrificing/abandonment of enjoyable things/worldly pleasures;  
whose;  
happiness;  
not;  
does;  
Non-attachment/desirelessness;  

= indulging in yoga;  
or;  
indulging in worldly pleasures;  
or;  
indulging in good company;  
or;
भगवान = god's;
ज्ञान = song (here the scripture 'bhagavatgItA');
संस्कृ = a little;
अज्ञात = studied;
राम = river Ganga;
जल लव = water drop;
काली = a little droplet, drunk;
नानीका = Even a little drop of Ganga water;
जयकी = once even;
मात्र = by whom;
देवता = the enemy of ‘MurA’ (Lord Krishna);
सामही = well worshipped;
संस्कृ = is done;
मात्र = his;
यमन = by Yama, the lord of Death;
ना = not;
चर्चा = discussion;
॥ २० ॥
सञ्जय = punaH+api, again again;
जनान = birth;
सञ्जय = again again;
सञ्जय = death;
सञ्जय = again again;
सञ्जय = mother;
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father;
thus;
deem well/visualise;
the entire;
worthless/without essence;
world;
having abandoned/sacrificed;
dream;
consideration/thinking;
in yourself;
in myself;
cha+anyatra+ekaH, and+in any other place+only one;
the Lord MahAviShNu;
in vain ; for nothing;purposeless;
you get angry;
im+intolerant, in me+intolerant;
become;
equal-minded/equanimity;
everywhere;
you;
you desire;
without delay/in no time;
if;
the quality/state of Brahman/god-realisation;
in (towards)the enemy;
in (towards) the friend;
in(towards) the son;
in (towards) relatives;
don’t;
do;
effort; for war(dissension) or peace-making; in all beings; see your own self; everywhere; give up; difference/otherness/duality; desire; anger; greed; infatuation; having abandoned see as one’s own self; deem/consider/visualise/imagine; who am I; knowledge of self; bereft; fools; they; are cooked?; in the hell; cast in; is to be sung; bhagavatItA; name of the lord; 1000 times; is to be meditated; LakShmi’s consort MahAviShNu’s; form/image; the unborn one; is to be lead/taken;
good people;
in the company;
mind;
is to be given;
to the poor (humble state) people;
and;
wealth;

for happiness;
is done;
sexual pleasures?
later on in the end;
in the body;
disease;
even though;
in the world;
death;
resort/surrender;
even then;
not;
releases/gives up;
pApa+AcharaNa, sin-practising;

wealth;
purposeless/in vain/danger-productive;
deem/consider/visualise;
daily/always;
not;
is;
from that;
(even a little) happiness;
Truth;
ಭಜಾಗವಿಂದ = even from the son;
ತುಂ = wealth;
ಹಡಾಸೋ = acquiring people;
ಒಬುಂ = fear;
ಎಂದು = everywhere;
ಎನೂ = this;
ಎಂಬೈ = understood;
ಎಂಬೇ = procedure/practice/custom;
Ⅰ ೫ Ⅱ
ಬ್ರಹ್ಮಸೌದರ್ಶ = breath-control;
ದುರ್ಾಡಸೂರ = diet-control;
ನೂಬುಂ = always/daily/certain;
ನೂಬುಂ = uncertain/temporary/ephemeral/transient;
ನೂಬುಂ = awareness after reasoning;
ನೂಬುಂ = thought/considered conclusion/opinion;
ನೂಬುಂ = with chanting of the names of the lord;
ನೂಬುಂ = in the state of trance;
ನೂಬುಂ = pay attention;
ನೂಬುಂ = great care attention;
Ⅱ ೫ Ⅱ
ಸಾಂತಾರುಂಜಾ ಎಂಬೇ = the lotus feet of the teacher/guru;
ನೂಬುಂ = dependent;
ನೂಬುಂ = devotee;
ನೂಬುಂ = from the world;
ನೂಬುಂ = in no time from the cycle of birth and death;
ನೂಬುಂ = released;
ನೂಬುಂ = sa+indriya+mAnasa, with senses and mind;
ನೂಬುಂ = control alone(niyamAt eva);
ನೂಬುಂ = you will see;
ಎಂಬೇ = one’s own;
ನೂಬುಂ = heart-stationed;
ನೂಬುಂ = God;
II 28 II
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.
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The audio renderings have different sequence for verses.
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