Bhaja Govindam

భజ గోవిండు

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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 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.

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 bhagavadvada.

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 vArttikAra (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.

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Stanza attributed to nityanAtha.

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Stanza attributed to yogAnanda.

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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.

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 bhArativamsha.

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.

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భజ గోవిండ గోవిండ గోవిండ 
క్రమాత్మా బాలి క్రమాత్మా క్రమాత్మా 
భావయు బాలి బాలి 
భవతి బాలి బాలి 
భవతి బాలి బాలి 
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Thus a silly grammarian lost in rules cleansed of his narrow vision and shown the Light by Shankara’s apostles.

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భజ గోవిండ గోవిండ గోవిండ 
గోవిండ గోవిండ గోవిండ 
గోవిండ గోవిండ గోవిండ 
భవాయు 
భవయు 
భవయు 
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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.

- భజ్ = worship;
- గోవిండ = Govinda;
- మాతమాత్యం = O, foolish mind!;
- సంఖ్యం = (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!
jahi+iha, 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; nija+karma, one’s+duty (normal work); obtained; wealth; by that; with that; divert/recreate (be happy); mind; woman; breasts that are (full-with milk); nAbhI+deshaM, navel+region/country; having seen; mA+gA, Don’t+go; infatuated state (moha+AveshaM-seizure); this; flesh, fat, +etc; appearance (generally, grotesque/ugly);
భజం = in the mind;
మను = think well;
మన్ = again;
మన్ = and again;

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

య = so long as;
య = wealth;
య = earning/acquiring;
య = capable of;
య = tAvat+nija, till then+one’s;
య = family;
య = attached;
య = later;
య = while living(without earning);
య = old/digested (by disease etc);
య = in the body;
word (here enquiry/inquiry);
whosoever; even one;
not;
inquires/asks/minds;
in the house;
so long as;
air/breath;
lives/dwells;
in the body;
till then;
asks/inquires;
welfare;
in the house;
while gone;
air(life-breath);
when life departs the body;
wife;
is afraid; fears;
tasmin+kaye, in that body;
till then (till he is young);
play;
attached/engrossed/absorbed;
young man;
till then;
young woman;
attached/engrossed;
young man;
till then;
old man;
till then;
worry;
= attached/engrossed/absorbed;
= in the lofty; high; supreme; also pare
= Brahma; God;
= whosoever;
= not;
= attached/absorbed/engrossed;

= kA+te, who+your;
= wife;
= kaH+te, who+your;
= son;
= world/family;
= this;
= great/big/very much;
= wonderful/mysterious;
= whose;
= you;
= who;
= from where;
= have come;
= truth/nature;
= think well/consider;
= tat+ihA, that+here;
= brother;

= in good company;
= aloneness/non-attachment/detachment;
= non-infatuated state/clear-headedness;
= tranquillity/imperturbability;
= salvation+freedom from bondage of birth;
= vayasi+gate, when age has advanced/gone;
రం = who/what use (in the sense of kva?(where));
రం తుం = sensual/sexual attraction;
రం = in the drying up of;
రం = water;
రం = what (use) is the;
రం = lake;
రం = spent-up/weakened state of;
రం = wealth;
రం = what (use) for;
రం = family (is there?);
రం = in the realised state;
రం = truth;
రం = what (use) is;
రం పం = world/family bond;

పం పం
రం = do not;
రం = do/act;
రం = wealth;
రం = people;
రం = youth;
రం = arrogance/haughtiness;
రం = takes away/steals away;
రం = in the twinkling of the eye;
రం = Master Time;
రం = all;
రం = delusion;
రం = full of/completely filled;
రం = this;
రం = whole/entire;
రం = having given up/abandoned;
రం పం = the state/position of Brahma/god-realised state;
రం = you;
enter;
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)

kA+te, who+your;
wife;
wealth;
thinking of;
O mad one!;
what?;
your;
na+asti, is not there;
controller;
in the three worlds;
good people;
sa.ngatiH+ekA, company+(only) one (way);
becomes;
bhava+arNava, birth and death+ocean;
in crossing;
boat/ship;
with knotted hair;
shaven head;
hair cut here and there;
saffron cloth;
cloth/sky;
variously done/made-up;
make-ups/garbs/roles;
even after seeing;
and +not;
sees;
the fool;
for the sake of the belly/living;
various make-ups/roles;
limb(s);
weakened;
భజ నూనె పుతం = ripened(grey);
మృతు = head;
తెలుగును = dashana+vihInaM, teeth+bereft;
తంత = having become;
మృతు = jaws/mouth?;
వం = the old man;
మృతు = goes;
నంతయాం వు = holding the;
తెలుగును = stick(walking);
తంత = then even;
న = not;
మృతు = lets go/releases/gives up;
ఆందాం = AshA+pindaM, desire+lump(piNDaM also means rice-ball given; as oblation for the dead)

అని = in front of/ahead/beforehand;
వేను = fire (for worship);
ప్రిం = pRiShThe+bhAnuH, behind+sun;
మృతు = in the night;
మృతునునియాం = face dedicated to(huddled up between) the knees;
చేతులు = taking alms in the palms;
తంత = living under the trees;
తంత = then even;
న = not;
మృతు = releases/lets go;
ఆం = desire;
ప్రిం = rope/ties;

ఒన్ను = one takes resort to;
ప్రింయాం = the sea of Ganga (banks of the Ganges);
మృతు = going;
మృతు = austerities;
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భజగోండం = observance/governance;
అథ = or/else;
ఉం = charity;
మొత్తంరించిన = (but) bereft of knowledge of the Self;
పెయించిన = according to all schools of thought/unanimously;
మాధుర్య = salvation/freedom;
హ = not;
అధి = attains;
నృషి = birth(s);
పద్ధతు = hundred;
పాటిక = temple of god;
ప్రతి = tree;
ప్రాం = root;
నీన్న = living;
ప్రాంజ = bed;
నికటా = on the surface of the earth;
పాలన = skin (of Antelope);
పర = living;
ప్రతియోతి = all attachments;
ప్రతిధాన = sacrificing/abandonment of enjoyable things/worldly pleasures;
ప్రతి = whose;
పాలన = happiness;
హ = not;
పాలన = does;
ప్రతియోతి = Non-attachment/desirelessness;
పాలన = indulging in yoga;
హ = or;
పాలన = indulging in worldly pleasures;
హ = or;
పాలన = indulging in good company;
భజాంక, ననే ఉన్న సఙేరం = or; 
యసు = whose; 
బహుస్తు = in Brahman(God); 
రము = delights; 
ముగు = mind (here soul); 
యసు = revels; 
యసుతు = nandati+eva, revels alone/revels indeed; 
భగవాను = god’s; 
దుర్గ = song (here the scripture ‘bhagavatgItA’); 
అంటు = a little; 
అకుటు = studied; 
గంధ = river Ganga; 
సమయ = water drop; 
తిరుము = a little droplet, drunk; 
ముగు జలాంక సమయు = Even a little drop of Ganga water; 
సంసకరి = once even; 
సమయు = by whom; 
సమసయ = the enemy of ‘MurA’ (Lord Krishna); 
సమయు = well worshipped; 
సమయు = is done; 
సమయు = his; 
సమయు = by Yama, the lord of Death; 
సమయు = not; 
సమయు = discussion; 
సమయు = discussion; 
మరణం = birth; 
మరణం = death; 
మరణం = again again; 
మరణం = again again;
భజ = mother;
ధజీ = in the stomach;
శయనో = sleep;
అహి = in this world/here;
సంధు = family/world;
శయాంత్రి = fordable with great difficulty;
కృపాంత్రి = out of boundless compassion;
ప్రేయు = protect;
మారుట్ = Oh MurA’s enemy!(KriShNa);

రచరుట = torn/tattered cloth lying in the street;
రచరు = created;
రచరు = rag;
రాంచుట = virtues sins;
రాంచుట = without/ having abandoned;
రాంచుట = way;
మారుట్ = the man seeking union with god;
మారుట్ = controlled by yoga;
మారుట్ = mind;
మారుట్ = delights;
రాంచుట = like a child who has gone mad;

రాంచుట = who (are);
రాంచు = you;
రాంచు = who(am);
రాంచు = I;
రాంచు = whence;
రాంచు = has come;
రాంచు = who;
రాంచు = my;
రాంచు = mother;
రాంచు = who;
my; father; thus; deemed 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; mayi+asahiShNuH, 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;
భజ = do;
యత = effort;
హస = for war(dissension) or peace-making;
సర = in all beings;
ప = see your own self;
సర = everywhere;
అహ = give up;
చేస = difference/otherness/duality;

భం = desire;
ధం = anger;
భం = greed;
హం = infatuation;
తొమం = having abandoned see as one’s own self;
మ = deem/consider/visualise/imagine;
మ = who am I;
మ = knowledge of self;
మ = bereft;
మ = fools;
భ = they;
ప = are cooked?;
ప = in the hell;
చేస = cast in;

భం = is to be sung;
భ = bhagavatgItA;
మ = name of the lord;
మ = 1000 times;
చేస = is to be meditated;
మ = LakShmi’s consort MahAviShNu’s;
ప = form/image;
అ = 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;
= even from the son;
= wealth;
= acquiring people;
= fear;
= everywhere;
= this;
= understood;
= procedure/practice/custom;

= breath-control;
= diet-control;
= always/daily/certain;
= uncertain/temporary/ephemeral/transient;
= awareness after reasoning;
= thought/considered conclusion/opinion;
= with chanting of the names of the lord;
= in the state of trance;
= pay attention;
= great care attention;

= the lotus feet of the teacher/guru;
= dependent;
= devotee;
= from the world;
= in no time from the cycle of birth and death;
= released;
= sa+indriya+mAnasa, with senses and mind;
= control alone(niyamAt eva);
= 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  
The audio renderings have different sequence for verses.
Bhaja Govindam

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Please send corrections to sanskrit@cheerful.com