

Bakti rasAnuBUti In Lyrics of SrItyAgarAja, SrIannamAcArya and SrIrAmadAsu (A Prelude)

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1. To Set the Stage

I am using ITRANS version 5.3, a generally accepted standard (<http://www.aczone.com/itrans/>) for English transliteration of Indian language terminology. Please visit Baraha.com, a [multilingual software](#) to represent the Indian terms in to English as per ITRANS version 5.3 for the guidance of the readers.

There are several articles written on the topic, *Bakti* by eminent people. I do not have to re-invent the wheel as it is a well known territory. I picked *SrI svAmi sivAnaMda's* lecture on *Bakti* as it exposes the *Bakti BAva* in simple style. The following introduction to *Bakti* (Sections 1.1 & 1.2) is an abridged version of "*Bakti yOga*" by *SrI svAmi SivAnaMda* (<http://www.sivanandadlshq.org/teachings/bhaktiyoga.htm>). Please ignore the introduction, if you already know the material. Please bear with me as I have to set the stage to identify different *BavAs* and *rasAs* of *Bakti* felt while listening *kIrtanas* of *tyAgarAja*, *annamAcArya* and *rAmadAsa* rendered in different *rAgAs*. There are many other great composers who composed devotional lyrics not only in *Telugu* but also in other languages. As I only know *Telugu* and to some extent *Hindi*, I do not make an attempt to get into non-*Telugu* devotional lyrics, which I am sure, are exceptionally superb and rich in devotional aspects.

I love literature and always listen to music rendered by veterans. A modest attempt is being made in this article as well as in the others to follow, to characterize the *Bakti rasa* which can be felt in the devotional songs of *annamAcArya*, *rAmadAsa*, *tyAgarAja*, etc. They poured their hearts in devotion to the Lord. The spontaneous emotional outcome of such superb devotion is reflected in their lyrics. Their music is surcharged with *sadBakti*. Great people say "*sadBakti sahita saMgIta j-jAnamE jIvanmukti dAyakaM*". It means that knowledge of music, surcharged with self-less

Bakti, leads to salvation. Hence, such great composers realized the *salvation* via their heavenly music that pleased the Lord.

1.1 What is *Bakti*

Bakti is the intense devotion often called *prEma*, the supreme love and the supreme attachment to God. It is the spontaneous out-pouring of *prEma* towards the beloved, the God. It is pure, unselfish, divine love or *Suddha prEma* which does not involve bargaining or expectation of anything from the Lord. This is sincerely experienced by the devotees like *puraMdara dAsa*, *annamAcArya*, *rAmadAsa*, *tyAgarAja*, etc. *Bakti* is sublime that unites the devotees with the Lord.

Bakti is broadly categorized into *sakAmya Bakti* and *nishkAmya Bakti*. The *sakAmya Bakti* is devotion with desire for material gains. One wants wealth, freedom from diseases and day-to-day troubles, etc.. Therefore, one offers prayers. Another person may want to become a *mata-pravakta* and does *upAsana* with this aim. This is *sakAmya Bakti*. Whatever one wants, the Lord will certainly bless the person, if the person's *Bakti* is intense and comes from the bottom of the person's heart. But one will not get supreme satisfaction, immortality and *mOkSha* through *sakAmya Bakti*. The person, however, has to face the consequences (*karma PalaM*) of the wishes, granted by the Lord.

One's *Bakti* should always be *nishkAmya Bakti*. God has already given *mAnava janma* (the best form with *buddhi* and *j~jAna*). One should be content with the material wealth given to a person by the Lord. One should aspire for *nishkAmya Bakti*. The *nishkAmya Bakta's* heart will be purified and the Divine Grace will dawn upon the person. With the help of *nishkAmya Bakti*, one can be in communion with the Lord, can become one with the Lord and consequently will enjoy all the Divine *aiSvaryAM* (Divine attributes like wisdom, renunciation, power, etc.). All the *viBUti* aspects (Special forms in which the Lord manifests) of the Lord will be accessible via *nishkAmya Bakti*. The *nishkAma Bakta* can feel the *divya darSanaM* of the Lord all the time.

Bakti is cultivated via discipline and training of one's will and the mind. Intuitive way to realization of God is through intense love and affection for Him. It is a means to thorough apprehension of the true knowledge of Reality. It begins from the ordinary form of idol worship which eventually leads to the highest form of cosmic realization of his or her oneness with Him. One can achieve this by continuous thinking of God:

Right conduct, *satsaMga*, *japa*, *smaraNa*, *kIrtana*, prayer, worship, service of saints, residing in places of pilgrimage, service of the poor and the sick with divine *BAva*, observance of *varNASrama* duties, offering of all actions and their fruits to the Lord, feeling the presence of the Lord in all beings, prostrations before the idol and saints, renunciation of earthly enjoyments and wealth, charity, ego, austerities, practice of *ahiMsa*, *SatyaM* and *brahmacaryaM* - all these will help one to develop *Bakti*.

1.2 Nine Types of *Bakti*

Deep devotion to the Lord leads to absolute self-forgetfulness. This is called *BAva*. Devotion to God is developed in nine different ways. It is supreme attachment to God through a *BAva*, predominant in the devotee. Intense love is the common factor in all the nine modes. Exclusive love for God is expressed through various methods. All *BaktAs* are above the formalities of the world. They are untouched by the laws of human *dharmA* and are out and out concerned with God.

Good moral conduct is essential to foster pure *Bakti* which in turn, follows the true *Bakta* wherever he goes. Love for the world and love for God are diametrically opposite things. One has to be renounced for the attainment of the other. This renunciation can be acquired through the nine forms of *Bakti*.

The *vairAgya* is the product of real love for God. One, who loves and cares for the worldly things, cannot have love for God. Where there is *kAmA* (worldly desires and aspirations), there cannot be *rAmA* (i.e., the Lord) and where there is *rAmA*, there cannot be *kAmA*.

The following nine modes of *Bakti* are the ways in which a devotee attains the Supreme Ideal of life. A devotee can take up any of these paths and reach the highest state. The path of *Bakti* gradually takes the individual to the Supreme and leads the person towards a progressive realization of Him.

The nine forms of *Bakti*, mentioned in *SrImad-BagavadGIta* and *SrI viShNu purANaM* are:

1. *SravaNa* (hearing of God's *IIIAs* and stories, ex: *parIkShit*),
2. *kIrtana* (singing of His name and glories, ex: *tyAgarAja*, *caitanya*, etc.),
3. *smaraNa* (remembrance of His name and presence, ex: *prahlAda*),
4. *pAdasEvana* (service of His feet, ex: *lakShmi*),
5. *arcana* (worship of God),
6. *vaMdana* (prostration to Lord),
7. *dAsya* (cultivating the *BAva* of a servant with God, ex: *hanumAn*),
8. *saKya* (cultivation of the friendly-*BAva*, ex: *arjuna*) and
9. *AtmanivEdana* also identified as *mAdhura* (complete surrender of the self, ex: *rAdha*, *mIra*).

Any one method of *Bakti* paths as listed above will shower God's Grace on the devotee.

SravaNa: is hearing of the Lord's *IIIAs*. *SravaNa* includes hearing of God's virtues, glories, sports and stories connected with His divine Name and Form. The devotee gets absorbed in the hearing of Divine stories and his mind merges in the thought of divinity. The mind of the devotee cannot think of mundane things. Such a mind loses its charm for the world. The devotee remembers God only even in dreams.

kIrtana: is singing of Lord's name and His glories. The devotee is thrilled with Divine Emotion. He loses himself in the love of God. He becomes oblivious of the surroundings while singing due to extreme love for God. He weeps in the middle when thinking of the glory of God. His voice becomes choked, and he flies into a state of

Divine *BAva*. Wherever he goes, he begins to sing and praise God. He requests all to join in his *kIrtana*. He sings and dances in ecstasy. He makes others also dance.

SmaraNā: is remembrance of the Lord at all times. This is unbroken memory of the Name and Form of the Lord. The mind does not think of any object of the world, but is ever engrossed in thinking of the glorious Lord alone. The mind meditates on what is heard about the glories of God and His virtues, Names, etc. It makes one to forget even the body, making one cherishing in the remembrance of God. Remembrance has no particular time. God is to be remembered at all times without break, so long as one is alive.

pAdasEvana: is serving the Lord's Feet. Actually, this can be done only by *lakShmi* or *pAarvati*. No mortal being has got the fortune to practice this method of *Bakti*, for the Lord is not visible to the physical eyes. But it is possible to serve the image of God in idols and better still, taking the whole humanity as God. This is *pAdasEvana*. The *pAdasEvana* is service of the sick and it is service of the whole humanity at large. The whole universe is only *virAT-svarUpa*. Service of the world is service of the Lord.

arcana: is worship of the Lord. Worship can be done either through an image or a picture or even a mental form. The image should be one appealing to the mind of the worshipper. Worship can be done either with external materials or merely through an internal *BAva* or strong feeling. The latter one is an advanced form of worship, which can only be done by a person of purified intellect. The purpose of worship is to please the Lord, to purify the heart by relinquishing one's ego at the feet of God.

vaMdana: is prayer and prostration. Humble prostration of touching the earth with the eight limbs of the body (*sAshTAmga-namaskAra*), with faith and reverence, before a form of God, or prostration to all beings knowing them to be the forms of the One God. Getting absorbed in the Divine Love of the Lord, is termed prostration to God or *vaMdana*.

The ego or *ahaMkAra* is flushed out completely through devout prayer and prostration to God. Divine grace descends upon the devotee and hence, the person becomes God.

dAsya: is the love of God through servant-sentiment, best known as servility. To serve God and carry out His wishes, realizing His virtues, nature, mystery and glory, considering oneself as a slave of God, the Supreme Master, is *dAasya Bakti*.

Serving and worshipping the *mUrtis* in temples, sweeping the temple premises, meditating on God and mentally serving Him like a slave, serving the saints and the sages, serving the devotees of God, serving poor and sick people who are forms of God, is also included in *dAsya-Bakti*.

sakhya: is the cultivation of the friendly-sentiment with God. To be always with the Lord, to treat Him as one's own dear relative or a friend belonging to one's own family, to be in His company at all times, to love Him as one's own self, is *sakhya-BAva*. How do

friends, real friends, love in this world ? What an amount of love they possess between one another ? Such a deep sense of love is developed towards God instead of towards man. That is to say, that physical love is transformed into spiritual love. There is a transformation of the mundane into the Eternal.

atma-nivEdana: is self-surrender. The devotee offers everything to God, including his body, mind and soul. He keeps nothing for himself. He loses even his own self. He has no personal and independent existence. He has given up his self for God. He has become part and parcel of God. God takes care of him and God treats him as Himself. Grief and sorrow, pleasure and pain, are considered by the devotee as gifts sent by God and does not attach himself to them. He considers himself as a puppet of God and an instrument in the hands of God.

This self-surrender is Absolute Love for God exclusively. There is nothing but God-consciousness in the devotee. Even against his own wishes, the devotee shall become one with God and loses his/her individuality. This is the law of being one with the Lord. The highest truth is Absoluteness and the soul rises above through different states of consciousness until it attains Absolute Perfection when it becomes identical with God. This is the culmination of all aspirations as well as love.

Bakti leads to *j~jAna*. The *j~jAna* intensifies *Bakti*. *Bakti* softens the heart and removes jealousy, hatred, lust, anger, egoism, pride and arrogance. It infuses joy, divine ecstasy, bliss, peace and knowledge. All cares, worries and anxieties, fears, mental torments and tribulations entirely vanish. The devotee is freed from the *saMsAric* wheel of births and deaths. He attains the immortal abode of everlasting peace, bliss and knowledge.

1.3. *saMgItaM*

OMkAra nAdaM, also well known as *praNava nAdaM*, is the primal source of seven fundamental notes, the *sapta svaras*. *Sabdabrahma*, the creator of the universe is nothing but the *OMkAra svarUpaM*. The *vEdAs* which pronounce the same fact loud and clear as "*OM ityEkAksharaM brahma*". In fact, all the *akSharas* (i.e., the Indian Alphabet) did emanate from the *Sabdabrahma* (see Chapter 3 of *BAGavataM*). The meaning of the *akShara* is one that is not-perishable with time and space.

It is said that "*paMcaBUtAs* (i.e., earth, sky, air, water and fire), *sUrya*, *caMdra*, and *jIva* together are called *aShTamUrtis*. Amongst these *ashTaMUrtis*, *jIva* is *paramAtma* and the rest seven of them, the so called seven *tattvAs* are nothing but *sapta svaras*". The Lord assumes the roles of *brahma*, *viShNu* and *Siva* to generate, sustain and end the *sRShTi*, respectively. Such *trimUrtis*, assuming the *nAdarUpa*, are the *nAdAtmakas*. Hence, for *nAdOpAsakAs* like *tyAgarAja*, the Lord is visible as one and only one, the *paramAtma*. The Lord is pervading the entire universe as *anAhata nAdam*. Hence, it is important that a singer, the *nAdOpAsaka*, recognizes the sources of *nadaM* in a human body as noval, heart, neck, tongue and nose (i.e., *nABi hRtkaMTha rasana nasAdulu* -- as per the lyric of *tyAgarAja*, "*SOBillu sapta svara*") and

produces the pure *nAdaM*. Then, the music turns out to be heavenly. Such a music is *sunAdaM* which gives *AtmAnaMdaM*, the everlasting bliss.

Such a *nAdaM* is the essence of *sAma vEdaM*. Another popular saying goes, " The *sapta svaras* did emanate from the five faces of the Lord, known as *sadyOjAta*, *aGOra*, *ISAna*, *tatpuruSha* and *vAma dEva*". Hence, the lord is called *nAda SarIra* (i.e., the embodiment of *nAda*).

The Lord is praised as *nAda tanuM aniSaM SaMkaraM*. Great noble persons like *nArada*, *BRuMgi naTESa*, *agastya*, *hanumAn*, *yaj~iavalkya*, and *tuMbura* set the basics of *saMgIta saMpradAyaM*. That *saMpradAyaM* was nurtered and embellished over several hundreds of centuries. In recent times, *vAggEyakAra* trinity (i.e. *tyAgarAja*, *dlkShitAr*, and *SyAma SAstri*) as well as by *puraMdara dAsa*, *annamAcArya*, *rAmadAsa* and others preserved and enriched the *saMgIta saMpradAyaM*. All of them were ardent devotees of their respective *iMhTa daivaMs* and their lyrics are undoubtedly surcharged with *sadBakti*.

Hence, one can conclude that our Indian music is sublime and heavenly. How can anybody think of singing these lyrics in any other style other than the *saMpradAya* style. It is the responsibility of every Indian to preserve the rich heritage and pass on to the posterity. Perhaps, this is only the best Indian tradition which can be considered as precious and worthwhile to present to the non-Indian community. The western cultures are looking towards India for a way to find eternal bliss. Such a bliss is extinct in their part of the materialistic world because of rampant sex-craze, violence, and drug habits.

Nowadays people are talking about fusion, rap, rock and punk music styles. Some people hold the view that if musicians like Mr. A. R. Rehman had existed in those days, *tyAgarAja's kRutis* would have got the face lift to please the public!!!

With the fusion, rap, rock and punk music styles (including Mr. A. R. Rehman style where in the beat (*tALaM* – that too fast beat is the only importanat thing **neither *sAhityaM nor BAva***), one's limbs may dance in 360 degrees with free mobility, but at the end of the day, one runs out of steam and is totally exhausted. The next morning the person wakes up with body pain. Such a music is nothing but *vinOdaM* (fun). It is not at all *sunAdaM*. That will be the day (God forbid!!), when *haridAsAs* like, *puramdara dAsa*, *annamAcArya*, *rAmadAsa*, *tyAgarAja*, etc., start crying in their graves if their lyrics are to be sung in fusion, rap, rock and punk music styles (including Mr. A. R. Rehman style).

For several centuries, India was under the spell of foreign rule. During that time, our culture got tarnished but not annihilated. Now we, the free Indians, are trying to destroy our own culture and traditions totally by importing, adopting and nurturing the western styles of music and dance into our culture. How deplorable it is!!!

The cornerstone of our music is melody where as the above mentioned other styles are based on harmonic blend of instruments. It is not a popularity stunt but a genuine issue concerning identity, dignity, honor, and tradition of the *haridAsAs*. If the roots are uprooted, everything will be dead and gone. Then, we Indians cannot claim anything worthy of name and **there will never**

be any chance to know ourselves!!! If one does not blindly run after get-quick-name and fame- Craze and also after money-greed, the whole perspective will be really holy.

Tens of thousands of lyrics (especially film songs) almost with the same rhythm or fast beat were or are being composed in recent times. How many of such lyrics have been remembered over the years? I leave it to the readers to answer this question!!!

Only music, which is based on *sunAdaM* and *SuddhaBakti*, can last for ever, providing everlasting peace and salvation. It is established that Indian classical music *rAgAs* provide medical cure for ailments for the body as well as for the soul when there is *sunAdam* in the music:

http://www.musicalnirvana.com/carnatic/bmk_articles.html

<http://www.the-south-asian.com/Aug2002/Music%20Therapy.htm>

<http://www.google.com/search?sourceid=navclient-ff&ie=UTF-8&rls=GAPB,GAPB:2005-09,GAPB:en&q=carnatic+music+therapy>

The other types of music may provide some relief for the body ailments (???) but I doubt very much if the ailments of the soul can be fixed!!!

1.4 Bakti rasAnuBUti

Bakti rasAnuButi is an emotional ecstasy felt by an individual who may be a singer or a music lover. It is felt when the *BavArthaM* of a lyric / *kRuti* is embellished by music comprising of *Sruti*, *svaram*, *rAgam* and *tALaM* (beat) appropriately to reflect the *Bakti BAva* associated with a lyric. Then, *Bakti rasAnuBUti* makes one to identify oneself with the composer's state of mind or the *manOdharma*. At that point, the composer (who may be the singer), the singer and the audience are in the same state of sublime peace. That is heavenly music which leads to *Bakti rasa siddhi*.

If one does not pay attention to the *BAvArthaM* of the lyric, there is no way, one can feel the *rasa* aspect of the lyric. The choice of *rAgam* and *Sruti* should support *BAva* of the lyric. The *Svaram* and the *tALaM* should aid to embellish the *BavArthaM* of the song. Any lyric can be sung in any *rAgam*, *Sruti*, *svaram*, and *tALaM*. But an appropriate choice of *rAgam*, *svaram*, *Sruti* and *tALaM* can only expose the *BAvArthaM* of the lyrics in awesome manner touching the heart and soul of a person.

In the essays to follow this, a modest attempt will be made to enlighten some of the great composer's lyrics focusing on the *Bakti rasAnuBUti* aspects.

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