

The Principles of *Bhakti* Ethics in Hinduism

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Abstract

Bhakti is one of the paths in Hinduism to get closer to God. *Bhakti* is defined as religious devotion. Although it contains religious nuances, devotees often do not understand it fully. The spiritual and profane aspects of *bhakti* are often separated. Some people think *bhakti* is only enough to be done with certain rituals or offerings. Meanwhile, external aspects such as respect for others, compassion, empathy, charity, and so on are ignored. There are exclusive *bhakti* practitioners, who consider themselves the most loved by God so that they demand special treatment from the people around them. To prevent deviations in the implementation of *bhakti*, this research examines the integral aspects of *bhakti* both vertically and horizontally. Because basically, *bhakti* must include both. When a person worships or expresses his affection for God, at the same time he must also respect and love others. In Hinduism, there is a concept that God (*Brahman*) and the creatures in the world are one. In the context of creation, there is also a very close relationship between one creature and another. Unfortunately, material deception (*maya*) makes humans unable to see these similarities. Differences in skin color, race, form, species, and other appearances often trigger ignorance. Through *bhakti*, attunement of consciousness can be practiced. In different aspects, the implementation of *bhakti* can then be evaluated towards perfection. The purpose of this study is to summarize the ethical principles of *bhakti* as they were originally conceived. This is qualitative research with a descriptive approach. The principles of *bhakti* ethics in Hinduism include the ethical principle of surrender and respect, the ethical principle of love or compassion (*ahimsa*), the ethical principle of sincerity (*lascarya*), the ethical principle of service (*sevaka dharma*), and the ethical principle of empathy.

Keywords: Principles of *Bhakti* Ethics, Hinduism

I. INTRODUCTION

Vertically, *bhakti* is about the existence of God as the creator. Human behavior toward God stimulates the emergence of noble behaviors, especially those that are synonymous with the worship of God as the Holy One. In Hinduism, it is commonly believed that *Brahmā* is an aspect of *Brahman* that creates the universe and everything in it. Raju (2007) states that *Brahmā* is considered the earliest creator god according to pre-*Vedic* beliefs. *Brahmā* is the popular name for the creator god in the *Āryāvarta* region. The creator god has various forms and names that are specific to each different region and era.

It is mentioned that at the end of the *Maharātri*, when the period of new creation was imminent, Lord *Brahmā* created the entire universe (brought from cause form to effect form) through His unlimited omnipotence. Consequently, all religious schools and sects came to recognize Him as

the creator god and accept Lord *Brahmā*'s authority. There is also a belief that the *Vedas* are the creation of Lord *Brahmā*. Thus, *Brahmā* is also the origin of the *Vedas*, and subsequently, the *Vedas* are the origin of all sciences and their systems.

The worship of God as the creator is not always synonymous with fear. Humans do not only have fear. As in everyday life, humans act with other emotions such as love, shame, gratitude, and others. In the context of worship, different types of emotions flow in the minds of devotees when contemplating God. The more sublime emotions indicate the level of attainment of each devotee. The realization of these is sincerity. *Bhakti* in this sense is based only on sincerity. However, sincerity cannot be achieved instantly. A very integral accumulation of *bhakti* can save the image of religion from partiality. Every devotee of *bhakti* is not only taught to worship God but forget the love and respect for God's creatures. On the contrary, the

principles of *bhakti* contain the understanding that God resides in every aspect, there is not a single aspect that is not impregnated by God. This understanding is the ethical, philosophical, and theological foundation for realizing horizontal harmony. Of course, this harmony is very linear with the spiritual or religious dimension.

II. RESEARCH METHOD

This is a type of qualitative research because it is only descriptive, without any special numerical processes. This research begins with a research question although it is not explicitly stated. The approach of this research is descriptive because here the researcher tries to describe a concept with the appropriate analysis process or literature reference. The steps taken by researchers in this study are (a) finding the problem to be studied, (b) collecting literature sources that are considered relevant, (c) conducting a description and analysis process based on the literature sources that have been collected, (d) formulating research conclusions.

III. THE RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. The Concept of *Bhakti* Ethics

Essentially, *bhakti* is an effort made by a person to focus on essential things. In living life in the world, everyone has the potential to be tempted by something bad. Borah and Das (2020) stated that the special characteristic of *bhakti* is that through this method the practitioner loses interest in other things, apart from just the sake of God whom he loves very much. Borah and Das When relating their opinions to Ramanuja's views, identified that *bhakti* is not just about feelings, but rather a special type of knowledge (*jnana-visesa*) that leads practitioners to be able to ignore everything that is not done for the sake of Isvara (the devotee's manifestation of God). According to Ramanuja, devotion begins with total obedience to religious duties as prescribed in the holy books in each community group and at every level of life.

Bhakti was originally designed to ensure that each person performs their respective duties according to their age and position in society. Of course, *bhakti* predominantly impacts social order.

However, *bhakti* must begin with individual reinforcement. Every prospective *bhakti* practitioner must have moral and spiritual responsibilities related to the path or method he has chosen. The effectiveness of *bhakti* to create harmony vertically and horizontally, body-spirit, and individual-social has been proven since ancient times. Holdrege (in, Bennett, 2016) states the earliest appearance of the term *bhakti* can be found in Pāṇini's Aṣṭādhyāyī (500-400 BC) and Mahābhārata (200 BC-100 AD). The term *bhakti* generally refers to a relationship of loyalty and devotion to a king or military leader. While in the Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad (400-200 BC) and Bhagavad-Gītā (200 BC), the meaning of the term is expanded to include service, respect, love, and devotion to the gods. The later development of the *bhakti* phase also included the *guru* as its object.

The principles of *bhakti* ethics are not only about modesty and worship but also include humanitarian ethics. The concept of *bhakti* connects divine ethics and human ethics. Both kinds of ethics are needed as a whole in life. Divine ethics relates to respect for the formless (*nirrupa*) aspect that lives in the beliefs of each religion or faith. Each religion and faith has certain rules to achieve the ethical value of worship. Humanitarian ethics, on the other hand, deals with courtesy to others. Ethical behavior should be directed to every human being without exception.

2. The Ethical Principles of Surrender and Respect

The principle of surrender in *bhakti* is closely related to the level of divinity in human understanding. Khajegir and Afroogh (2019) state in the view of Vedantism that *Brahman* has different levels. In a state of unity, totality, and immobility, the quality of *Brahman* is identified as *Nirguna*. In this condition, *Brahman* can only be understood through higher knowledge. People who understand *Brahman* in that state find the influence and imprint of *Brahman*'s actions on themselves. While at a lower level, everything is visible, diverse, and dynamic. The entire world which includes various elements is *Brahman*. In that state, *Brahman* is called *Saguna*. In the *Saguna* aspect people with low knowledge can also identify *Brahman*.

The surrender to God based on the spirit of *bhakti* is known as *prapatti*. Borah and Das (2020) when reviewing Ramanuja's opinion stated that *prapatti* is a very old teaching as can be found in ancient texts such as Ahirbudhnya Samhita, Laksmi Tantra, Bharadvaja Samhita, and other Pancaratra works. *Prapatti* means surrender (*saranagati*). The three prominent paths of *bhakti*, *jnana*, and *karma* are generally recognized. However, according to Ramanuja *prapatti* is not the fourth path but the proper fulfillment of *marga bhakti*. Without *saranagati*, the implementation of *bhakti* will not achieve favorable results. People who apply the *prapatti* method can overcome suffering, then gain knowledge of the ultimate reality. If devotees succeed in doing so, they will enjoy eternal bliss forever. After the destruction of attachment to mortal things, devotees enjoy *Bhagavat-kaimkarya* (the blessing of serving God sincerely). It is through the practice of *bhakti* that every devotee gets God's infinite mercy. *Prapatti* does not require any equipment and is open to all.

Ramanuja advised those engaged in the path of *bhakti* to abstain from worldly temptations and surrender unconditionally at God's holy feet. Ramanuja also observed that God's mercy is powerful enough to destroy most of the karmic bonds, but there are still traces left. This is because God's mercy does not destroy the *prarabdha karma* of the devotee. The devotee must still reap the results of his actions. Ramanuja strongly believed that the value of *prapatti* or complete surrender is an effective way to achieve *Moksha* or liberation. *Prapatti* is only possible if the practitioner always remembers *God*. The state of the *Jiva* will remain confined by suffering until a state of complete surrender to God is reached. God will bestow *Brahmajnana* to those souls who attain purification. For devotees, *Moksha* can't be achieved without God's grace, because if God's grace does not appear then there is only theoretical knowledge or baseless devotion that fails to open the door to liberation.

Surrender is closely related to mental health. Sharara (2018) found several clinical implications related to the practice of holistic psychology, especially as it embraces

cultural views to expand psychological understanding around the nature of selfhood. The main implication concerns the importance of the cultural competence of psychologists or other medical professionals in understanding surrender as a psycho-spiritual phenomenon that often reflects clients' values, existential ideals, and self-understanding. Surrender as a way of life is easily misunderstood and pathologized when interpreted from the perspective of modern psychological theories that predominantly begin and end with the reality of the ego.

In ego-based theories of psychology, a dominant sense of self is used to view both the self and the world. According to this theoretical perspective, the concept of surrender is difficult to understand. Meanwhile, the worst paradigm related to surrender is the view of a pathological form of ego development. In addition, the prejudices inherent in modern psychological discourse tend to be based on scientific positivism. This can put patients at risk of having their existential values and beliefs invalidated and potentially pathologized by experts with positivistic views. The phenomenon of surrender is very difficult to understand, but it is not an inherent obscurity or complexity of the phenomenon, but rather a difference or change relative to the implicit understanding of the notion of self that characterizes sensibility in modern psychology. In other words, there are often untested human assumptions about what is real and what is not. This then makes the phenomenon of surrender difficult to apply. The difficulty is also exacerbated by the fact that in the modern world, individuals tend to be under enormous pressure to constantly prove themselves, assert their values, and differentiate themselves from others. Of course, differentiation is not the problem, because non-separatization does not mean non-differentiation. The world of multiplicity is full of differentiation. Whereas the teachings of emptiness and non-separatization inherent in the phenomenon of renunciation explain that beyond these differences, at the level of essence, all diversity comes from the same source of ultimate silence.

In addition, the phenomenon of surrender is clinically relevant, as in most

instances, it facilitates a state of health and well-being that is obtained through certain techniques. One of the most important things is that surrender allows individuals to break away from narrow-mindedness and limited ways of understanding themselves and others. In other words, surrender can directly address alienation, anomy, and a sense of separation. An example can be seen through the experience of an individual who previously felt no connection with others, subsequently learning to care for others deeply. The exercise is very useful for the practitioner to recognize himself in the condition of others, both about feelings of joy and sorrow. Another example can be seen in the transformation of an individual's relationship with nature. An individual who is isolated and experiences the world through the perspective of a separate experience of self tends to perceive nature as a threat that needs to be controlled or even simply regard it as a resource that can be exploited for personal gain. On the contrary, if the person practices surrender, he or she will abandon his or her limited and egocentric-oriented way of identification. The individual will discover new and wiser understandings, feelings, and ways of being. Such as manifesting a sense of communion, connection, and obligation to manage nature ethically.

Another way in which the concept of renunciation is related to facilitating health and well-being is through the control of suffering stemming from addiction. It is important to note here that the term 'addiction' is used to describe a much broader domain of human experience than its generally accepted formal meaning. Addiction in this case refers not only to the use of addictive substances but also to worldly attachments. The set of behaviors that individuals engage in is often unconsciously intended to avoid feelings of alienation, emptiness, and loneliness. This signifies a partial life experience for the perpetrators. People who are alienated in modern life tend to compulsively use social media, smartphones, fancy food, and so on. Moreover, when individuals are trapped in narrow thinking, they will continue to seek help or temporary escapes that do not solve the problem.

Devotees uphold the ethic of respecting fellow human beings without being confused by differences in gender or background. The perversion of *bhakti* teachings is first seen in the discrimination against people based on gender. As patriarchy is too prominent in a society. In such a society, respect for women is neglected. Goswami (2021) states that men and women are two basic components of society. Each component is highly dependent on the other. Both men and women are envisioned as a pair of wheels of the same chariot. Distinctions are only related to a person's position in a system based on certain statuses and duties. Individuals of a particular gender then play their role in the group based on age, family background, occupation, marriage, and achievement. However, women's rights are generally measured by the amount of prestige and respect given to them, rather than men.

In fact, for the sake of human existence and evolution, society has always required the role of both men and women. One is not superior to the other, and both come from God. However, until now, we can still see inhumane, unethical, and immoral treatment of women. Goswami (2021) further states that the belief in dominating masculinity makes women suffer greatly because they are not given equal opportunities in various fields of life. In the modern era, the rise of feminist thought has had a tremendous impact on improving the conditions of women around the world. Access to education has become one of the most pressing demands of the women's rights movement. Meanwhile, when viewed more integrally, there has been no gender discrimination since Vedic times. Women were highly respected by men in the family. Women also took part in teaching as men did. Gender discrimination against women began in the Mohul Period. Even minimal freedom was not given to women in that period. This restraint continued into later periods.

In India, where the Vedic tradition was born and developed, discrimination against women continued until the British colonization. Fortunately, after independence was proclaimed, India's leaders thought of re-establishing the Vedic teachings of respect for women. A constitution was then drafted

to abolish gender discrimination. The rules that were drafted in the spirit of Vedic values sought to restore women's rights through the means of education and awareness of equality. Consequently, men were required to behave ethically towards women and vice versa.

The second cause, related to the erosion of respect between fellow human beings, is hereditary background. People who feel they are in the upper class look down on other classes that are perceived to be lower. In Hinduism, this has been anticipated by the *varnashrama* system. Dhakad (2019) states that the *varnashrama* system is an important element in ancient Indian social life. Ancient thinkers divided society into four *varnas* namely *Brahmins*, *Kshatriyas*, *Vaisyas* and *Sudras*. The *varna* system is a form of social organization in the Vedic period that still has an impact on society today. The form of the *varna* system has changed over time based on actions (*karma*), birth, skin color, social system, and status. The word *varna* is derived from the root *varani* or *vari* meaning choice, henceforth *varna* means *vriti* or choosing a certain specific system. The term *varna* was first used in the Rgveda to classify forms of social organization in the early Vedic period. *Purusha Sukta* is the first mantra to describe the *varna* system. In this *mantra*, there is an analogy of the four organs of *Adi Purusa*. Through the *mantra*, the whole of society is described as *Virata Purusha*. Its parts consist of *Brahmins*, *Ksatriyas*, *Vaishyas* and *Sudras*. *Brahmins* emerge from the mouth of *Virata Purusha*, *Ksatriyas* from His arms, *Vaishyas* from His abdomen, and *Sudras* from His feet. It is in this way that human beings are classified by *guna* and *karma*. Man achieves greatness based on the harmonization of potential *gunas*. There are three kinds of *gunas* namely *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas* that have been conditioned by nature. Individuals who are predominantly *sattva guna* are willing to live their lives peacefully. People dominated by *rajas guna* tend to be greedy and enslaved by lust. While individuals dominated by *tamas guna* are lazy and careless. The three *gunas* are purely innate and some are influenced by the environment. In essence, *guna* is an individual trait. Furthermore, each individual's actions (*karma*) are

predetermined based on the *guna*. Individuals with *sattva guna* were classified as *Brahmins* in ancient Vedic society. People with *rajas guna* become *Kshatriyas* and individuals with a combination of *sattva* and *rajas* become *Vaishyas*. Finally, individuals who are predominantly *tamas guna* become *Sudras*. Similar depictions can be found in the *Puranas*. The *Vishnu Purana* states that *Brahmins* dominated by *sattva guna* are born from Vishnu's mouth, *Kshatriyas* dominated by *rajas guna* are born from Vishnu's arms, *Vaishyas* dominated by *rajas* and *tamas guna* are born from Vishnu's thighs, and finally, *Sudras* dominated by *tamas guna* are born from Vishnu's feet.

In the *Bhagavadgita* it is explained that the duties of a *Brahmin* are related to control of conscience, control of the senses, maintaining purity of body and soul, forgiveness, simplicity, independence of learning, humility to respect, and striving for knowledge of God. In addition, purity, self-control, contentment, forgiveness, simplicity, love of God, and righteousness are natural qualities of *Brahmins*. The duties of the *Kshatriyas* are related to power. *Kshatriyas* are naturally described as having courage, heroism, strength, skill, war readiness, charity, and love of God. The duties of the *Vaishyas* are related to agriculture and economics. More broadly, every *Vaishya* must have the ability to farm, raise livestock, buy and sell, and behave honestly. The *Sudras* must serve the other *Varnas*.

In *Manusmrti*, *Manu* had placed the *Brahmins* at the highest level of the social order and expected them to behave according to honorable principles. *Manu* had instructed the *Brahmins* to always adopt the holy behavior prescribed by the Vedas. *Manu* also warned that *Brahmins* who deviated from this holy behavior did not gain the merit described in the Vedas. The main duties of *Brahmins* are to control the senses, learn and teach, make sacrifices, and give and receive alms. The duties of the *Kshatriya* are to protect the people from external invasion, provide security during internal conflicts, care for the plight of the people and rule with a vision of progress, avoid selfishness, be prepared to go to war when necessary and obey the teachings of *dharma*. *Vaishya* duties relate to the practice of buying and selling

goods at fair prices, farming, and raising livestock. The *Sudras* must provide services to the other three *varnas*. The services rendered by the *Sudras* should be sincere. Kautilya supported the varna system for the realization of an ideal social order. Kautilya especially emphasized the king's primary duty to maintain the *varnashrama*, so that the other classes do not deviate from their duties.

Therefore, respect between classes in the *varnasrama* system as an imperative is very clear. That is because each *Varna* supports the other in the performance of societal duties. Another reason is that all humans come from one God. This realization then gave birth to various types of rules such as ethics when dealing with spiritual teachers, ethics when dealing with leaders, ethics when dealing with economists, protection of subordinates, and so on. Such ethics create mutual comfort in interaction and cooperation.

3. The Ethical Principle of Loving or Compassion (*Ahimsa*)

Das and Rao (2022) state that the concept of love (*kama*) in Hinduism is part of the four main spheres of life besides *artha* (material gain/ownership), *dharma* (virtue/moral duty), and *moksha* (ultimate liberation). The RgVeda analogizes *kama* to a bull's thirst for water. The Atharva Veda describes the life of love as marital and family harmony which includes harmony between husband, wife, and children. The Bhagavadgita reveals the teachings of devotional love and divinity as the central point supporting compassion, love for all life forms, and avoidance of hatred.

Farhatullah (2015) mentions that Kamadeva is the god of carnal love in Hinduism. This god can arouse physical desires in living beings. Kamadeva was born from the heart of the Creator, Lord Brahma. This god of romance is described as a figure who always looks young with greenish or reddish skin, decorated with ornaments and flowers, armed with a sugar cane bow and flower arrowheads. His wives are the very beautiful Rati and Priti, his vehicle is a parrot, his main ally is Vasanta (the god of spring) and his attendants are a group of heavenly dancers and musicians (*Apsara*, *Gandharva* and *Kinnara*). According to legend,

Kamadeva met his demise at the hands of Lord Shiva who burnt him with His third eye. Kamadeva at the time had disturbed Lord Shiva who was meditating with one of his love arrows. It was intended to make Lord Shiva fall in love with Parvati. Since then, Kamadeva has been without a body. However, in Indian mythology, Kamadeva is believed to have several incarnations.

Sharma, et.al (2013) stated that for Hindus the purpose of marriage is not only to produce offspring to pay off debts (*rna*) to ancestors, but also relates to spiritual duties. The institution of marriage is considered sacred even by people who consider it a civil contract. According to the Satpatha Brahmin view, the wife is analogous to half of her husband (*ardhangini*). Similarly, men are also partial during singleness and attain completeness when married. Manu states that fidelity between husband and wife is the highest dharma of mutual benefit. While the Mahabharata supposes that by loving their wives the husbands are actually honoring the goddess of prosperity. Wife according to Hindu law is not just *grahpatni*, but also *dharma patni* and *shadharmini*. The wife is the best for her husband acting as a loyal friend. The wife determines the achievement of *dharma*, *artha*, *kama*, and *moksa*. Meanwhile, the husband is known as *bharthi*, a figure whose duty is to support his wife. The sacramental aspect of marriage according to Hindu law has three characteristics. First, marriage is not just to satisfy physical needs but is intended to realize religious and spiritual goals. Second, a marriage that has been entered into cannot be annulled for any reason. Third, in marriage, there is a process of unification of soul, body, and mind. This union is not only for the sake of material life but also for the sake of eternal life after death. Related to affection for the spouse, *bhakti* then gives birth to ethical rules for a husband to his wife or vice versa.

The second type of love is universal. Krishna, et.al (2023) attributed the frequency of loving energy to the algorithm of the universe. The algorithm of the universe is run as it happens in the internet world. Just as the Instagram algorithm sorts things that are often followed or searched for by users. The universe algorithm works similarly. The

universe algorithm will bring things into focus and reflect the dominant energy received. When a person emits energy with high vibrations, such as love, kindness, abundance, gratitude, and so on, the energy will be radiated back to them so that they can realize *Jagadhita*. *Jagadhita* is the happiness and well-being that humans achieve in their lives in the world. *Jagadhita* is very important to realize in life because it can enlarge human potential to share and love each other. This can be realized when humans feel sufficient for themselves and start thinking about the wider environment. The feeling of sufficiency and the orientation of an inward-looking quest to know one's authentic self can be a stepping stone for the soul to achieve ultimate freedom and happiness. Humans must understand that they exist in a universe full of energy fields, everything is connected to energy. At this level of understanding, man needs to be in harmony with the energy of the universe. The mind has a very dominant influence on the course of human life. The universe algorithm will be able to quickly read the frequency of each person's thoughts and respond in various forms, whether humans realize it or not. When humans emit waves of universal love, the universe will respond with similar energy. People who radiate universal love, in addition to maintaining the safety of the beings around them, are saving themselves. Every *bhakti* practitioner radiates universal love with ethical behavior. Because when treated following ethical rules everyone will feel joy and be kept away from suffering.

4. The Ethical Principle of Sincerity (*Lascarya*)

Vertically, the values of sincerity are closely related to offerings, especially those addressed to God (*dewa yajna*). Indeed, in Hinduism, there are several other variants of *yajna* such as *bhuta yajna*, *rsi yajna*, *manusa yajna*, and *pitra yajna*, but all four aspects originate from God. Raju (2007) states that the main theme of the Vedas is *Yajña*. The Vedas were created from the *Yajña* performed as a pledge by Virat-Purusha (Brahmā) as expressed in the Purushuktam Rig-Veda. The all too prevalent evil thoughts and deeds led to the contamination of the *Mahaprana* called Virat-Purusha. Slowly,

the pollution leads to saturation which appears in holistic disturbances to living beings that can be categorized as natural disasters. To minimize these adverse effects, *Yajña* is performed. In this sense, *Yajña* is an offering of purity to the Gods. The close relationship between the Vedas and *Yajña* is inseparable. For example, in the Karmakanda practice of *Yajña*, the chanting of Rgveda, Yajurveda, and Atharveda mantras is a very common practice. When *Yajña* is examined from a broader aspect it is only *Yajña* that is responsible for the creation and maintenance of the universe as reflected in the Purusuktam. The Gyan-Veda was created out of immense *Yajña* to support and maintain the universe. In detail, it is stated that the universe and its contents were created from the will of Virat-Purusha.

First, the Earth and its various life forms were created. Then the Vedas were created by *Yajña* to provide a vision of the ideal life through its disciplines. It is conceived that the Gods prayed before Virat-Purusha performed *Yajña*. Those who imitate the performance of the ritual are declared to attain heaven (*Swarga*). Vedic mantras reveal the angels of all animate and inanimate objects found in the universe. If one does not understand their secrets then their proper utilization is very difficult. For example, without understanding the nature of *Agni* (fire) it becomes very difficult to utilize it properly. *Agni* can only be controlled by non-flammable objects and on the contrary can destroy flammable objects. A *satya-purusha* (true human being) will be able to attain salvation by following the Vedic rules that are attached to the Deity (God). *Purusha* (main being or Brahmā) in the Vedas is described as having many faces. The first *sankalpa* (promise) of the main *Purusha* in the performance of *Yajña* is the creation of the universe. His second promise is the creation of macro and micro-objects by following their flow so that the *shruti-chakras* are not interrupted. His third promise is that all living beings follow their natural course, including not disturbing the balance of nature. His fourth promise is *Karmakanda* manifested in the form of *Puja* (prayer) which can condition the energy waves in the universe. The ethics of vertical *bhakti* are summarized in the rules of worship that come

from the scriptures or become a noble tradition in a place. For example, the ethics of entering a holy place, the ethics of worshipping *pratima*, the ethics of making offerings (*banten*), and so on. The ethics also indicate sincerity (*lascarya*).

Sociologically, the value of sincerity in *bhakti* is manifested in *punia*. Sujatindriasih (2023) interprets three types of *punia* quoted from the Sangyang Kamahayanikan text. The three types of *punia* include *dana*, *mutidana*, and *atidana*. *Dana punia* is realized by donating property to those in need. There is a higher value in *dana punia* than just an ordinary gift. The giver must practice sincerity and get rid of feelings of pride. In addition to benefiting people in need, charitable behavior also brings benefits, which can form a noble personality for the practitioner. Besides gifts in the form of property, there are other types of non-material gifts. *Atidana* is apologizing to others who have made mistakes. It often happens that someone who is victimized or harmed by an act is very difficult to forgive the perpetrator. Moreover, the mistake was intentional and repeatedly committed by the perpetrator. Only people who have undergone mature self-cultivation can forgive others sincerely. This decision can avoid other greater losses such as revenge or hurt. People who can forgive will not be burdened by the traces of other people's wrongdoings. The ability to forgive indicates that the perpetrator has greatness of soul. Apologies should not be given only when the perpetrator asks for forgiveness. Apologies should be given immediately even after an unpleasant act has occurred. Indeed, for the sake of social good, one is required not to apologize easily to the perpetrator of the crime, but this is only normative, not inner. The aim is to provide a deterrent effect to the perpetrators of the crime as well as to prevent the recurrence of similar acts by other perpetrators. Besides forgiving, another type of *atidana* is doing work with sincerity, without expecting anything in return. The third type of *punia* is called *mutidana*, which is done by sacrificing one's body and soul for the benefit of many people. In general, *mutidana* perpetrators are *ksatriyas* who are always prepared to sacrifice their body and soul for the integrity of the state. However, it

does not close the opportunity for other groups to do the same. For example, when the country's integrity is threatened, the obligation to defend the country is not only imposed on the military. All people who still have the ability must move. Likewise, the sacrifice of body and soul is not only limited to the physical battlefield. Even in everyday life, the readiness to sacrifice is often found and needed. For example, a firefighter or rescue team who bravely saves the victims is also classified as a *mutidana*.

The sincerity (*lascarya*) of *punia* performed by devotees is reflected in ethical behavior. For example, *punia* is not done with arrogance, pride, showing off, and so on. Sincerity in forgiving or doing certain jobs prevents one from unethical behavior such as blaspheming, ranting, or speaking ill of others. Likewise, patriotic people who are hailed in society should not be too proud. Instead, their prominence can be used to provide examples of ethical behaviors.

5. The Principles of Service Ethics (*Sevaka Dharma*)

Patel (2012) states that *sevā* in the conception of *bhakti*, although often associated with social service activities, also has a deep relationship with the underlying Hindu theological concepts. This is because, without theological concepts, *sevā* cannot be done optimally. *Sevā* must be done with the right method of implementation. A person who will perform *sevā* must be adequately trained. About the dimension of worship, *Sādhanā* is the agent that transforms *sevā* from social service to spiritual attainment. An individual who performs *Sevā* is not only dealing with human satisfaction but is further closely related to the religious dimension. It is also through *sevā* that *sādhanā* can be understood as a means to attain various kinds of spiritual attainments ranging from rectification of errors to *moksha*. *Sadhana* is thus not just blind worship of certain manifestations of God but also deals with the human world such as assisting people in need. In general, *sādhanā* related to *Sevā* mainly comes from two sources namely religious scriptures and direct instructions from individuals who are considered spiritually advanced.

Patel (2023) compared *seva* with other aspects of human relations such as charity, empowerment, and advocacy. Firstly, charity and service (*seva*) both aim to help others but are seen as having different motivations. Charity is often motivated by compassion or sympathy among those in need. In addition, charity also has the potential to create a sense of dependency or inferiority on the part of the recipient. *Seva*, on the other hand, is motivated by gratitude or devotion to God, which in turn triggers humanitarian actions. *Seva* is seen to create a feeling of dignity or equality among the recipients. Through the understanding that God resides in everything, humans feel an obligation to serve and respect God's creatures. Charity is also seen as selective or conditional, depending on the preferences or expectations of the donor. Meanwhile, *seva* is universal or unconditional, paying little attention to the condition or background of the recipient. Secondly, integrating the right ideas or ideologies into far-reaching policies can overcome potential injustices. It is also stated that empowerment and *seva* need each other, despite their different approaches and scopes. Empowerment focuses on increasing capabilities and is related to the opportunity for individuals or groups to develop according to their respective life situations. Meanwhile, *seva* focuses on fulfilling the needs and interests of others without expecting anything in return. Empowerment can be limited by the availability or accessibility of resources or information. Whereas *seva* goes beyond the material or physical aspects, it can solve emotional to spiritual problems.

Through involvement in *seva*, a person becomes more empowered in their community and connected to the wider society. The position of a *seva* actor can also become more visible. A sense of equality can be strengthened as actions are carried out with sincerity and without expecting anything in return. Third, advocacy and *seva* both involve communication with others but differ in purpose and perspective. Advocacy aims to influence or change policies and practices that affect the health and well-being of individuals and communities. While *seva* aims to express or show love for God and humanity. Advocacy can also be

confrontational or trigger conflict, depending on the nature or extent of the issue. Meanwhile, *seva* is more inclined towards harmonization or cooperation. One form of *seva*, *vachan seva*, utilizes communication for the collective good. *Seva* and other aspects of human relationships must work together to achieve individual and social good. *Seva* must also be distinguished from ordinary service which is still clouded by piety or other impure goals. Every devotee must perform sincere service. When this is the case, service can be done ethically and does not cause discomfort to those served.

6. The Principle of Ethical Empathy

Empathy is not a weakness of the soul that causes one to feel compassion for the suffering of others. In bhakti teachings, empathy signifies the peak of divine appreciation. Thasleema KR, et.al (2019) stated that according to Vedic teachings, *yogis* are figures who succeed in putting themselves in the position of others at all times. The *yogi* no longer distinguishes himself from others so that he can feel the pleasure and suffering of others. People who find empathy in *bhakti* always strive for glory in every action, because they understand that all things have unity with themselves.

In Hinduism, the most famous concept of empathy is *tat tvam asi*. Untung and Mu'tasyim (2020: 236-237) state *Tat Tvam Asi* is the foundation of the highest moral teachings in Hinduism. This teaching contains unlimited moral philosophy. The delivery of these teachings in philosophical nuances has led to the emergence of a very varied study space. The meaning of *tat tvam asi* is simply to see oneself as the other party or vice versa to consider the other party as one's own. In Hinduism, this teaching has permeated the moral or ethical dimension. It also means that *tat tvam asi* is not just a philosophical concept, but is implemented in everyday life. Second, *tat tvam asi* shows the unity of the essence of humans and all creatures with the highest Brahman. In this understanding, the Supreme *Brahman* illuminates' creatures. Through an understanding of *tat tvam asi* humans can then appreciate themselves as not only material beings, but eternal spiritual entities.

The spark of Brahman in humans that has the same nature as *Brahman* is *Atman*. In a social sense, *tat tvam asi* makes every devotee realize to empathize with others, in line with the *bhakti* performed.

Empathy in *bhakti* is not just for the sake of social image nor is it a feeling whose source is unknown. The practitioner of *bhakti* exudes empathy not just for the sake of external praise or rewards. The process is understood as part of spiritual practice. External things are not able to influence people who practice *bhakti*. Meanwhile, through the principle of empathy, every devotee does not get caught up in individual or theoretical preoccupations. His feelings of love and devotion to God are manifested into concrete actions such as social humanitarian activities.

Empathy is closely related to taking into account the impact of an action on the physical and mental condition of the individual who is the target of an action. People who have established empathy will perform ethical behaviors to everyone because they realize that unethical behavior causes uncomfortable feelings. Someone who exemplifies ethical behavior is not only to get self-satisfaction from the implementation of ideology. More broadly, ethical actions based on empathy are expected to be imitated by everyone. In the end, the condition of society can be harmonized with ethical behavior that is triggered by inner awareness.

IV. CONCLUSION

The ethic of *bhakti* encompasses both the vertical and horizontal dimensions. Because religiosity will lose its function when it does not continue into the social dimension. The development of religious *bhakti* then continues into the realm of humanity. Indeed, in general, the initial targets of *bhakti* are individuals who occupy honorable positions in society such as spiritual teachers, kings, and so on. While in its more integral aspect, *bhakti* is manifested in ethical behavior aimed at everyone. Through the vibrations of *bhakti*, every place becomes adorned with ethical behaviors.

The principle of surrender to God in *bhakti* ethics is based on the realization that God is the origin and destination of all

beings. This realization triggers respect for fellow human beings, even all beings because it is understood to come from a single source. *Bhakti* leads to the collapse of discrimination caused by differences in gender, family background, and so on. Human beings then show ethical behavior towards each other. The principle of love and affection in *bhakti* ethics takes the form of rules of married ethics and universal ethics of affection.

The principle of sincerity (*lascarya*) in *bhakti* ethics reinforces that ethical behavior must be based on sincerity. When actions are not based on sincerity, it will be very difficult to achieve a degree of ethicality. While sincerity affects the next principle, namely the principle of service (*sevaka dharma*). In this view, serving humans is seen as equivalent to serving God if done with sincerity. It is also through deep devotion that the practitioner recognizes the next principle, namely empathy. When a person has established empathy, he will be able to treat others as he treats himself. The ethics that materialize from empathy become very integral.

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