



Sharanagati

Sharanagati (Sanskrit: शरणागति; IAST: *Śaraṇāgati*) or **Prapatti** (Sanskrit: प्रपत्ति; IAST: *Prapatti*), is the process of total surrender to God (Narayana-Krishna) in the tradition of Vaishnavism. The process of Sharanagati forms the basis of devotion to Vishnu in the bhakti traditions within the Sri Sampradaya, propounded by Ramanuja (1017–1137 CE), and the Gaudiya Sampradaya, founded by Chaitanya Mahaprabhu (1482–1533 CE). Ramanuja considered surrender to Vishnu and his consort Lakshmi to be the highest goal of life, while Chaitanya emphasised surrender to Krishna and his consort Radha as supreme through physical surrender to the preceptor/guru.

Literature

Sri Vaishnava texts offer their recognition of the practice of Sharanagati. Yamunacharya posited this approach as an alternative to the conventional practices of seeking salvation:^[1]

Na dharmamanistosmi na catmavedi

na bhaktimam stvaccaranaravinde \ akincano
ananyagatissaranya tvatpadamulam saranam
prapadye ||

The path of surrender (Saranagati) is open for one who is unable to follow the path of action (Karmayoga), knowledge (Jnanayoga) and devotion (Bhaktiyoga), and who has no other way of salvation

—Yamunacharya, Stotra Ratna

Vedanta Desika's commentary on this sloka offers his perspective:^[1]

Ahamasmyaparadhanamayokincano gatihi

tvamevopayabtuto me bhaveti prarthanamatihi Saranagatirityukta sa deva smin
prayujyatam

Saranagati is a state of mind of praying to God that he alone should become the means of saving the devotee, associated with the realisation that the devotee is utterly helpless, sinful, and without any other hope of salvation

—Vedanta Desika



Depiction of a Vaishnava, a performer of this practice

Initiation

The formal ritual of Sharanagati is a Vedic and Puranic scriptural and tradition backed ritual called the *Pancha-Samskara*, or "the five impressions", and another name is *Samashrayanam*. The individual receives the following:

- **Nama Samskara** - An initiation 'spiritual' name such as a name of Vishnu, or one of his devotees (such as Ramanuja), suffixed with the word *dasa* (meaning "servant", or servant of). Examples of these could be *Vishnu dasa*, or *Ramanuja dasa*.
- **Pundra Samskara** - Application of the *tiruman*, or the Urdhva Pundra, on the forehead and 12 marks on certain parts of the body, which signifies that the individual belong to Vishnu, and that their bodies, minds, and souls are the temples of Lakshmi-Narayana.
- **Thapa Samskara** - Special branding on the shoulders of the conch (Panchajanya) and the chakra (Sudarshana) of Vishnu by a guru.
- **Yajna Samskara** - Learning to perform the archana or puja, or ritual worship, of Lakshmi-Narayana from the guru.
- **Mantra Samskara** - Learning three special mantras dedicated to Vishnu from the guru.

Principles

Sri Vaishnavism

In the Sri Vaishnava tradition, the Sharanagati is divided into six principles:

1. Accepting those things that are favorable for devotion to God (*anukulyasya sankalpa*)
2. Rejecting those things that are averse to surrender to God (*pratikulyasya varjanam*)
3. Considering God to be one's protector in all circumstances (*raksisyatiti visvasa*)
4. Accepting God as one's maintainer (*goptrtve varanam*)
5. Surrendering everything in God's service (*atma-niksepa*)
6. Cultivating a humble attitude (*karpanya*)

Gaudiya Vaishnavism

In the Gaudiya tradition, the Sharanagati is divided into ten principles [1] (<https://archive.org/details/ails/the-concept-of-saranagati-in-gaudiya-vaishnavism>):

1. Ānukūlyasya saṅkalpaḥ – Accepting what is favorable for devotional service (bhakti).
2. Prātikūlyasya varjanam – Rejecting what is unfavorable for bhakti.
3. Rakṣiṣyatīti viśvāsaḥ – Having firm faith that Bhagavān will protect the devotee.
4. Goptrtve varaṇam – Accepting Bhagavān as one's sole maintainer.
5. Ātma-nikṣepaḥ – Full surrender of oneself to Bhagavān.
6. Kārpaṇya – Feeling humility and helplessness before Bhagavān.

Five Limbs

In the philosophy of Vishistadvaita, the Saranagati bears 5 elements: the five limbs, referred to as *angas*, and the adherent of these, known as an *angi*.

1. Acknowledgement of one's helplessness
2. Determination to not err again
3. Vowing to follow the rules
4. Possessing an unshakeable faith that God is the sole refuge
5. Seeking God as one's protector

References

1. Umakantham. C (2001). *Greatness Of Saranagati In Sri Vaishnavism* (<http://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.162083>).
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 - *Sri Vaishnavism: an Elementary treatise for beginners, published Sri Thillasthanam Swamy Kainkarya Sabha, Bangalore India & the Sri Vishishtadvaita Research Centre, Madras India* <https://sites.google.com/view/tsksabha/home/srivaishnavism-saranagathi>
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