

## **Bhava Samadhi: Lead me from the unreal to the real**

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*Bhava Samadhi* is a concept related to a set of experiences surrounding one's devotional life. *Bhava* means "feeling," "emotion," "mood," "mental attitude," or "devotional state of mind." *Samadhi* is a state of consciousness in which the mind becomes completely still. *Bhava Samadhi* is sometimes translated as trance, but there is no exact English word for *bhava*. It is most closely related to the idea of emotional feeling, which, in this case, is a kind of *false ecstasy*.

Understanding the meaning of the word *samadhi* helps us to understand authentic experience. The word *samadhi* reveals what the authentic experience is. Here is a breakdown of this word:

sam: to join together, to consume utterly by burning, same

ma: measure, measured frequencies, wave forms emanating from the Field of consciousness

sama: even, smooth, flat, plain, level, parallel, constant, unchanged, having the right measure, peace, full, complete, whole, entire

dhi: to nourish, satiate, satisfy, receptacle, to hold

Putting it all together, *samadhi* refers to an internal joining together with that constant, unchanging Space or Field - Consciousness. The nature of this Space is that it is comprised of measured frequencies or vibrations (qualities) that, when encountered, entirely consume us with peace, wholeness, and fullness. Our experience is that we are held in a state of nourishment, satiation, and satisfaction. We stop seeking outside ourselves and feel no need for outside teaching other than confirmation. Our search is over. We cease our search for belonging to an organization or belief. As we develop this state called *Samadhi*, we are able to perceive inwardly the various differentiated frequencies arising through our *Atman*, which are produced by Consciousness. At that level, we gain true freedom and free will as we are able to discern and choose the frequencies that we want to out-picture as our life.

If we add the word *bhava* to *samadhi* – *Bhava Samadhi* – it modifies the meaning given above and *describes a state that is an emotional experience thought to be samadhi but it is not actually true samadhi*.

Bhava Samadhi is often seen when disciples are in the presence of their Guru, a new age speaker, or other person of spiritual authority, such as a pastor, the Pope, etc. It is also seen as a kind of ecstatic swoon or feeling when one worships idols or their Ishta deity (personal God). It is widely prevalent among millions of devotees of modern gurus and gods. It has become incorrectly thought of as a good or desirable experience. It can arise due to a suggested expectation.

*Bhava Samadhi* has been mistaken to be an advanced spiritual state. Individuals believe they are having a spiritual experience in the presence of a teacher or worship of their Ishta devata. However, it is in fact only a preliminary material state and not higher consciousness itself. One can become attached to bhava samadhi and limit their experience of true samadhi.

This state is well understood by authentic teachers and its concept is transmitted to students when the time is evident. Ramakrishna Paramahansa, a great exponent of *Bhava Samadhi*, made it clear to his disciple, Swami Vivekananda, that *bhava samadhi* is a preliminary state of consciousness and not higher consciousness itself:

"Witnessing the religious ecstasy (bhava) of several devotees, Narendra (Swami Vivekananda) one day said to the Master that he too wanted to experience it. 'My child,' he was told, 'when a huge elephant enters a small pond, a great commotion is set up, but when it plunges into the Ganga, the river shows very little agitation. These devotees are like small ponds; a little experience makes their feelings flow over the brim. But you are a huge river.' (from biography of Vivekananda)

Several other times Ramakrishna Paramahansa made the same point. He told one of his close devotees Gopalchandra Ghosh (later known as Swami Advaitananda, his most senior monastic disciple) that it was not so important to experience such a temporary ecstasy (bhava) and that on the spiritual path "true faith and renunciation are far greater." True renunciation here means diving deep into the real state of bliss or samadhi. Renouncing the senses, for example, simply means transcending sensory experience and sitting in the state we call Maha Samadhi and Maha Asana. That is, when one is seated in the Transcendental state, one is beyond the senses, emotions, and seated in The Field of Consciousness itself.

Shivabalayogi Maharaj has emphasized that bhava is a preliminary experience: "During this all your bhava (the mind's feelings/emotional response) will get concentrated on your favorite deity (or teacher) and thus your mind becomes more

concentrated, more single-pointed. Then meditation itself becomes much easier and consequently one would take up meditation more willingly. "It's like giving chocolate to a child to make it go to school. But one should not settle just for the chocolate - one must go on to school. In the same way, one must meditate." In the meditation, one must not be caught by false samadhi/emotional reaction.

Here he is equating Bhava Samadhi as being something to keep you satisfied until authentic experience arises. One must not be caught up in that emotional experience. Even in meditation one may have this false samadhi due to some kind of expectation of what should be. However, it is just a mental construct that the mind/ personality/ ego makes up. It is a mental construct that is nothing more than a drunken mind. The great Buddhist teacher Trungpa Rimpoche calls it spiritual materialism or spiritual narcissism. He uses the term to describe mistakes spiritual seekers commit which turn the pursuit of spirituality into an ego building and confusion creating endeavor, based on the idea that ego development is counter to spiritual progress.

Spiritual narcissism might show up as commercial efforts such as "new age" bookstores and wealthy lecturers on spirituality; it might be attaching oneself to a well-known teacher or guru and teaching in their name; it might also mean the attempt to build up a list of credentials or accumulate teachings in order to present oneself as a more realized or holy person. And, it might show up as certain behaviors or emotional responses mistakenly thought of as true bliss.

Spiritual materialism is the conscious or unconscious belief that a certain temporary state of mind is a refuge from suffering. Examples would be constantly seeking a guru whom you can focus your mind on to have what is mistakenly thought of as darshan or shaktipat, engaging in chanting for the emotional high it brings, ever seeking new relationships or lovers for the high it brings, engaging in sex addiction, or using drugs or alcohol to remain in a numbed out or a euphoric state.

According to Trungpa Rimpoche, these states are temporary and merely heighten ones suffering when they cease causing the person to seek more and more hence wasting time, energy, and resources. Attempting to maintain a particular emotional state of mind as a refuge from suffering, or constantly pursuing particular emotional states of mind like being in love, the high of chanting, etc., will actually lead to more long-term suffering. He says, "Don't try to reinforce your ego through material things, belief systems like religion, or certain emotional states of mind."

The wise men and women indicate that this false samadhi causes seekers to attach

false attributes to their guru/savior. Seekers experience Bhava Samadhi in the presence of their guru out of an unspoken expectation and then attribute that experience to the power of their guru. Thus, they empower their guru and become addicted to the presence and teaching of that person when in fact, the experience was merely an internal emotional response based on unspoken expectations. This concept pertains to all kinds of gurus, teachers, and religious figures. It can lead to fanaticism.

How do you know if your experience is real or unreal?

Are you addicted to it? Addictive behavior causes you to seek again and again. Using statements such as "I feel so much bliss when I am with Guru xyz." I get high on chanting, etc, etc, etc.

The experience is centered in your head in that you feel a swoon, dizziness, or other experience that causes a false ecstatic state (Bhava Samadhi) centered on your head or brain.

Looking for energy highs from various techniques and objects (crystals, yantras, ,etc.) If you keep seeking and seeking yet another guru or teacher, chances are you have been caught up in Bhava Samadhi.

The best solution to this situation is to simply drop your gurus and saviors in terms of relying on them to bring you to enlightenment, continue with your practice or devotion, and then evaluate your experience over time.

These behaviors simply create a veil or separation from your true nature. They take you away from the internal quiet needed to observe the unfolding of pure consciousness. You miss out on the moments when the Divine awakens within you its own awareness of itself through you.

How do I avoid this state? There is a statement "He also serves who only stands and waits." These experiences of Bhava Samadhi create a distraction and commotion within us that disallow us from waiting.

Our awakening depends upon our being in the receptive mode of waiting and Bhava Samadhi gets in the way of that because it is merely an emotional state of the mind and brain. If you find yourself being overly enthralled by a teacher of some kind, listen dispassionately to what the teacher is actually saying. Are they simply parroting

someone else? Does what they say make sense? Are their techniques truly spiritual methods or are they touchy feely or surface methods?

The most important thing for you to do is to discern carefully who you listen to, who you regularly devote yourself to, and notice if you are doing what you are doing for a spiritual high.

Authentic experience can be powerful but in truth, when you have a taste of it, it is difficult to describe. You can describe the results of it (swelling in your heart center, heat rising and or spreading, clarity of mind, sense of oneness for example). Ultimately the experience causes you to feel integrated with the material world, and you feel very balanced. It may take time, but the integration comes.

In the final analysis if you are seeking, you must evaluate your motive. Is it for the high or for the wellbeing of humanity? Is it for your own financial benefit or for the benefit of others? Is it about you or about your sincere desire to end the suffering of humanity?

The first instruction the Supreme Being gave Brahma when Brahma was avidly seeking knowledge of where he came from and why he was living was very simply two syllables: "Ta Pa."

Most people believe that *tapa* means austerity. We know from the experiences of many rishis, that *tapa* actually does not mean austerity. Take a look at the word:

Ta: gather, to capture, womb, jewel, nectar, crossing

Pa: drinking, purity, observe, feast upon

Tapa: consumed by heat

We can see that the meanings associated with this word *tapa* are quite different than simply austerity. Fundamentally, Supreme Being is telling Brahma to gather his energy, cross over into the womb of consciousness (Atman,) drink in, and feast upon the jewel found there as it is nectar of purity. In that state of introspection, Brahma will be consumed by cosmic fire and will understand and take in all that the Cosmic flame has to offer at that time.

We know that this is the process that sages like Mayasura (Brahmarishi Mayan), the great siddha architect in ancient India, went through to write Surya Siddhanta (text on astronomy and movement of the planets) and other texts related to Vaastu science such as Mayamata, Aintiram and Pranava Veda. In addition, other sages like

Thirumular, Agastya, Patanjali and the 18 siddhas of Tamil Nadu, India went through that process, which in a word, is total surrender.

True samadhi is a deeply profound yet simple internal experience that is beyond emotion and mind. Spiritual bliss is not an emotional experience. It may give rise to an emotional experience but it is not emotional in and of itself.

This true samadhi/ experience of Being is what students of Self Recognition Meditation are being entrained to do. [www.selfrecognitionmeditation.org](http://www.selfrecognitionmeditation.org)