

Households in Focus

Mandali (Fellowship): Bharati on *Bhakta* Expressions of Ekklesia

by J. Paul Pennington

Editor's Note: This article was originally presented at ISFM 2017, Dallas, TX, September 2017.

Many Christians wonder what fellowship and community looks like for Yesu bhaktas—incarnational believers in the Hindu world. Are they mostly individualistic believers who are isolated in the way they follow Jesus? Dayanand Bharati (author of *Living Water and Indian Bowl*) has lived as a Hindu follower of Jesus for thirty years and his writings on fellowship and community are well known through his books and blog. In this article, he has graciously permitted me to represent (however inadequately) some of his key reflections on the need for mutual encouragement and instruction among the network of Yesu bhaktas whom he serves in India and around the world.

When I talk with Christians about incarnational believers (people who follow Jesus while remaining within their own socio-religious community, sometimes labeled “insider believers”) the conversation regularly takes the following turns:

- “Those are those ‘Churchless Christians’ (see Hoefer 2001) aren’t they? I don’t think that’s right.”¹
- “How can they be followers of Jesus and not belong to a church?”
- “I don’t think it’s appropriate for people to be private, individualized believers. They need a fellowship or community.”
- “What do they do for public worship?”

Paul Pennington, Cultural Coach and Consultant, Journey Services, spent 13 years as a missionary kid in Zimbabwe, another 5 years there as a missionary, and 17 years as Professor of Urban/ Intercultural Studies at Cincinnati Christian University. Paul left university teaching four years ago to partner with Indian colleagues to research and advocate alternative ways of following Jesus in the Indian context. He is author of Christian Barriers to Jesus: Conversations and Questions from the Indian Context (2017). Contact him at paul@journeyservices.org.

These responses, and similar ones, reflect some possible misperceptions about how the Yesu bhaktas view their walk with the Lord and their relationship with other *bhaktas* (devotees, followers) and other believers. This issue of the joint life and worship of bhaktas has been a major concern among Christians.² In fact, Christians often express surprise when I tell them about the gatherings and mutual life shared by the bhaktas. They seem to assume that incarnational believers (“insiders”) are by nature prone to isolation.

The theme of this year’s EMS and ISFM³ conference was “Engaging Theology, Theologians, Theological Education in (or from) Majority World Contexts.” In the spirit of that theme, I asked a well-known Yesu bhakta,

Dayanand Bharati, if I might present his perspectives on the *mukti*⁴ *mandali*⁵ (salvation fellowship), as they call their society or community⁶ of believers.

Bharati has served Yesu bhaktas across India for much of 30 years. His writings are known to Christians in India and the West, especially his book *Living Water and Indian Bowl* (William Carey Library, 2004).

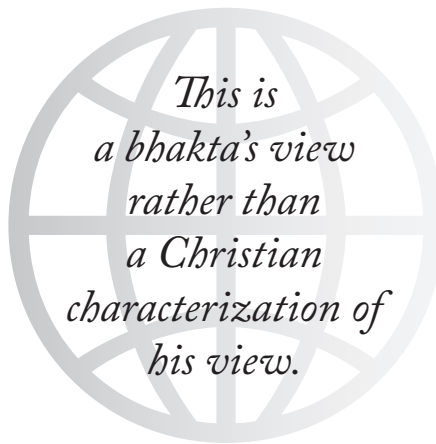
Rather than limiting our theological reflection to Christian theologians in the majority world, I thought it would be helpful to hear the voice of a man who walks with followers of Jesus within their Hindu socio-religious community. Dayanand Bharati graciously agreed to let me compile some of his writings—to share his voice about ekklesia, fellowship, and community among the bhaktas. He has reviewed and either verified or clarified my presentations of his perspectives on these issues.

This paper, then, presents a direct statement of a bhakta's view of fellowship, rather than Christian characterizations and even misrepresentations of his views. Admittedly, this presentation is mediated through the English language, but Bharati wrote them in English himself. I am also responsible for the thematic organization and writing. Bharati, however, has always been very honest in pointing out where I have misunderstood or misrepresented his views. I have been and continue to be deeply grateful for his forthright clarifications.

You must also know that over the last four years Bharati has become a dear friend and I respect him highly as my brother in Christ. So, what I present is not simply an academic research paper written from a dispassionate distance. I am trying to faithfully represent the views and ideas of a friend whom I respect and treasure deeply. I don't always agree with everything he says, but he would say that about his own writings, much less mine. I do appreciate

the way he continually pushes me to reflect on my own culture-bound ways of reading Scripture and helps me look at God's word through other lenses. So I present this paper in the hopes that you will hear his heart and see the issues of fellowship and community through fresh eyes.

My reflections on these fellowship issues also reflect reports by bhakta friends who are involved in the regular gatherings. Occasionally I have been able to participate in *satsangs* with bhaktas in India. Too much Western presence, though, can compromise their relationships with their Hindu family and community, so these times are intentionally rare, both by my choice and theirs.



In reviewing this paper, H. L. Richard noted that there are bhaktas who have followed Jesus in more individual ways. Hoefler's book *Churchless Christianity* provides multiple examples. Both of them have also noted a phenomenon that Bharati specifically mentioned—bhaktas who attended church gatherings and sat at the back for the worship and preaching, but quickly left at the end of the service. Such believers find their social interaction primarily with their family and community at large, not the church group. These challenges require careful examination and creative pastoral responses by believers (Christians and bhaktas alike). But they lie beyond the scope of this paper.

The fact remains that a number of bhaktas do share in regular, mutual fellowship. So I thought it would help believers to get an inside perspective on what fellowship means among this significant group of followers of Jesus.

Fellowship is Essential

Some Christians charge that bhaktas (or incarnational believers in general) practice an individualized spirituality. Yet Bharati said long ago in *Living Water and Indian Bowl*, "A congregational or body life expression of faith in Christ is essential for truly biblical discipleship" (Bharati 2004, 55).

In a more recent blog post entitled "Unity in the Spirit," Bharati articulated some basic essentials as he understood them:

In our movement as Hindu bhaktas, the essence is that Muktinath is the Lord and Savior, Muktiveda is the Word of God, Mandali [i.e., the fellowship] is the one through which God carries out His will and purpose for the world. (Bharati 2016a)

Some bhaktas asked Bharati to further explore the significance of the *mandali* (fellowship). So in a follow up blog post, "On Fellowship," he wrote,

One crucial thing that is so important for every convert or Hindu bhakta of the Lord is the avenue and opportunity to learn to grow in her faith/bhakti in the Lord. (Bharati 2016b)

How does that happen? Bharati elaborated:

As I often say, *we don't have a private bhakti or a private God, though we do have a personal relationship with Him. Our faith/bhakti is not a one-man-operated corporation.*⁷ Either we sail together or sink together. For this, fellowship, learning, and teaching are important apart from worshipping together and also individually. (ibid., 2016b; emphasis mine)

These believers are so concerned about their mutual life that they even have a regular e-satsang for

believers who cannot attend physical gatherings. They seek to ensure that all the bhaktas have regular opportunity for worship and instruction. Bharati added at this point,

We also have a Skype discussion, which often gets disturbed. Yet we try to keep it going to have a systematic study of the Mukhtiveda. Interestingly, we use this forum most of the time only to learn from the Mukhtiveda, not for common discussion or any other study other than Mukhtiveda. However, sometimes we will bring some references from Hindu scriptures. (Bharati 2017a)

So contrary to common Christian representations, Bharati assumes that followers of Jesus need a “congregational or body life,” are part of a mandali (fellowship), and that faith in Jesus is not a “one-man operated corporation.” Bharati has affirmed the need for believers to gather together so that they can encourage and sharpen one another.⁸

Foundational Concerns about Unity

Bharati is also deeply concerned about the unity and fellowship of believers. But his early experience with church hierarchy and structure has led him to be deeply troubled by unity based on church organizations and institutions. These often embody cultural assumptions, attitudes, and expressions for the way of Jesus that are foreign to India.

In his blog post on “Unity in Spirit” Bharati comes back repeatedly to a central concern (Bharati 2016a):

- “Thankfully this movement of Hindu bhaktas is neither an organization nor is there organic unity.”
- “So each bhakta is an entity in this movement—thank God we are not organized as a denomination or even with any organic identity.”
- In his summary he reiterates, “Try to understand the fact that our unity is only in Spirit and not organic and never organizational.”

Bharati’s language is problematic to church people who want to see an organization and structure to the church.

Concerns about Organizational Unity

This language is problematic to church people who want to see an organization and structure to the church. For churches steeped in some form of monarchical leadership (monarchical bishop or monarchical pastor), this sentiment is particularly disconcerting. Some churches, in fact, see the clergy and hierarchy as “the church.” The lay people simply attend and view what “the church” presents to them.

Bharati’s unease about “organization,” I would suggest, parallels what drove Huss or Zinzendorf to emphasize “brethren,” or Tyndale to use “congregation.” They desired to emphasize the equal gifting of all believers (Rom. 12; 1 Cor. 12) and the priesthood of all believers—the responsibility of all believers to speak, teach, minister, and serve (Eph. 4:11–12).

How do I know that? Bharati, in the same article, says as much:

So in this movement we all have unity in Spirit but not uniformity or organic unity. But we keep in touch with each other as we all strive to live our life with mutual learning and teaching based on some common minimum principles.... That is why we don’t have any permanent leader or head to look unto for all our need. (Bharati 2016a)

I also know from bhakta testimonies what happens when the mandali gathers for regular retreats during the year. Sometimes Bharati sits at the front and leads a satsang or discussion. At other times, though, he is just a part of the circle, and encourages the bhaktas to wrestle with and discuss the Scripture for themselves. He may insinuate a comment or question at times where appropriate, but he does not drive or direct the discussion to pursue his agenda. He wants the believers to own

their faith and their understanding and application of Scripture.

This was confirmed in his elaboration of this point,

In our satsangs, sometimes I used to lead only the worship part with some small sharing that is relevant to that worship. After that we will have a teaching session in which we all will share, after someone started the initial topic or verses from Mukhtiveda. So we generally have two parts—one worship which I or someone would lead; the next major part is teaching in which all will participate. (Bharati 2017a)

The West’s propensity for structure, organization, and external conformity, is itself partially a product of its culture. If Jesus or Paul stepped into many churches today, I suspect they would be far less at home in that organizational system and likely more comfortable with the bhaktas’ less formal, at times anti-formal, fellowship (mandali).

Again, Bharati provided some interesting elaboration from what I initially presented in the previous paragraph:

I too recognize the initial need of some kind of structure or form to link with each other. But when the structure becomes the centre of focus and not people, then all kinds of problems come one by one. What we started in spirit will end up in flesh.... Similarly, a mandali will collapse when its Mukhtivedic-based values get lost. But it can continue even without any structure or create a new one which will serve its purpose, like what we have: email forum, Skype discussion, Whatsapp group, etc. (Bharati 2017a)

So organizationally, they make sure believers have opportunities to gather regularly for fellowship and worship. For those who cannot physically meet, they use electronic means to provide weekly

Scripture study and weekly worship opportunities with other bhaktas. More mature bhaktas make a point of traveling each year and visiting personally with more isolated bhaktas both in India and in other parts of the world. Such efforts to maintain fellowship and unity entail a level of organization, but are not hierarchically structured and managed.

Concerns about Organic Unity

While presenting this material, several participants asked for clarification about Bharati's view of "organic unity." In a follow-up electronic conversation, Bharati explained,

According to my understanding "organic" means having a kind of blood relationship which we cannot choose, or we cannot throw away. So the Hindu bhaktas have no blood relationship with each other but have unity in spirit. (Bharati 2017b)

He later sent a Whatsapp message with a further nuance to his use of "organic":

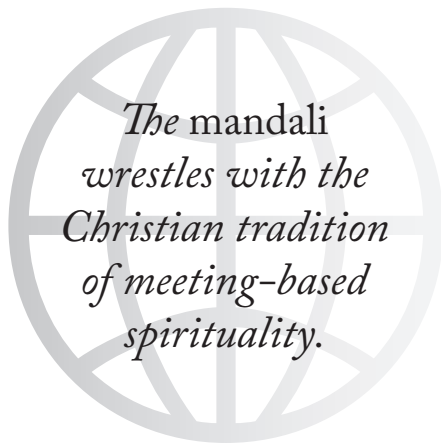
For me a sense of belonging is also organic. For example, I feel that I am an Indian. This comes naturally. Suppose if I migrate to another country and even become a citizen. I still would feel that I am an Indian, now become a non-residential Indian. So it is not only blood relationship, but the sense of belonging. Though I belong to the bhakta mandali, yet it is more unity in spirit, but not an organic or organizational one. (Bharati 2017c)

From his perspective, "organic" includes two somewhat related elements: blood or genetic relationships which one cannot choose, and one's sense of belonging or heritage, which someone might retain even when changing nationality (or faith).

So when Bharati says, "We do not have organic unity," he is asserting that following Jesus does not deny one's blood relationships or a believer's heritage (sense of belonging) prior to meeting Jesus. The Spirit unites people across such "organic" realities, but does not supplant or eliminate them.

Some Western listeners or readers have expressed confusion because of Bharati's rejection of "organic." They use "organic" (as in organic church) for expressions of fellowship that grows naturally within a specific context, that are not highly structured or formal. To them, Bharati's concern about "organic unity" seems unnatural and counter-intuitive.

This confusion, however, highlights a critical issue when we explore these issues with believers in other contexts. They may use terms in ways that are natural to them, but that do not follow standard Christian usage. Just because certain Christians use terms in certain ways does not mean that all believers are obligated to use their terminology with their definitions or understandings.



Incarnational situations require freedom in articulating appropriate theology and praxis for their context. We must seek to understand their perspective and concerns, rather than simply imposing our understanding and perspective on them.

In their desire for fellowship and unity, then, bhaktas seek to display spiritual unity and meet one another's needs. Yet they are concerned about creating rigid structures and schedules in the name of "unity" that end up reflecting man-made conformity. They want to remain flexible to the needs of the mandali (fellowship) rather than constraining it to one form and structure. They are also intentional about not

unnecessarily rejecting believers' blood relationships or heritage in the name of spiritual unity.

De-emphasizing Meeting-based Spirituality

In addition, Bharati and the mandali also wrestle with a common Christian tradition of meeting-based spirituality. His discussions around the relationship of one's spiritual life to religious gatherings move in two directions.

When Christians maintain that Hindus in general do not know corporate worship, he rightly challenges this assertion. Several years ago, he wrote,

The too common comparison of the Christian church as a community with Hinduism as a highly individualistic religion is an entirely false antithesis. Hinduism is far from void of community expressions of faith and life. (Bharati 2004, 56)

There is a corporate aspect of Hindu worship, although their events or gatherings may not be as frequent nor are they emphasized in the same way church services are for Christians.

At a deeper level, though, Yesu bhaktas are troubled by the concept that one's relationship with the Lord and one's spiritual maturity is primarily determined by attending meetings. In a personal conversation Bharati once said to me, "I never understood how Christians can limit worship to one or two hours a week" (Bharati 2015).

He articulated a similar concern in his blog reflection "On Fellowship":

Though I don't want to criticise the church, yet according to my understanding, no convert can get the real fellowship that she needs to survive as a human being within the four walls of a church that gathers once in a week plus a cottage prayer meeting. In such a scenario, she has to spend six days and 20 hours in the outside world. That fellowship alone helps her grow in her faith/bhakti properly rather than having a wrong notion about

fellowship gatherings once a week inside any building. (Bharati 2016b)

Bharati emphasizes the fact that bhakti is supposed to involve love, devotion, and worship in all of one's life all the time. So if someone claims to be a bhakta of *Mukthinath* (Jesus), they should live a life of worship, not just attend a weekly gathering. This leads to some different emphases in the way bhaktas view personal and corporate expressions of faith.

Individual versus Corporate Expressions of Faith

Bharati, in private conversations, and in his writing, has expressed his personal preference to be alone and simply meditate on the Lord and Scripture. The history of Christianity has itself seen believers who avoided crowds and meetings and sought to relate to the Lord in more personal and private ways. Some people are more gregarious and others more private and reserved.

It should not surprise us, or cause undue judgment, then, if bhaktas display a similar variation in need for corporate affirmation and expression of their faith. Vows of silence, of chastity, of worldly avoidance, are not unknown in Christian circles.

To some extent, Dayanand Bharati's views on gatherings, meetings, and fellowships are a reflection of his own tendency toward being a *sannyasi* (one who renounces the world for spiritual matters). His aversion to excessive meetings and overly-structured organization grows partly out of his own spiritual life. He spends much time with the Lord, writes new songs frequently, and meditates on the Lord and Scripture.⁹

One wants to ask how much Jesus' spiritual vitality depended on his attendance at weekly synagogue services, or how much Paul's spiritual vitality derived from his attendance at synagogue. In their speaking, writing, and practice, we get the distinct impression that their private communion with the Lord was far more significant for their

Ideas reflected in mandali actually convey more of the people-centric ideas of ekklesia than common ideas associated with "church."

spiritual power, than their occasional attendance at religious gatherings.

When we look behind the unfamiliar terminology Bharati sometimes uses, we actually find concerns that have been raised even in Christian circles. The solutions to these challenges that he and the bhaktas have arrived at may not always be comfortable to Christians. That should not warrant blanket rejection and condemnation.

Principles of the Mukti Mandali

Bharati's own articulation of the governing principles of the mukti mandali¹⁰ (salvation fellowship) helps us to see some of the bhaktas' concerns and values:

Once, we were asked to give a statement of our principle at a conference. We wrote: Mukthinath-centered families within every community (Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, even among the Christians).

Added to this, I shared these as my principles:

- We will remain as Hindu bhaktas of the Lord—never severing our relationship with our family, particularly in the name of our bhakti.
- We have no official membership in any denominational church—but we will have friendship and fellowship with them or with any other people in this world.
- No full-time workers—each bhakta should stand on her own feet and be a witness to others. We are not against this practice among the Christians supported by their church or mission. (Bharati 2016a)

Their vision, in other words, is:

- Christ-centered families
- Living incarnationally as disciples of Jesus in and with their socio-religious community

- No "church membership" but friendship and fellowship with all believers
- No professional, "full-time" workers, but each believer is a responsible witness for Jesus

He Doesn't Call It a Church

Some Christians I know will look past the above statements about fellowship and unity. They will instead fixate on Bharati's use of "mandali." Using a "Hindu" word for a fellowship of believers may trouble them. They want to see the word "church" to ensure that fellowship and public worship are being done in proper fashion and order.

Look up mandali in a Hindi dictionary, though, and you find a wide range of meanings that correlate more closely to "ekklesia" than "church" does: congregation, circle (of people), band, company (Hinkhoj.com 2017). Google Translate (2017) includes the following meanings: team, guild, association, network.

The idea of a circle or association of people who share a common life or purpose lies at the heart of the New Testament concept of ekklesia. The ideas reflected in mandali actually convey more of the people-centric ideas of ekklesia than common ideas associated with "church" (i.e., denomination, institution, organization, program, building). At this point, Bharati specifically responded,

Yes you are right and thanks for giving this new insight for me. In the church people are expected to accommodate to the demands of that [human-made] structure. Whereas in a mandali, which is people centered and oriented, we try to understand and address the issues of individual bhakta's needs. (Bharati 2017a)

So the fact that Bharati and his fellow bhaktas call their fellowship a mandali does not invalidate the very real

fellowship and mutual life they share together in their relationship with Muktinath (Jesus).

Similarly, when they refer to worship or fellowship gatherings as satsangs, this sounds unfamiliar and uncomfortable to some Christians. I would remind them, though, that some Indian translations of Scripture use *satsang*, *sangam* (gathering), or *sabha* (assembly) for ekklesia. The language Bharati uses at times, though unfamiliar to Christians with traditional views of church, is not necessarily unfaithful to Jesus or Scripture.

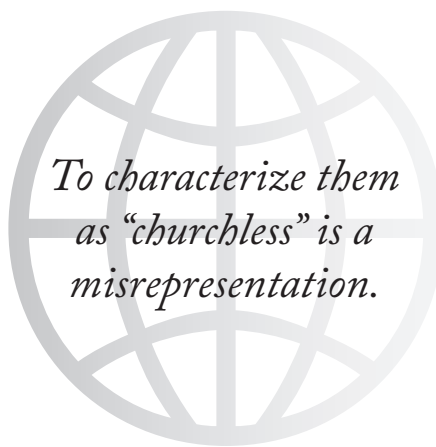
Bharati's Indian terminology for the body of Christ and the fellowship of believers represents necessary shifts in language and expression when the new wine of Jesus is put into new wineskins for new contexts and cultures. Bharati and the global mandali¹¹ he serves are not being unfaithful to Jesus, but are doing what Jesus said should happen in new situations.

In making these changes, Bharati has articulated concerns about the traditional, institutional church. It is important that we clarify his view of the church in the face of common misrepresentations by some Christians.

A pastor I know once did a cursory, snap reading of Bharati's blog posts and rather prematurely concluded, "He is an enemy of the church." Without bothering to understand Bharati's heart or his broader writing, he cherry-picked one statement and drew sweeping, prejudiced conclusions from it.

Bharati, with his desire for more culturally appropriate expressions of fellowship or witness, is no more an enemy of the church than Huss or Luther was for advocating vernacular expressions for worship instead of Latin; or congregationalists were for seeking more people-centered forms of congregational life instead of hierarchical, institutional church structures.

Bharati is motivated in this realm by the same feeling that led William Tyndale to translate ekklesia as "congregation" rather than "church." We should not forget that Thomas More and the English church had Tyndale kidnapped, tortured, and eventually strangled and burned for that "damnable heresy" (Daniell 1994). Bharati's impetus to foster a more people-focused, culturally appropriate expression of fellowship should not be rejected out of hand simply because he does not follow more traditional, institutional forms of "church," forms often modeled more on Western cultural patterns and assumptions, than on biblical teaching.



Conclusion

In conclusion, then, let me try to summarize Bharati's key points about fellowship and community among the Yesu bhaktas in the mukti mandali.

- Fellowship and mutual encouragement and teaching are essential. Faith or bhakti is not a "one-man operated corporation," and they actively foster joint learning, teaching, and worship.
- Bharati seeks to emphasize unity in the Spirit without forming an artificial "unity" based on forms and structures. This arises from his resistance to hierarchical, sometimes colonial-style control in some churches. The more committed

Christians are to the external organizational structures of their "church," the more uncomfortable they will be with Bharati's emphasis on spiritual unity, not external uniformity.

- Bharati and the bhaktas he serves place a strong emphasis on informal fellowship and "non-organization." They are troubled by many cultural and hierarchical forms within the institutional church. This concern is not without parallels within church history and should not be rejected outright.
- They do not and will not call their fellowship or gatherings a "church," seeking to avoid several negative connotations of that word. They are not, however, opposed to fellowship just because they avoid that word. When people characterize them as "churchless," this is a misrepresentation. They have community and body life, they just don't call it church.
- Some of Bharati's views on fellowship are influenced by his own personality that tends more towards what we would consider the life of a secluded monk, more towards withdrawal and individual devotional practice than public, shared activities.
- Many of the concerns Bharati raises are actually concerns shared by Christians in the body of Christ, when we look past the unfamiliar terminology.

Christians have much to learn, actually, from those who follow and worship Jesus in unfamiliar ways. Bharati's perspectives have helped me to reexamine my own traditions and allegiances based on what the Word of God says, not just what church custom and practice dictate. In fact, his concerns about institutional church are becoming increasingly voiced in the Christian West, not just by international believers in the East. If we have the humility to listen and learn, Bharati and the mukti mandali could help the church find answers to challenges it faces both in the West and globally. **IJFM**

Endnotes

¹ Bharati responded here, “I told Dr. Hoefler that rather than calling us ‘Church-less Christians’ better call us ‘Christianity less church.’” Since the Yesu bhaktas also avoid the label Christian or Christianity, though, they would prefer something like “disciples less church and Christianity” or “believers less church and Christianity.” But even this can sound problematic to Christian ears, since it brings to their minds isolated believers without a fellowship of any kind. Bharati, as this paper will clearly demonstrate, does not believe in an individualist faith in Jesus without mutual accountability, encouragement, and teaching. To truly capture his sentiment here, I would suggest their stance is more like “disciples of Yesu (*Muktinath*) with non-church forms of fellowship” (Bharati 2017a).

² He commented at this point: “I appreciate their concern. And I am very thankful to them. Even I am under an obligation to be thankful to them as I belong to the body of the Lord. At the same time, I often feel that this concern is coming out with a ‘negative and condescending attitude’ sometimes with some kind of superiority complex on their part rather than with real sympathy. Then, naturally, we never pay any attention to that kind of concern” (Bharati 2017a).

³ Joint conference of Evangelical Missiological Society and International Society of Frontier Missiology held September 15–17, 2017 at GIAL in Dallas.

⁴ *Mukti* is an important term for the Yesu bhaktas. It is often translated “salvation,” but has a richer sense than just removal of sins as Christians often think of with that word. They translate the name of Jesus (“God saves”) as *Muktinath* (Lord of salvation), or use as a title, *Muktidata* (salvation giver)—ideas that Jews would have recognized in the Aramaic original Yeshua. Some bhaktas call the Bible the *Muktiveda* (Salvation Scripture), a term coined by Bharati instead of the Western “Bible” which is not in the Bible.

⁵ *Mandali* literally means “circle.” But it is used also for a social “circle,” in similar fashion to English usage for a “circle of friends” or “one’s social circle.” Mandali is a great Indian translation for the people-centered ekklesia of the New Testament.

⁶ I am deeply aware that “community” can be a code word in India for caste communities, religious communities, and other social groupings that can imply separateness and division. Communalism (separating people by their community) is a deeply harmful

aspect of some parts of Indian society. The word community, though, is one of the best renderings for ekklesia. When a Greek community of citizens gathered to conduct city business (ekklisia), they did so out of shared commitment to the best interests of the community, the people of the city.

⁷ I have quoted Bharati’s original wording (it got edited before posting to “one-man operation”). His preferred phrase still means that we don’t go it alone in our faith. But it also emphasizes an added sense that one person does not drive the faith of the group, as in too many churches, where a monarchical leader of some kind is seen as the director or operator of the faith of others.

⁸ Bharati commented: “I often insist that the touch of human flesh is very important. So physical gatherings are very important as eye-to-eye contact, a smile, a hello, a *Namaste*, etc., will communicate more than what we listen to while in teaching. I often said that true fellowship and learning happens not in our teaching/learning sessions but in between the breaks, when we have tea time, lunch and dinner time, evening walks, night-time outside fire fellowship. So I always insist on the need of physical gathering as much as possible. But I oppose any gathering out of compulsion or mere routine because of habits” (Bharati 2017a).

⁹ Bharati confirmed this, “I agree with you. My desire for a life of recluse is also a fact behind my views on many of my writings—which sometimes are explicit and other times implicit” (Bharati 2017a).

¹⁰ I have intentionally made mukti mandali lowercase. The bhaktas seek to maintain as low an organizational and structural form as possible. They are not particularly interested in a name that would isolate and denominate them against others. The lowercase, to me, represents their desire to have this be who they are in essence (a fellowship of freed and saved people), while not making it a distinctive name and organizational feature that separates them from others.

¹¹ The mukti mandali is not limited to India. Their Skype calls, WhatsApp group, and e-satsangs include bhaktas across India (north and south), Singapore, UK, and in different parts of the US.

References

Bharati, Dayanand

2004 *Living Water and Indian Bowl*. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library.

2015 Personal interview, April 2015.

2016a “Unity in Spirit.” DayanandBharati.com. November 18. <http://dayanandbharati.com/unity-in-spirit/>.

2016b “In My Humble Opinion.” DayanandBharati.com. November 21. <http://dayanandbharati.com/in-my-humble-opinion/>.

2017a Email message to author, July 27, 2017.

2017b Email message to author, Oct 17, 2017.

2017c WhatsApp direct message to author, Oct 17, 2017.

Daniell, David

1994 *William Tyndale: A Biography*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Google Translate

2017 “Mandali.” *Google Translate*. <https://translate.google.com/>.

Hinkhoj.com

2017 “Mandali.” *Hinkhoj.com*. <http://dict.hinkhoj.com/hindi-dictionary.php?word=mandali&ie=UTF-8>.

Hoefler, Herbert E.

2001 *Churchless Christianity*. William Carey Library.