Chapter VII

WAY TO LIBERATION IN THE GĪTĀ

We have already pointed out that most of Indian systems of philosophy both orthodox and heterodox hold that there are certain preliminary steps like purification of the mind, non-attachment etc. to be pursued prior to entering into the real paths that would lead to the attainment of the highest ideal of life, viz., liberation. We have also further said that the Gītā has taught us how we can overcome selfishness and thereby acquire the habit of non-attachment.1 It says that we can overcome selfishness by performing duties with total disregard to its consequences or by performing duties without hoping to reap its fruits. It teaches that duty for the sake of duty2 is the golden rule of life.

In the Gītā morality is not taken to be the primary means; but it is only a secondary means here.3 Though morality by itself can never lead us to that goal; but "It leads to ever better and higher existences, and helps to prepare for final success."4 The Gītā says that lust, anger, and greed are the

1. B.G. II.52
2. B.G. II.47
3. Franklin Edgerton, The Bhagavad Gītā, p. 81
4. Ibid., p. 81
three gates leading to the Hell. They bring ruin to the soul. Hence, they should be abandoned.\textsuperscript{5} Further the Gîtā asks us to consider lust as an enemy\textsuperscript{6} which incites man to commit sin. The importance of morality becomes conspicuous on the negative side.\textsuperscript{7} Immorality is said to be a fatal hindrance. It says, "The man who is released from these, the three gates to darkness, O son of Kunti (Arjuna) does what is good for his soul and then reaches the highest state."\textsuperscript{8} Further it says that a man who by discarding the scriptural law acts according to his sweet will, does not attain either perfection or happiness or the highest goal.\textsuperscript{9} Thus we may say that morality here is only a secondary means to the attainment of salvation.

Giving up of selfish desire is also another preliminary step. Selfishness hinders from getting at the truth. In order to remove ignorance or ajñāna, we should cleanse the soul of the dirt of the body and soul. Hence we should abandon our passions and desires.

The Gîtā says, "He who has faith, who is absorbed in it (i.e., wisdom) and who has subdued his senses gains wisdom

\begin{itemize}
\item 5. B.G. XVI.21
\item 6. B.G. III.37, VI.5-6
\item 7. Franklin Edgerton, op.cit.
\item 8. B.G. XVI.22
\item 9. B.G. XVI.23
\end{itemize}
and having gained wisdom he attains quickly the supreme peace."^{10}

Further a steady, stable and calm mind is necessary for receiving the knowledge from above. The mind has the power of understanding or discrimination. But the way in which this power operates depends on our past habits. Hence, Buddhi or the power of understanding and discrimination is to be trained.

With a view to training the mind, the Gītā adopts the Yoga system. The Yoga discipline incorporates into itself the following necessary steps. First, there should be purification of the mind, the body, and the senses so that God may take possession of them. Secondly, the mind should withdraw itself from the diverse movement of thoughts that run after the senses and concentrate its attention on the supreme. Thirdly, we should identify ourselves with the real when we reach it. According to Franklin Edgerton the Gītā means to imply reformation or repentance on the part of the sinner as a prerequisite or at least concomitant to the attainment of "devotion" or "knowledge".^{11}

Of the many theories of the means to salvation adopted by most of the Hindu thinkers, the jñāna-yoga or the way

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10. B.G. IV.39
11. Franklin Edgerton, op. cit., p. 81
of knowledge may be said to be a very effective and important theory. This is a very widely prevalent theory in ancient India. We can trace back its origin even in the earliest Vedic speculation. The Upaniṣads also accept this theory. This is the theory which holds that "by perfect knowledge man can control his destiny."¹² In other words it means that perfect knowledge enables one to be free. What is very important in connection with this theory is that most Indian systems of philosophy have belief in the magical power of knowledge. The Gītā too has such belief in the power of knowledge. It says, "Even if thou shouldst be the worst of all sinners, merely by the boat of knowledge thou shalt cross over all (the sea of) evil."¹³

Further we can get rid of the evil consequences of actions with the help of knowledge. The fire of knowledge burns all deeds to ashes. The Gītā says, "As a kindled fire burns fire wood to ashes, so the fire of knowledge burns all deeds to ashes."¹⁴ Knowledge frees man from rebirth. We will no longer be subject to rebirth which is the consequence of deeds performed with selfish motive. Its opposite, namely, ignorance or doubt is dangerous. The ignorant doubter comes

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¹². Ibid., p. 62
¹³. B.G. IV.36
¹⁴. B.G. IV.37
to an end. He cannot hope for bliss or happiness. 15

The Gītā compares knowledge with a sword with which a man can cut his doubt. And accordingly, the Gītā advises Arjuna thus - "With the sword of knowledge, therefore, cut thou this doubt of thine heart, springing from ignorance. Arise Arjuna, and get established in Yoga."16 Further the Gītā says that knowledge as a sacrifice is better than any material sacrifice. It further says that all actions without any exception culminate in knowledge.17 Thus knowledge, according to the Gītā consists in knowing God's true nature. One who knows truly the Divine birth and His works is not subject to rebirth. Though he leaves this mortal frame he goes to God.18 Many a man being delivered from passion, fear and anger, and taking refuge in God, can attain to the state of God's being, when purified with the austerity of wisdom.19 Whenever a man knows that works do not defile God nor He yearns for the fruit of His actions, he is not bound by works.20

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15. B.G. IV.40
17. B.G. IV.33
18. B.G. IV.9
19. B.G. IV.10
20. B.G. IV.14
Though we have already pointed out that knowledge in the Gītā means often the knowledge of God, yet elsewhere knowledge means "the knowledge of the absolute separateness of the soul from the body, the independence of the soul from the body and all its acts and qualities, which brings release from rebirth."\(^{21}\) It is a sort of profound religious or philosophic truth which emancipates one from bondage.

The Gītā further says that we may have knowledge of the self by following different methods. The Gītā in one verse says that some by meditation come to behold the self (soul, ātman) in the self by the self, some others by the path of knowledge and still others by the discipline of action.\(^{22}\) The very next verse further says that yet others not knowing these paths, hear from others and devote themselves to it. Even they too cross over death by their devotion to what they have heard.\(^{23}\) According to these verses, knowledge here means the knowledge of self or ātman. And such knowledge can be acquired either by meditation, or by the path of knowledge or by the path of action or by instruction from others when one fails to have this knowledge by himself. We may follow all

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22. B.G. XIII.24
23. B.G. XIII.25
these paths and can have salvation.

The Gītā recognises two kinds of knowledge. One gives us knowledge of the phenomenal world while the other gives us knowledge of the ultimate principle lying behind the apparent series. We acquire the knowledge of the phenomenal world in and through our intellect, and we can grasp the ultimate principle only through spiritual intuition. Of the two kinds of knowledge, one is called Vijñāna and the other is called Jñāna. Vijñāna gives us intellectual knowledge of the phenomenal world but jñāna is the integral knowledge of the common foundation of all existence.

"All knowledge is knowledge of God." Scientific knowledge has the dominance of rajas while spiritual knowledge has the dominance of sattva. Elsewhere the Gītā again speaks of three different kinds of knowledge. The knowledge by which we see the one Imperishable Being in all existences, or we see It undivided even in the midst of the divided, such knowledge is of superior type or of the nature of "goodness". The knowledge by which we see multiple selves (beings) in multiple bodies for their separate existences, such knowledge is of the

25. B.G. XVIII.20
medium type or of the nature of "passion". That knowledge is of inferior type or of the lowest order by which we consider a single effect to be the whole effect, without searching for its cause or without grasping the real.

The phrase Śāmkhya-yoga in the Gītā means the way of knowledge or the method of knowledge. Those who follow this method believe it to be the supreme and exclusive means of salvation. In its many passages, the Gītā recognises the value of knowledge as a means of salvation. But like the Jaina system of philosophy, the Gītā is also Catholic and tolerant. It admits the validity of different points of view. Hence it is not surprising to learn that in many places the Gītā recognises both the Śāmkhya and Yoga methods as effective. According to it both the methods lead to the same goal. It even asserts that they are really one at bottom. Pools alone think these two methods as distinct and different. The wise do not think so. A person devoting himself only to any one of these two, obtains the fruit of both. Further it says, "The station that is obtained by the followers of Śāmkhya is also reached by the followers of Yoga. Who so looks upon

26. B.G. XVIII.21
27. B.G. XVIII.22
28. B.G. V.4
Sāṃkhya and Yoga as one has true vision." 29 It is also said that renunciation of works (i.e., Sāṃkhya-yoga) and their unselfish performance (i.e., Karma-yoga) both lead to soul's liberation. 30

However the Gītā appears to prefer the path of Karma. It says "But of these two, the unselfish performance of works is better than renunciation of works." 31 According to it without Yoga (Karma-Sammyāsa), the path of renunciation is difficult to attain. The sage who is sincere in Yoga (i.e., Karma-yoga) quickly goes to Brahman. 32 A Karma-yogin also gets the same result as is obtained by a follower of Jñāna-yoga. It claims that even knowledge can be had by following the path of action. The Gītā says that there is nothing equal in purity to wisdom. He who perfects himself in Yoga finds it (knowledge) in himself in due time. 33 From this point of view Yoga may be regarded only as an auxiliary means for gaining knowledge.

Faith and control of the senses are necessary for obtaining knowledge and he who thus gains knowledge, he attains

29. B.G. V.5 (Franklin Edgerton's translation).
30. B.G. V.2
31. B.G. V.2
32. B.G. V.6
33. B.G. IV.38
quickly the supreme peace. Thus it is through the path of knowledge that we can attain salvation. Though the Gītā allows validity to the severe and troublesome path of pure knowledge, yet we should remember that the Gītā always looks for the easy-way to salvation. It is to be admitted that few people could travel the pure path of knowledge. Hence the Gītā suggests other easier methods of salvation like the path of Karma and the path of devotion. In this connection, we like to point out that a knower is also a devotee and he is the best of them. He is dear to God as God is supremely dear to him. "He who thus knows Me, the highest person, knows all and worships Me with all his being."

The author of the Gītā with a view to pursuading Arjuna to work or to justify performance of duties of one's own station in life takes much pain by putting forward so many arguments in support of his view. In His attempt to persuade Arjuna to fight, Śrīkrishṇa the teacher Himself puts forward some mutually contradictory arguments. Sometimes He says - "Therefore arise thou and gain glory. Conquering thy foes, enjoy a prosperous kingdom. By Me alone are they slain

34. B.G. IV.39
35. B.G. VII.17
36. B.G. XV.19
already. Be thou merely the occasion, O Savyasācin (Arjuna).

Here the teacher exhorts Arjuna to fight for arriving at certain ends. He can gain glory and enjoy a prosperous kingdom. But elsewhere it is said that he should perform his duties by being indifferent to the consequences of his actions. Thus He says - "To action alone hast thou a right and never at all to its fruits; let not the fruits of actions be thy motive; neither let there be in thee any attachment to inaction." Arjuna is advised here to be indifferent to the results of actions, whatever right a man has is only the right for actions, and never for its consequences. Arjuna is further advised not to be inclined to inaction. Thus the author of the Gītā repeatedly says that a man should perform duties quite disinterestedly.

There should be no attachment whatsoever in discharging one's duties. "Therefore, without attachment, perform always the work that has to be done, for man attains to the highest by doing work without attachment." Thus by discharging one's duties without attachment, a man can attain to the highest state of liberation. We find in the Gītā many

37. S. Radhakrishnan, The Bhagabad Gītā, p. 280; B.G. XI.33
38. Ibid., p. 119; B.G. II.47
such passages which strongly support the view that actions performed with total disregard to its consequence is a means to liberation.

The Lord advises Arjuna to prepare himself for the battle, but before being prepared for the battle, he should be even-minded. In other words he should treat pleasure and pain, gain and loss, victory and defeat alike.\textsuperscript{40}

Arjuna is thus persuaded to work - the work which conforms to his station in life. And in performing duties in the manner just stated above one is not to incur sin. So is the case with Arjuna. Though he might be killing his teachers, friends, relatives etc. in the ensuing battle, he would in no way incur sin, because he is now even-minded.

By following the path of Karma-yoga no effort is lost. Even a little of this Yoga saves one from great fear.\textsuperscript{41} "The mind of the Karma-yogin has only one End in view, viz., self-realization (wherefore it is able to concentrate on duties as a means to the End) whereas the mind of the desire-seekers is infinitely divided."\textsuperscript{42}

\textsuperscript{40} B.G. II.38
\textsuperscript{41} B.G. II.40
\textsuperscript{42} B.G. II.41

Jayantilal S. Jariwalla, \textit{Gītā the Science of Living}, p.110
Thus Arjuna is advised to do his duties without any attachment whatsoever to the results of his actions. He is further advised to be even minded because evenness of mind is called Yoga. The Gītā says that work done 'with an eye to the results' is far inferior to the work done with an even mind (Buddhi-yoga).

We have already pointed out that the Gītā opens up discussion with the problem of action. Arjuna's refusal to fight the battle is the problem. He intends to abstain himself from his normal duties and also wants to retreat from the world. He is found to be very much hesitant as to whether he will throw himself up in the bloody war or not. Hence arises the question of persuading him to fight and the Gītā finds solution of the problem when Arjuna after carefully listening to the advice of the teacher wholeheartedly accepts the challenge of life.

Thus the persuasion becomes many sided. The teacher by way of persuading Arjuna says, "Further having regard for thine own duty, thou should not falter, there exists no greater good for a Kṣatriya than a battle enjoined by duty."

43. B.G. II.48
44. B.G. II.49
45. B.G. II.31
S. Radhakrishnan, The Bhagavad Gītā, p. 112
The teacher says that it is a matter of happiness for a Kṣatriya if war comes of its own accord. It opens up for him the door to heaven.\(^{46}\) If Arjuna does not fight this lawful battle, then he will be failing in his duties and he shall have to incur sin.\(^{47}\) Moreover the teacher says that ill-fame is worse than death for an honourable man.\(^{48}\) Again he says - "Either slain thou shalt go to heaven; or victorious thou shalt enjoy the earth; therefore, arise, O son of Kunti (Arjuna), resolved on battle."\(^{49}\)

In this context we may also discuss the problem of free will versus predestination. From many passages of the Gitā it is apparent that man is not free, he is pre-determined. He is merely a tool in the hands of God. God abides in the hearts of all beings and He turns round by His power all beings as if they were mounted on a machine.\(^{50}\) Śrīkrishṇa asks Arjuna to fight the battle and to enjoy a prosperous kingdom. But at the same time He says "By Me alone are they slain already. Be thou merely the occasion, O Savyasācin (Arjuna)."\(^{51}\)

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46. B.G. II.32  
47. B.G. III.33  
48. B.G. II.34  
49. B.G. II.37  
   S. Radhakrishnan, The Bhagavad gītā, p. 113  
50. B.G. XVIII.61  
51. B.G. XI.33 (S. Radhakrishnan's translation.)
If from self-conceit we do not listen to the advice of God, we will surely be perished. In other words we cannot resist the will of the Almighty. In another passage the Gītā says to Arjuna - "If indulging in self-conceit thou thinkest, 'I will not fight', vain is this thy resolve, Nature will compel thee." These and some other passages certainly show that man is predetermined. He has no freedom of will. But in the last analysis it is seen that man is free to choose the course of action he likes.

But it is a fact that if he disobeys God, he will be ruined, and if he obeys Him, he will be saved. He will be liberated. But he is free to take any path he likes - either the path of salvation or the path of bondage. "Thus has wisdom more secret than all secrets, been declared to thee by Me. Having reflected on it fully do as thou choosest."

Before entering into the detailed discussions on the way of action, we feel it necessary at the beginning to explain the meanings in which the term 'Yoga' and the compound 'Karma-yoga' have been used in the Gītā. Franklin Edgerton

52. B.G. XVIII.58
53. B.G. XVIII.59 (S. Radhakrishnan's translation.)
54. B.G. XVIII.63 (S. Radhakrishnan's translation.)
translates the term 'Yoga' as "discipline". And in that case the Sanskrit compound "Karma-yoga" may be translated as the "discipline of action". One important thing to be noted here is that the term 'Yoga' itself is also used sometimes to mean "Karma-yoga" or the discipline of action. The word 'Yoga' is used in a great variety of senses. It is used in the sense of 'method' or 'means'. Exertion, diligence, and zeal are other meanings of the term. But usually it means a "regular, disciplined course of action, leading to a definite end". In case of the GItā it is used to mean such a regular course of action that leads to the end of emancipation. In some contemporary works, it is used to mean a system of ascetic practices which are likely to lead to emancipation or to some supernatural attainment. In some other works of the time of the GItā the word is also used to denote a practical method as distinguished from an intellectual method.

But in what sense is the term 'Yoga' used in the GItā? Does it merely mean active participation or performance of our regular and normal duties? Surely it implies activity. But


Yoga, in its etymological sense, means 'to join' or 'bring together'. It thus signifies the union of the individual soul with the Supreme Soul. By extension whatever means helps in bringing about this union is also called Yoga. It is in this sense that the colophon at the end of each chapter calls that particular chapter a Yoga.
it is not work done with certain interest.

It is a method or discipline of action which leads to salvation. It means performance of moral duties with total disregard to its consequences. In discharging one's normal duties, one should on no account hope for its reward. One should perform one's duties without any interest whatsoever. There should never be any attachment for the work done.\textsuperscript{56} One is to perform one's duties with indifference. Thus the \textit{Gita} opens up discussion with the problem of action. The \textit{Gita} says that action is indispensable for us. None can remain even for a moment without doing work.\textsuperscript{57} Further it says that action is better than inaction. Action is necessary even for maintaining our physical life.\textsuperscript{58}

Works do bind us to this world if these are not done in the spirit of sacrifice. Hence the teacher advises Arjuna to perform duties as a sacrifice abandoning at the same time all attachment.\textsuperscript{59} Persons doing work without attachment can attain to the highest.\textsuperscript{60} Even God Himself is engaged in work

\textsuperscript{56} B.G. II.48
\textsuperscript{57} B.G. III.5
\textsuperscript{58} B.G. III.8
\textsuperscript{59} B.G. III.9
\textsuperscript{60} B.G. III.19
though He has nothing to do in the three worlds nor there is anything for Him to be obtained.61 The Gītā repeatedly asks us to perform duties with indifference to their results. It says that only the ignorant (unlearned) act from attachment, the learned should also act; but while acting they should act without any attachment.62

The Gītā says that the path of knowledge is very difficult to follow. "Among thousands of men perhaps one strives to perfection. Even of those who strive and perfect themselves, rarely does one know Me in very truth."63 Another verse of the Gītā says that it is very difficult to find such a noble soul who knows Vāsudeva (Krishṇa God) to be all in all. After having such knowledge at the end of many lives, the man of wisdom resorts to God.64 So the Gītā suggests another alternative means of salvation which is easier for the most of mankind. This is the method of 'bhakti', 'devotion' or 'love of God'.

The Gītā makes no distinction of race, sex or caste. The path of devotion is open to men, women and persons of all

61. B.G. III.22
62. B.G. III.25
63. B.G. VII.3
64. B.G. VII.19

Franklin Edgerton, op.cit., p. 70
castes. Even men of low caste, if they take refuge in God, may attain to the highest goal. It says - "For those who take refuge in Me, O Pārtha (Arjuna) though they are lowly born women, Vaiśyas, as well as Śūdras, they also attain to the highest goal." Again it says, "One who constantly meditates on Me with thoughts ever straying to no other object, for him I am easy to attain." The method or doctrine of devotion was not quite unknown to the Upaniṣadic thinkers. As Radhakrishnan says, "The origin of the Bhakti mārga is hidden in the mists of long ago. The Upāsana theory of the Upaniṣads and the devotional way of the Bhāgavatas have influenced the author of the Gītā." The seed of Bhaktimārga is hidden in the statement that a man should give up not only the fruit of action but also the agency of action. As long as a person has a will of his own, he cannot give up the agency of his action. He can do this only when he surrenders his will to God in self-forgetting love. The religion of the Bhagavad gītā is a theistic one representing Krishṇa as a personal Deity, and teaching us the doctrine of devotion. The Gītā teaches us that by devoted love of God a man can know God and thereby he attains liberation. It says, "By devotion one

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65. B.G. IX.32 (S. Radhakrishnan's translation.)
66. B.G. VIII.14
67. S. Radhakrishnan, Indian Philosophy, vol. I, p. 559
comes to know Me, what my measure is and what I am in very truth; then knowing Me in very truth, he straightway enters into Me."68

Arjuna after having known from the Lord the nature of self, the birth and passing away of things and also the imperishable nature of the Supreme Lord expresses his desire before the Lord of seeing the Divine form, whereupon the Lord being pleased with him shows him (Arjuna) His Divine form. But such revelation, says the Lord, may come to a man not by any other means but by devoted love to Him. The Gītā says, "But by unswerving devotion, it is possible to know Me in this form Arjuna, and to behold Me in very truth and so to enter into Me."69

From what has been said above it is possible to estimate the value of devotion as a means to liberation. Unswerving devotion helps us to attain knowledge of God which in turn helps us to come into union with Him, i.e., to attain liberation. From this point of view, we may say that the path of devotion is only an auxiliary means of gaining knowledge. But this doctrine was not for long subordinated to the path of knowledge. It was given an independent status.

68. XVIII.55
   (Franklin Edgerton's translation.)

69. B.G. XI.54 (Franklin Edgerton's translation.)
The Gītā usually speaks of devotion as "the immediate and all-sufficient way to final union with God."\(^70\) Radhakrishnan says, "It is quite as efficacious as any other method, and is sometimes said to be greater than others, since it is its own fruition .. ."\(^71\)

The Gītā says that by fixing one's mind on God and by being devoted to Him, and by worshipping and revering Him and thereby thus disciplining one's soul in full devotion to Him, one can come into God's being.\(^72\) One who knows God as the imperishable source of all existences, is to worship Him with an undistracted mind.\(^73\) He being strenuous and steadfast in vows, never failing to glorify God, worships Him with devotion.\(^74\)

Those who worship God with devotion, are in Him and God is also with Him.\(^75\) Some passages of the Gītā say that even a man of most vile conduct, if he worships God with devotion, he at once turns to be righteous as he has resolved rightly.\(^76\) His righteousness enables him to obtain lasting

\(^70\) Franklin Edgerton, op. cit., vol. II, p. 72
\(^71\) S. Radhakrishnan, Indian Philosophy, vol. I, p. 55a
\(^72\) B.G. IX.34
\(^73\) B.G. IX.13
\(^74\) B.G. IX.14
\(^75\) B.G. IX.29
\(^76\) B.G. IX.30
peace and it is a fact beyond doubt that God's devotee never perishes.  

We learn from the Gītā that we can even avert the consequences of our deeds. But it should not be taken to mean supersession of the law of Karma, because according to this law, even devotion should have its reward.

Devotion, according to the Gītā means believing in God and loving Him. It means bowing down before the Almighty God. It is to revere Him and to worship Him with true devotion. It also implies entering into God or coming into union with Him. The bhakti mārga or the path of devotion is a pointer "to the law of the right activity of the emotional side of man." Through devotion, we show reverence to the Supreme.

A devotee has always a sense of humiliation. He feels helpless and worthless in His absence. He prostrates before God and such bowing down of the self before the Divine is the indispensable pre-requisite of true religious devotion. God also loves those who are meek and amiable. God loves His devotees. A devotee is not deprived of God's grace. By performing any action whatsoever continually and taking refuge

77. B.G. IX.31
in God a man can by God's grace reach the eternal undying abode. Krishna advises Arjuna thus - "Fixing thy thought on Me, thou shalt by My grace, cross over all difficulties, but if from self-conceit, thou wilt not listen (to Me) thou shalt perish."  

A man's devotion finds expression in two ways. He either shows love for God or he feels himself miserable in His absence. The devotee surrenders himself to the God, prostrates before Him and entirely relies on His mercy. Krishna advises - "Merge thy mind in Me, be my devotee, prostrate thy self before Me, thou shalt come even unto Me. I pledge thee My truth, thou art dear to Me. Abandoning all dharma, come unto Me alone for shelter; sorrow not, I will liberate thee from all sins."  

The Gītā has a tolerant attitude to those who worship any other minor gods including the Vedic gods. There are four kinds of devotees according to the Gītā. Of them the wise ones are the best. They are the dearest of all devotees. God in the Gītā is represented as impartial to all men. He has neither foes nor friends. He is alike to all beings.

78. B.G. XVIII.56  
79. B.G. XVIII.58 (S. Radhakrishnan's translation.)  
80. B.G. XVIII.65, 66 (S. Radhakrishnan's translation.)  
81. B.G. VII.16-17
is hateful nor dear to Him. But in the very same verse the Lord says that He loves His devotees.

"But those who worship Me with devotion, they are in Me and I also in them." Another passage of the Gita says, "But those who laying all actions upon Me, intent on Me, meditate on Me and revere Me with utterly unswerving devotion, for them I speedily become the saviour from the ocean of the round of (rebirths and) deaths, because their thoughts are fixed on Me." Certain passages of the Gita seem to suggest that the path of devotion is only a secondary means of gaining salvation. The Gita in the last chapter says that the path of action is a favorite way of salvation. Even such discipline is granted to the devotee by God, whereby the devotee can enter into God. What we can infer from it is that the

82. B.G. IX.29
83. B.G. IX.29 (Radhakrishnan's translation.)
84. XII.6,7
path of devotion is only a help towards the path of Karma which ultimately leads one to liberation. Thus it says, "to these who are constantly devoted and worship Me with love, I grant the concentration of understanding by which they come unto Me." In the very next verse, God again grants the devotee the light of knowledge. "To show compassion to these same ones I, while remaining in My own true state, dispel their darkness that is born of ignorance by the shining light of knowledge." The devotee is granted not only the discipline of mind but also the shining light of knowledge.

All this seems to suggest that the author of the Gītā lays more emphasis on the path of devotion. For him the path of devotion is a favourite one. Nay it may be said to be the path par-excellence which has the control over all other paths to salvation. Knowledge is energised by devotion. True devotion issues in unselfish conduct. There are passages in the Gītā which recommend the ascetic life. But the author of the Gītā further recommends the ascetic to concentrate his mind on the Supreme Self. Even the ascetic should fix his thought on God and by so doing he shall attain to the peace

85. B.G. X.10
86. B.G. X.11 (Franklin Edgerton's translation.)
87. B.G. VI.10
which culminates in Nirvāṇa and that rests in God. 88

One verse of the Gītā declares the disciplined man or
the Yogin to be superior to the ascetic, to the followers of
the path of knowledge and to one who performs ritual works. 89
But such a Yogin is not declared superior to the adherent of
the method of devotion. The Gītā says that a true devotee can
only turn to be a perfectly disciplined man. In other words
a great Yogin is a great devotee (bhakta). In the words of
the Gītā - "And of all yogins, he who full of faith worships
Me, with his inner self abiding in Me, him, I hold to be the
most attuned (to Me in Yoga)." 90

According to the Gītā, we may attain emancipation or
reach God in several ways. It is by means of devotion, we
may reach God. God straightway delivers a man from the ocean
of death-bound existence. The Gītā commands us to fix
our mind on God and by so doing we are capable of living in Him. 91
If we are unable to fix our thought steadfastly on God, then
we can reach Him by the practice of concentration 92 (that is
by Yoga or disciplined activity). If we are incapable of

88. B.G. VI.15
89. B.G. VI.46
90. B.G. VI.47 (Radhakrishnam's translation.)
91. B.G. XII.8
92. B.G. XII.9
practice, we may try to attain perfection by being wholly devoted to work for Him, by performing actions solely for God's sake.\textsuperscript{93} If we are unable even to do that, we may take another alternative means of gaining salvation. This way is none other than the way of desireless action. By resorting to God's discipline and by renouncing the fruits of all actions, we may attain the supreme. Thus the Gītā speaks of several paths that lead to salvation. The different paths are evaluated thus:

"Better indeed is knowledge than the practice (of concentration); better than knowledge is meditation; better than meditation is the renunciation of the fruit of action; on renunciation (follows) immediately peace."\textsuperscript{94}

The knowledge of the Ātman – or Brahman – is the central theme of the Upaniṣads, and it is no less so with the Gītā. But the Gītā teaches different practical methods of attaining to this self-knowledge. While the Upaniṣads emphasize almost always the way of knowledge, the Gītā's teaching – eminently practical – is broad-spectrum. The Yogas of knowledge, work, devotion and psychic control are stressed as well as various combinations of two or more of these ways.

\textsuperscript{93} B.G. XII.10
\textsuperscript{94} B.G. XII.12
The Gītā insists upon keen spiritual earnestness. It recognises human limitations. Man is active by nature. Activity (Karma) begets bondage and misery. Without overcoming this proneness to activity and the craving for the results of action, man cannot find peace and freedom. The Gītā shows a way out of the Karmic bondage. That way is the way of selfless action, of dedicated activity, of loving surrender to the will of the Lord while performing all one's duties as worship. "Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer in sacrifice, whatever you give away, and whatever you practise in the form of austerities, O son of Kunti — do it as an offering to Me. Thus shall you be free from the bondage of actions, which bear good or evil results. With your mind firmly set on the Yoga of renunciation, you shall become free and come to Me." 95

The Gītā maintains that all actions are actuated by sattva, rajas and tāmas. Egoism (ahām-kāra) is a modification of the guṇas. The Ātman is the transempirical self or pure spirit which transcends the guṇas and their modifications. The embodied soul becomes free from sufferings due to birth, old age and death, when it transcends the guṇas which produce its body. 96 The association of the self with the mind-body

95. B.G. IX.27-8
96. B.G. XIV.19-20; iii.28
complex is the cause of the embodied life and transmigration. Its complete detachment from the guṇas and their modes brings about its release. Complete transcendence of the three guṇas is the prerequisite of the realization of the transcendental freedom of the finite spirit. 97

The Gītā advocates the threefold method of Karma-yoga, Bhakti-yoga and Jñānayoga. The union of the finite soul with God which is brought about through action, devotion and knowledge is complete transformation of the finite soul into a conscious instrument of the divine spirit. It must not be thought that action, devotion and knowledge are the three divisions of Yoga or that there is any hard and fast line between one division and another. Very often in one and the same passage one aspect of Yoga runs into another most naturally. As D.S. Sarma remarks, "The fact is that the various aspects of Yoga cannot be really separated from one another, any more than the various functions of our minds can be separated from one another. It is only for purposes of analysis that we isolate the discipline of our will and call it Karma-yoga, the discipline of our emotions and call it Bhakti-yoga and the discipline of our understanding and call it Jñāna-yoga. Spiritual life is a whole and it involves the

97. B.G. XIII.20-21
direction of the whole mind - our will, our emotions and our understanding. The path of light begins with right discrimination, goes through obedience to the law and moral action, and thence through self-forgetting love and service, ends in spiritual freedom, where the individual realizes that he is part and parcel of the all-embracing spirit." 98

The Gītā uses the word Yoga with great significance and amplification of meaning in combination with some words like Sannyāsa (renunciation), ananya (single-minded), abhyāsa (repeated practice), buddhi (determinative faculty) etc. In all these instances, Yoga has the connotation of concentration of mind on God or the Ātman. It is sannyāsa or a continuous giving up of all selfish motives and desires, which ultimately shatters the stronghold of 'I' and 'mine'. It is Yoga because all works then are done as an offering to God. A true lover of God consecrates all his actions to Him and meditates on Him with single-minded concentration (ananyena yogena). To such devotee, the Lord ultimately reveals Himself, thereby putting an end to the devotee's transmigratory existence. 99

As the human mind is plagued by distractions, it is difficult

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99. B.G. XII.6-7
to fix it on God. So constant vigilance and practice are recommended. This is abhyāsa-yoga. With strong discriminative buddhi a spiritual aspirant can hold on to his ideals. So Arjuna is advised to resort to buddhi-yoga and thereby remain anchored in God.\textsuperscript{100} The Gītā thus advocates harmony of yogas. Karma is not unenlightened action, nor is Bhakti unbalanced emotion. An enlightened understanding is necessary for effective spiritual life.

\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{100} B.G. XVIII.57. See also X.10.