CHAPTER IX
THE THREE COMPLEMENTARY WAYS OF SALVATION
IN THE BG

Even a casual reader can easily make out that the BG advocates all the three mārgas (paths, ways) of Hindu spirituality, viz. Kārma, Jñāna and Bhakti. But controversies have been raging down the centuries on the question whether our sacred book upholds one of the mārgas as superior to the other two. Śaṅkarācārya holds the view that the BG gives primacy of place to the Jñānamārga. The other great Ācāryas Rāmānuja, Pādha and Vāllabha hold that this scripture, gives a privileged position to the bhaktimārga. According to B.G. Tilak, one of the most popular commentators of the BG, Kārma-mārga is the one of special predilection.

From the above conflicting views on the status of the different mārgas one thing is quite clear: the BG strongly emphasizes all the three. Most of the modern scholars like Radhakrishnan, T.M.P. Mahadevan, K.N. Upadhyaya, Troy Wilson Organ and A.K. Lad consider the three mārgas as complementary in Hindu spirituality considered in a general way, and also particularly in the BG. Most of these authors hold that karma, jñāna, and bhakti cater to the conative, intellecualistic and affective aspects of the human personality.

In this chapter we shall treat all the three mārgas separately and then shall make a comparative study of them. As we shall see,
since a profound understanding of each marga leads to the others, we cannot be too rigid in our treatment.

A: THE KARMA-MARGA

As the Lord Himself says, the questions, "What is Karma? and What is Akarma?" (Kiṁ-karma? kiṁ akarma?) have caused bewilderment even in wise men (4:16). "Hard to understand is the way of work (gahana-karmano gatiḥ, 4:17)." These statements are enough for us to be aware that the questions of involvement in the world through action and of renunciation of the world through non-action do not have ready answers without controversies. First we shall make some remarks on the concept of karma, then we shall concentrate on two main questions viz. the one of niskamakarma and the other on karma as yajña. And these two concepts will lead us to the heart of the question of karmamarga in the Gītā and also will relate this marga to the other two.

1. Some Conceptual Clarifications

The word 'Karma' comes from the root kr which means to act, to do, to perform etc. By further evolution this word got the meanings of duty, religious rite and the fruit of one's actions. The Mīmāṁsakas restricted its meaning to Vedic (ārauta) sacrificial rites. Since these sacrifices have been for certain results or fruits (karmaphalam), either in terms of cosmic harmony (ṛta) based on the sacrifice of the primordial purusa (Ṛg.10:90:5ff.) or in terms of particular fruits like progeny, good crops etc. Thus karmaphalānī began to be known as karmas themselves.
When this term is used in the sense of duty, it includes nitya (everyday duties) naimittika (occasional duties) kamya (for a particular fruit) and nisiddha (forbidden deeds).

a) **Karma Linked with Kama (desire, will)**

The Upanisadic linking of karma with kama has far reaching influence in the BG. In Br.Up.4:4:5-7 we have the basis of the later theories on the link between karma, kama and punarjanma which constitute the saṃsāracakra (the wheel of life). "One becomes virtuous by virtuous action, bad by bad action. Others, however, say that a person consists of desires. As is his desire so is his will (kratur); as is his will, so is the deed he does, whatever deed he does, that he attains" (4:4:5 b). In the following verse this Upanisad points out how the karma is attached to the lingasarīra due to desire and how this attachment leads to rebirth. And the verse following this (i.e. 4:4:7) shows how one attains to Brahman once the desires are destroyed. The BG fully accepts this link between karma and kama.

b) **The Cosmic Aspect of Karma**

According to the Upanisad, karma has something to do with the coming to be of the phenomenal world. The Br.Up. declares: "Verily this (world) is a triad of name, shape and work." It is in this sense we have to understand the statement of the BG that "Karma is the name given to the creative force that brings being into existence" (8:3). Radhakrishnan comments on this verse: "Karma is the creative impulse out of which life's forms issue. The whole cosmic evolution is called karma". No wonder then why Tilak could say that "'māyā'
and 'karma' are synonyms, because unless some karma or action has been performed it is not possible for the Imperceptible to become Perceptible, or for the Qualityless to become Qualifyful.\textsuperscript{14} According to BG 3:15 karma had its origin in Brahman (brahmabhavam).

From this fundamental karma, the other objects evolve and act. And one karma produces another. The rule with which the karma operates is called Karma-vipāka. Tilak writes: "The wind blows by Karma. The sun and the moon move on account of Karma, and Brahmadeva, Viṣṇu and Śaṅkar, and other qualityful gods also are tied up in Karma."\textsuperscript{15} This cosmic karma continues in the form of a seed even after pralaya and carries on at the beginning of a new yuga, to express itself in diverse ways.

2. The Central Problem of Karma Faced by the BG

Here we take karma in the sense of any sort of activity for some fruits, or to put it in another way, any purposeful activity. The paradox upheld by the BG with regard to this sort of activity, with regard to karma in this sense, is the following: On the one hand, the BG accepts the Upaniṣadic position that karma, as it is linked with desires, always binds, and on the other hand, it accepts the common experience that no one can live without acting. Let us examine this paradox a little more closely.

Both from the context and from the text it is clear that the BG advocates work. The purpose of the teaching of the Lord is to lead Arjuna to do his svadharma, which, in the present context is to fight
against the Kauravas. As far as the text is concerned, the BG not only gives a counsel for action, not only action is considered as a moral imperative, but also teaches that non-action (akarma) is physically impossible. The first three chapters have as their central theme, the necessity of work. All the arguments of these chapters seem to be leading to this imperative: nityam kuru karma (3:8) which reminds one of the following imperative given in the Isa Up: "Always performing works one should wish to live a hundred years." (2) Apart from these general considerations we may note specially the decisiveness and unambiguity in favour of work in 3:19; 4:15; 16:24; and 18:6, 73.

The Lord brings forward various reasons for inducing Arjuna to act. This inducement is in terms of caste-duty in 2:13–37, for self-purification (ātmāsudhaye) in 5:11 for release as in the case of Janaka and co. in 3:20 or for lokasangaha (total welfare of the world) in 3:25. Work is also recommended as a way of imitating the Lord, to be attuning ourselves with the Lord's will and activity, in 3:20–24 and in 4:14. Besides, the Lord says that, whether one likes to work or not, one is forced by nature to act (3:5, 8, 33; 16:11, 60).

On the other hand, the BG upholds the Upanisadic view that all works cause bondage (2:39, 43; 3:31; 9:28). Even good actions do not lead to final liberation though one may be rewarded various ways, yet with temporary advantages (6:41–44). Even by doing the Vedic rituals (śrauta) one will not attain liberation (2:42–44).
The BG does not remain in this apparent contradictory position. The solution is one of nīskāma-kārma as explicitly mentioned in 2:47. And this concept is further enriched by the one of sacrifice. Works done as a sacrifice do not bind (3:9). As we shall see nīskāma-kārma implies jñāna and doing everything as a sacrifice implies bhakti.

3. Nīskāma-kārma

By advocating nīskāma-kārma-yoga the BG on the one hand allows us to do action as svadharma demands, and on the other hand shows that such desireless actions instead of binding us lead us to liberation. We shall cite two crucial texts which give us an insight into this concept.

To action alone hast thou a right and never at all to its fruits; let not the fruits of action be thy motive; neither let there be in thee any attachment to inaction (2:47)

He who in action sees inaction and action in inaction, he is wise among men, he is a yogin and he has accomplished all his work (4:18)

In the first verse the Lord recommends action without attachment to its fruits. Of course action is prescribed as an imperative. According to Radhakrishnan this text contains "the essential principle of disinterestedness." Saṅkara stresses the idea of disinterestedness without taking into account the kārma-imperative. But the text is too obvious for further commentary. The second verse further elucidates the meaning of nīskāma-kārma. The obvious meaning of this text is that an action performed without attachment could be called akarma because such an action does not have the evil effect of karma,
the effect of bondage, and so such karma is not karma at all. Verse 3:4, according to which "Not by abstention from work does a man attain freedom from action" complements this idea pointing out that it is not the external performance or non-performance of an action that binds a man but the attitude with which one performs or does not perform. Commenting on 4:18 Radhakrishnan brings out this idea very clearly:

So true non-activity is to preserve inner composure and to be free from attachment. Akarma means the absence of bondage resulting from work because it is done without attachment. He who works without attachment is not bound. We are acting even when we sit quiet without any outward action.

a) The Way to Niskamakarma

Now the question is whether it is possible to act without the desire for fruits. Can we engage ourselves to fruitless actions? According to Mahadevan it is psychologically impossible to act without some desire for fruit. And Aurobindo writes: "Desire is the ordinary motive of all human actions, and if the soul is free from desire, then there is no farther rationale for action." How then is disinterestedness achieved? It has a negative aspect of controlling the senses etc. through yogic practices and a positive aspect of getting attuned with the Lord, the source of all karma.

In 3:7, for the sake of niskamakarma control of the senses by the mind is recommended. In 2:58 and 59 the Lord says that is not enough to withhold the senses from the objects as a tortoise draws in its limbs but must also detach the mind itself lest there will
remain the taste (rasa) for the object.\textsuperscript{23} In 6:11 ff., various yogic techniques are prescribed in order to help one to act as though the body alone acts mechanically, so to say, with no attachment to the object (4:21).\textsuperscript{24}

But the meaning of niskāmakarma has to be understood in terms of the Supreme Being. In 2:59 this idea is hinted at saying: "The objects of sense turn away from the embodied soul who abstains from feeding on them but the taste for them remains. Even the taste turns away when the Supreme is seen." That is to say, when the contact with the UK is accomplished no attachment with any other finite creature would remain. And this is the more important aspect of niskāma which we shall deal with somewhat in detail.

b) The Positive Side of Niskāmakarma

For the BG action is not an unavoidable evil. When our action is done in solidarity with the Lord whose action is responsible for the orderly functioning of the world (3:24) we are freed from the whims of the particular individual egos, and the bondage caused by them. When we perform our svadharma overcoming the narrow and petty desires of the ahamakara and uniting our inner self with the Supreme Self by attuning our actions with the universal, cosmic actions of the Lord, there will be lokasāṅgraha, total welfare (3:20 and 25) in the world both individually and collectively.

Certainly actions just out of desire following the instinctual impulses do bind us. But there is less self-conceit (18:59) when actions are performed according to the Sāstric injunctions (16:24) since in such
actions the motive is, in a sense something outside of ourselves, something of a moral imperative that is independent of us, something which does not, at least openly, cater to our passions and lower instincts. But by the mere fact that it is a norm which is outside ourselves, cannot make us experience the spontaneity of the spirit or true universalism. Aurobindo rightly says in the context of the question of acting according to the norms of the śāstras:

We cannot become impersonal by obeying something outside ourselves, for we cannot so get outside ourselves; we can only do it by rising to the highest in ourselves, into our free Soul and Self which is the same and one in all and has therefore no personal interests, to the Divine in our being who possesses Himself transcendent of cosmos and is therefore not bound by His cosmic works or His individual action. That is what the Gītā teaches and desirelessness is only a means to this end, not an aim in itself.25

According to Radhakrishnan there are three stages in our onward movement towards niṣkāmakarma. He says:

We generally act according to our personal desire, then regulate the course of our conduct by reference to prescribed social codes and ultimately attain a deeper intention of life's meaning and act according to its guidance. The prompting of desire(18:59), the guidance of law(16:24) and the spontaneity of spirit(18:64; 11:33) are the three stages.26

The yogic exercises prescribed in the BG is of immense help to get out of the first stage. Sāstric injunctions lead to the second. But actions performed as Yajña will lead us to true Niṣkāmakarma.

4. Karma as Yajña

One of the most central and richest of the BG concepts is the
one of yajña. The karma-marga according to the BG is based on this concept. Rightly Aurobindo says that "The whole of the Gītā's Gospel of works rests upon its idea of sacrifice and contains in fact the eternal connecting truth of God, and the world and works". What does the Lord mean by sacrifice when he says that any work except that done for sacrifice, binds (3:9)? Is the BG holding a position like that of the Mīmāṃsakas?

The concept of yajña is very complex in the BG. In the third chapter from verses 10 to 16 we have the concept of yajñacakra described in detail. In the fourth chapter, after describing the nature of an integrated person, there is a symbolic interpretation of the concept. For instance, in verse 24 Brahma is identified as offering, the sacrificial ghee, the offerer and the sacrificial fire. In 26 it is said of the sacrifice of the senses in the fire of self-restraint (saṁyamagnisu). In 4:33 there is a statement about jñānayajña and dravyayajña and in 10:25 of japayajña. In fact, the study of the whole of Gītā is considered as jñānayajña (18:70). How to interpret these varied meanings of this concept?

a) Some General Remarks on 'Yajña'

'Yajña' comes from 'yaj-yajati' which means to worship with oblation, to concentrate, to hollow etc. The central religious cult of vedic religion, was various types of yajñas. Rightly, therefore V.M. Apte says: "The Śruti literature and the Sūtras can hardly be understood independently of sacrifices. It is no exaggeration to say that as the Vedic literature, the Vedic religion was centred on numerous
sacrifices. In the Brahmanic period yajña became the chief pre-occupation of the Aryan religion. In the Upaniṣadic age rituals were discouraged and the inner meaning and spirit of the yajñas were stressed. This gave rise to various symbolic interpretations of the concept of yajña and the BG is an heir to such an interpretation.

(i) The cosmic aspect of yajña

The idea that the world process and sacrifice are connected has its root in the Puruṣa Sūkta (10:90) where it is described how Puruṣa, the primordial cosmic Person was immolated in sacrifice and from his dismembered body how the whole cosmos with its variety came to be. This connection between the world process and sacrifice is expressed in a very clear way in the following verse of Mait. Up.6:37 which is also found in Manu (3:76): "The offering properly cast in the fire goes toward the sun; from out of the sun comes rain; from the rain food; from food living beings." In the Satpata Brahmana (11:1:8:2-3) it is stated that Prajāpati created the ‘yajña’ for the maintenance of the world-process. With this Śruti background we can somewhat easily understand the yajña-cakra described with its cosmic connotations in the BG (3:10-16). Again the symbolic expressions of ‘yajña’ found in our Sacred book 4:24-33) have their precedence in the Śruti literature. Tilak rightly remarks: "This idea of symbolically extending the original meaning of the word 'yajña' namely 'a sacrifice of various materials', and making it include religious austerities(tapa), renunciation(saṁnyāsa) mental absorption (saṁśādhi) control of the prana or breath(prānāyāma), and other means of
getting merged into the Blessed Lord, has not been mentioned by the Gītā for the first time."

(ii) **Yajña and Debt**

The cosmic concept of sacrifice is intimately connected with that of fundamental debt. The Taittirīya Samhitā states that a Brahmin is born with three debts (rn), namely the rn to the ṛṣis, to the devas and to the ancestors, and the first type of debt is paid by the study of the Vedas, the second by ritual sacrifices to the gods and the third by procreation (6:5:10:5). This idea of repaying the debts through yajñas is very obvious in the traditional concept of paccamahāyajñas.

Tilak writes:

Manu and other Smriti writers have mentioned five daily sacrificial rites to be performed at home, which do not entail the slaughter of animals, namely the study of the Vedas as a brahma-yajña, oblations to the ancestors as pitṛ-yajña, oblations into the fire as deva-yajña, offering of food as bali as a bhūta-yajña, and entertaining guests as a manusya-yajña; and the ritual prescribed for a man in the state of a householder is, that he should partake of food after he has in this way satisfied respectively the ṛṣis, the ancestors, the dīśties, the spirits of the departed, and men, by these five sacrifices.

What is to be noticed in this concept of debt and yajña is the awareness of the Vedic sages of the inter-relatedness of different classes of contingent beings among themselves and of the need among men to work for the total well-being sacrificing man's own egos.

b) **The Meaning of 'Yajña' in the BG**

The yajña-cakra described in chapter three is quite intelligible if we understand the cosmic aspect of yajña described in the Śruti.
We have also referred to the symbolic expressions of yajña in chapter four where mention is made about drvya-yajña, tapo-yajña, svādhyāya-yajña, etc. (4:29) and of yajña of the senses in the fire of self-restraint (4:26) or of the works of the senses and of the vital breath in the fire of self-control (4:27). In 3:14-15 it is said that yajña arises from karma, karma from Brahman (in the sense of Veda) and Brahman from Akṣara, and that Brahman is established (pratistitam) on yajña. Taking into account of these very broad and varied concepts of yajña in the BG, Swami Vireswaranand gives the following interpretation of this concept:

... sacrifice does not mean merely ritualistic worship performed by offering material things in the fire, but it includes all kinds of spiritual culture. Thus acts of charity, giving up of desires, control of senses and of the breath, muttering of mystic syllables and God's names, are all conceived as sacrifices (Gītā, 4:25-30; 10:25). In fact, according to the Gītā, sacrifice includes all acts whatsoever, done unselfishly; for the main idea in a sacrifice is the offering of something in the fire to the deity. So any act done without selfishness can be regarded as an offering, and therefore all acts such are sacrifice. 34

According to Tilak, Aurobindo and Radhakrishnan the invariable and constant element in the BG concept of yajña is selflessness or egolessness in the performance of an action. Tilak puts it briefly: "In short, one may say that doing a particular Karma, in which there is no selfish purpose, with a pure frame of mind is a yajña in itself." 35

But another important element of the BG concept of yajña is the theocentric attitude of our karmas. The freedom from ego-centrism is to surrender all our actions to the Lord as an offering. It is here, the
concept of yajña complements nīṣkāmakarma.

c) The Theocentrism of Yajña

True, for the BG ego-centrism in action is unacceptable, but the action advocated by it is not centre-less. The Karmakāṇḍins absolu­tized yajñas without divine reference. But for our scripture an action is a yajña not by merely not having ego-centrism but also because it is theocentric.

There is, of course, a mystical identification of the Lord with the yajña (aham yajñah, 9:16. Cfr. also 8:4). This reminds us of 4:24 where the Supreme Brahman is identified with the act offering, with the oblation etc., following the Śruti tradition. The action that is sacrifice is desireless in the sense that it is not bound by the inclinations and instinctual desires of the petty individual egos which try to imprison the higher selves to the narrow and puny world of the individual egos; but when the action is in consonance with the cosmic will of the establisher of sanātana dharma, when the action is in harmony with the cosmic actions of the Lord, the actions which keep the cosmos in order, then the drive, enthusiasm and 'desire' implied in action take the form of bhakti. Thus in 3:30 the Lord says not only to be ego-less (nirmamo bhūtva) but also to surrender all actions to him (mayī sarvāni karmāni sanyasya). Indeed, whatever one does (yathāroṣi) has to be done as an offering to the Lord (9:27) thereby all desireless actions with God-orientation will become a true worship (18:56). Rightly therefore Śri. Aurobindo writes:

All being and all action of Prakṛti exist only for the sake of the Divine; from that it proceeds, by that it endures, to that
it is directed. But so long as we are dominated by the ego-
sense we cannot perceive or act in the spirit of this truth,
but act for the satisfaction of the ego and in the spirit of
the ego, otherwise than for sacrifice. Egoism is the knot of
the bondage. By acting Godwards, without any thought of ego,
we loosen this knot and finally arrive at freedom.

5. The Essence of Karma-marga in the BG

The BG accepts the Sruti view that Karma was at the root of
creation. The external world with its varied classes and types of
contingent beings came into being by the lower nature of the Lord
through karma. It is the continued activity of the Lord that brings
about lokasaṅgraha i.e. universal welfare (3:24). When man does his
svadharma (3:35; 18:47) without the egoistic desire for the fruits
transcending his little ego to the Supreme Self identifying one's own
will to the cosmic will of the Lord who is the Protector of the Eternal
Dharma (Śāsvatadharma greatest, 11:18), one will be contributing to the
lokaśaṅgraha in one's own individual capacity (3:25) as Janaka and
others did their little mite for lokaśaṅgraha by being faithful to
their svadharmas (3:20).

The above mentioned primordial karma has a root that is sacri-
ficial. The particular activities of the contingent beings i.e. the
svadharmas, when performed in consonance with the primordial karma, in
consonance with the cosmic will, which is rooted in the Lord, all the
svadharmas share the sacrificial colouring of the primordial karma.
Rightly therefore Radhakrishnan says that "The Law of the world is
sacrifice". 40.
Man enjoys a certain amount of freedom in doing his svadharma. He can fail thereby causing disharmony in the cosmos though the Lord, in the long run always achieves his purposes in spite of man. Though, as we said earlier, it is impossible psychologically to act without certain individual purpose and certain particular desires, when one identifies one's own will and desires with those of the Lord by attuning oneself with the Lord in total and wholehearted devotion, this psychological problem is overcome. Indeed, the one who performs his actions only as sacrifice surrendering them all to the Lord as offerings (5:30; 18:57; 9:27) will, in a sense, becomes the enjoyer of the sacrifices (aham hi sarvayajñānām bhoktā) with the Lord (9:24).

The text 18:46 where the Lord asks to perform all actions as worship of him (sarvakarmanā tam abhyarcya) puts in a nut-shell all that we said of karma-marga in the BG. The BG accepts the Mīmāṃsaka position that sacrifices do not bind provided that the concept of sacrifice is understood in this sense rather than that given by the karmakāndins. The niskānakarma advocated by the BG is truly sacrificial worship of the Lord, and our text truly advocates karmamārga in which actions are in the spirit of sacrifice to the Lord. The following statement of Aurobindo is a fitting conclusion to this section:

The universal law of sacrifice is the sign that the world is of God and belongs to God and that life is his dominion and house of worship and not a field for the self-satisfaction of the independent ego; not the fulfilment of the ego, — that is only our crude and obscure beginning, but the discovery of God, the worship and seeking of the Divine and the Infinite through a constantly enlarging sacrifice culminating in a perfect self-giving founded on a perfect self-knowledge is that to which the experience of life is at last intended to lead.
1. Some General Remarks on the Concept of Jñāna

For the modern mind scientifically trained in the Western mould, the idea that knowledge can lead one to liberation may sound strange. For, knowledge (jñāna) is usually understood by the modern man either as informative, factual knowledge or scientifically systematised knowledge. And knowledge understood in this sense usually does not presuppose an axiological or value dimension. Or to put it in another way, a knower of many sciences can be a slave to his passions and evil tendencies, and so can be called a bad man according to the current ethical standards. How then is jñāna said to liberate man?

But for the ancients both in Indian and elsewhere knowledge was not such an abstract, theoretical stuff as what it has become for the 'modern' man. A brief comparison with the Hebrew concept of knowledge, especially as found in the Bible, can lead us to see a remarkable similarity between this latter and the traditional Indian concept of knowledge. For the Hebrews the word knowledge expressed something very concrete, experiential and existential that it included even sexual intercourse. Thus, for instance, in Genesis 4:1, the sentence "Adam knew Eve" meant that the former had sexual intercourse with the latter. John McKenzie writes: "In general it may be said that in Hebrew to know is to experience; experience develops into acceptance or possession. The experience of possession is clear in the use of the word "know" to designate sexual intercourse (Gen. 4:1, 17, 25; Num. 31:18, 35; Jgs 21:12+)." The OT concept of knowledge has been slightly weakened in the NT due to
the Hellenistic contact. Yet much of its meaning is carried on especially in the Pauline and Johannine writings in the NT. In the context of some Johannine passages, McKenzie remarks: "In John knowledge and love grow together, so that it is difficult to say whether love is the fruit of knowledge or knowledge is the fruit of love. Actually this is a false antithesis in John since the two mutually enrich each other (1 Jn.4:7-8,16,20). One who knows God keeps his commandments, and one who sins cannot know God (1 Jn.2:3-5; 3:6). To know God and Jesus Christ is eternal life (Jn.17:3)."

The concepts 'jñāna and 'vidya' of ancient and mediaeval philosophical traditions in India have a similar meaning. In spite of modern rationalistic and scientific thinking even to-day in India the original meaning is preserved though in a watered down way. All the same the meaning of the word knowledge in the Upanisadic statements like the following are quite mysterious to us: "He who, verily knows (veda) the Supreme Brahman becomes Brahman Himself" (mund. up. 3:2:9). "Whoever knows (veda) thus; 'Iam Brahman', becomes this all" (Br.Up.1:4:10). "By knowing (jñātva) God there is a falling off of all fetters, and the sorrows of birth and death cease" (Śv.Up. 1:11). Thus in the Upanisadic tradition knowledge as expressed by vidya and jñāna are not some informative, intellectualistic knowledge but is much deeper involving the mind and heart, nay the whole personality of the 'knower'. Due to the superimposition of the modern scientific, rationalistic concept of knowledge, Śaṅkaraśārya, the advocate par excellence of jñānamārga, is considered as a onesided, cold, intellectualist. If we interpret Śaṅkara's concept of jñāna in
this sense, his demand for Śādhanā-catuṣṭāyam for Vedāntic knowledge would remain an unsolvable mystery, even as his devotional writings would become so. No wonder then why even the most speculative philosophical systems are called in India darśanas (visions) and are considered to be mokṣa-sastras. T.W. Rhys Davids was well aware of this experientialistic concept of knowledge in the Indian philosophical tradition when he said: "Even the knowledge sought by the six classical systems of philosophy was more than the intellectual knowing; it was a marga to the realization of man's highest good.... However the philosophies were so man-centred that this quest for knowledge was subordinated to mummukṣa, the desire for liberation. Soteriological motivations overrode the purely cognitive motivations."

2. The Concept of Knowledge (jnāna or vidya) in the BG

There are two passages in the BG which ex professo give detailed descriptions on the concept of jnāna, though they should not be taken as precise and comprehensive definitions which would satisfy the logicians. The first passage is 13:7-11 and the second is 18:18-20. In the first passage, after describing the various characteristic notes of jnāna concludes: "...all this is knowledge" (tāj jñānam iti proktam). Hence according to the Gitākaras mind, the description given in the verses from 7 to 11 stand for knowledge. In the second passage (18:20-22) there is a description of three kinds of knowledge, viz. sāttvika, rajasika and tāmasika.

Let us examine some of the elements of the concept of true knowledge, in these two passages. Humility (amanītvaṃ) or sincerity, honesty (adamāhitvaṃ) non-violence (ahimsa), patience (kaśanti) uprightness (ārjavam)
service of the teacher (ācāryopāsanām) purity (saucam) steadfastness (sthairiyam) and self control (ātmavinigraha). These are the characteristics of knowledge given in 13:7. One may wonder how these qualities are connected with jñāna. Then the qualities like the insight into the suffering and limitations implied in birth, death, illness and old age, detachment from the sense-objects including one’s own dear ones like son and wife. To these are added unswerving devotion to the Lord (bhaktir avyabhicārini) (10). In the second passage the crucial text is 18:20 according to which sāttvika jñāna would mean the vision (īksate) of the changeless and unique reality in the changing multiplicity of contingent beings (avibhaktam vibhaktesu) beings as consistently taught elsewhere also in the BG (Cfr. 9:15; 11:13; 13:16,30). Certainly knowledge with the characteristics of this sort is a far cry from the knowledge we to-day we usually speak of. Tilak writes:

This is the difference between real saints and mere Vedāntists; and therefore, in describing Knowledge it is stated in the Gītā that true Knowledge may be said to have been acquired, when noble emotions like ‘humility (amanitva), peacefulness (sānti), self-control (ātmavinigraha), equality of mind (samabudhi) are awakened, whereby the total purification of the mind is continually expressed in conduct, instead of saying that ‘Knowledge is understanding by Reason of what is at the root of the external world (BG 13:7-11)’. 48

3. Jñāna as a Path with Various Degrees, and as Goal

In our sacred book jñāna is used both as a means or mārga for attaining ultimate liberation, and as the state of ultimate liberation itself. The failure to recognize this fact has led many to avoidable controversies whether jñāna is superior to bhakti or vice versa.
Radhakrishnan remarks:

Jñāna as the intellectual pathway to perfection is different from jñāna as spiritual wisdom. The spiritual apprehension of the real is not an act of service or of devotion or for that matter, of cognition, however much these acts may lead up to it. As the same word 'jñāna' is employed for both the goal of perfection and the way to it, for the recognition of reality as well as the scheme of spiritual knowledge, some are led to think that the intellectual path is superior to the other methods of approach.

a) Jñāna as a Path

In 4:9 the Lord says that those who know (vetti) in its true nature his divine births and works, will reach him after his death. And in the following verse knowledge-austerity (jñānatāpasā) is considered as a means for purification for attaining the Lord's being the final destiny. In 4:19 this idea of purifying function of jñāna (jñānānāngni dagdha karmāṇam) is repeated. Jñāna is considered as a means (jñānam labdhvā) for final liberation (param śāntim) also in 4:39. Indeed most of the verses from 4:32-42 speaks of jñāna as a means for liberation. This is especially true of 4:36 where jñāna is metaphorically used as a bark (jñānaplavaiveva) to cross over the stream of samsāra. In 5:29; 8:29; 9:1,13,12,18 and 34; 14:1&2; 18:55, we have the same idea in clear terms.

b) Jñāna as Having Various Degrees

There are a number of passages which show that jñāna accepts different grades or degrees. In 18:20-22 we have the categorization
of this path according to the three gunas in a hierarchical way. Parallel to the salvation-giving bhakti of a durācāri (evildoer) (9:30) there is also a salvation-giving jñāna of an evil-doer (duṣkrtino) in 4:58. In both cases, it is obvious, that both the bhakti and jñāna are of an inferior kind. In 14:6 we read of a kind of joy (suḥkham) and knowledge (jñānam) attachment to which causes bondage. Then there is a jñānī who will possess the Lord only after many births (7:19). The jñāna which is superior to abhyāsa (practice) but inferior to meditation (dhyāna) and the renunciation of the fruit of action (karmaphalatyāga) (12:12) is certainly inferior to the jñāna which is the goal, as we shall soon see.

c) Jñāna as Goal

If jñāna admits grades it is not difficult to understand how it can be the experience of one in jīvanyātra (i.e. one who is on the way to mukti), and of one at the end of this yatra in mukti. In 5:18-21 we have a clear description of jñāna as a goal. Here the jñānī is sama-darśin (looking at all things with equal attitude) be it a candāla or a brahmin, a dog or a cow (5:18). And the jñānicos of this sort are established in the Absolute (brahmani stihitah) (5:19, 20). And the jñānī of this passage, established in Brahman, is a jīvamukta (5:19).

In most of the verses of the passage 6:20-32 we have the idea of a jñāni with a cittavṛtti and with true peace. In 6:21 and 22 of this passage this question of complete rest or tranquility is expressed after 'possessing' Brahman which totally satisfies the whole of the
knowing self of man. Here, jñāna is intimate union with the Absolute. This idea of peace or rest in the Absolute expressed in most of the verses of this passage reminds us of the characteristics of the Sthitaprajñā described in 2:54-72. To be established in Bhrahman, with peace and joy, with no more desire, is the experience of mukti which is the goal of our jīvanyātra.

4. Jñāna and Grace

According to the Upaniṣads' Katha (1:2:23) and Mundaka (3:2:23) the "Self cannot be attained by instruction, nor by intellectual power, nor even through much hearing" but only "by the one whom the(self) chooses." This Upanisadic idea of saving knowledge as a gift from God is very much present in the BG. According to 10:10 the budhi-yoga (‘power of understanding’, true jñāna) by which one is led to commune with the divine is a gift from the Lord. In 10:11 the Lord says that out of mercy (anukampāpartham) he will destroy the darkness caused by the ignorance by the light of wisdom. As we have pointed out earlier Arjuna saw the cosmic form of the Lord only after the Lord had given him the divine eye (11:8). The Lord is very explicit in saying that this vision afforded to Arjuna was by his own divine pleasure (maya prasannena; 11:47) and that such intimate knowledge of The Lord through such a vision could not have been possible for Arjuna by the study of the Vedas or by ritualistic observances (11:48, also 11:54). In fact, the enlightening discourse which the Lord has given to Arjuna is something done out of compassion and love (madanugrahāya) (11:1). It is, thus, quite clear in the BG that the knowledge that leads to mukti is attained not only by human effort alone but also by the Lord’s grace.
Some Concluding Remarks on Jnāna

What we have been trying in this section was to present a description account of the concept of jnāna on an overall background of this concept in the Indian tradition. The question as to how jnāna is a mārga of or a means for mukti has been partially touched upon contrasting it to the question of jnāna as a goal. However, our remarks were more on the concept of jnāna than taking it as a mārga leading to liberation.

When we compare the mārgas together after dealing with bhakti, the question of the relevance of jnāna for mukti will become clear. Jnāna as a gift from God or as something which is dependant on God's grace is obvious if we realize that in personal relations among men, knowledge of each other implies free self-revelation of each other unlike the knowledge of objects with no knowledge and love. An apple falling from a tree can be known independent of its willing whereas the relevant and meaningful knowledge of a person is very much dependent on the free revelation of his inner self to the other. What is true of human relationships is much more obvious in the question of divino-human relationships.

C. BHAKTIMĀRGA

Bhakti comes from the root bhaj which means to divide, to distribute, to share with, to bestow, to serve, to adore etc. Among the various meanings of this word given by Monier Williams the following could be noted: distribution, separation, share, being a part of, that which belongs to, attachment and devotion. After analysing various texts from the classical bhakti literature of India, Dr. Dhavamony gives the following brief description of this concept:
... the religious usage of it in these classical texts suppose a god or a personified god or a spiritual master to whom personal reverence and devotion are directed. The adjuncts of the word bhakti, like namah(bowing), in these texts denote respect and reverence towards the person who is to be honoured. The term bhakti in the religious sense obviously implies the meaning of reverential devotion and loyal love to God or to his manifestation.

1. A Prima Facie View of the Bhakti-texts in the BG

There are some 43 instances where the substantive bhakti and its verbal forms occur. Here we shall have an overall view of some of these instances to have a general idea of this concept in the BG. Later on we shall do some systematic considerations trying to get into the very central core of the Gītā-bhakti.

a) In the Verbal Sense

In 4:11 the Lord says that as men approach me(prapadyante) so I show 'devotion to them(tathatva bhajamy aham). Here the subject of the verb 'bhajamy' is the Lord himself. It means that in return of the devotees devotion the Lord communicates himself to them in love and loyalty. Here the original meaning of sharing or participating is present. In 6:47 the nature of expressing bhakti is pointed out. It has to be in great faith(āradhāvān) and establishing one's inner self abiding in the Lord(madgatena'ntarātmanā). And he is considered as a yogi. Here the subject is man, and the verb retains its original meaning of participation and personal communion. In 7:16 the Lord describes four kinds of bhakti-relationship namely, that of ārta (the one in distress) of jijnāsu (the seeker of wisdom) of arthārthi (seeker of
wealth) and of jñāni (the man of wisdom). As we shall later see, here certainly we have different grades of bhakti. Here the Lord appears as an answer to man's experience of his limitations either in accidental matters as wealth or in structural matters as in wisdom. In 7:28 the bhakta is one who has transcended the pairs of opposites, whose sinful attitudes have come to an end (anta-gatam pāpaṁ) who are doers of good actions (punya-karmaṇam) and who are steady in their vows (dṛḍhavrataḥ). In 9:13 the verb bhaj is qualified by the expressions ananya-mānasā (singlemindedly) and daivim prakṛtim āśritāḥ (taking refuge in my divine nature). The Lord prescribes as an imperative to have devotion to him (bhajasva mam) to have a meaningful life in this sorrowful and impermanent (anityam asukham lokam) world (9:33). According to 10:18 this bhakti-relationship with the Lord has to be with affectivity (bhāvasamaṇavitāḥ). In 10:10 this bhakti relationship is qualified by the expression pritibhūtavrakam (with affective love) and in 15:19 by sarvabhāvena (by one's whole being or by one's whole emotive love). So much for the passages where the various verbal derivatives of the root bhaj is used.

b) In the Substantival Sense

By the expressions like "ekabhaktir" (singleminded or singlehearted, 7:17), "ananyabhaktyā" (unswerving devotion, 8:22), and "ananyayogena and avyabhicāriṁ bhaktir" (13:10) the Gītākāra teaches that bhakti in the BG has to be towards one and only person with wholehearted dedication and loyalty, and that this person is Lord Kṛṣṇa. By saying that the Lord's bhaktas will come to him (madbhaktayaṁti mam api) the Lord indirectly points out how bhakti is a means for mukti in him (7:23). In 9:34 the characteristics of bhakti and of the bhakta are vividly described saying:
"On Me fix thy mind; to Me be devoted; worship Me; revere Me; thus having disciplined thyself, with Me as thy goal, to Me shalt thou come." In 11:55 we have an equally vivid description of the bhakta pointing out that this relationship implies working for the Lord alone, taking the Lord as the ultimate, detaching oneself from all other things and having no enmity towards any contingent being. In 12:13-20 where the nature of the bhakta is ex officio described we find together with the above characteristics many others too.

c) In Brief

Even a casual look at the texts like the ones given above makes it obvious that the word bhakti is used to express a personal relationship between God and man. Though this term was used also to express secular love, in the BG it is expressive of a sacred relationship. Rightly therefore, Dr. Dharmody says: "At the outset we have to note that there is not a single case in the whole of the Gita in which bhaj is employed to mean secular love, sexual or asexual.... All the forty-three cases in which the derivatives of Bhaj are made use of, indicate the personal relationship between God and man."58

Another easily observable element in Gita-bhakti is that of interpersonal sharing. That is why the Lord too has bhakti towards the bhakta (4:11), and the Lord is in the bhakta and the bhakta in the Lord (9:29). Rightly therefore Zaehner says that in the various instances of the use of the derivatives of bhaj "the original meaning of the word, which is 'participation', is never lost".59

2. Bhakti as Marga with its Various Degrees and as Goal

This treatment is parallel to that of jñāna. Since our primary
intention is to understand the central core of bhakti in the following section, here too our treatment will be somewhat generalistic and casual. Dr. Dharmiyu writes on the question how bhakti is conceived as a marga and as a goal:

Already in the Gita bhakti is proposed both as a means of liberation and as the supreme goal of liberation itself. Bhakti as a means of release denotes the love of God shown by the devotee with the view of attaining final liberation, and bhakti as the liberated state signifies union with and surrender to God; it is the felt participation of the soul in the total being of God. 60

a) Bhakti as Marga

In 4:3 Lord Krishna acknowledges that Arjuna is his devotee and friend (bhakta and sakha). Yet Arjuna is in an attitude of bewilderment until the full revelation came to him in the following chapters. It is his docility (Brahmajijnasa) and singleminded devotion that makes the Lord give him an insight into the unfathomable mysteries of the infinite. In 8:14 and 22 it is pointed out how the Lord is possessed by the devotee through whole-hearted and singleminded devotion thereby showing that bhakti is a means for mukti in the Lord. After revealing his cosmic form the Lord says that only through wholehearted bhakti (bhaktya tu ananyaya) he can be truly known, seen and ‘possessed.’ The instrumental case in the use of the word bhakti is quite obvious in this text to express bhakti as a marga. The idea of liberation from mrtyeasa sarasagarat (from the ocean of death-bound existence) by single-minded bhakti is graphically described in 12:5-7. Among other texts 18:55 also could be considered an obvious one which brings out the idea explicitly that bhakti is a marga.
b) The Various Degrees of Bhakti

There is a passage in the BG where Lord Krsna explicitly speaks of different kinds of bhaktas, and so of different kinds of bhaktis, and then shows his preference to one type (7:16-17). When the Lord speaks tolerantly of devotion to other gods he does not acknowledge the value of such devotions, unenlightened though these devotions may be (7:20-23; 9:23). Being an unenlightened type of bhakti it cannot be put in the same category with the bhakti where the devotee gives himself wholeheartedly to the Lord with true knowledge. Though the Lord accepts the bhakti of the sinners, Śudras etc. it is not of the same grade as that of the rājāśīs (9:32-33). Here too the Lord accepts openly the different grades of bhakti.

c) Bhakti as a Goal

Due to the relationship of the liberated soul with the Paramātman in terms of sādharmya rather than of absolute absorption, this relationship of the liberated soul is often called parābhakti. Krsna, the puruṣottama transcends even Brahman in so far as Brahman is conceived in a negative and 'impersonalistic' way forgetting that it is only an aspect of the total reality that the Absolute is (11:37-40; 12:1-5; 14:3-4). With the awareness of such a bhakti Zaehner writes:

What no commentator who has in any way been influenced by Śāṅkara seems to realize, is that devotion to God is not only one of the means that will lead to the vision of the self which is also liberation, but that this devotion and love, now raised to a higher power, gives content and purpose to liberation itself. There is a lower and a higher bhakti (18:54): the one is little more than conventional piety directed to God, the other is the
completion and fruition that the self enjoys after its final emancipation ...

It is in 18:54 where the word para-bhakti occurs, and so we shall cite it here: "Having become one with Brahman, and being tranquil in spirit, he neither grieves nor desires. Regarding all beings as alike he attains supreme devotion (madbhaktim labhate param).

In 6:30-31 the same content of parabhakti is expressed without the use of this term. In fact the description of a true bhakta given in the passage 12:13-20 is very similar to the nature of a liberated soul as we have seen in our study on Muktì in the BG. As in the case of jnāna so too bhakti is at once marga and a goal, and the perennial peace and bliss of the liberated soul has the aspects of both jnāna and bhakti.

3. Total Self-surrender as the Central Core of Bhakti

According to the BG, the UR is the total cause of everything. Only the conscious beings with self-reflection can be aware of this nature of God. The very nature of God and man demands that man should acknowledge this total supremacy of God and surrender himself totally to the divine designs with regard to oneself and with regard to the cosmos as a whole. The Bhakti in the Gītā does full justice to this nature of God and of man by prescribing total, whole-hearted self-surrender to the Lord in loving dedication. We shall first cite a few slokas where this idea is most obvious and then shall analyse the various aspects of this surrender.

a) Some Sample Texts Expressive of Total Self-surrender

On Me fix thy mind; to Me be devoted; worship Me; revere Me; thus having disciplined thyself, with Me as thy goal, to Me shalt thou come (9:34. For a parallel text cfr.18:65)
He who does work for Me, he who looks upon Me as his goal, he who worships Me, free from attachment, who is free from enmity to all creatures; he goes to Me, O Pandava (11:55, Cfr. also: 12:6-7).

Whatever thou doest, whatever thou eatest, whatever thou offerest, whatever thou givest away, whatever austerities thou dost practise - do that, O Son of Kunti, as an offering to Me (9:27).

It is difficult to bring out the full import of these texts without referring to the Sanskrit original. The strength of the Sanskrit expression 'manmana bhava' by the translation "Fix thy mind one Me" or matparamo by "look upon Me as goal" is not fully brought out. Together with the Sanskrit original when we look at these few sample texts we can easily understand the true meaning of total self surrender without spoiling them by elaborate commentaries. The bhakta seen in these texts is one, who does everything for the Lord or with reference to the Lord, the whole of whose conscious life is permeated by the thought of the Lord, and the whole of whose affective life is filled by the Lord. This is strikingly similar to the following commandment in the OT and NT: "You must love your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength" (Dt. 6:5; Lk. 10:27). In this total self-surrender the bodily, intellectual and emotional aspects of the devotee are involved.

(i) **Surrender of all the actions**

We have already seen in our study of niskamakarmayoga that when the actions are performed as a sacrifice, i.e. as an offering to the Lord without the ego-sense, they instead of becoming a source of
bondage, will become a source of liberation. We have cited above the text 9:27 where the Lord demands of his bhaktas that all actions be performed as offerings to Him. In the previous verse (9:26) Lord Krsna had already said that he would accept from his bhaktas such humble offerings as patrana, puspam, phalam and toyam provided that it is done with a dedicated heart. As in 9:27, so too in 5:30; 12:5; 18:56-57, the Lord asks of the bhakta to offer all actions (sarcvani karmani) without making the distinction between secular and religious actions. Indeed, in the BG, if one is a bhakta, all the actions are sacralized. The BG is more interested in how one performs an action rather than what one does. Commenting on 9:27 Radhakrishnan writes: "Self-giving results in the consecration of all acts to God. The tide of the common tasks of daily life must flow through the worship of God..... Karmamarga or the way of works...concludes with the position that all tasks are sanctified when done with disinterestedness and dedication."

(ii) The intellectual aspect of the self-surrender

The mind of a true bhakta does not jump from one object to another like a wild monkey but is concentrated on the Lord seeing him in all things, all things in him. His mind will be turned to the Lord intent on him (maccitto) yukta aśīta matparah, 6:14) like the compass needle always turns towards the north. This idea is expressed more graphically by the phrase mayi arpitamanobudhir (mind and understanding set on Me 8:7, also 12:14). The Lord alone as the object of the intellectual faculty is brought out by the expressions ananyacetah satatam (thinking of nothing else, 8:14), ananyamānasā (with mind on nothing
else, 9:13) and ananyas cintayanta (thinking of nothing else, 9:22).

This idea of intellectual dedication is forcefully brought out in 12:8 where the Lord says: "mayi eva mana ādhatava, mayi budhim niveśaya (On me alone let your mind remain established and let your intellect enter into me).

(iii) The wholeheartedness of the self-surrender

In this section we are interested in those passages which give an affective dimension to the bhakti-relationship. This dimension, however, cannot be considered as independent from the other ones. In 10:8 Lord Kṛṣṇa says that the wise men (budhah) worship him bhavasamanvitah (endowed with bhava). Zaehner translates bhava as "warm affection". Rāmānuja's rendering of the word "mayi sprhāyalavo" could be translated as "passionately". Chidbhanandaji translates as "with all their heart". Śaṅkarācārya's rendering by "bhāvo bhāvana paramārtha-tattva-bhiniveśah" too implies an effective element though the cognitive is more predominant. All the same no one can deny the affectivity implied in this expression.

After speaking of the need of removing asakti (attachment) from sons, wives and homes, the Lord advocates a bhakti which is avyabhicarini (13:9-10) and invites the devotee to have asakti towards Him alone (7:1).

Both from the text and context we can easily notice the affective element. Since this love-involvement is directed towards one and only person, it is called ekabhakti (7:17) reminding us of the ekāntikabhakti of the Bhāgavatas. In 11:44 Arjuna begs of the Lord to forgive him as a father forgives the son, friend forgives the friend and lover forgives
the beloved. By bringing forward these affective relationships the BG emphasizes the emotional involvement implied in the bhakti-relationship. The expression we often come across in the BG, viz. matparāh(e.g. 2:161; 6:14) does have the affective connotation of being absorbed in the Lord as Sakuntala was absorbed in the 'thought' of Dusyanta when Rsi Durvasāv paid a visit to the Āśrama of Kanva.

**Conclusion**

The brief survey we have made above is enough to make us understand that the bhakti advocated in the BG is essentially a surrender to God with the totality of one's person, with one's body, mind and heart. Rightly Dr. Bhavmony writes: "Expressions such as dhrdhavrataḥ(7:28) madgadenantarātmāna(6:47) ananyamānasa(9:13), avyabhicarini(13:10) bring out the personal involvement of the whole self, mind and heart of the bhakta in his attitude towards the incarnate God Kṛṣṇa." The few people have expressed more beautifully and picturesquely this idea of total self-surrender than Gurudev Ravindranath Tagore in the last poem of Gitanjali which we shall cite here:

In one salutation to thee, my God, let all my senses spread out and touch this world at thy feet. 

Like a rain-cloud of July hung low with its burden of unshed showers let all my mind bend down at thy door in one salutation to thee.

Let all my songs gather together their diverse strains into a single current and flow to a sea of silence in one salutation to thee.
Like a flock of homesick cranes flying night and day back to their mountain nests let all my life take its voyage to its eternal home in one salutation to thee. 67

D. MARGA-TRAYAYA-SAMANVAYA IN THE BG

From the above considerations it is clear that the BG advocates all the three paths. It is well and good to say so; but what about the texts which seem to give greater importance to one marga over the other? We shall briefly survey some of these texts and shall try to find an answer.

1. The Problem

According to the BG, as we have seen, it is impossible not to act (3:4-6) and action is considered as an imperative (3:8). In 5:2 karmayoga is preferred to karmasanyasa, the former standing for karmamarga and the latter for jnanamarga. Since this statement of the Lord is an answer to a straight question by Arjuna as to which between jñana and karma is superior, the meaning of the answer is quite obvious. According to Tilak this text indicates incontrovertibly the superiority of karmamarga. Tilak interprets 6:46 3:7 too as showing preference to karmamarga.

In 4:38 the Lord says that nothing on earth resembles jñana in its ability to purify us after saying in 4:36 how even the sinful men sail across the ocean of samsār through the boat of knowledge. In 9:30-31 the Lord says that even the evil doers will be liberated provided that they have bhakti, and in 18:66 the Lord asks to take
refuge in Him as a bhakta forgetting all the dharmas, and this will be enough for liberation. Indeed, the bhakti towards a personal God is preferred to the contemplation of the jñāna of an 'Impersonal Absolute' for salvation (12:5 & also 2).

There are verses where karma seems to lead to bhakti (18:49-54; 9:26-27), and also to jñāna (18:49-50). In 5:4 the Lord identifies the jñānamarga and the karma-marga. In 10:10-11, bhakti seems to lead to jñāna while in 7:16 the jñāni seems to be considered as a preferable kind of bhakta. In 4:42 jñāna seems to lead to karma and in 9:13 and 15:19 seem to lead to bhakti.

In the light of the above texts how can we say that the BG gives equal status to all the three mārgas? We have seen also texts which show that one mārga plays a subordinate role to another while in another context the apparently superior mārga seems to play the subordinate role. Again we have texts where one mārga is identified with another. These apparent inconsistencies have led various commentators to various controversies. How shall we face this problem?

2. Our Solution

The first thing to be noted is that in the BG there are various grades of jñāna and bhakti as we have seen. And the karma advocated in the BG is karma which has become yajña due to bhakti. In the state of liberation there is parambhakti, there is perfect knowledge and there is perfectly disinterested action attuning oneself with the Supreme dharmagopta. The karma, jñāna and bhakti of the state
of mukti are the most perfect kind and in this state all the three are intrinsically connected. This intrinsic dependence of jñāna and bhakti in the state of mukti is very obvious. Jñāna as a path is inferior to parābhakti, and bhakti as a path is inferior to jñāna as a goal or in the liberated state. Niṣkāmakarma, as we have explained above is superior to escapistic sannyāsa without taking into account of one's svadharma (3:35; 18:47), or to unenlightened bhakti. But karma without disinterestedness is inferior to the other two paths. Thus, this understanding of the different grades of karma, jñāna and bhakti can resolve many of the apparent contradictions.

The problem could be viewed from another angle too. From the context of the Gītā-dialogue one can easily conclude that our sacred book does give special prominence to karmamarga. After all, the dialogue is to induce Arjuna to fight. But the activism demanded by the BG is not just any kind of activism, but one that demands much "kausalam" (skill). The action has to be niṣkāmakarma (disinterested action) as we have explained above. Besides the action has to be God-centred. The Lord tells Arjuna to fight thinking of Him (māṁ anusmara yudhya ca, 8:7). Indeed, however secular the action may be like eating and drinking, it has to put on the nature of yajña, and has to become a true worship of the Lord (12:10). This means that the niṣkāmakarmayoga of the BG is, to a great extent, identical with the total self-surrender demanded by the Gītā-bhakti.

The karma with kausalam of the BG implies also jñāna. In 4:42, the Lord asks Arjuna to enter into action after having cut off
ignorance by the sword of jñāna. The karma advocated in our sacred book is such that was purified by jñāna(jñānāgni-dgadha, 4:19). Verses 4:23 and 13:24 show the mutual dependence and overlapping-ness of the three margas. In 4:23 we read: "The work of a man whose attachments are sundered, who is liberated, whose mind is firmly founded on wisdom(jñānavasthitacetasah), who does work as a sacrifice, is dissolved." Here the agent is one with detachment(nisēvakarma) and is established in jñāna(jñānamarga) and does his actions as a sacrifice(bhakti). In short, in the BG the paths of karma, jñāna and bhakti are intimately and inseparably connected, and treating them one as superior to the other is contrary to the spirit of this scripture. However, this sacred book does accept the particular temperament, varṇa-vocation and practical feasibilities according to which one may give in one's particular life greater importance to one marga than to the other. Hence to a great extent we agree with the following statement of Upadhyaya: "It is needless to remind that this preference depends not on the consideration of any qualitative value of these paths, but on the extent to which one path is considered easier and more expedient to practice than the other." 69

The BG certainly advocates all the three paths considering them not as independent but as interdependent. The ultimate purpose of the BG is not to lead people to karma, jñāna or bhakti as paths but to realize God through these paths. Rightly therefore Ranade asserts that "God-realisation constitutes the Apurvata, the novelty or the supreme contribution of the Bhagavagita." 70